

# Doctoral Qualifying Examination

All doctoral students enrolled in the Counseling Psychology Program are required to take a Doctoral Qualifying Exam (DQE). This exam has a written component that is administered by the Program's Qualifying Exam Committee and an oral component that is administered by a student's Doctoral Supervisory Committee. The oral component is taken after the written component. Following the successful completion of the DQE, the student is officially admitted into doctoral candidacy.

The primary purpose of the DQE is to permit doctoral students to demonstrate their comprehension of the field of Counseling Psychology.

Students are eligible to take the DQE after they have:

1. filed a valid and current Doctoral Supervisory Committee Form with both the Graduate School and the Psychology Department's Graduate Coordinator;
2. had the Doctoral Supervisory Committee review and approve the student's Doctoral Planned Program of Study. This review can occur in an in-person meeting or via other communication method agreed upon by your committee. Have the Planned Program of Study form and accompanying materials signed by the Doctoral Supervisory Committee chairperson and placed in the student file.
3. submitted a completed and signed (by the Chairperson of his/her Doctoral Committee) "Application to take the Doctoral Qualifying Examination" to the Graduate Secretary to be filed in the program student file. Applications to take the written component of the DQE must be submitted to the Graduate Secretary by 4:30 p.m. on the Thursday prior to the week in which the exam is scheduled; that is, the deadline will be seven days prior to the day of the DQE. The written component of the DQE is administered once a year--in the Fall Semester. The oral component of the DQE, which is individualized for each student, does not require an application and typically occurs two to three weeks after the written exam at a time agreed to by the student and his/her Doctoral Committee.

## Content, Organization, and Development of the Doctoral Qualifying Exam (DQE)

### 1. What topics are covered on the DQE?

Students will be required to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge in each of the following four domains: (1) theory, (2) ethics, (3) research, and (4) contemporary themes in the counseling psychology literature. Students are directed to attend to multicultural and diversity issues across the domains and responses to questions. Domain 1 and 2 are completed during a week time span prior to the start of the fall semester. Domains 3 and 4 are completed on a single day, the first Monday of the fall semester. Students are asked to submit an honesty pledge related to their qualifying exam.

Domain 1: Theory (completed during week prior to start of Fall semester, open book and internet) One week prior to the official start of Fall semester, students will be provided the following prompt along with three alternative theoretical orientations to choose from in addressing the prompt. This domain response should be no more than 10 pages in length, (not including references) using normal APA formatting (e.g., double spaced, times new roman, 1-inch margins, 12 point font). Students will not be allowed to discuss their answer with anyone else and will turn in their answer at the end of the week period.

Prompt: Explain the key concepts and processes involved in healthy and unhealthy development and therapeutic change according to your preferred theoretical orientation. Discuss the adequacy of these key elements of development and change in addressing issues of diversity. Compare and contrast these elements of your theory with one other distinct theoretical orientation of the three that will be provided at the time of the exam. Review research that supports four aspects of your preferred theory. Be sure that some of the research that you review addresses issues of diversity.

Domain 2: Ethics (completed during week prior to start of Fall semester, open book and internet)

One week prior to the start of the fall semester, students will be provided with the following prompt along with an ethical dilemma which will be chosen by the faculty. This domain response should be no more than 10 pages in length (not including references), using normal APA formatting (e.g., double spaced, times new roman, 1-inch margins, 12 point font). Students will not be allowed to discuss their answer with anyone else and will turn in their answer at the end of the week period.

Prompt:

1. Explain why it is a dilemma (e.g., present relevant code or principles that are in conflict).
2. Present any relevant research literature that addresses both sides of the dilemma and offers recommended action.
3. Explain a cogent rationale and plan for the action they would take to address the dilemma.

Domain 3: Research (3 hours, closed book, completed the first Monday of Fall semester)

One article will be selected that was published between June through June during the two years preceding the administration of the exam. The article selected will have appeared in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* or the *Journal of Counseling and Development*. Students must write a review of the article in which the following questions and content are addressed:

1. Theoretical Perspective
  - a. Describe and critique the author's conceptual framework.
  - b. Comment on the need for this study and its importance.
  - c. How effectively does the author tie the study to relevant theory and prior research?
  - d. Describe and evaluate the clarity and appropriateness of the research questions or hypotheses.
2. Research Design and Analysis
  - a. Critique the appropriateness and adequacy of the study's design in relation to the research questions or hypotheses.
  - b. Critique the adequacy of the study's sampling methods (e.g., choice of participants) and their implications for generalizability.
  - c. Critique the adequacy of the study's procedures and materials (e.g., interventions, interview protocols, data collection procedures).
  - d. Critique the appropriateness and quality (e.g., reliability, validity) of the measures used.

- e. Critique the adequacy of the study's data analyses. For example: Have important statistical assumptions been met? Are the analyses appropriate for the study's design? Are the analyses appropriate for the data collected?
  - f. Critique the adequacy of the study's consideration of cultural differences and other issues of diversity.
3. Interpretation and Implications of Results
- a. Critique the author's discussion of the methodological and/or conceptual limitations of the results.
  - b. How consistent are the author's conclusions with the reported results?
  - c. How well did the author relate the results to the study's theoretical base?
  - d. In your view, what is the significance of the study, and what are its primary implications for theory, practical application, and future research?

Domain 4: Thematic Review and Critical Analysis of Contemporary Counseling Psychology Literature (6 hours, open book, internet access, completed the first Monday of Fall semester)

Students will write an integrative review and critical analysis of a theme that faculty identify in the counseling psychology literature. To prepare for this portion of the exam, students should read all issues of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *The Counseling Psychologist*, and *the American Psychologist* published during the two years preceding the administration of the exam. Understanding of this contemporary literature will be facilitated by familiarity with the earlier roots of this work; strong answers will demonstrate knowledge of the contemporary literature in the context of relevant historical roots. In addition, a strong answer is characterized by students demonstrating their own original, critical thinking and integration of empirical literature. Relatively weaker answers will simply repeat what other scholars have said about a theme. The answer to the Thematic Review question should be no longer than 7 pages, excluding References, with one-inch margins and 12-point, Times Roman font. Following is the text for the question.

Select one of the following two topics that have been recurrent or current themes in the counseling psychology literature. Provide an integrative review and critical analysis of the empirical and conceptual literature relevant to the theme. Conclude your answer with directions for future development of theory and research in this area.

**2. How important is it to be able to cite specific references, and how complete must these references be?**

It is important to cite basic sources and major research in an area that is being addressed by an exam question. References are appropriately used to support points in your answer. Points being referenced should be accurate, and generalizations cited should be correct. A reference should minimally include the author's last name followed by year of publication as follows: ....(Corsini, 1973). or Corsini (1973). Additionally, students must submit a reference list in APA format for each DQE answer EXCEPT for the research domain; for the research domain students need only provide in text citations.

**3. Will students be penalized for using information unfamiliar to faculty in their answers on the written component of the DQE?**

Counseling Psychology faculty members will be involved in generating exam questions and in selecting and/or approving the final questions that will constitute the written DQE. The Quals Committee will ask faculty members to evaluate questions that they are particularly competent to score. [However, a faculty member will not be asked to score exam questions of a student whose doctoral committee he or she chairs.] At least three faculty members will score each exam. Given this procedure for generating, selecting, and evaluating exam questions, it is not likely that a student will be penalized for a response to an exam question because of a faculty member's level of knowledge about the topic that the question addresses. However, if there is some unfamiliar information in a student's response to an exam question, the faculty member who is grading that response may review that information before grading the student's response. Thus, it is important to cite the sources of information used in exam responses.

#### **4. What are the purposes of the oral component of the DQE?**

The purposes of the oral part of the Doctoral Qualifying Exam are to:

- a. provide each student the opportunity to clarify or supplement answers to exam questions that received less than satisfactory evaluations,
- b. further determine the degree that each student has integrated knowledge and skills for functioning as a scientist-practitioner in the field of Counseling Psychology, and
- c. provide members of the student's doctoral committee who may not have participated in the written examination process (e.g., external doctoral committee members) the opportunity to actively participate in the qualifying examination process, especially since it is the entire doctoral committee who will ultimately make the decision as to whether the DQE as a whole (i.e., the written and oral components collectively) has been successfully passed.

#### **5. What course work should be completed prior to taking quals?**

- a. Three courses that constitute the Basic Counseling Psychology Core must be completed: PCO 6057, PCO 6931, and PCO 6278.
- b. It is strongly recommended, though not required, that you complete the following courses prior to taking the DQE because they constitute the Basic Scientific Psychology Core: PSB 6099, CLP 7934, SOP 6099, DEP 6099, and PSY 6608.
- c. The master's degree requirement or master's Equivalency also must be completed before taking the DQE.

#### **6. May notes or references be utilized?**

The third domain (research) is completely closed book. Notes, references, electronic documents, or other materials may not be accessed at any time during that portion of the DQE. The first, second, and fourth domains of the DQE are open book, and any non-human resources can be used during that portion of the exam.

#### **7. Are there any areas which were not addressed in the core courses which will be included in the quals questions, (e.g., women's issues, multicultural counseling, gay and lesbian issues, family systems theory, etc.)?**

Yes, there may be topics from areas outside of those covered in the core courses. It is indeed likely that the exam will include coverage of areas such as those examples given above. It is expected that students can address such topics by extrapolating from content covered in the core courses and from knowledge acquired in other required courses including the pre-practicum and the practica.

**8. Are there any particular guidelines that would be helpful in writing very good answers to DQE questions?**

It is essential that students communicate their thoughts clearly and concisely when writing their answers. The following suggestions may assist in writing effective answers:

- a. Read a question twice.
- b. Notice that nouns and action verbs are the primary guides to what the question is asking.
- c. Spend a few minutes thinking about the main points to be included in the answer. Plan the answer using an introduction-body-summary format.
- d. Devote part of the allotted time for planning and outlining each answer.
- e. In the introduction, refer to the main idea to be discussed in the body of the answer and state any assumptions that will be made in answering the question.
- f. Write complete sentences and try to avoid verbosity. Make sure that each sentence is clear and concise.
- g. Make sure that each paragraph develops one complete thought. A good paragraph should contain five to ten well-integrated sentences.
- h. Cite references where appropriate to support the answer. Simply write the author's last name followed by the year of publication and enclose within parentheses, such as Fox (1969).
- i. Use subheadings and numbering where they are appropriate. Charts and graphs may be used as part of the answer.
- j. Emphasize quality rather than quantity in the answer.
- k. Limit your summary or conclusion to a paragraph and do not include new material in the summary.
- l. Be mindful of the time limitation involved and estimate your response time accordingly.
- m. Move beyond repeating what other scholars have said and demonstrate your own original thinking. For instance, repeating the content of *TCP* major contributions is not sufficient. Strong responses would include describing your own novel integration of extant empirical data AND critical evaluation and integration of prior conceptual literature; the key here is to demonstrate your own original integration of the empirical and conceptual literature.

## **Resource Materials for Preparing to take the Doctoral Qualifying Examination (DQE)**

### **1. What version of the APA Ethical Principles should students use to prepare for the DQE?**

You are responsible for the most recent version of the APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct).

### **2. Is there a list of suggested readings or types of readings to assist in preparing to take the DQE?**

No, there is no specific list of readings for preparing to take the DQE. However, the descriptions of the domains of the DQE should inform students' readings and preparation.

### **3. What is a ballpark figure for how much students should study for the written DQE (what's expected)?**

Two months of concentrated study is a ballpark estimation of the time needed to prepare to take the written DQE. However, more, or possibly less, time will be needed depending upon the following factors:

- a. time duration since completing core Psychology and Program courses;
- b. individual differences with regard to level of difficulty involved in organizing, integrating, and memorizing large amounts of information;
- c. personality differences that influence effective study behavior, and
- d. overall academic preparation prior to studying for the DQE.

## **Administration of the Doctoral Qualifying Examination**

### **1. When and how will the written DQE be administered? How much time will students be given to complete this exam?**

The written component of the DQE will be administered during the first Monday of the start of the Fall semester. Unless otherwise notified, the written component of the DQE will follow this schedule:

8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Domain 3 (Research)
12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Domain 4 (Theme)

Note that the faculty view Domain 4, the Thematic Review and Critical Analysis question, as a four-hour task, but students may use the additional two hours time if needed.

Exams will be administered and completed in a computer lab room in the Department of Psychology or in alternative computer lab site.

At the end of each domain period, answers will be emailed to the administrative assistant within the department assigned to this task. Answers completed or provided after the ending time will not be submitted to exam graders. Students with documented disabilities requesting accommodations for taking the DQE must arrange these accommodations with the Chairperson of the Qualifying Exam Committee ten (10) days prior to the day of the qualifying exam.

## **2. What is the application procedure for taking the DQE?**

Applications to take the written component of the qualifying exam are available in the Program Handbook and must be completed, signed by the chairperson of the student's doctoral committee, and submitted to the Graduate Secretary at least seven days prior to the day of the qualifying exam (no later than 4:30 p.m. on the Thursday before the week in which the exam is scheduled). The "Criteria for Eligibility to Sit for the Written Component of the Doctoral Qualifying Examination" information is included with the application.

Each student who applies to take the DQE will be notified that his/her application was received and that he/she is on the list of students scheduled to take the exam.

If the written component of the DQE must be re-taken, a new signed application must be submitted to the Graduate Secretary by the application deadline for the semester that it will be retaken. Failure to meet a DQE application deadline will necessitate that the student wait until the next administration of the examination.

## **3. Who monitors the written component of the DQE? How?**

The Chair of the Qualls Committee will see that the qualifying exam is administered. Monitors may be present in the computer rooms during the time students complete the exam. If not, students will be informed where the monitor can be found in case of an emergency. Specific instructions as to time and place will be sent to or posted for qualifying students.

When the written component of the DQE ends, all answers will be emailed to the appropriate administrative assistant within the department.

## **Grading of the Doctoral Qualifying Exam (DQE)**

Grading of and feedback concerning the written component and later the oral component of the DQE will involve the following steps:

- Step 1. One copy of each exam question will be given to each of three faculty for grading. Approximately half of the faculty will grade the ethics and theory essays, and the other half will grade the research and theory essays. Faculty members will receive the exam questions that they are to grade no later than Friday of the week following the exam.
- Step 2. Three faculty members, using a scale of 1 to 5, will rate each answer. The scale is analogous to graduate school letter grades of consequence (i.e., 5=A, 4=B+, 3=B, 2=C+, 1=C).
- Step 3. Faculty who grade the answers to the four DQE questions will return graded exam responses to the Qualls Committee no later than one week after receiving the exam answers to grade.
- Step 4. The Qualls Committee will then (a) have grades on all exam answers recorded on the Qualls Feedback Form (QFF) along with the grand sum rating/grade for all four questions, and (b) send copies of these graded exams and QFF to the chairperson and members of each student's doctoral committee after receiving the graded answers.

The grand sum of ratings for all four DQE domains reported on the QFF and any additional comments from raters will enable the student's doctoral committee to determine if the student will be allowed to advance to the oral component of the DQE. The maximum grand sum is 60. As an advisory guideline, faculty have agreed that a score of 36 or above would result in a recommendation that the student be permitted to advance to the oral portion of the DQE. This and any recommendation is only advisory to the student's doctoral supervisory committee. The doctoral committee might also want to calculate performance within each area of the exam to identify respective areas of strength warranting special acknowledgement or concerns warranting remediation. Remediation could occur through another written examination, during the oral portion of the exam, or through some other activity deemed relevant by the committee.

Step 5. The chairperson of each student's doctoral supervisory committee will discuss the DQE performance and feedback with all members of the student's doctoral committee. The purpose of the discussion is to make one of the following decisions:

- a. to inform the student that he/she demonstrated adequate performance on the written component of the DQE and thus can schedule the oral component of the DQE within approximately two to three weeks, or as soon as the student and his/her chairperson think is reasonable;
- b. to inform the student that the written performance was deemed sufficiently inadequate that some form of remediation is warranted before the oral component of the DQE can be scheduled.

The student's doctoral committee chairperson will report the decision to the student in a Performance Feedback Meeting that will be held as soon as possible following receipt of the QFF.

At or before the Performance Feedback Meeting the student will receive the following:

- b. her/his graded exam answers from all faculty graders,
- c. the completed Doctoral Qualifying Exam Answer Evaluation Sheet that the faculty graders completed (one Sheet will be attached to each answer for each grader), and
- d. the Quals Feedback Form (QFF). This information will be helpful to a student in preparing for the individualized oral component of the DQE administered by her/his doctoral supervisory committee. Typically, questions are asked in the oral component of the DQE that address, among others, areas of weak performance on the written component of the DQE.

If a student's performance on the written common of the DQE is judged inadequate, the information presented at the Performance Feedback Meeting will be helpful in preparing the remediation plan or other activities deemed appropriate by the doctoral committee.

Step 6. If the student's doctoral committee decides that he/she should advance to the oral component of the DQE, the student will schedule this oral component within two to three weeks after the Performance Feedback Meeting or within some time frame that the student and his/her doctoral committee chairperson agree is reasonable.

Step 7. The oral component of the DQE ordinarily includes questions that a) address written DQE answers on which the student received Marginal Pass or Fail grades, b) are not related to the written DQE but assist individual committee members to evaluate the student's preparation to function as a counseling psychologist.

The oral component of the DQE is typically scheduled for 2 hours. When the doctoral committee chairperson ends the time for asking the student questions, the following steps typically occur in the order numbered:



1. the student leaves the examination room;
2. the committee discusses the student's performance and decides whether the student earned a Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail on the DQE (based on her/his performance on the written and oral components of this exam). If the student earned a Conditional Pass, then the doctoral committee will decide what conditions the student must satisfy in order to earn a Pass on the DQE.
3. the committee chairperson will ask the student to return to the exam room and will take leadership in informing the student of the committee's decision regarding his/her level of passing on the exam;
4. the student will have the opportunity to make comments and ask questions of the entire committee;
5. if the student earns a Pass, the committee then signs an Admission to Candidacy Form (prepared by the Graduate Program Assistant) to document the successful completion of the DQE; if the student earns a Fail or Conditional Pass, the chairperson will meet with the student to work out the specific plan for passing the exam and advancing to doctoral candidacy. This plan will be formally put in writing by the doctoral committee chairperson within two weeks after the oral exam. A copy of this document will be sent to the student and a copy will be placed in the student's academic file.
6. finally, the doctoral committee chairperson will notify the Area/Training Director regarding the action taken concerning each student's DQE (i.e., pass, conditional pass, fail). This information is used in certifying each student's eligibility to apply for pre-doctoral internship.

It is the doctoral committee chairperson's responsibility to supervise the student in meeting whatever conditions specified by the student's doctoral committee as being necessary to earn a Pass on the DQE, and thus advance to doctoral candidacy.

**Application to Take the Written Component of the  
Doctoral Qualifying Examination (DQE)**  
Department of Psychology, University of Florida

**\*\*Note:** This form must be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant at least 7 days prior to start of the DQE.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

UFID: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**DOCTORAL SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE**

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

External: \_\_\_\_\_

Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your Doctoral Supervisory Committee been approved by the Graduate School?     Yes     No

Has your Planned Program Form been filed with the Graduate Program Assistant?     Yes     No

Before applying to take the written component of the DQE, make sure these things are done and that you have met all other criteria specified on the checklist entitled, "Criteria for Eligibility to Sit for the Written Component of the Doctoral Qualifying Examination (DQE)."

**SIGNATURES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Doctoral Committee Chairperson

## **Criteria for Eligibility to Sit for the Written Component of the Doctoral Qualifying Examination (DQE)**

Once completed and signed by the student's Doctoral Committee Chairperson, this form must be filed with the Graduate Program Assistant in who will see that the form is placed in the student's program file.

### **Check if completed:**

- Master's degree or master's Equivalency (see Department of Psychology Graduate Regulations)
  
- These courses in the core program in Counseling Psychology Core (PCO 6057, PCO 6931, PCO 6278) or the equivalent of these courses.
  
- Valid and current Doctoral Supervisory Committee Form filed with the Graduate School, and Graduate Coordinator, and placement of a copy of this Form in the student's program file.
  
- Current Planned Program Form reviewed and approved by the Doctoral Supervisory Committee, and signed form is in the student's program file.
  
- Completed and signed application to take the written component of the DQE at least one week (7 days) in advance of this exam.

### **SIGNATURES:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Doctoral Committee Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date