

All doctoral students must pass an oral qualifying examination (OQE) as the first step to candidacy. The OQE should be completed the first semester following the completion of prerequisite courses, typically during the summer semester of the first year of study but no later than the second fall semester.

The graduate advisor for the student's discipline serves as chair of the OQE committee. He/she will appoint the committee from the graduate faculty active in the discipline and may consult with the department chair. In the event that the graduate advisor is the major professor, he/she will appoint another member of the faculty to serve as chair for that student. The committee will be comprised of four to five voting members, including the chair, plus the student's University Member. A non-voting member may be allowed to observe the procedures as a mechanism for training faculty to serve on future examination committees. The major professor will not serve on the OQE committee, nor will he/she be present at the examination.

The OQE chair will provide guidelines for exam administration to the committee members. He/she will provide a study guide to each student upon matriculation into the discipline. This guide will include information on exam format and content.

The examination is discipline-specific, not student-specific. The examination will include content from core courses and discipline-required courses completed during the first year of study. It will not include content specific to the student's research. Questions will be written and vetted by the examination committee and compiled by the chair. The chair may also solicit content from discipline faculty not serving on the examination committee.

The student will be given a list of questions one hour prior to the examination. During this hour, the student will not have access to resources such as textbooks, Internet, or colleagues. The student will review the questions and select the questions he/she will address in the examination.

At the end of the examination, the committee deliberates without the student present. The chair is responsible for reviewing the evaluation form and rubrics with the committee to provide an evaluation to the student. Once the committee is in agreement, the student is invited back to the examination room for the results. The chair is responsible for preparing a written summary of the committee feedback within five working days of the examination. The summary will be given to the student and major professor and will also be attached to the Evaluation of Oral Qualifying Examination form submitted to the GSBS office.

If the student passes the OQE, the next step in advancement to candidacy is the successful completion of a research proposal (see below). Each student has a maximum of two attempts to successfully pass the OQE. In the event the student does not pass the first attempt, the committee must establish a deadline for the second attempt which may be no later than the end of the following semester. If the student does not pass the second attempt at the OQE, the committee must make one of the following recommendation to the dean: 1) allow the student to complete the requirements for the Master of Science degree or 2) dismiss the student from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences.