2018-2019 Graduate Council
Meeting Agenda: May 1, 2019 | 3:30 p.m.–5:00 p.m. | 102 Kern Graduate Building

1. Minutes of the April 10, 2019 Meeting (2 minutes)
2. Communications to Graduate Council (1 minute)
3. Announcements/Remarks by the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School - Regina Vasilatos-Younken (9 minutes)
4. Reports of Standing Committees of Graduate Council (70 minutes)
   a) Committee on Committees and Procedures – Siela Maximova, Chair (15 minutes)
      1. Election of new members for the 2019-20 Committee on Committees and Procedures (online balloting prior to the meeting)
      2. VOTE – Revisions to Graduate Council Articles of Authority (Appendix A)
   b) Committee on Academic Standards – Douglas Stairs, Chair (30 minutes)
      1. VOTE – Revisions to GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs (Appendix B), GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination – Research Doctorate (Appendix C)
      2. INFORMATION – GCAC-604 FAQs (Appendix D)
   c) Committee on Programs and Courses – Andy Cole, Chair (5 minutes)
   d) Committee on Fellowships and Awards – David Atwill, Chair (5 minutes)
   e) Committee on Graduate Research – Siela Maximova, Chair (5 minutes)
   f) Committee on Graduate Student and Faculty Issues – Amy Allen, Chair (5 minutes)
   g) Subcommittee on Graduate Exhibition – Elizabeth Hughes, Chair (5 minutes)
5. Special Reports (5 minutes)
   a) Graduate and Professional Student Association (5 minutes)
6. Unfinished Business (1 minute)
7. Comments and Recommendations for the Good of the Graduate Community (1 minute)
8. New Business (1 minute)
Graduate Council met on Wednesday, April 10, 2019 at 3:30 p.m. in 102 Kern Graduate Building. Dr. Regina Vasilatos-Younken, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School, chaired the meeting. The minutes of the March 13, 2019 meeting were approved.

Communications to Graduate Council
None.

Announcements/Remarks by the Chair – Regina Vasilatos-Younken, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Siela Maximova, who was recently one of two recipients, along with Dr. Mark Guiltinan, of the 2019 W. LaMarr Kopp International Achievement Award. Named for the late deputy vice president for international programs, this award recognizes faculty and staff members who have contributed significantly to the advancement of the international mission of the University.

Reports of Standing Committees of Graduate Council

Committee on Committees and Procedures
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Elizabeth Hughes on behalf of Dr. Siela Maximova, Chair of the Committee on Committees and Procedures.

Dr. Hughes presented the proposed revisions to the Bylaws and Standing Rules of Graduate Council and moved to approve the revisions. Dr. Hughes clarified that according to the proposed revisions, nominations for chair would begin immediately, the election of the chair would take place in May, and the chair’s term would begin at the start of the fall semester. The motion was adopted.

Dr. Vicki Hewitt announced that a vote could not be held on the revisions to the Articles of Authority that were presented at last meeting due to the stipulation in Article VI that requires a vote on amending the Articles be held no less than thirty and no more than sixty days after the preliminary presentation. Since only twenty-eight days had passed since the March meeting, the vote will be scheduled for the May Graduate Council meeting.

Committee on Academic Standards
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Doug Stairs, Chair of the Committee on Academic Standards.

Dr. Stairs reported that the committee met earlier in the day and discussed feedback received on policy GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination. The discussion focused on the requirements for the Qualifying Examination in dual-title degree programs. Under current policies GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs and GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination, students must enter a dual-title program prior to taking the Qualifying Examination, as students must take a single exam that integrates the graduate major and dual-title fields and has representation from both programs’ faculty. The committee heard from guests representing two dual-title programs about complications they have experienced due to these requirements. The committee amended the proposed revisions to GCAC-604 to add allowances providing more flexibility for dual-title programs. Although the ideal situation is still a single integrated Qualifying Examination, the amendment allows dual-title programs to either examine dual-title students
for their potential to conduct doctoral research in the dual-title field at a later time or accept the results of the Qualifying Examination in the graduate major program. In all cases, the requirements for the Qualifying Examination must be defined in the graduate major program’s proposal to adopt the dual-title and must be stated in the student handbook. Dr. Stairs also presented proposed revisions to GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs that would align that policy with these proposed amendments to GCAC-604.

Dr. Stairs reported that most other feedback focused on the non-mandatory Best Practices/Responsibilities/Guidelines section of the draft. The committee removed the term “best practices” from the section title and distilled the points in this section down to two principles: Qualifying Examinations must be administered fairly to all students, and conflicts of interest in administering the Qualifying Examination must be avoided or effectively managed. Some examples were provided illustrating these principles, but Dr. Stairs clarified that these examples are not intended to be an exhaustive list. The committee will make some additional minor edits and distribute the final revised draft to Council before the May meeting. A vote on the revisions was postponed until the May meeting.

Committee on Programs and Courses
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Andy Cole, Chair of the Committee on Programs and Courses.

Dr. Cole presented the April 3, 2019 Graduate Council Curriculum Report, which was included in the materials for this meeting and is available to the public on the Graduate School’s website.

Committee on Fellowships and Awards
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. David Atwill, Chair of the Committee on Fellowships and Awards.

Dr. Atwill reported that the Graduate Awards Luncheon will be held on April 11, 2019. The committee is wrapping up its work but will be evaluating and making recommendations on the process for next year.

Committee on Graduate Research
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Siela Maximova, Chair of the Committee on Graduate Research.

Dr. Maximova reported that the committee has not met since the last Council meeting. The next meeting will be held on April 23. The committee has been discussing the Graduate School exit survey and drafted a summary of the exit survey results as an informational report to the University Faculty Senate. Dr. Vasilatos-Younken announced that the university-wide results of the exit survey will soon be available on the Graduate School’s website. Dr. Maximova will be presenting on the barriers to sustainability for intercollege graduate degree programs as an advisory report to the University Faculty Senate at its next meeting.

Committee on Graduate Student and Faculty Issues
Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Amy Allen, Chair of the Committee on Graduate Student and Faculty Issues.

Dr. Allen reported the committee met earlier that day to continue discussion on the proposed survey that would be sent to former graduate students who have voluntarily left the University prior to completing their degree. The committee also met with Mr. James Caltagirone, Director of Alumni and External Relations for the Graduate School, about the interest of the Graduate School Alumni Board in finding ways to support professional development of graduate students and increase graduate student
and alumni participation in LionLink. LionLink is a professional networking program connecting Penn State students and alumni, which has primarily been geared towards undergraduates in the past.

Subcommittee on Graduate Exhibition

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken thanked everyone involved with the recent Graduate Exhibition and particularly Dr. Elizabeth Hughes, who was instrumental in the success of the event. Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Elizabeth Hughes, Chair of the Graduate School’s Graduate Exhibition Committee.

Dr. Hughes reported that the annual Graduate Exhibition took place March 22-24 with performances, visual arts, posters, and the new design category. The design category was very popular, and the committee hopes students from varied disciplines will use it as an opportunity to showcase their design work. Student registration and no-show trends have remained fairly consistent over the past few years. However, there has been a downward trend in judge registration, resulting in low registration and a very unfortunate no-show rate of 33%. The committee plans to survey individuals who registered but did not show up to judge in an attempt to propose changes for future years. Dr. Vasilatos-Younken clarified that Graduate Exhibition judging uses a precise methodology that is predicated on a certain number of judges per student and cross-over in the students evaluated by specific judges to validate the regression model. When registered judges do not participate, the judges at the event must take on extra assignments, undermining the validity of the statistical model used for determining the award winners.

Special Reports

Graduate and Professional Student Association

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Claire Kelling of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA).

Ms. Kelling reported that GPSA concluded its annual elections. Mr. Alexander Wilson-Heid will be returning as a member of Council next year, and the other GPSA representatives will conclude their service at the end of their current terms. The current representatives have met with the new representatives who are excited to get involved in Council next year. GPSA also announced their annual awards, including the award for delegate of the year, and provided input on the climate study coming out next year. Ms. Kelling also reported feedback on policy GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination. GPSA expressed concern that there were no specific details or time limit laid out for reporting the outcome of the Qualifying Examination to the student and recommended including this in the final version.

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken congratulated Ms. Kelling on her election as President of GPSA for 2019-20.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

None.

Comments and Recommendations for the Good of the Graduate Community

Dr. Vasilatos-Younken recognized Dr. Kevin Luhman, who had requested to speak before Council. Dr. Luhman expressed concern about the restructuring of what he referred to as Bunton-Waller Fellowships
by reducing funding from two years to one and expressed that he believed this would make it more difficult for faculty in his college to recruit students. Dr. Luhman stated that in the Eberly College of Science, the new structure would give students only one year without specific duties while they currently have two years without those duties. He also expressed that Graduate Council should have oversight of graduate fellowships and funding for graduate education. Dr. Vasilatos-Younken clarified that the Bunton-Waller awards were and have always been assistantships funded by the Graduate School, that funding was not being reduced in any way such that the same dollars were being allocated to the colleges, but that the new model for a Ph.D. student guaranteed support for five years (the previous model only provided for four) at higher stipend levels than the prior model, so in fact would be more attractive to competitive students and better support students once in their graduate programs. She also clarified that the Graduate School’s budgets and funding initiatives are not under the purview of Graduate Council. Importantly, the old model, which had been in place for over two decades, had not significantly increased the number of diverse graduate students in the resident population over that time. Dr. Vasilatos-Younken explained that currently, many programs do not offer competitive stipends and/or do not support their students to their full time-to-degree, even when students are making good academic progress. At the inception of the program, the multi-cultural leaders in the colleges had emphasized the need for the award to be an assistantship to better assure that students are engaged with faculty and peers in their cohort, with assistantships activities typically related to instruction or research. Colleges may implement this program in a variety of different ways, including allowing award recipients on research assistantships to rotate among different faculty research programs to experience different areas of research focus, methodologies and, in the case of laboratory-based fields, laboratory “cultures.” Because how the new model can best be utilized in each college is college-specific, the Graduate School has been meeting with each college individually to discuss how best to implement the new Bunton-Waller model in their respective college. The meeting with the Eberly College of Science has been scheduled in late April at the college’s request, so has not yet taken place.

Next meeting:
Wednesday, May 1, 2019 at 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., 102 Kern Graduate Building
Changes in **red** are proposed as a result of the change to Faculty Senate requirements. Changes in **blue** are additional suggested revisions.

**Articles of Authority**

**PREAMBLE**

Graduate education and graduate research are among the foremost functions of The Pennsylvania State University. They constitute a dominant force in maintaining the vitality of scholarly inquiry and intellectual achievement in the University community. The accomplishments of graduate research and education are a major contribution of the University to the Commonwealth, the nation, and the world.

As delegated by the University Faculty Senate (Senate Bylaws, Article VII, Section 2), ultimate responsibility for all matters pertaining to graduate education and graduate research rests with the Graduate Faculty. To provide for governance by that faculty and to facilitate the creation and maintenance of graduate education and graduate research programs of high quality and accomplishment, these Articles are hereby established.

**DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**

The faculty of the Graduate School, as represented by the Graduate Council, is delegated authority by the University Faculty Senate for the interests of the Graduate School except in those matters that have University-wide implications; it shall administer its own affairs subject to review by the University Faculty Senate.

The review process shall include a report of actions of the Graduate Council to the Senate through the Senate Council.

1. On special motion of the Senate Council, any of those actions may be placed on the agenda of the Senate for appropriate action.

2. The Senate Council will provide for liaison with the Graduate Council.

3. The Dean of the Graduate School shall present an annual report to the University Faculty Senate.

**ARTICLE I**

The Graduate Faculty of The Pennsylvania State University shall consist of its present Members and such members of the University community as hereafter shall be designated, on the basis of their academic credentials, scholarly achievements, and abilities in graduate education and research, to be Members.

**ARTICLE II**
The Graduate Faculty shall be responsible, through its governing body, for the creation and maintenance of all graduate programs in the University and for all matters pertaining to graduate education and graduate research.

**ARTICLE III**

The authority of the Graduate Faculty shall be vested in a Council of Graduate Faculty (the Graduate Council, or Council). The members of the Council shall be elected from membership of the Graduate Faculty and from the membership of an officially sanctioned graduate student organization as provided for in the Bylaws of the Graduate Council.

**ARTICLE IV**

The Graduate Council shall:

1. Establish criteria and procedures for election to membership in the Graduate Faculty.
2. Establish bylaws governing the election of Council members, the organization of the Council, the frequency of its meetings, the procedural rules that will govern its proceedings, and a procedure for Graduate Faculty review of Council actions.
3. Establish general policies and procedures pertaining to graduate programs and graduate research within the University.
4. Strive to improve and enhance the quality of graduate education and graduate research.
5. Promote the general welfare of the graduate students and faculty.
6. Foster and sustain the intellectual climate of the University.

**ARTICLE V**

The Office of the Dean of the Graduate School shall have the responsibility for implementing the policies and actions of the Council and the Graduate Faculty and for administering the Graduate School so that it is effective in implementing and responding to those policies.

**ARTICLE VI**

These articles shall be subject to amendment in the following manner:

1. A preliminary presentation and discussion of the proposed amendment will be made at a meeting of the Graduate Council.
2. At a second regular or special meeting of the Council, to be held no less than thirty and no more than sixty days after the preliminary presentation, the proposed amendment will be discussed and approved by a majority of Council members present and voting.

Commented [HV4]: This prevents abstentions from counting towards determining the majority needed to pass the vote. Revision suggested by the Graduate School.
3. The amendment shall be approved by two-thirds of all Graduate Faculty members voting in a mail ballot sent to all members of the Graduate Faculty.

4. Following approval, the amended Articles of Authority will be submitted by the Chair to the University Faculty Senate for ratification.\[Commented [HV5]: Revision suggested by the Faculty Senate.\]
GCAC-208 Dual-Title Graduate Degree Programs

Purpose: This policy describes underlying goal of and the process by which graduate students may apply and be admitted to a dual-title graduate degree program.

Academic Goal: The academic goal of this policy is to define the features of a dual-title graduate degree program.

Scope: This policy applies to all graduate programs and graduate students.

Background

A dual-title graduate degree program is a fully integrated program of study that begins with defining a research problem or culminating experience, as appropriate to the degree, that integrates both the graduate major and dual-title fields early in the program. A dual-title graduate degree program includes the addition of valuable coursework not currently prescribed in an existing graduate degree program (in distinction to an option or a minor. In the case of doctoral students, a dual-title degree program permits the examination of the students’ ability to conduct research in both fields at the first doctoral benchmark: the qualifying examination.

Policy Statement

1. A graduate dual-title degree is a fully integrated program of study that allows students to define a research problem that combines both the graduate major and dual-title fields.
2. A dual-title graduate degree program must require a minimum of 15 credits for a dual-title doctoral program and 6 credits for a dual-title master’s program.
3. The dual-title area of study cannot exist as a separate (stand-alone) graduate degree program at Penn State. The student's diploma will carry the name of both the graduate major and the dual-title offering. Students may complete only one dual-title in addition to a graduate major program of study within a single degree program.
4. Students must apply and may be admitted to an existing dual-title graduate degree program only after being enrolled in an existing graduate program, and, in the case of doctoral students, prior to having taken the qualifying examination in the graduate major program.
   a. Doctoral students who have already taken their qualifying examination in a graduate major program generally are not eligible for admission to a dual-title graduate degree program; should enroll in a dual-title graduate degree program early in their training, and no later than the end of the fourth semester (not counting summer semesters) of entry into the graduate major program.
   b. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should students be encouraged to take coursework related to or recruited for admission to a dual-title graduate degree program that has not yet been approved by Graduate Council and adopted by the student’s graduate major program by means of a program change proposal submitted to and approved through the Graduate Council curricular review process.
Process

In order for a dual-title graduate degree program to be established, an existing graduate program must have previously agreed to the desirability of adding such a course of study, and will have detailed in writing the rationale and requirements of this course of study via a graduate program change proposal submitted centrally. Graduate Council must approve any newly constituted dual-title graduate degree program and the addition of the dual-title offering to each graduate program that wishes to offer it.

The new dual-title area of study must be described in a new graduate program proposal, outlining the nature of the dual-title degree, including the array of courses typically taken; expectations for participation by dual-title students (for example, dual-title students may be expected to regularly attend weekly seminars scheduled by the dual-title area of study); and detailing other structural and practical requirements of a dual-title degree. Proposals for new dual-title graduate degree programs also must address the rationale for the creation of the dual-title degree. The proposal must show the advantages to be conferred by the dual-title graduate degree beyond those in existing alternative paths (e.g., graduate minors). A proposal might address such issues as the existence of current and sufficient demand by graduate students for such a program, and the enhanced employment opportunities for dual-title degree graduates. Graduate programs seeking to add (adopt) a new dual-title graduate degree program similarly must show the advantages to be conferred. Proposals for new dual-title graduate degree programs must be accompanied by at least one graduate program change proposal by a graduate major program to adopt the dual-title degree.

Graduate programs participating in a dual-title degree must develop sections in their graduate student handbooks that outline the nature of the dual-title degree; stipulate the array of courses typically taken; and detail other structural and practical requirements of a dual-title degree.

A graduate program wishing to adopt an existing dual-title program must submit a program change proposal to adopt the dual-title degree as described above, and must describe in its graduate student handbook the dual-title offering requirements. The various formal requirements for achieving a dual-title degree should be stated in the graduate program’s student handbook, and care be taken to outline how satisfying these requirements can be rationally connected with satisfying the requirements in the graduate program.

Typically, a provision is made whereby a dual-title degree student at the master's level is relieved of some of the requirements of the graduate degree program, so that a different and substituted set of courses can be pursued. Any such course substitutions must be specified in the graduate program’s student handbook. Since Graduate Council does not specify a minimum number of credits for a doctoral degree program, programs must include language in the proposal and in the student handbook that specifies any courses from the dual-title area of study that are approved as substitutions in the graduate program for post-master's students.

A dual-title doctoral degree student (like single-title doctoral degree students) will take a qualifying examination that is administered by the graduate major program, but that also examines the student’s suitability for doctoral research in the dual-title field. Because students
must first be admitted to a graduate major program of study before they may apply to and be considered for admission into a dual-title graduate degree program, dual-title graduate degree students may require an additional semester to fulfill requirements for both areas of study and, therefore, the qualifying examination may be delayed one semester beyond the normal period allowable. The normal period requires that “the examination may be given after at least 18 credits have been earned in graduate courses beyond the baccalaureate and must be taken within three semesters (summer sessions do not count) of entry into the doctoral program.”

A dual-title graduate degree student's qualifying examination committee will be composed of faculty from the graduate program, as well as at least one faculty member from the dual-title area of study. In cases of programs with many overlapping interests, the designated dual-title faculty member may be appointed in the student's graduate program, but he or she also may hold a formal appointment with the dual-title area of study. Typically, the dual-title member will participate in constructing and grading qualifying examination questions in the dual-title area of study.

The dual-title representative on the Ph.D. Committee will participate in constructing and grading comprehensive examination questions that cover the dual-title area of study as part of a unified comprehensive examination with the major program administered to the student.

Revision History

Approved by Graduate Council Nov. 20, 2002
Revised by Graduate Council, May 13, 2009
Revised by Graduate Council, Sept. 17, 2014
QUALIFYING EXAMINATION - RESEARCH DOCTORATE

Contents:
- Purpose
- Academic Goal
- Scope
- Background
- Definitions
- Policy Statement
- Process
- Responsibilities/Guidelines/Best Practices
- Forms
- Further Information
- Cross References/Other Policies

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this policy is to establish the content, form, scheduling, and reporting requirements for the Qualifying Examination.

ACADEMIC GOAL:
The academic goal of the Qualifying Examination is to assess early in the student’s program whether the student is capable of conducting doctoral-level research based on evidence of critical thinking and other skills that the Graduate Faculty of the program view as necessary to a successful researcher in the disciplinary field.

SCOPE:
This policy applies to all students enrolled in programs of study leading to the Ph.D.

BACKGROUND:
Graduate education leading to an advanced research degree (M.A., M.S., or Ph.D.) is fundamentally different from undergraduate education in form and content. Graduate work on an advanced research degree is often solitary and in close collaboration with one or a few faculty members or other research personnel. Research doctorate education in particular is focused on research methodologies and is uniform across disciplines in its characteristics, including but not limited to being hypothesis-driven, and evidence-based, and results in the creation of new knowledge. To ensure adequate progress toward the Ph.D., there are a set of formal assessments at various times in the student’s program; at Penn State the first of these is referred to as the Qualifying Examination.
Policy GCAC-604
Policy Steward:

DEFINITIONS:

Academic Adviser: A Graduate Faculty member assigned to an individual student who provides individualized advice that promotes intellectual discovery and helps guide the student to meet the student’s goals through the successful completion of the degree program.

Dissertation Adviser: Graduate Faculty member principally responsible for day-to-day guidance of the student’s dissertation research and academic and professional development.

Qualifying Examination Committee: A committee drawn from the Graduate Faculty members of the student’s Ph.D. program faculty charged by the Graduate Program head to administer the Qualifying Examination.

POLICY STATEMENT:

1. The primary purpose of the Qualifying Examination is to provide an early assessment of whether the student has the potential to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes the program has defined in its formal Learning Objectives, including evidence of critical thinking skills, necessary for a successful researcher in the disciplinary field.
   a. The Qualifying Examination is conducted early in a student’s program to ensure that the considerable investment of time, resources, and effort required by the student has a high likelihood of leading to completion of the Ph.D.
   b. Additionally, the Qualifying Examination may assess if the student is well grounded in the fundamental knowledge of the discipline.

2. Scheduling:
   a. It is the responsibility of the major Graduate Program Head to ensure that the Qualifying Examination is scheduled within the required time limits as defined below.
   b. All students must take the Qualifying Examination within three semesters (not counting the summer semester) of entry into the doctoral program.
      i. Students who have been identified as master’s-along-the-way upon admission into the graduate program may be allowed an extension such that the three semester time limit will begin upon completion of the master’s degree.
      ii. Students pursuing dual-title degrees must take the Qualifying Examination within four semesters (not counting the summer semester) of entry into the doctoral program.
   c. To be eligible to take the Qualifying Examination the student must have:
      i. Earned at least 18 credits in courses eligible to be counted toward the graduate degree (these may be graduate credits earned previously at other recognized institutions from which transfer credits would be accepted).
      ii. A grade-point average of 3.00 or greater for work done at the University while a graduate student.
      iii. No incomplete or deferred grades.

3. Content:

1 The additional time allowed for dual-title degree students is in recognition of the additional requirements they may need to fulfill.
**Policy GCAC-604**

**Policy Steward:**

a. The student’s major program must establish guidelines for the Qualifying Examination that are uniformly applied to all students. These guidelines and evaluation criteria must be presented in the graduate program’s handbook, which must be provided to the student upon matriculation. These guidelines must include:
   i. The timing and the format of the examination
   ii. Clear criteria for evaluation.
   iii. The program’s policy describing the student’s options in case of failure. The policy must include:
      1) If retaking the examination after failure is allowed.
      2) If retaking the examination after failure is permitted whether there is a limit to the number of attempts.
      3) If students who have failed the final attempt will be dismissed from the program or may be allowed to change to the master’s degree.

b. If the student is also enrolled in a dual-title graduate degree program,
   i. the Qualifying Examination requirement shall be satisfied by one of the following:
      1) Ideally, a single Qualifying Examination that incorporates content from both the graduate major program and the dual-title program. The Qualifying Examination Committee must include at least one member of the Graduate Faculty from the dual-title program.
         a) In cases where the timing of the Qualifying Examination in the major area precludes the inclusion of the dual-title area, the dual-title program may choose to examine proficiency in the dual-title area at a later time, but no later than the end of the fourth semester (not counting summer semesters) of entry into the major doctoral program.
      2) Dual-title programs may choose to allow the Qualifying Examination in the major area alone to satisfy the requirements for the dual-title program.
   ii. The means of establishing proficiency in the dual-title area must be defined in the major program proposal adopting the dual-title degree and must be included in the student handbook for each dual-title program.

4. Format of Exam:
   a. Each graduate program will determine the composition of its Qualifying Examination Committee. All members of the Qualifying Examination Committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty drawn from the faculty of the program.
   b. The graduate program administering the Qualifying Examination may choose one of the following general formats with the specific details being left to the discretion of the program. The exam can be:
      i. a written, oral, or written and oral assessment of a student’s ability to conduct doctoral-level research as determined by the graduate program; or
      ii. an assessment of a thesis submitted in fulfillment of a research master’s degree in the major or a related program.

5. Outcome: At the conclusion of the evaluation, students must be informed of the results in writing. In cases when the Qualifying Examination is not passed, the student must also be notified whether a re-examination is offered or if the student will be terminated from the Ph.D. program. If the student will be terminated from the Ph.D. program, they must also be informed if they will be allowed to change to the master’s degree.
Policy GCAC-604
Policy Steward:

6. Reporting: The same results of all Qualifying Examinations, regardless of the outcome, must be reported to both the student and Graduate Enrollment Services as soon as possible but no later than 30 days following the examination; this includes both the initial examination, and any subsequent retakes.
   a. The report will include any identified deficiencies as well as any remedial steps the committee recommends or requires the student to undertake. Unresolved deficiencies from other assessments (e.g., English Competence, see GCAC-605) should be included.
   b. Following the examination, the Qualifying Examination Committee should also share any recommendations for further study or preparation with the student’s Academic or Dissertation advisor and Dissertation Committee (when formed).
   c. While it is common and helpful for a student and the student’s Dissertation Committee to use the information gathered to further guide the student’s program, such discussions are not part of the examination itself.

PROCESS:

RESPONSIBILITIES/GUIDELINES:

The program is responsible for ensuring that:

1. **Qualifying Examinations are administered fairly to all students.**
   
   Examples (not an exhaustive list):
   
   a. Smaller programs may use the same Qualifying Examination Committee for all eligible students.
   
   b. Larger programs or programs with distinct subdisciplines may use multiple committees, but will undertake measures to ensure that the evaluation criteria are equally applied across all examinations; a description of such measures will be included in the program’s handbook (e.g., the evaluation criteria will be listed in the handbook).

2. **Conflicts of interest in administering the Qualifying Examination must be avoided or effectively managed.**
   
   Examples (not an exhaustive list):
   
   a. For students whose dissertation adviser has already been identified at the time of the Qualifying Examination, the adviser may participate in the examination (if oral) or review the examination (if written) but not be the sole participant in the formal assessment.
   
   b. Graduate programs will undertake measures to ensure that conflicts of interest are managed; a description of such management measures will be included in the program’s handbook.
Policy GCAC-604
Policy Steward:

FORMS:

FURTHER INFORMATION:

CROSS REFERENCES / OTHER POLICIES:

GCAC-601 Residency Requirement – Research Doctorate
GCAC-602 Doctoral Dissertation Committee Formation, Composition, and Review – Research Doctorate
GCAC-603 Doctoral Dissertation Committee Responsibilities – Research Doctorate
GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination – Research Doctorate
GCAC-605 English Competence – Research Doctorate
GCAC-606 Comprehensive Examination – Research Doctorate
GCAC-607 Dissertation – Research Doctorate
GCAC-608 Final Oral Examination – Research Doctorate
FAQs for GCAC-604 Qualifying Examination

What changes are being proposed and why?

Policy Statement 2.a.: Clarifies that the major Graduate Program Head is responsible for making sure that students in the program take the exam within the time limits required. The goal is to ensure that students complete the program in a timely fashion.

Policy Statement 2.b.: Adds a provision that students pursuing a master’s-along-the-way will be allowed an extension on the time limit for the Qualifying Examination. Some graduate programs admit students into the Ph.D. program, but prior to beginning doctoral work, students complete the requirements for a master’s degree (known as a “master’s-along-the-way”). Since those students are officially registered as Ph.D. students, they are held to the same requirement to take the Qualifying Examination within three semesters of entry into the doctoral program, even though they have not yet begun doctoral work. This provision would allow master’s-along-the-way students to reset the clock so the time limit for the Qualifying Examination begins after completion of the master’s degree.

Policy Statement 3.a.: Clarifies that guidelines for the Qualifying Examination must be established by the program for all students and must be included in the student handbook. The goal is to provide students will the information they need to successfully navigate the process, and to make sure that all students in the same program are held to the same standards and expectations.

Policy Statement 3.b.: Gives additional options for students in dual-title programs to complete the Qualifying Examination. Currently, students must enroll in a dual-title prior to taking the Qualifying Examination, which must be a single unified examination covering both the major graduate program and the dual-title program. This revision allows dual-title programs to examine proficiency separately at a later date, or to accept the results of the Qualifying Examination in the major field.

Policy Statement 4.b.: Clarifies the appropriate formats for the Qualifying Examination; however, the specific details of the examination are left up to the program.

Policy Statement 5: Clarifies that students must be informed of the results of the Qualifying Examination in writing, and of their options if they did not pass the examination. The goal is greater transparency for students on their progress and options.

Policy Statement 6, 6.a., 6.b., 6.c.: Clarifies that the same results of the Qualifying Examination must be reported to both the student and Graduate Enrollment Services no later than 30 days following the examination. Specifies what the report should include, and that recommendations for further study should be shared with the student’s adviser and Ph.D. committee. The goal is to encourage communication between the Qualifying Examination committee and the student’s adviser/Ph.D. Committee, so that required remedial steps and recommendations for further study can be followed up on and revisited as the student progresses in the program.

Responsibilities/Guidelines: This section states that it is the responsibility of the major program to ensure that the Qualifying Examination is administered fairly to all students and that any conflicts of interest in administering the Qualifying Examination are avoided or effectively managed, and gives some examples to illustrate these principles.
In defining the 18 credits necessary to be eligible to take the Qualifying Examination, what does “eligible to be counted towards the graduate degree” mean?

Courses eligible to be counted towards the graduate degree are 400-, 500-, 600-, and 800-level courses taken at Penn State, whether taken as:
- Penn State undergraduate students after having satisfied the credit requirement for their undergraduate degree;
- Penn State non-degree graduate students;
- Penn State degree-seeking graduate students.

In defining the 18 credits necessary to be eligible to take the Qualifying Examination, what does “graduate credits earned previously at other recognized institutions from which transfer credits would be accepted” mean?

See GCAC-309 Transfer Credit, Policy Statement #2: Transfer of Credit from an External Institution.

Note that for purposes of this policy, those external credits do not need to be transferred to Penn State, they simply must be eligible for transfer.