

PhD Qualifying Examination Procedure

Purpose

The qualifying examination is intended to assess the student's ability to situate her or his area of research interest within the broad intellectual domains of the field of Information. The qualifying examination is separate and distinct from the evaluation of the doctoral Thesis Proposal.

Timing

A qualifying examination is normally held

- after the completion of INF3001H, INF3002H, INF3003H, INF3007Y and all electives that constitute the formal degree requirements (i.e., 1.5 FTE).
- during the second term of INF3006Y.

Structure of the Examination

The qualifying examination includes both a written and an oral component. The student must pass both to successfully complete requirements for the qualifying examination.

Qualifying Examination Procedures

The following procedures apply:

- The student and the Research Advisor will identify an area of doctoral research as well as pertinent frameworks and literatures in relation to which to pursue that research. They will also identify [usually during the first term of INF3006Y] at least two other professors who are qualified to guide the student in situating the research within those frameworks and literatures, and to serve on the qualifying examination committee (QEC). Both of these professors must be on the University of Toronto graduate faculty; at least one must be on the graduate faculty of the Faculty of Information.
- The student will approach two professors, so identified, with a description of the proposed area of research, and a request that they serve on the QEC.
- When two professors have agreed to serve, the Research Advisor will submit the names for the QEC to the Faculty of Information Committee on Standing for approval.
- Each member of the QEC will, in collaboration with the student, generate a reading list appropriate to the student's area of research [usually during the first term of INF3006Y].
- The student is responsible for scheduling the written and oral components of the qualifying examination. The entire QEC must be available to participate in the oral examination in real time [usually during the second term of INF3006Y].

- Each member of the QEC will set three questions which may be asked of the student during the qualifying examination. The QEC will meet to discuss the questions and ensure that, as a whole, they are comprehensive. The QEC will choose one question from each of the committee members to ask the student during the written examination.
- One month before the beginning of the written examination, the Research Advisor will forward to the student the list of the nine potential questions. The list will not specify which professor set which question.
- In order to accommodate a diversity of scheduling constraints, the student will be given nine calendar days to complete the written examination. During those nine calendar days, the student will respond to the three questions previously determined by the QEC. Responses to questions will typically be approximately 2,000 words (excluding references).
- All members of the QEC will review all of the student's answers. Unless the written answers are patently unacceptable to the QEC, an oral examination – at which the QEC will ask questions of the student – will be held within one week of the end of the written examination period. The purpose of the oral examination is to allow the student to provide context for his or her answers to the written examination, and to demonstrate additional depth and breadth of knowledge in the area. At the end of the oral examination, the QEC will meet in camera to discuss and vote on its assessment of the examination as a whole, both oral and written.

Assessment of the Qualifying Examination

The examination is to be assessed on the student's demonstrated critical ability and mastery of the topics involved through:

- comprehensive knowledge of the main issues or problems;
 - incisive evaluation of current and past research;
 - rigorous analysis, organization and synthesis of information; and
 - clear written and oral communication.
- Three options of assessment are possible:
 - Pass:* If through the examination as a whole, both written and oral, the student has been able to demonstrate all of the qualities listed above, the student will receive a Pass;
 - Conditional Pass:* If some aspect of the student's written and/or oral response is weak, the student may receive a Conditional Pass. In that case, the QEC will outline the work necessary to convince the committee of the student's ability. This will be in written form, and submitted for re-assessment within one month. After the QEC assesses this additional work, the student will receive either a Pass or an Adjournment;
 - Adjournment:* If the student does not pass both the written and oral components, the examination will be adjourned. The student will be presented with the following options: 1) taking the examination, both oral and written, again, with the same QEC but a new set of questions; 2) appealing the failing grade; or 3) withdrawing from the program. A student will be permitted to take the

- examination only once more, within six months of the first examination. Failure to pass on the second attempt will mandate withdrawal from the program.
- Immediately after the oral examination, the Research Advisor will inform the student and the Committee on Standing, in writing, of the examination QEC's assessment. In the case of a Conditional Pass, the results of the re-assessment will be reported in writing to student and the Committee on Standing by the Research Advisor.

Approved by the Faculty of Information Committee on Programs, June 5, 2012