

Speech and Hearing Science Qualifying Exam Policies and Procedures

Approved: December 2012

Purpose: To assess the student's (a) depth of knowledge in a specialty topic area and (b) ability to identify, integrate, synthesize, and critically evaluate research in this area. The Qualifying Exam is the second of three research milestones in the SHS PhD program.

Rationale: In-depth knowledge of scholarly topic(s) is necessary for the student: (a) to identify gaps in the knowledge base or significant barriers to scientific progress that future research must address; and (b) to generate innovative solutions to existing problems that may contribute to major advances in the field. The Qualifying Exam will take the form of a critical analysis and original synthesis of the scholarly literature. The student's paper must address a novel topic and should not be a direct replication or summary of their mentor's work. Successful completion of the Qualifying Exam provides evidence of the student's scholarly independence and indicates the student is qualified to begin the planning stages of a dissertation proposal.

Exam Process and Document

1. Committee Composition

- a. The Qualifying Exam committee consists of the student's mentor and two additional faculty members from SHS. All committee members must be members of the graduate faculty, and at least one must have tenure. The student should select faculty who have expertise and/or interest in the topic area.

2. Proposal and Approval Meeting

- a. The student, in consultation with committee members, will write a brief proposal that includes (a) the topic, (b) an outline of the major issues to be addressed (~ 2 pages), and (c) a preliminary, representative list of sources that will be included in the document.
- b. The student schedules an approval meeting to give the advising committee an opportunity for collective discussion and feedback on the proposal. A successful proposal meeting will indicate (a) the committee has approved the student's proposal and signed the exam signature page and (b) the student has declared their intention to begin writing the review paper. The student will revise the proposal, if needed, based on discussion and feedback during the approval meeting and provide a revised proposal to members for final approval within one week of the meeting.
- c. The due date for the written document will be 8 weeks from the proposal's approval date. The committee should identify a defense date at the time of the approval meeting (2 to 4 weeks after the due date for the written document). The student will submit the approved proposal and signature page to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) with the date the written document is due to the committee.

3. Written Document and Document Evaluation

- a. The paper should take the form of a review article. The document cannot exceed 30 pages, excluding the title page, figures, tables and references. Papers should be prepared following standard APA guidelines with 1" margins, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and 1.5 line spacing. The student's paper should be accessible to scholars that are not experts in the specific subject area.
- b. The exam document must be written independently by the student; all content and written organization is expected to be the responsibility of the student and must adhere to the expectations for academic integrity in the Student Code http://www.admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/article1_part4_1-401.html. Assistance with copy-editing is encouraged for all students.
- c. The review must be completed and submitted to the committee by the due date.
- d. The mentor is responsible for reporting receipt of the document by the due date to the DGS.
- e. Committee members will review the exam and evaluate it according to a pre-defined rubric (see attached). Committee members will have at least 2 weeks to prepare their written evaluation before the oral defense (see 2c above).

4. Oral Exam

- a. The defense meeting consists of a 1-hr question and answer session. The student does not prepare a formal presentation but can provide a short summary. The summary should not exceed 5 minutes.
- b. The defense meeting is an exam; therefore, it is not open to those outside the committee.
- c. The defense meeting provides an opportunity for the student to elaborate, clarify, or defend aspects of their paper that were of concern to the reviewers. The student will not receive the written comments of the reviewers prior to the defense.
- d. The committee evaluates the student's oral defense according to a pre-defined rubric (see attached). The evaluation of the written document and oral defense will be recorded on the signature page.
- e. After the oral defense, the student will receive a copy of the written evaluations from the three committee members. Reviewers' comments will be turned in to the student/mentor following the oral defense.

5. Criteria for Passing the Qualifying Exam

- a. Scoring will be Pass/Fail. The student must obtain a majority pass score to complete this milestone.
 - i. Pass: The student's written document and oral defense received a PASS from 2 of 3 committee members. If the entire committee agrees that performance on the written document and oral defense were both outstanding, they can award a pass with distinction.
 - ii. Fail: If the student's written document and oral defense is deemed unsatisfactory by 2 of the 3 committee members, he or she is provided with one more opportunity to write an entirely different Qualifying Exam and must repeat steps 1-4 again.

6. Special Circumstances

For some Qualifying Exam topics, there may be an insufficient number of SHS faculty to serve on a Qualifying Exam Committee. In these exceptional circumstances, a student may petition the Graduate Programs Committee for permission to include a member from outside the department. The student's request should justify the need for expertise from outside the department and be accompanied by a letter of support from the mentor.

If at any point during this process the student experiences unforeseen circumstances, the student should contact his/her mentor and the DGS to discuss options for adjusting the timeline for meeting the exam requirements on a case by case basis.

Evaluation Rubrics

Committee members will evaluate the document using the following criteria:

1. The central ideas and arguments are thoroughly explored.
2. Ideas and arguments are supported with appropriate references.
3. Ideas and arguments are presented clearly and logically.
4. The reviewed evidence is well synthesized and evaluated.
5. Paper is well written and well organized.

Committee members will evaluate the oral exam using the following criteria:

1. Student communicates depth of knowledge in the specialty area clearly.
2. Student answers general questions posed by committee.
3. Student answers specific questions to provide more detail or clarify points.
4. Student engages in a dialogue with committee members.
5. Student demonstrates effective presentation skills.

The committee of the whole will assign an overall rating for the Qualifying Exam (i.e., written document and oral exam).

- Pass with distinction
- Pass
- Fail

A signature page will be developed to record signatures for: (a) committee approval of proposal, (b) committee rating for the Qualifying Exam.