

GGHA QE Information Session

- Krista, Paul, Liberty, Ted, Kent, Allen and Astrid

- 30 April 2021

JORGE CHAM © 2012

QE

YOUR ~~THESIS~~ COMMITTEE

Also known as: an impossibly difficult group to get together in one room but who nevertheless hold your future in their hands depending on their ability to reach a civilized consensus.



Your QE chair

Simultaneously your biggest ally and your worst enemy. Will be the first to suggest you do more work.



The Guru

Only here for the free cookies. Don't forget to bring cookies.



**Adversary
The ~~Asshole~~**

Has bitter rivalry with your Professor and will argue the exact opposite view. Work this to your advantage.



The Strawman/woman

Nice guy. No opinions.



The Assistant Professor

Still doesn't believe just a few months ago they were on the other side just like you. Pretends to be an adult.

NONE OF THEM WILL ACTUALLY READ YOUR ~~THESIS~~.

proposal (in advance)

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

Why this meeting?

- Mixed experiences amongst students
- Increasing “no pass” rates
- Lots of new faculty
- Little information written down

Today's agenda:

- Introduction of new documents
- What is the objective of the QE within the GGHA?
 - What is a typical timeline?
 - How is the typical exam structured?
 - Committee selection, who is eligible to serve, how are examination areas decided, what should I think about?
 - How can I prepare?
- Recording stops – Panelists will talk
- Faculty experience (Panel – Ted, Kent, Allen, Astrid)
- Role of the proposal and the proposal presentation?
 - What type of topic specific questions are typically asked?
 - What happens if the student is obviously nervous and shuts down
 - How do faculty decide on pass, no pass, fail, and what happens when there is a no pass?
- Student experience (Liberty, Krista, Paul)
- How did you pick your topics/committee (any advice?)
 - What can QE committee members do to make the experience less stressful?
 - How can faculty help their students prepare?
 - Organizing practices sessions
 - Other tips
- Open discussion of any other questions related to QE

New documents online

QE procedure within the Horticulture and Agronomy Graduate Group (GGHA) at UC Davis

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1. Purpose

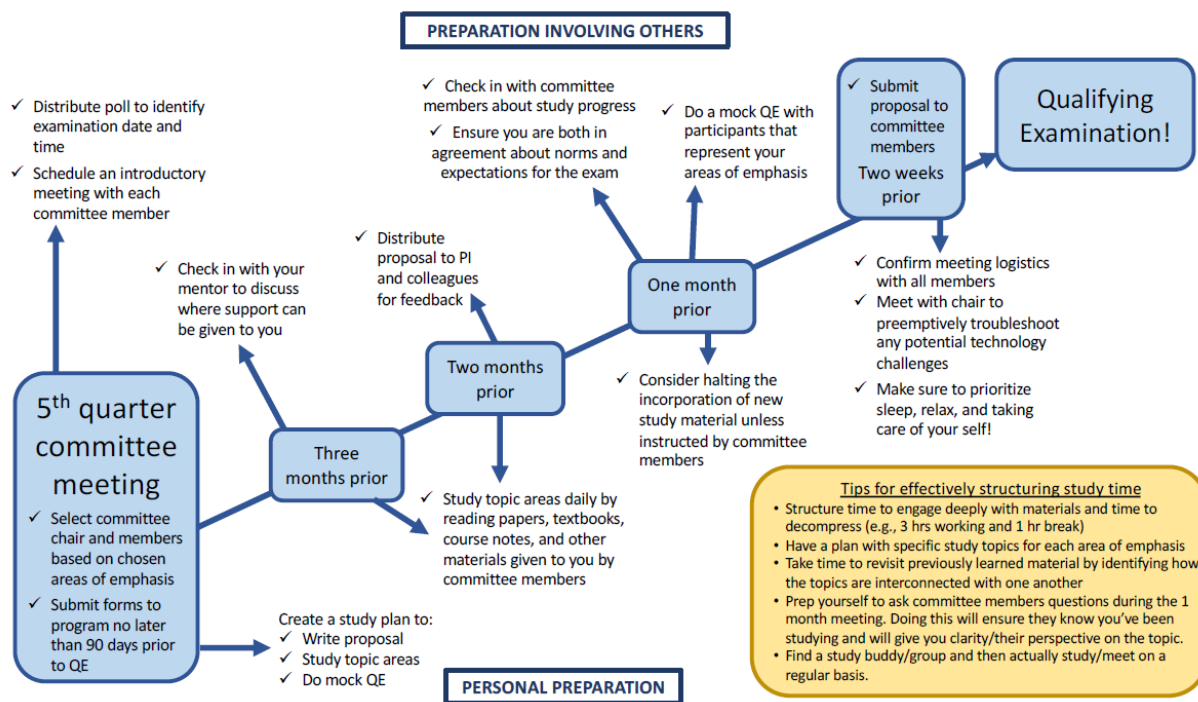
The primary purpose of the Qualifying Examination (QE) is to validate that the student is academically qualified to conceptualize a research topic, undertake scholarly research and successfully produce the dissertation required for a doctoral degree. The student must demonstrate that they are able to:

- think independently, creatively, and critically,
- clearly articulate a proposed research project and its scientific hypotheses, including ability to analyze strengths and weaknesses and place the value of the research in a broader context,
- demonstrate mastery of breadth and depth in a range of subject areas in and related to horticulture and agronomy, including the ability to synthesize (rather than memorize) broad concepts and detailed information,
 - depth of knowledge should be sufficient for professional work or to teach an advanced undergraduate course on the subject,

The following broad timeline is involved in scheduling a QE within GGHA:

- 1) the Guidance Committee and the student work together to select potential QE Committee members, as well as alternates for each member. This information should be included on the student's Guidance Committee Report (<https://ggha.ucdavis.edu/Forms/GuidanceCommitteeReportForm.pdf>) **during the fifth quarter meeting.**
- 2) the 5th quarter form should be forwarded to the program coordinator no later than 90 days prior to the anticipated date of examination (earlier is better). The program coordinator will then notify the GGHA Chair, who will e-mail the potential committee members, asking if they are willing to serve on the committee,
- 3) the QE date can be scheduled only after the student has completed all courses and other GGHA degree requirements (except dissertation) - however, the QE may be scheduled during a quarter in which the student is taking the final 1 or 2 courses in their program of study,
- 4) the QE must be scheduled early enough to enable the student to advance to candidacy by the end of the 9th quarter of residency (excluding summer terms),
- 5) the student must be in active status when taking any portion of the examination,
- 6) the Graduate Adviser will not sign the Advancement to Candidacy form until it can be verified that the student has passed the courses and thereby satisfied all program requirements,
- 7) schedule the QE at least 3 months ahead - it may be difficult to get all examiners on a schedule.

Timeline and checklist



Road to becoming a Ph.D. Candidate in GGHA!

Timeline	Action and Deliverables
The beginning of 2nd academic year Date: _____ Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Attend QE info session hosted by GGHA <input type="checkbox"/> Attend QE Student Q&A hosted by Hort & Ag Student Association
5th quarter committee meeting Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Select committee chair and members based on chosen areas of emphasis <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule an introductory meeting with each committee member Chair: _____ Date to meet: _____ Committee (area): _____ Date to meet: _____ Committee (area): _____ Date to meet: _____ Committee (area): _____ Date to meet: _____ Committee (area): _____ Date to meet: _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Distribute poll to identify examination date and time
At least 90 days before QE Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit QE form to GGHA coordinator for approval
3 months before QE Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check in with your PI to discuss where support can be given to you List support here: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Study topic areas by reading papers, textbooks, course notes, and other materials given to you by committee members Describe your study plan: _____
2 months before QE Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Distribute a draft proposal to PI and colleagues for general feedback
1 month before QE Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Check in with committee members about study progress <input type="checkbox"/> Check in with QE chair about norms and expectations for the exam <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a mock QE with participants that represent your areas of emphasis
2 weeks before QE Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit proposal to committee members <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm meeting logistics with all committee members <input type="checkbox"/> Meet with chair to troubleshoot any potential technology challenges <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure to prioritize sleep, relax, and taking care of yourself!
Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Qualifying Examination
72 hr after QE Date: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Submit candidacy form

Congratulations, you are a Ph.D. Candidate!

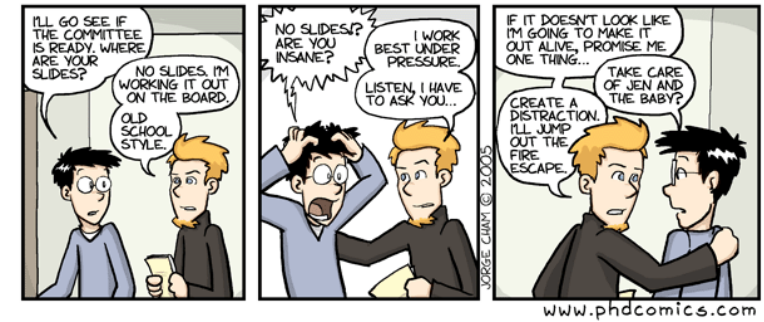
The QE committee is looking for evidence that the candidate is able to:

- think independently, creatively, and critically,
- clearly articulate a proposed research project and its scientific hypotheses, including ability to *analyze strengths and weaknesses and place the value of the research in a broader context*,
- demonstrate mastery of breadth and depth in a range of subject areas in and related to horticulture and agronomy, including the ability to synthesize (rather than memorize) broad concepts and detailed information,
 - depth of knowledge should be sufficient for professional work or to teach an advanced undergraduate course on the subject

As a PhD candidate (*) you are within 2 years or so from potentially working as an assistant professor – the QE assesses whether you are on your way to function at that level

* After passing the QE you can request PhD candidacy

At the exam



- Committee/candidate chat about anything except the exam prior to exam
- Chair asks candidate to leave – committee discusses procedures and general performance so far. Chair introduces any specific student issues to the committee (e.g., request for specific examiner order, high anxiety, last minute disasters in preparation, etc.). This takes 5-10 mins at most
- Candidate is asked back in and chair asks for the proposal presentation to start
- Aim for 20 minute presentation, but be prepared that with questions this may take an hour. No specific order to who asks questions. This is the period to really exchange ideas and clarify the reasoning behind your research and assumptions on which it is based
- Break (5-10 mins)
- Remaining time is divided across the four specialization areas. Chair sometimes asks related questions
- End of oral exam – candidate is asked to leave the room
- Discussion led by the QE chair, committee tries to reach unanimous outcome (pass, no pass, fail)
- Candidate called back in and chair explains the outcome and provides summary of committee feedback

Who can be on the committee?

- a) The qualifying examination committee shall include five members; the majority of the members shall be members of the Horticulture and Agronomy graduate program (GGHA).
- b) The Chair of the QE committee shall be a member of GGHA. The intended Chair or Co-Chair of the Dissertation Committee (commonly known as the Major Professor) cannot be a member of the QE committee.
- c) No fewer than three members of the QE committee shall be voting members of the Academic Senate of University of California (includes Professors, Lecturers with Security of Employment).
- d) At least one member should be external to the GGHA.
- e) The Chair and members of the examination committee should be chosen to avoid any real *or perceived* conflict of interest. E.g., there should not be more than one person from any given research group and none of the committee members should be a member of the same research group as the student.

Note that you start selecting areas of specialization with your guidance committee during the first (!) quarter meeting. You will finalize your list of committee members (and alternate members) at the 5th quarter meeting. The final decision is made by graduate studies who will act on the advice submitted by your **graduate advisor** (not major professor)

QE procedure within the Horticulture and Agronomy Graduate Group (GGHA) at UC Davis

How to prepare?

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PREPARATION INVOLVING OTHERS

- ✓ Distribute poll to identify examination date and time
- ✓ Schedule an introductory meeting with each committee member

- ✓ Check in with committee members about study progress
- ✓ Ensure you are both in agreement about norms and expectations for the exam
- ✓ Do a mock QE with participants that represent your areas of emphasis

- ✓ Submit proposal to committee members
- Two weeks prior

Qualifying Examination!

- ✓ Check in with your mentor to discuss where support can be given to you

- ✓ Distribute proposal to PI and colleagues for feedback

One month prior

- ✓ Confirm meeting logistics with all members
- ✓ Meet with chair to preemptively troubleshoot any potential technology challenges
- ✓ Make sure to prioritize sleep, relax, and taking care of your self!

Two months prior

- ✓ Consider halting the incorporation of new study material unless instructed by committee members

Three months prior

- ✓ Study topic areas daily by reading papers, textbooks, course notes, and other materials given to you by committee members

5th quarter committee meeting

- ✓ Select committee chair and members based on chosen areas of emphasis
- ✓ Submit forms to program no later than 90 days prior to QE

- Create a study plan to:
- ✓ Write proposal
 - ✓ Study topic areas
 - ✓ Do mock QE

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Tips for effectively structuring study time

- Structure time to engage deeply with materials and time to decompress (e.g., 3 hrs working and 1 hr break)
- Have a plan with specific study topics for each area of emphasis
- Take time to revisit previously learned material by identifying how the topics are interconnected with one another
- Prep yourself to ask committee members questions during the 1 month meeting. Doing this will ensure they know you've been studying and will give you clarity/their perspective on the topic.
- Find a study buddy/group and then actually study/meet on a regular basis.

Faculty panel

- Kent Bradford, Ted DeJong, Allen VanDeynze
 - Chaired and participated in numerous QE's
- Advice for students
- Advice for faculty QE committee members
- Advice for faculty in mentoring students towards the QE

Student panel

- Paul Kasemsap, Krista Marshall, Liberty Galvin
 - All passed their QE, one “in person”, two “zoom”
- Advice for students
- Advice for faculty QE committee members
- Advice for faculty in mentoring students towards the QE