

# **DOCTORAL QUALIFYING EXAMINATION POLICY**

## **COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA**

7/2/14

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to introduce students to the College of Journalism and Communications' doctoral qualifying examination and its procedures.

### **Purpose of Doctoral Qualifying Examination and Admission to Candidacy**

The purpose of the qualifying exam is to test a student's knowledge of core competency areas. Each student must answer qualifying exam questions from memory. No external aids of any kind (including electronic or written notes, books or references, external memory devices, cell phones or study aids of any kind) are allowed during the exam. Any exceptions must be approved by a petition to the Senior Associate Dean of graduate studies one month prior to taking the qualifying exam.

Only one automatic exception, which does not require a petition, will be made for the legal methodology question, which tests the student's ability to use the law library, legal research databases and occasionally the Internet. Resources must be approved by the student's committee.

**Any violation of the above rules will result in immediate dismissal from the doctoral program.**

The purpose of a doctoral qualifying examination is to evaluate each student's comprehensive understanding of the field, as well as the student's insight, creativity, and clarity of expression. The examination is one of the requirements for admission to candidacy.

A graduate student does not become a candidate for the Ph.D. degree until granted formal admission to candidacy. Such admission requires the approval of the student's supervisory committee, the department chairperson, the college dean, and the dean of the Graduate School. The approval must be based on (1) the academic record of the student, (2) the opinion of the supervisory committee concerning overall fitness for candidacy, (3) an approved dissertation topic, and (4) a qualifying examination as described above.

### **Preparation for the Examination**

To provide the committee with adequate information for the development of appropriate written examination questions, each student shall submit to the committee chair syllabi or course descriptions and paragraphs describing the parameters of the study area established for each question in consultation with the appropriate committee

member(s). The course descriptions need to include required readings for each course taken during the coursework portion of the program. Students will be held responsible for the coursework they were required to complete as a prerequisite to the doctoral program. All of these materials – syllabi, course descriptions and paragraphs describing each question area – must be submitted to the chair no later than the beginning of the semester planned for the qualifying examination.

In addition to the paragraphs describing each question, the student must submit a reading list of current journals and journal articles, books, and other appropriate documents for each question, prepared in consultation with the individual committee members and chair. The reading list is meant to act as a study guide so that the student and the committee agree on necessary preparation.

The student also must submit a dissertation proposal, approved by the chair, to the supervisory committee no later than the first day of the written qualifying exams. The proposal is composed of a completed draft of the first three chapters of the dissertation, including: the research problem, the paradigmatic and theoretical foundations for the project, the rationale for the project, key definitions and literature of the topic, a description of the methodology to be used (for example, survey research, experimentation, historical research, legal research), and a tentative bibliography, research schedule, and tentative budget.

### **Scheduling Qualifying Examinations**

It is the student's responsibility to schedule times for the written and oral portions of the examination. After agreement by the supervisory committee chair that the student may schedule the examination, the student simultaneously arranges the dates, times, and locations for both the written and oral portions of the qualifying examination and proposal.

Between the admission to candidacy and the graduation date of the degree, there must be a minimum of two semesters. The semester in which the qualifying examination is passed is counted, provided that the examination occurs before the midpoint of the term. For example, if a student plans to graduate in the spring term, the oral portion of the qualifying examination must be taken before the midpoint of the fall term. However, if the student plans to graduate in the summer term, the oral portion of the qualifying examination can be held after the midpoint of the fall term, but before mid-point of spring term.

All times and dates of the written and oral qualifying examinations will be announced to the members of the faculty in advance and posted on a bulletin board available to graduate students. A copy of the written questions for every qualifying examination must be on file in the Division of Graduate Studies and are **not** for public inspection.

## **Nature of the Qualifying Examination**

The University of Florida requires that the examination be both written and oral. At the College of Journalism and Communications, the written and oral portions are considered as parts of one unified examination. The student must meet the university's registration requirements at the time he/she takes the exam.

The student should register for MMC 7979 in the term in which he or she plans to take the qualifying examination. The Graduate School provides the official notice that the student has been admitted to candidacy.

### Written Portion of the Examination

Answers to the written portion of the examination must be written. Oral examinations are forbidden as substitutes for any, or all, of the written portion.

Effective Spring 2010, the written portion of the examination will be divided into four parts instead of five. The dissertation question has been removed. The written portion of the examination focuses on the individual student's coursework and readings. There shall be one part each on (a) mass communication in general, (b) the specific aspects of mass communication on which the student focused, (c) research methods central to the study of those specific aspects of mass communication, and (d) supporting studies taken outside the college.

While there will no longer be a formal fifth question regarding the dissertation proposal, the faculty will ask the student questions designed to increase the student's understanding of the dissertation topic or resolve outstanding issues in the proposal. In addition, it is expected that the proposal (completed first three chapters) will be turned in prior to the exam.

Any foreign language examination requirement will be met outside of the qualifying examination.

### Time for Written Portion

The student will be allowed four hours for each part. The four parts of the examination must be completed within ten official class days.

### Responsibility for Preparing Questions

The student's supervisory committee members, under the direction of the chair, are responsible for the development of the questions for the written portion of the qualifying examination in accordance with the policies of the university and the college. The supervisory committee prepares the examination questions within the context of the individual student's program.

### Taking the Written Examination

The answers must be written within Weimer Hall and produced in electronic form. The arrangements to sit for the written portion must be coordinated by the student in

consultation with the supervisory committee chair and Division of Graduate Studies. The student is responsible for reserving with the Division for Graduate Studies a computer, room, and other supplies necessary for the examination. The chair of the committee will collect a printed version of the examination answers, plus one output copy or photocopy for each additional supervisory committee member at the conclusion of each of the four parts. The supervisory committee chair also will deliver one set for the official records to the Division of Graduate Studies. The student is responsible for providing the additional copies.

#### Evaluation of Written Examination

Student responses are evaluated by the student's supervisory committee following the policies of the university and the college and within the context of the individual student's program.

There will be no separate faculty evaluation for the written portion of the examination. Rather, the committee will decide whether a student passes or fails the qualifying examination after the oral portion of the examination. The chair will discuss the results of the written portion of the examination with members of the supervisory committee and separately with the student prior to proceeding with the oral defense.

#### Oral Portion of the Examination

The oral portion of the examination should take place within one month of the student completing the written portion of the examination. The oral portion of the qualifying examination must be held on campus. A major purpose of the oral exam is to allow the student, in response to faculty, to answer questions that arose as a result of the written portion of the examination. The second purpose is to defend the dissertation proposal—Chapters 1-3, complete. The supervisory committee chair may meet with committee members before admitting the student to the oral portion of the examination, and a committee member may request such a meeting, which request shall be honored by the chair.

#### Evaluation of the Oral Examination

The UF Graduate Council changed the policy for all examinations involving a graduate student's supervisory committee. Effective Spring 2009, only the student and the chair or co-chair are required to be in the same physical location. All other committee members, including the external, can participate via advanced communication technology. Only with advance notification and permission of the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies can a graduate faculty member substitute for another committee member. Justification for the substitution must be made in writing to the Senior Associate Dean and contain a reasonable timeframe for the substitute to review and prepare for the oral portion. Only in extraordinary situations would a substitution be approved less than one month prior to the oral portion of the examination. No substitutions are permitted for the committee chair or the external member. If a substitution is denied, the oral portion must be cancelled and rescheduled when all committee members are present.

Telephone participation or participation via videoconference is allowed. The request to have a member of the supervisory committee participate by telephone must be made in advance and in writing to the Senior Associate Dean. Advance permission is necessary to estimate the costs of the call and to reserve a room. The Division of Graduate Studies will not reimburse telephone expenses directly to students. Therefore, approval to pay for telephone expenses must be made in advance with the division. The College will accept responsibility for the cost of the call only if the student has followed all procedures properly.

The oral portion of the examination will be evaluated by the entire supervisory committee following the policies of the university and the college and within the context of the individual student's program. The supervisory committee has the responsibility at this time of deciding whether the student is qualified to continue work toward the Ph.D. degree.

At the conclusion of the oral portion of the examination, the entire committee must agree that the student has passed, conditionally passed, or failed each of the four parts of the examination separately. If a conditional pass is assigned for any portion of the exam, the student must complete additional requirements, as assigned by the committee, to remove the "conditional" status. This work must be completed within a reasonable time period determined by the committee.

Any failure must be reported to the Graduate School, and the student must wait at least one semester for a retake if a retake is recommended by the student's committee and approved by the Graduate School. The following rules were approved by the Graduate Faculty on April 28, 2014 and pertain to outright fails, not just to the need to rework a question before approval.

1. Students cannot change the chair or member of their committee following the Qualifying Exam except by petition to the Graduate Committee, and there is no guarantee that the petition will be approved.
2. Only one member can be changed, not the entire committee.
3. They will receive a pass or fail for each question and the proposal. The vote must be unanimous on each question or it is considered a fail.
4. Students can retake the exam only one time.
5. The student will retake only the questions they failed. The questions will be different on the retake.
6. Questions will be taken under the same circumstances as the original testing – no outside materials will be allowed and the student will take the questions in the building.

## **Admission to Candidacy Form**

When a student has successfully completed the qualifying examination/dissertation proposal and completed all requirements for admission to candidacy, the completed, signed, Admission to Candidacy form will be submitted to the Graduate School by the Division of Graduate Studies.

On the day of the oral portion of the qualifying examination, the student must obtain the official Admission to Candidacy form from the program assistant in charge of current student records, take it to the exam, and return it to the program assistant after receiving signatures of all committee members.

The date that the dissertation proposal was accepted by the supervisory committee must also appear on the Admission to Candidacy form. The Graduate School will not grant approval of a student's Admission to Candidacy form until the date that the qualifying examination was passed and the date the dissertation proposal was accepted both appear on the form. The later of the two dates will be the official date of "Admission to Candidacy." If a period greater than four months elapses between the date that the student passed the oral portion of the examination and committee approval of the dissertation topic, the student must notify the Senior Associate Dean in writing indicating the reason for the delay.

## **Petitions**

Any petition requiring approval for exceptions to the policies described above will be submitted in writing and must be approved in writing by the student's entire supervisory committee. The student will deliver the petition to the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. The Senior Associate Dean will review the petition and seek Graduate Committee approval or denial.

Approved by the Graduate Committee February 26, 1988; approved by the Doctoral Program Group March 11, 1988; edited for clarity by assistant dean for graduate studies on April 11, 1988; approved by Graduate Faculty on April 15, 1988. Revision approved by the Doctoral Program Group on July 31, 1989, and the Graduate Committee on September 21, 1990. Further edited on July 19, 1991 to reflect Graduate School policy changes. With input from the Graduate Faculty, the Graduate Committee approved revisions to reflect Graduate School and College policy changes on March 11, 2002. Further edited and approved by the Graduate Committee on April 8, 2005. Edited per Graduate Council 08/03/09. Edited per Graduate Faculty 01/20/10. Edited per Graduate Faculty 09-16-2010. Edited per Dean Treise 12-15-2010. Updated 7-2-14