

Graduate Program PhD Qualifying Exam Procedure for EEOB Students

General philosophy: The exam will be completed in a timely manner, and requirements will be enforced uniformly among candidates.

Supervisory Committee

The Qualifying Exam Committee will consist of the Supervisory Committee with the exception of the thesis supervisor. One member of the Qualifying Exam Committee will serve as chairperson to ensure that the rules for qualifying exam are followed. The thesis advisor may attend the oral portion of the exam as a silent observer, and may participate at the discretion of the Qualifying Exam Committee. The advisor must leave the room along with the student for the Committee's discussion following the exam and cannot vote on the outcome of the written or oral portion of the exam. A pass or fail decision will be by majority vote of the Exam Committee (at least 3 votes in favor).

Written and Oral Exam Components for the Qualifying Exam (PhD)

The exam will consist of a written document that will be defended in a single oral defense. If failed, a student can retake each part of the exam once as per university statutes.

The written component will consist of a research proposal on the topic of the student's proposed thesis research. The student should describe the background leading to the proposed research, the significance of the research, the research approach (design and methods) for achieving the specific aims, the rationale for the proposed approach, potential pitfalls, and expected/alternative outcomes of the proposed studies. Formatting requirements are as follows: 1 page project summary plus a project description no longer than 15 pages; single spacing; Arial 11 or Times 12 font; one inch margins. Figures are included but citations excluded from page limitations.

The student is encouraged to consult with his/her thesis advisor during preparation for the exam about the concepts and principles of the study. The thesis advisor and other members of the supervisory committee can have conversations with the student about specific aims and provide guidance and recommendations on the development of the experimental approach. However, the student is responsible for crafting a document that speaks in his/her voice, and the thesis supervisor and supervisory committee may not contribute to the writing or editing of the proposal. However, the student may solicit feedback from other faculty, postdocs and graduate students.

The student will submit the written research proposal on a date determined by the supervisory committee. The committee will have two weeks to evaluate the written document. If the committee requests revisions, the student will have two weeks to complete them and resubmit the revised proposal. In addition to the revised proposal, the student must submit a "Response to Reviewers" document that explicitly addresses the written comments and recommendations of the student's exam committee, itemizing changes made to the proposal and justifying any recommendations not followed in the revision. The committee will then have one week to reevaluate the written component of the exam.

The oral component of the Qualifying Exam cannot be scheduled until the student has passed the written component and must take place within 30 days from the time the student passed the written component of the exam. In the oral defense, the student may give a formal presentation of the proposal to the Qualifying Exam Committee, but it may not exceed 10 slides. The oral component of the exam may cover any material deemed appropriate by the committee and should not exceed two hours in length.

Exam Schedule

The qualifying exam must be undertaken by the fourth semester of entering the graduate program. If the exam is failed, it may be retaken once by the end of the following semester. Students who have not attempted their qualifying exams by the end of their fourth semester and have not passed the exam by the end of their fifth semester will be judged as not making satisfactory progress toward their degree. These students will be ineligible for departmental and university support.

Exceptions or modifications to these rules must be approved in advanced by the Graduate Program Committee.