

## Qualifying Exam:

The Qualifying Exam is a comprehensive knowledge examination the content of which will be determined by the student's dissertation committee in consultation with the student. The qualifying exam will consist of a written and oral examination. The written exam will take place over a two-day period (~4 hours per day) and the oral exam will follow the successful completion of the written exam. Students who fail to successfully complete the written or oral examination will, at the discretion of the students' dissertation committee, be given one attempt to retake the examination.

A PhD student must successfully pass the Qualifying Exam before being eligible for further progress in the program, e.g., preparation for the Preliminary Exam. The GS6 form, Program of Study, must be filed with the Graduate School prior to initiation of the Qualifying Exam. The student must be in good standing with a GPA of at least 3.0 in graduate courses.

The qualifying exam should occur at the end of the first year of study and no later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester of study (e.g. a PhD student beginning in August should take the exam no later than the end of the second fall semester).

As the content of the Qualifying Exam is a collaboration between the student and committee members, it is suggested that a specific meeting with mentors and the student be scheduled in which all come prepared with areas and/or questions that they would like the advisee to study in preparation for this exam. In addition, the student can come to this meeting with topics that they want to focus on.

In most cases, the recommended written exam schedule will allow for ~ 2 hours for the student to respond for each mentor question (assuming a 4-person committee). However, it should be understood that some flexibility in this structure may be necessary. Examples of questions could include:

1. Design a study that examines the hypothesis that sugars cause obesity (include hypothesis, research design, proposed results and potential limitations).
2. Define validity and reliability as they relate to the development of a food frequency questionnaire and provide a scientific-based discussion of the strengths and weaknesses associated with the use of a food frequency questionnaire.
3. High fat diets are associated with obesity. What are the physiologic and behavioral factors that contribute to this association? Take one of these factors and discuss the mechanisms involved using relevant scientific literature.

An oral examination will follow the successful completion of the written exam. The oral exam should be scheduled no later than 1 month following the written exam. The oral exam will be used to clarify issues related to the written exam, to further examine the student's knowledge and comprehension and to provide feedback to the student regarding strengths and weaknesses.

## Major Steps for Doctoral Students:

1. Establish doctoral dissertation committee in consultation with primary advisor.
2. Submit GS6 form to Graduate School.

3. Organize meeting with dissertation committee to establish areas of study for the written examination.
4. Take written exam.
5. If successful, schedule and take Oral Exam. If unsuccessful determine whether you are eligible to retake written exam. If eligible, schedule committee meeting and retake Exam.
6. PhD candidates who successfully complete Qualifying Exam will then:
  - a. Prepare for Preliminary Exam with primary advisor and dissertation committee.
  - b. Register and present in Graduate Seminar (Literature Review and Study Design).
  - c. Complete studies associated with your dissertation.
  - d. Register and present in Graduate Seminar (Final Project).
  - e. Defend dissertation.