

Developmental Area Qualifying Exam Guidelines

As required by the Graduate School at the University of Florida, the “Qualifying Exam” or “Quals” is an examination followed by an oral defense that must be passed in order to advance to PhD candidacy. The Developmental area offers two options for the Qualifying Exam.

OPTION 1: Review Paper. This typically consists of one 25-30 page papers (double-spaced, not including references, tables, and figures) that synthesizes the literature on a specified topic, and reflects a novel conceptual contribution to the developmental psychology literature with the goal of eventual publication. The review paper should be related to the student’s current and future research interests but does not substitute for a Dissertation Proposal.

OPTION 2: Exam. Answer 8-10 questions (~2 pages per question), open note. Questions will be written by the Dissertation Committee and are guided by the Reading List with Program of Study. The student will answer the questions during two days within a one-week period. The exam will be administered by the Dissertation Chair.

After turning in the exam or paper to the Dissertation Committee, an oral exam will occur (usually 2-3 weeks later). During the oral exam, the committee asks questions about the written document and related concepts.

Step 1. Together with your advisor, choose Option 1 or 2.

Step 2. Draft your Program of Study summarizing your academic training and goals, and your Reading List for the Qualifying Exam. The Reading List/Summary typically includes 3-4 subsections, with each sub-section including a summary and references, with a total of 60-80 papers. This document must be approved by your Dissertation Chair (your advisor) and your co-Chair, if you have one.

Step 3. Circulate the Program of Study and Reading List to your committee, requesting edits and suggestions to your Reading List/Summary. Once approved by all members of your committee, schedule your written exam or set a deadline for your paper.

Step 4. Complete the writing portion of the Review Paper or Exam independently. Schedule your oral defense to be held 2-3 weeks after turning in your exam/paper.

It is expected that the Qualifying Exam occur during Year 3. Passing this exam allows the student to advance to candidacy and officially begin dissertation work to earn a PhD. The reading list should be completed by the end of Fall of Year 3. The deadline for completion of the Qualifying Exam including oral defense is Spring of Year 3 or prior to earning 80 credits (including transfer credits), whichever occurs first.