

**Qualifying Examination Procedures**

For

**Ph.D. Students**

in

**Learning Technologies**

# **Qualifying Exam Guidelines for Doctoral Students in Learning Technologies @ The University of Texas at Austin**

To be admitted as Ph.D. candidates, students will be examined by the faculty in their program area through both a written examination followed by an oral defense of the written examination.

## **Qualifying Examination Committee Constituency**

The Exam Examination Committee will consist of a chairperson and a minimum of two other faculty members for a total of three-member committee:

- The chair or one of two co-chairs must be from LT.
- One member must be from outside C&I department.

It is recommended the Constituency of the Examination Committee remain the same as student's Dissertation Committee, but it is not required.

## **Description of the Examination Components**

Written Examination is a one-week (7 days) take-home written. International students will have two more business days to edit for English grammar/usage. There will be four exam questions, one from each committee member. The Chair will solicit questions from the committee. Each of the three committee members will prepare one question, addressing student's coursework and student's dissertation interest. It is the chair's responsibility to ensure the exam questions cover a broad range and minimize any overlap. The 4<sup>th</sup> question will be student's tentative dissertation proposal (Rationale, research questions, and tentative design methodology). Student can still change the research idea/design after the examination.

Because this is a take-home examination, students should use APA format for your responses, with full citations and reference lists, and polished writing – akin to a formal writing submission for class or a journal. There are no length restrictions; some questions may require lengthier responses – it is your decision how to answer and to what length for each question, but we expect responses to reflect the expertise you've developed within your years in the LT program, the preparation you have done for the examination, and the focused week of writing time allotted for the examination.

You may use all resources available to you, including but not limited to books, journal articles, word processing, bibliography software etc.

You are to uphold the **University of Texas Code of Academic Integrity**, noted below, with the most important aspects being: (a) citing sources, (b) completing your examination independently with no assistance in any part of it including but not limited to writing and editing, and (c) avoiding plagiarism. *For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to Chapter 11 of the Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities.* <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>

*Students who enrolled before Fall 2020 can still choose to do “old” timed way (a four-hour timed examination) if you prefer.*

Oral Examination is a two-hour exam conducted by the student’s Examination Committee in which the student elaborates or justifies responses on the written examination and demonstrates readiness to proceed with the dissertation. That is, the written examination and general coursework serve as the basis for the oral defense. The committee must also determine that the student is prepared to engage in dissertation research once he or she is advanced to candidacy.

### **Scheduling the Written Examination**

**Step 1:** When a student is ready to schedule his or her qualifying examination, he or she will secure agreement of a LT faculty to chair the Examination Committee and choose the other members of the Committee with the advice from the Chair.

**Step 2:** A student will schedule the Qualifying Examination on the basis of advice from the committee Chair. Both written and oral should be completed within one semester and are usually conducted during Fall or Spring semesters.

**Step 3:** When a student has secured agreement of three faculty members to serve on the Examination Committee, he or she will obtain from the department Graduate Coordinator the following two forms: 1) **Intent to Take C & I Doctoral Qualifying Exam**, and 2) **Program of Work form**. The **Intent** form lists the names of the Examination Committee members. The **Program of Work** form, which follows LT program guidelines, is to be completed and typed. Both the **Intent** form and the **Program of Work** form should be reviewed by the LT Program Advisor and then returned to the department Graduate Coordinator in the C&I office no later than three weeks before the written is to be taken.

**Step 4:** The department Graduate Coordinator will then circulate to members of the Qualifying Examination Committee a copy of the student’s **Program of Work**. The committee chair will prepare and gather all the examination questions and deliver a copy to the department Graduate Coordinator at least three days before the examination scheduled.

**Step 5:** The student will decide date, with supervisor's guidance, when the exam will begin and inform the department Graduate Coordinator. The student will receive the questions from the department Graduate Coordinator.

**Step 6:** After completing the written part, the student will turn in the responses to the department Graduate Coordinator who will email the questions and responses to the committee as well as to the student.

### **Scheduling the Oral Defense**

For the Oral exam, the student must schedule a two-hour block of time on a date agreeable to all members of the Committee. When the date and time are firm, notify the C&I Graduate Coordinator who will send a written notice of date, time, and place to each committee member and to the student.

The Oral exam is scheduled a minimum of two weeks after the written has taken to allow the committee time to review the written responses. Students are advised to work backward from the Oral date to allow enough time (usually about four weeks) for the entire exam process.

### **Evaluating the Qualifying Examinations**

The entire written examination is read and evaluated by the Examination Committee. The committee will assess (a) the degree to which the student has written a comprehensive and scholarly response to the posed questions, (b) recognizes key issues, researchers, and theorists within the LT fields as related to the questions, and (c) has appropriated and extended ideas from the field toward their own scholarly focus. At the close of the Oral, the student will be told whether he or she passes, passes with conditions, or fails the exam.

A decision to pass the student means the student will advance to candidacy. A decision to pass with conditions means the student will be allowed to advance to candidacy as soon as specified conditions are met. The imposition of these conditions is intended to help the student strengthen areas that are of concern to the faculty (e.g. additional research coursework, additional involvement in research projects, additional courses in content areas). The Examination Committee chair is usually responsible for monitoring the student's work on the conditions set.

A decision to fail will carry the recommendation that the student be dropped from the program or that the student retake one or all parts of the Examination. In the case of a recommendation to retake the exam, the student will be given specific suggestions. One retake is permitted according to Graduate Studies Committee policy. In the case of a recommendation for dropping from the program, the student's program will be terminated with the Graduate School.

When the student is recommended for advancement to candidacy, the student's program is submitted to the C&I faculty for review. The program of work cannot include courses with

incompletes. The C&I Graduate Coordinator will then formally notify the student of the results and guide the preparation and submission of candidacy papers.

### **Dissertation**

Once the student is advanced to candidacy, s/he will proceed to form the dissertation committee. The Dissertation Committee, requiring a minimum four members, for LT students will consist of a chairperson and three other faculty members:

- The chair or one of two co-chairs must be from LT.
- At least three members of the committee must be from the C&I/STEM department.
- One member of the committee must be from another department (not CI or STEM).