







WRITTEN QUALIFYING EXAMINATION PROCESS
PH.D. RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMISSION 

1. Research Proposal Topics: 

Student must submit proposal topics to the exam committee for approval at the end of the 3rd quarter or no later than 4th quarter.  Proposal topics should be presented at a meeting of the full exam committee. Presentations should be 5-10 minutes (no longer) and relatively informal (e.g. no Power Point slides). Student should also write an abstract of each proposed project to hand out to the committee members. 

Proposals must be on two different topics but can be within students' field of interest. For example, a student working on trilobites for a primary proposal can have a secondary proposal also on trilobites but it must be asking a fundamentally different question. The second proposal provides the student with a starting point for a potential NSF proposal upon graduation. 



2. Preliminary Review with Research Advisor:

Student writes proposals and submits to research advisor for comment and review.  Advisor reviews as if they are proposals submitted for funding (e.g. no extensive editing).  [Beginning of 6th qtr]

After research advisor review/approval, student submits copies of proposals to exam committee chair for preliminary review process. Both proposals are submitted at the same time.

3. Preliminary Review with Exam Committee: 

Chair of exam committee forwards proposals to abbreviated committee (without research advisor) for preliminary review process.

Abbreviated committee reviews proposals as if they are proposals submitted to NSF and returns them to chair with separate comments. The proposals themselves will not be returned to the student so the student will not see any marks that the committee member might make on the proposals. At this stage in the process, the student hears only from the committee as a whole. The committee chair will provide the student with a written summary of the comments of the committee. Later, prior to the oral exam,  appropriate for the student to discuss the proposal with individual committee members. Committee has 4 weeks during regular academic year to return comments. 

Upon receipt of committee comments, student will make the necessary revisions (without consulting their research advisor) and then submit formally to the full committee (includes research advisor). There is no time limit on the re-submittal, but obviously any delays are not in the student's best interests.

4. Formal Review:

First formal review by full exam committee. At this stage in the process, the student hears only from the committee as a whole. The committee chair will provide the student with a written summary of the comments of the committee. Later, prior to the oral qualifying exam, it will again become appropriate for the student to discuss the proposal with individual committee members. Committee has 4 weeks during regular academic year to review.

Exam committee makes pass or fail recommendation. Failing unanimity, a committee report which contains only one negative vote will be deemed a pass, and a committee report which contains two (or more) negative votes will be considered a failure.

Student receives two opportunities to pass written exam.* A third examination is not permitted.

- *The policy of the Graduate Council is that a graduate student may be given a second examination in the event of unsatisfactory performance on critical examinations (including comprehensive examinations for Master's degree and Ph.D. Qualifying Examinations) with the positive recommendation of the examination committee. The second examination may have a format different from the first, but the substance ordinarily should be the same. The second examination will ordinarily not be given until three months have elapsed since the first examination. A student whose performance on the second attempt also is unsatisfactory, or who does not undertake a second examination within a reasonable amount of time, is subject to academic disqualification. A third examination is not permitted. (Graduate Advisor's Manual, September 1998).*