

PhD in Education Studies Qualifying Examination Guide

*For Students in the Field of
School and Applied Child Psychology*

Version Date: March 2024

GRADUATE PROGRAMS OFFICE

All **students in the PhD in School and Applied Child Psychology program** are required to satisfactorily complete a qualifying exam. The purpose of the exam is to allow students the opportunity to situate their chosen area of research in a broad educational context. The written paper serves as the Qualifying Examination.

PhD Qualifying Exam:

The doctoral qualifying exam represents one of the major milestones in the School and Applied Child Psychology program. The purpose of the qualifying examination is to demonstrate the student's level of knowledge in a particular area of research and to contribute to the knowledge in the field.

Please follow these guidelines. In 6000-8000 words, exclusive of references:

The qualifying exam consists of a review of literature on a topic of the student's choice. Students are encouraged to choose a topic that is related to their dissertation topic in order to make clear the theoretical and methodological foundations on a particular topic. Topics of review should be appropriately narrow so that the review is feasible within 2 to 3 months and can contribute to the wider academic conversation. ***Students are required to discuss the topic and proposed method for their review with their supervisors to ensure that the proposed area and review method is appropriate.***

Students are expected to mostly use traditional (narrative) review or rapid review methods, though other types of literature review are also acceptable (see this Western Library site <https://guides.lib.uwo.ca/knowledgesynthesis/purpose> for some additional guidance on types of literature reviews). Reviews will generally be structured with an introduction (which defines the topic area, describes that problem that will be addressed, specifies the gap and justifies that need for the review), a body (outlining methods used in the review process and where the literature is summarized, synthesized and critically evaluated) and a conclusion (where key finding and remaining questions are outlined).

Although the qualifying exam may relate to a students' PhD proposal, it is distinct from that a proposal in that it will cover a narrower range of work (thesis proposals often requires background review and synthesis of a range of research areas) and is primarily aimed at summarizing existing knowledge rather than laying the groundwork and proposing new research.

You may discuss your paper with anyone, including professors, but you may not submit drafts of your papers to anyone.

Starting Your Qualifying Exam:

It is expected that students will complete their Qualifying Exam within the first year of the program and must be completed in one term. Qualifying Exams are a Milestone and will not show up as a course in your Student Centre. Once you have passed your Qualifying Exam, it will appear at the end of your transcript under the Milestones area.

Request for Administration of Qualifying Exam:

Students must submit the following to the Graduate Programs Office at least four weeks prior to the end of the term of registration:

- 1 copy of your qualifying exam (Can be submitted electronically).
- Request for Administration of Qualifying Examination form (located on the "Forms & Guidelines" page of the Current Students website).

Grading:

Grading will be pass or fail.

The qualifying exam is read by two people: your Supervisor plus a second reader. Each reader will independently determine whether your paper is satisfactory or not and notify the Graduate Programs Office within two weeks after the submission date. The Graduate Programs Office will then notify your Supervisor who will share the results with you. In addition, the readers will be available to meet with you to provide feedback.

If a student's exam is not judged to be of sufficient quality to be marked "Pass" by the reader(s), the student will be permitted to resubmit a revised version of the exam within two weeks of its return. The revised exam will be re-read by the same reader.

If after reading the revised exam the reader does not assign a "Pass," the student will be asked to withdraw from the program. If the reader assigns a "Pass," the student may proceed in the program to complete degree requirements.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Graduate Programs Office.