



Department of Criminology Qualifying Procedures Associated with Revised Graduate Curriculum

Under the new graduate curriculum (that will be in the catalog and apply to all incoming students starting in the Fall of 2013), students will (1) complete two in-class qualifying exams and (2) complete an independent research project that results in a publishable manuscript. There is no prescribed order for the completion of the project/manuscript and the exams. The purpose of the two exams is to determine a student's knowledge of (a) theory, (b) research methods and data analysis, and (c) empirical literature, and to assess a student's (a) innovative, critical, and analytical thinking and (b) writing skills. Any student who sits for the new qualifying exams must also meet the project/manuscript requirement (details forthcoming).

Qualifying Exam Committee: All eligible tenured faculty members (except the graduate director and chair) will serve on the qualifying exam committee on a rotating basis (with 2-year staggered terms). The qualifying exam committee each semester will consist of three members who read both the theory and methods exams.

Eligibility for Exams: Students are eligible to take the exams once they have completed all coursework and have the approval of their Program Committee.¹ They must take at least two credit hours (e.g., CCJ 7910) the semester of exams. These count toward the non-classroom electives in the new (and old) curriculum.

Preparation for Exams: Student preparation will be more independent than in the past. CGSO is preparing a reading list. The graduate committee has produced sample questions.

Notification by Student to Graduate Director: A student must notify the Graduate Director by the Friday at the end of the second week of classes that s/he is taking a comprehensive/qualifying exam and indicate whether s/he will take the traditional (take home) or new (in class) exam. (An email will suffice for this notification.) Students may opt out of qualifying exams for the semester after this date and communication; they may not switch exams.

Scheduling, Exam Period: Students can take one or both exams (research methods and theory) during a semester. The exams will be spaced one week apart. Students will have up to eight hours to complete each exam. Students who accept an exam must complete it at that sitting or s/he will automatically receive a "fail" grade; that is, a student may not review the exam and decide not to sit. Students will take the exam in a single room with monitoring by the Graduate Director. (The Graduate Director can move a student to a separate location if s/he is disrupting the other students.) Students will not be allowed to bring in any resource materials; they can schedule their own breaks. Students may handwrite their exams; they will be typed by a staff person. The committee will receive both the typed and hand-written copy. Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with disabilities.

¹ This requirement is waived for Fall 2011, as students have not yet been assigned program committees. A student, however, should confer with his/her major professor before sitting for qualifying/comprehensive exams.

The new Theory exam will be held from 8 to 4 on the 4th Friday of the semester; the Methods exam will be held from 8 to 4 on the 5th Friday of the semester.

Exam Content: The exams will cover (1) theories of crime and (2) methods and data analysis. The two exams (theory and methods) will be graded independently, but together they constitute a qualifying exam. The student must pass each exam, although not necessarily in the same semester. Students will answer four questions on each exam. Exam questions will have equal weight. The Qualifying Exam committee has flexibility in terms of developing the exam. In many instances, students will be able to select from among several questions within a section. Any questions that are not optional will either have flexibility within them [e.g., "pick any two theories to explain (this behavior)"] or will call upon knowledge that is central to our field (e.g., "describe the strengths and weaknesses of experimental and quasi-experimental designs"). A separate document provides students with sample questions for the Theory and Research Methods exams.

Oral Exam: There will be no oral exams for the new qualifying procedures. (There will still be oral exams for the traditional comprehensive exams.)

Outcomes: Students will earn a pass or fail on each exam; there will be no conditional passes or high passes (with one exception provided below). A student must pass both exams; a second fail on either exam will result in dismissal from the program. A high pass is given at the discretion of the qualifying exam committee; the vote must be unanimous.

Grading Criteria: The essays will be evaluated in terms of the following, as applicable to the Theory and/or Research Methods Exam:

1. Formal writing conventions
2. Theoretical knowledge
3. Knowledge of empirical literature
4. Critical appraisal of the field
5. Research methods knowledge
6. Data analysis knowledge

As above, students will complete four questions for each of the two exams. For the in-class theory exam, students will be evaluated on criteria 1 through 4 above. Using a grading rubric, each of three graders will rate each of the four questions on each criterion using a scale of 1 through 5. Scores of 3 and above will be considered "passing." The minimum score a student can receive on the theory exam is 48 (3 graders x 4 criterion x 4 questions x 1 point); the maximum possible points is 240 (3 graders x 4 criterion x 4 questions x 5 points). Since a "3" is a passing score on each criterion, a student will pass if s/he receives 60% of the points (144 of 240) on the theory exam.

For the in-class methods exam, students will be evaluated on criteria 1 and 3 – 6 above. As with the theory exam, each of graders will rate each of the questions on each criterion, using a 1 – 5 scale. The

minimum score will be 60 (3 x 5 x 4 x 1); the maximum possible points is 300 (3 x 5 x 4 x 5). Passing is 60%, or 180 points.

Transition: The new curriculum, including qualifying exam process will be in the catalog for Fall 2013. Once it is in the catalog, it will be the method for qualifying for all Ph.D. students starting that Fall semester and thereafter. Until that time, any current Ph.D. student can choose the traditional or new qualifying system. Students will sign a document indicating that they are voluntarily departing from the comprehensive exam requirements listed in their entry catalog. Once a student selects one system or the other, s/he must stay with that system (i.e., s/he cannot switch to the other system following a failure), except that current students who took the traditional comprehensive exams before Fall of 2011 and failed, may choose the new system for their "second sitting." If that student passes one exam and not the other, s/he will get a "conditional pass," with the condition being to pass the other exam. We will have two exam committees during the period of transition.

Regarding the independent project/manuscript portion of the new qualifying exam procedures: A current student choosing the new qualifying process may submit a completed manuscript (that reflects independent research) to meet the manuscript criteria. The manuscript must have been developed while the student was at USF, even if it is based on the student's thesis that was written at another institution. All manuscripts, even published ones, will have to be approved by the student's Program Committees based on criteria to assess quality. These criteria and other information regarding the project/manuscript requirement are forthcoming.