

Weldon School of Biomedical Engineering

PhD Qualifying Examination and Mentoring-Committee Process

Guidance Sheet for Students and Faculty

- The Qualifying Exam is an important Weldon School PhD milestone, representing a checkpoint for students to demonstrate expected competencies for transition to our second training stage. It is also a critical opportunity to identify areas of academic, technical, and professional growth for each trainee and for their committee to provide the mentoring they need. Our expectations for passing the Qualifying Exam represent a rigorous but attainable bar defined by our experience, with the level of competency required for likely success after the first ~year of our PhD Training Program.
- The qualifying exam is NOT intended as the development of an entire thesis proposal, but rather a small-scope topic that addresses the specific goals of our qualifying exam and allows the student to demonstrate the expected competencies for this early milestone (*see rubric*).
- A complete description of the Qualifying Process can be found in the longer PDF document entitled “*Full Description of Rationale, Expectations, Logistics/Process, and Resources.*” Please read this document for full details.
- Written Submission Package includes (combined into 1 PDF):
 - Cover Sheet
 - Written Qualifying Document (*5-10 pages, format and required sections described in Full-Process document*)
 - Draft POS form
 - Individual Development Plan (IDP, *signed by student and main advisor*)
 - Unofficial transcript
- Evaluation of the Written and Oral portions of the Qualifying Exam will be based on the expectations included in the “*PhD Qualifying Examination and Mentoring-Committee Rubric,*” which is available to both students and faculty.
- The submitted written proposal will be passed through *Ithenticate* plagiarism-detection software by the Chair (Advisor), with the report distributed to all committee members. Plagiarism in the qualifying-exam document will be grounds for failure of the exam, and will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR).
- Suggested itinerary for the two-hour oral-exam/mentoring meeting (student present for #s 1-3, and 5):
 1. a ~30-min oral presentation of the material in the written submission (written proposal and progress report, coursework taken and planned, career-path plans, and desired professional development).
 2. ~45-min discussion on student’s proposal and relevant technical background,
 3. ~30-min discussion on coursework- and IDP-related training issues
 4. ~10-min private discussion amongst committee members [student excused], and completion of group Qualtrics rubric to provide constructive feedback
 5. ~5-min discussion with student of rubric feedback

Student-specific Guidance

- Overview of Timeline for Students (*see Delayed Timeline document* if Qual is deferred)
 - Oct 31: Submit Qual Pre-Registration Form (specific topic, 5 core papers) – [Student and Advisor]
 - Late Fall, Graduate Committee informs student of Qual-Mentoring committee members
 - Feb 1: Submit Qual Registration Form (Exam date and location must be established)
 - At least two week prior to Exam Date, full written submission (combined into 1 PDF) is sent to committee members
 - May 15 – deadline for Qualifying and Year-1 Mentoring committee meeting (even if Qual is deferred)
 - June 1 – deadline for electronic POS submission (even if Qual is deferred)
- Scheduling the exam with committee members must be done using a scheduling tool like [when2meet](#), [doodle](#) etc.
- While a formal exam, this is also a mentoring meeting – use it to your advantage to obtain the mentoring you desire.

Faculty-specific Guidance

- All committee members will use the Rubric to provide written feedback to the committee Chair (mentor) at least two days prior to the Exam date. The purpose of this is to facilitate effective use of the Exam/Mentoring discussion time to focus on areas for which the students can benefit from more mentoring. The Chair will compile all feedback and provide it to the committee prior to the meeting. This feedback is ultimately combined with feedback on the mentoring meeting/oral exam and provided to the student via a Qualtrics rubric completed together at the end of the meeting. This combined rubric and constructive feedback is shared with the student to help them understand their performance and areas for growth.
- During the Oral exam, questions on course material and technical foundations critical to the student's topic area are expected to be asked by committee members in order to identify gaps in training and suggest further courses or further training that may be helpful or needed.
- Overview of Timeline for Faculty
 - By Oct 31: Advisor helps students identify 5 core paper on which to center their proposal's critical analysis
 - Late Fall: Graduate Committee informs faculty of the committees to which they have been assigned
 - By Feb 1: all students will schedule (by email) Exam date/time/location with faculty committee
 - At least two week prior to Exam Date, full written submission is sent to Committee
 - Within a few days of submission, Chair sends iThenticate plagiarism-screening report to Committee. Results will be addressed in the qualifying exam report.
 - Two days before Exam, Committee members submit preliminary rubric to Chair based on written document
 - During exam, Committee completes final rubric together and reviews constructive feedback with student.

Note: Written submission package will need to be uploaded in the Qualtrics survey.