



NEW YORK MEDICAL COLLEGE

A MEMBER OF THE Touro College and University System

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

POLICY: QUALIFYING EXAMINATION POLICY

Dated: 8-30-2022

Supersedes: Qualifying Examination Policy, dated June 2019

Last review: 1-3-2022

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide uniform guidelines for the doctoral Qualifying Examination across all Ph.D. programs offered by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBMS) at the New York Medical College (NYMC).

II. POLICY

The qualifying examination is an important benchmark in a progress of doctoral student towards candidacy and is required for all Ph.D. students. It is designed to determine whether the student (1) can utilize knowledge gained from foundational courses and scientific literature to formulate well-reasoned answers to questions regarding major current concepts and paradigms in the discipline of study; (2) possesses general intellectual and scholarly tools needed to undertake a doctoral dissertation research project. Passing the qualifying examination provides evidence that the Ph.D. student can advance towards Ph.D. candidacy in their chosen discipline/program.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Ph.D. students who are undertaking their Qualifying Examination. This policy also applies to the Program Directors of the Ph.D. programs offered by the GSBMS, as well as members of Academic Advisory Committees and Academic Advisory Committees.

IV. PROCEDURE

1. Timing of the Qualifying Examination

Scheduling of the qualifying examination is determined by the Program Director of the student's discipline/program of study in consultation with the student's Academic Advisory Committee.

All Ph.D. students should take qualifying examination **no later than one semester after the completion of core and program specific courses** required by their respective program. To be eligible to take the qualifying examination, Ph.D. student must be in a good academic standing (an overall GPA of 3.0 or above).

The qualifying examination may be delayed for students who did not complete program milestones in expected time (by the end of the Fall semester of their third year). All such deferments must be recommended by the student's Program Director and approved by the Academic Advisory Committee in consultation with the Dean.

Once started, qualifying examination should be completed within a 3-week period. Preparation for the exam should take place in the preceding 2- to 3-month period. Timeframe of the examination can be extended for a student who receives a conditional pass and is required to complete make-up assignment.

2. Preparation for the Qualifying Examination

Program Director forms a Qualifying Examination committee. The committee can include members of the student's Academic Advisory Committee, and a member from a different program.

Each Qualifying Examination committee member assigns study objectives and topic areas, including reading requirements, to the student **2 to 3 months before the examination**. Study areas should be narrow enough for the student to be able to master them in a brief period of intensive study, yet of broad enough scope to be representative of the general discipline of the degree. Program Director can consult with the student's Dissertation Advisor regarding areas pertaining to student's research focus.

During the preparation for the examination the student is expected to use scientific literature in study areas and to meet with faculty members frequently to receive individualized guidance.

3. Structure of the Qualifying Examination

Prior to the examination, the student should receive explicit directions from the Program Director regarding the format of the examination and expectations for the student.

The qualifying examination should consist of **two components, written and oral**. The order in which components are completed, grading weight of the written and oral components, and content of the examination is program specific as long as the overall scope and difficulty of examination are comparable across different programs.

A written portion of the examination should test the student's competency in fundamental topics. It should be conducted over a period of 2 to 3 days. Each day, the student will have a 4-hour block to complete assigned questions.

An oral portion of the examination should test student's ability to verbalize and explain key concepts crucial to the topics assigned to the student. It can be designed as a follow up to the written portion of the examination or can cover entirely different topics. The student should complete oral portion of the examination in 1 to 2 days, within 2-hour block each day.

Duration of the written and oral portions can be modified for students with special accommodations approved by the Office of Academic Support.

During the qualifying examination period, student is not allowed to receive help from their Dissertation Advisor.

4. Grading of the Qualifying Examination

The members of Qualifying Examination committee will grade the written and oral portions of the examination and individually fill out the Qualifying Examination Assessment Sheet (see Appendix I). The committee then discusses the student's performance to reach a consensus.

Program Directors are encouraged to invite any graduate faculty member with appropriate expertise regardless of their departmental affiliation to grade at least some parts of the exam and to participate in the final assessment of the student's performance.

The student may receive a grade of Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail, based on their overall performance during the qualifying examination.

To Pass the qualifying examination, the student needs to meet or exceed expectations in all competencies. For all programs, the benchmark for passing the exam is 80% of a maximum grade composed of the total of both written and oral portions. Students that pass the qualifying examination are approved to become PhD candidates.

The student who displayed deficiencies and did not meet expectations in written and/or oral portion(s) of their examination (resulting in a grade between 60% and 79%) might receive a Conditional Pass, based on the magnitude of the insufficiencies. The Program Director and /or The Qualifying Examination committee should discuss these deficiencies with the student and develop make-up strategies to address the inadequacies in either written or oral format. The student should complete the make-up assignment within 2 to 6 weeks period following the qualifying exam.

Satisfactory completion of the assignment will result in the final Pass grade for the student's qualifying examination.

The student who does not meet expectations during the qualifying exam resulting in a grade below 59% or a student who cannot adequately address their deficiencies during a make-up assignment will receive the grade of Fail. Such students may be given a chance to retake the qualifying examination with the approval of the student's Program Director and the Academic Advisory Committee in consultation with the Academic Standards Committee and the Dean based on their overall assessment of the student's potential to complete the program successfully. The scheduling of the reexamination should occur within a year of the first attempt and will be determined by the Program Director and the Academic Advisory Committee.

No more than **two opportunities to pass** the qualifying examination shall be provided. A second failure will result in termination from the doctoral program and revocation of the financial aid package (stipend, tuition waiver, or medical insurance). In the event that the student fails the qualifying examination on two successive attempts, they might be eligible to receive a Master of Science degree, upon successful fulfillment of the Master's Literature Review / Research Thesis requirement, any additional required coursework, and approvals from the Program Director and the Dean.

Program Director must communicate the results of the Qualifying Examination to the student, Dissertation Advisor, Chair of the respective department, and the GSBMS office. Student should be provided with the copies of the Qualifying Examination Assessment Sheet from each committee member.

Grades, the Qualifying Examination Assessment Sheet, and the written part of the qualifying exam should be stored in the academic department.

For the students that passed the examination, a completed Qualifying Exam Approval form, signed by the Qualifying Examination committee, should be submitted to the GSBMS office for record keeping.

5. Other Considerations

A student who seeks a transfer from one Ph.D. program to another **after** having passed the qualifying examination in the first program must follow the normal procedures for requesting a transfer and may be required to pass a qualifying examination in the second program. The faculty in the second program may waive this second examination if, in their judgment, the student has demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the new discipline.

A student who wishes to transfer from one Ph.D. program to another after having **failed** the qualifying examination in the first program must follow the normal

procedures for requesting a transfer, which requires acceptance by the second program and approval of the transfer by the Dean. If the student is admitted to the second program, a second attempt at the new qualifying examination may be granted. Such student, however, is also subject to the possibility of dismissal for failure to make timely progress towards a degree.

A student who wishes to transfer from one laboratory to another in a different department without switching the program, can work towards their degree in the discipline of choice with permission of the Program Director, new Dissertation Advisor, Department Chair and the Dean.

V. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective immediately.

VI. POLICY MANAGEMENT

Executive Stakeholder: Dean, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, and Assistant Dean for Ph.D. Programs

Oversight Office: Office of the Graduate School of Basic Medical Sciences, and Ph.D. Program Directors

APPENDIX I



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The Qualifying Examination Assessment Sheet

Name of the Ph.D. Student: _____

Student's Program of Study: _____

Name of Qualifying Examination Committee Member: _____

Date of Completion of the Qualifying Examination: _____

Please, rate student's performance on the qualifying exam using the rubrics below:

Competency	Does not meet expectations	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectations
Scientific Knowledge Student's ability to address all questions and to demonstrate proficient background knowledge on subjects tested			
Understanding of Research Methods Student's ability to understand and apply appropriate research methods to address problems posed during exam			
Critical Thinking and Evidenced-Based Reasoning Student's ability to critically analyze data and to develop possible solutions from evidence			
Information Literacy Student's ability to identify and locate information, evaluate information, effectively and responsibly use information.			
Literacy, and Written and Oral Communication Communication skills of a student and their ability to present responses eloquently and skillfully			

Grades for the written _____ and oral _____ portions of the qualifying examination

Total Grade for the Qualifying Examination (% of a maximum grade): _____

What is your decision regarding the overall student's performance:

- Pass** (student meets/exceeds expectations, total grade ranges from 100% to 80%)
- Conditional Pass** (deficiencies were detected, but can be corrected, total grade ranges from 79% to 60%)
- Fail** (student does not meet expectations, deficiencies were not corrected or total grade below 59%)

Comments:

1. Provide a comment on student's performance during the exam. What were student's strengths and weaknesses?

2. Provide any additional comments