

Division of Public Policy (PPOL)

PhD Qualifying Exam (PQE) Guidelines

The main purpose of the Qualifying exam is to assess the student's understanding of the foundational public policy literature, as well as assess whether a Ph.D. student has achieved mastery of core public policy content, as related to strand and specialization, and to gauge students' readiness for continued doctoral study.

Conduct Ph.D. Qualifying Exam

The qualifying exam will be conducted over 2.5 days, including a written exam (1.5 days), written dissertation proposal and oral defence.

(i) **Written Exam:**

The written exam is divided into three parts consisting of a comprehensive writing component to assess the students: (i) fundamental knowledge in public policy (3 hours), (ii) research methodology (3 hours), and (ii) familiarity with their speciality (3 hours). The written exam will take place over two consecutive days (6-hours on Day 1, 3-hours on Day 2).

(ii) **Dissertation Proposal:**

Students will be required prepare a dissertation proposal in consultation with their advisor(s). The dissertation proposal will be focused on the student's research questions, hypothesis(es), methodology, and research design. It should be approximately 6- 8,000 (max) words, inclusive of references, tables, and figures. In addition to being well-written, the dissertation proposal must make clear the original research to be undertaken (clearly indicating what it will add to extant academic scholarship), appropriately referenced, and constitute a realistic research plan for a PhD dissertation. The proposal should be submitted to the PQE committee two weeks before the oral defence.

(iii) **Oral defence:**

An oral defence of the candidate's dissertation proposal will take place two weeks after the proposal is submitted to all members of the PQE committee. The PQE committee will participate in the oral defence.

Timing of the Qualifying Exam

The PQE should be conducted normally in January in the second year of the student's Ph.D. program. The student is required to submit the form "*Request to Schedule a PhD Qualifying Examination*" (as attached) to PPOL office at least 4 weeks before the written examination.

The written exam will normally take place six weeks after submission of the completed "Request to Schedule a PhD Qualifying Examination". The dissertation proposal should be submitted to the PQE committee at least two weeks before the oral defence. The PQE should normally be completed before commencement of the Spring term.

The PhD Qualifying Exam (PQE) Committee

The PQE Committee must be formed and approved by the Head of the Department at least six (6) weeks before the date of the qualifying examination.

The PQE committee shall consist of at least three faculty members, including:

1. Supervisor(s);
2. Faculty member(s) in the Division of Public Policy; and
3. One external faculty member (preferably from local university), optional

Qualifying Exam Result

- Pass
- Fail

If a student fails the written exam and/or the oral defence, he/she will have an opportunity to retake the written exam or revise their proposal for the oral defence. The second attempt will normally be arranged within 3 months.

Failure to pass the qualifying exam

If the student does not pass the exam on their second attempt, upon the PQE Committee's decision, he/she will be dismissed from the PhD Program, or may transfer to the MPhil program.

Request to Schedule a PhD Qualifying Examination

Student Information

Student name: _____

Student ID: _____ Year of Study: _____ Study mode*: Full-time/ Part-time

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Qualifying Examination Information

Proposal topic: _____

Requested written examination date: _____

Requested Oral defence date: _____

Examination Committee (including supervisor(s))

Supervisor: _____ Signature: _____

Co-supervisor: _____ Signature: _____
(if applicable)

Members (For written exam):

Name: _____

Name: _____
(Optional) (External Examiner – from local University)

Members (For oral defence):

(if different from the written exam)

Name: _____

Name: _____
(Optional)(External Examiner –from local University)

Department Head approval

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(Prof. Xun WU)

Disclaimer: I hereby declare that this proposal is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes.

Division use only:

Confirmed:

Written exam date: _____ Oral exam date: _____