GGAM Qualifying Exam Guidelines

As expressed by the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Doctoral Qualifying Examination is not only a major benchmark in the student's career, but a point at which the faculty must reflect with wisdom on the student's general qualifications for a respected position as an educator or leader as well as the student's preparation in a special area of study. The intended outcome of this examination is a unanimous decision by the committee based on:

- Relevant portions of the student's previous academic record;
- Performance on specific parts of the examination; and
- Overall evaluation of the student's performance and potential for scholarly research as indicated during the examination.

GGAM Guideline for Qualifying Exam committees

As part of the qualifying exam proposal, students prepare a detailed syllabus of coursework material. GGAMEXEC reviews the proposal and approves it if it satisfies a breadth and depth requirement. It is very important that the coursework is actually tested in the exam; see the rationale below.

The following is a recommended breakdown of a qualifying exam; the actual time for each portion of the exam is left to the discretion of the chair.

- 90 minutes research talk and discussion regarding research
- 10 minutes break
- 60 minutes questions on the syllabus
- 10 minutes deliberation

The candidate should aim for a 40 minutes research presentation, which leaves up to 50 minutes for discussion. Often it is the case that questions are asked during the research presentation. The chair should attempt to keep track of the time spent during the research talk to ensure that enough time for discussion is spent during the 90 minutes allocated.

Rationale:

It is very important that a thorough examination of coursework is included in the exam, no matter how strong or weak a candidate’s performance in the research component. Our strongest students study very hard for the qualifying exam and may be disappointed if no (or too few or too shallow) coursework questions are asked. Our weakest students will be motivated by a consistently thorough coursework examination to study harder for the qualifying exam. Studying for the qualifying exam will counter the oft-observed phenomenon that the material of a course is forgotten quickly after the finals have been written. Also, knowing the tools and methods of a broader field of study reduces the risk of getting stuck in a particular research direction.

A break between the research and coursework portions of the examination is strongly suggested. It serves as an opportunity for the candidates to refresh themselves, and then focus on the coursework examination. At the same time, it serves as a reminder to the committee that satisfactory performance in the research and coursework portions are two separate necessary conditions for passing the exam.