**Qualifying Exam**

**Doctoral Program in Special Education**

The Special Education Qualifying Examination is designed to provide evidence of competence in three core areas: 1) content core; 2) research core; and, 3) in an area of specialization. If the student is getting a CAS (in conjunction with PhD) that requires a qualifying exam, the CAS exam may be used in place of the specialization exam. The Qualifying Examination must be taken either during or directly following the last semester of course work. Upon successful completion of the Qualifying Examination, students earn the status of Doctoral Candidate.Each qualifying exam question is developed by a member of the qualifying exam committee reading the exam and the student. At least two readers should be Special Education faculty members. Faculty readers must approve the proposed question and a proposed bibliography before the student commences writing.

Qualifying Examination questions should be broadly conceived and involve substantive synthesis of the literature as well as application. The three exam questions may be completed serially or concurrently. Questions are most likely to be completed on a take-home basis, within an agreed upon time frame. All three questions should be completed within the term of one semester, with no question taking longer than 3 weeks to complete.

The student must provide his/her advisor and the Coordinator Special Education a plan for the Qualifying Examination. The plan should consist of the following:

1. a list of the three examination questions (including bibliography) and examining faculty member(s). Be sure to label the questions as either method, content, or specialization;
2. a time frame for completing exam.

Faculty readers are responsible for helping to develop the exam question and bibliography. Faculty must fill out and submit the Qualifying Exam Rubric (See the attached form.) Faculty readers should notify the Coordinator & the student’s academic advisor when a student has successfully completed an exam. Once the entire exam is complete, the Coordinator will notify the Graduate Recorder in Student Services. Faculty should evaluate each response on several criteria. For content and specialization exams, the response should demonstrate evidence of the student's capacity to comprehensively and critically review and synthesize the literature and apply it to the topic of the question. For methods exams, the response should evidence the student's grasp of the nature and methods of disciplined inquiry in special education. All response must reflect appropriate writing skills and mastery of APA. Students must obtain at least a "minimal pass" rating on all three questions to complete the examination successfully.

QUALIFYING EXAMINATION QUESTION

Doctoral Program in Special Education

Student:

Faculty reader(s):

Question type:

Content Area

Research Design and Methods       Specialization

Completion date:      Exam rating:  fail  minimal pass  pass

Comments:

Signature of the Rater Date

Return both the response and this rating form to:

Beth A. Ferri, Ph.D.

Coordinator of the Doctoral Program in Special Education150 Huntington Hall

QUALIFYING EXAMINATION RUBRIC

Doctoral Program in Special Education

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| The student | Fail | Minimal Pass | Pass |
| 1. demonstrates an ability to craft a well-researched literature review around a sufficiently limited research question. | Response fails to critically or comprehensively examine the literature; Connection between the literature review and the research question are unclear or ill-informed. | Student sufficiently analyzes and synthesizes the literature informing the research question; critically analyzes a sufficient range of empirical and theoretical work. Implications posed extend or apply the existing literature. | Exam is analytically and theoretically rich and insightful. The student critically examines an exhaustive range of literature and explicitly connects the findings to the research question. The response is well-articulated and of publishable quality. |
| 2. articulates a clear argument and summary of key findings drawn from the literature. | Response is unfocused and fails to develop an argument or come to any sort of conclusion based on the literature. | Response draws on a range of research to develop an over-arching argument or summary of key findings about what is known/not known about the research question. The response includes appropriate organizational structures and includes sufficient detail. | Student identifies and clearly discusses the key findings as well as implications supported by the available research. The student makes a clear argument and supports his/her assertions with relevant data. The response is well written, of sufficient detail, and of publishable quality. |
| 3. is able to connect theoretical and empirical data to practice . | Response summarizes a range of studies, but makes no connection to practice; theoretical constructs discussed either lack sufficient clarity or understanding. | Response goes beyond description to make informed connections between empirical or theoretical constructs to practice. Theoretical concepts are discussed with clarity. | Student makes informed and seamless connections between research, theory, and practice. Student demonstrates the ability to deftly apply theoretical insights in his/her writing. |
| 4. can propose and describe an appropriate research methodology and apply it to proposed research question(s).  (For Methods question) | Student expresses insufficient understanding of research methods. | Student demonstrates an adequate understanding of research methods and can adequately apply chosen methodology to proposed research question(s). | Student expresses depth and breadth of understanding of research methods; applies appropriate research methodology to proposed research question(s). The response is well written, of sufficient detail, and of publishable quality. |