Policy on Qualifying Examinations

College of Education

Qualifying Examinations determine whether the student has an adequate command of knowledge in the field of study, and can organize, apply and convey that knowledge. Successful completion of each question is required before candidates may be permitted to begin their dissertations, entering the final phase of their doctoral studies. The examinations cover classes from the candidate’s core, concentration, and research areas. The questions are comprehensive in nature and are not specifically course-based. To successfully respond to the questions, candidates must integrate knowledge from various courses to show they are able to synthesize content to explain, analyze, and evaluate educational issues.

Candidates will receive a copy of draft rubrics for the qualifying exam questions. Doctor or Education graduates are expected to be knowledgeable of the major research, theorists and theories in their fields of study; therefore, included in the expectations for successful performance on qualifying exam essays are candidates’ ability to cite theories, specific theorists, researchers, and research content, although specific references to documents, journals, or books are not required.

Since Doctoral students are expected to have a good grasp of the knowledge base, no outside resources will be permitted during the examination period. A study guide of topics from your courses in each area will be provided.

You will have two hours to answer each question. The exam room will be computer lab and you will type your responses. If you have a disability that affects your ability to type, you must contact the Office of Adaptive Services and discuss accommodations that may be arranged.

Qualifying exams will be given on Saturdays as this day of the week is typically most convenient for everyone and does not interfere with possible class obligations during the week.

Each response will be scored separately by two faculty members. They will then meet to discuss any discrepancies in scoring. If they cannot agree on whether or not the response is satisfactory at least one additional faculty member will be asked to participate in the scoring. Candidates must pass all questions to be admitted to final candidacy and permitted to take dissertation credits. Candidates will be provided specific feedback if they fail a question. A candidate who fails a question will have a one additional opportunity to respond to a second question which may or may not contain similarities to the first question.

If the candidate fails the second administration of any question, he or she can be dismissed from the program at that time at the discretion of the Post Master’s Admissions and Policy
Committee (PMAPC). If the candidate does not yet have an Educational Specialist (EdS) degree, he or she may apply to obtain the EdS degree. At the discretion of the PMAPC, candidates who fail a second administration of a question may be offered one opportunity to take additional coursework and then have a third administration of the qualifying exam question or questions that were failed. This would be the last opportunity to pass the qualifying examination.

There is no guarantee that a candidate will be successful in passing the qualifying exams and no guarantee a candidate will be permitted to develop a dissertation prospectus, proposal and then complete dissertation credits.

Approved: April 2013

Post Master’s Admissions and Policy Committee