

**PhD in Applied Science
Doctoral Qualifying Examination (APSC 7603)**

Information for Students & Faculty

- The student must complete the 7603 Evaluation form ([PhD_7603_Form_2026-27](#)) and send an electronic copy to the Examination Chair in advance.

Overview

- PhD students should complete the Qualifying Examination by the end of their fifth semester in the program.
- The Qualifying Examination is to be presided over by an Examination Chair. The Chair should be a faculty member who has not previously been involved in the student's research. **It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to find a faculty member who is willing to chair the student's Qualifying Examination.**
- In exceptional circumstances, the Supervisory Committee may believe that it is necessary to add an additional examiner to ensure proper expertise on the committee. Such an addition can be done, however, it is generally expected that such considerations are made upon establishing the Supervisory Committee.
- The Qualifying Exam consists of two elements:
 1. a written critical review,
 2. an oral examination.
- Both elements of the Qualifying Examination are assessed by the Supervisory Committee.

Exam Expectations

- During the Qualifying Exam period, the Supervisor and Supervisory Committee will have minimal involvement in assisting the student to prepare. Any assistance provided must be strictly basic advice on scientific writing and/or providing key references. The Supervisory Committee will also provide basic advice on structuring the written document upon receiving a draft outline (due within 30 days of the start of the Exam preparation process).
- During the Qualifying Exam period, it is expected that the student will dedicate the majority of their time into Exam preparation. However, it is also understood that research projects cannot be completely halted. Therefore, the student and Supervisor must discuss what degree of research activity must be maintained during this Qualifying Exam period. Disagreements can be further discussed with the Supervisory Committee.

Exam Preparation

- The student and Supervisory Committee will set an approximate date for the Qualifying Exam. This date will normally be at least 4 months in the future.
- Four months before the date of the Qualifying Exam, the Supervisory Committee will provide 3-5 subject areas that they believe the student must be proficient in to be considered a PhD candidate in their field. These topics may be different than the focus of the thesis and review.
- The student will engage in self-directed study of these subject areas in preparation for the Qualifying Exam.
- Simultaneously, the student will prepare either a critical review of their research topic or an introductory chapter for their PhD Dissertation. Should the Supervisory Committee deem it to be to the student's benefit, a written document other than a critical research review or introductory chapter can be assigned instead. It is expected that the basic scope and length guidelines will still apply.
- Within 30 days of starting the Exam preparation process, the student must provide a draft outline of their written document, including headings and subheadings for the topics they will discuss, to their Supervisory Committee for approval.
- The final written document is generally expected to be ca. 15-30 pages in length (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 point font) including figures and tables, but excluding references. Despite these length guidelines, it will remain at the discretion of the Supervisory Committee to decide if the length of the prepared document was adequate. **This review must be provided to the Supervisory Committee one week prior to the Qualifying Exam.**

Exam Process

- The Exam will occur on the date previously established.
- The Chair will introduce the student and the Supervisory Committee. The Chair will then explain the Qualifying Exam process.
- The Chair will open the examination question period. The question period will cover material from the written document and the self-study subject areas that were provided. The question period will consist of two rounds of questions, concluding with the Supervisor. Each round should be approximately 20 min per examiner (ca. 60 min/round, ca. 120 min total for a Committee of three individuals). Should the Supervisory Committee deem it necessary, a brief third round can be conducted. The question period should last no longer than 2.5 hours.
- At the end of the question period, the student will be asked to leave the room while the Supervisory Committee deliberates. The Examination Chair will guide the

discussion through the various evaluation components and complete Part II of this form.

- The Supervisory Committee will keep in mind the objectives of the Qualifying Examination, which are to determine if the student is a PhD candidate by
 - assessing the student's ability to synthesize information across fields,
 - assessing the student's knowledge of their research field,
 - assessing whether the student is ready to begin writing the dissertation
 - identifying any areas of weakness that must be addressed before the Doctoral Dissertation (APSC 7604).
- After deliberations have concluded, the student is invited back into the room to be informed of the exam outcome and receive feedback.
- It is the Supervisor's responsibility to ensure the final signed Evaluation Form is submitted to the APSC Program Manager for final approval.

Exam Outcomes

- It may take a student two attempts to pass the Qualifying Examination. Based on both the written document and the Question Period, the Supervisory Committee will confer one of the following outcomes:

1st Attempt:

Pass

The student is now considered a candidate for the PhD in Applied Science. A passing grade for APSC 7603 is recommended.

Fail

The Supervisory Committee will inform the student which exam components require revision and re-examination. Exam components for revision and re-examination must be documented in Part II of the attached form, which must be submitted to the Program Coordinator. Re-examination should occur within six weeks of the original oral exam.

2nd Attempt:

On re-examination, the Supervisory Committee's assessment must be documented using a new copy of the attached Evaluation Form.

Pass

The student is now considered a candidate for the PhD in Applied Science. A passing grade for APSC 7603 is recommended.

Fail

A second failure will cause the student to no longer be in Good Academic Standing under Graduate Academic Regulation 30. The student will be assigned a failing grade for APSC 7603 and withdrawn from the program.