GUIDE TO THE DOCTORAL QUALIFYING EXAM (DQE) PROCESS

COLLEGE OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Doctor of Education in Counseling Psychology (EdDCP Non-Licensure)

Doctor of Education in Pastoral Community Counseling (PCC)

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# Guide to the Doctoral Qualifying Examination

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Doctoral Qualifying Examination: Overview

The Doctoral Qualifying Examination (DQE) follows the completion of the prescribed core coursework of the College of Behavioral Sciences (COBS) programs at Argosy University. Students in the doctoral programs must pass the exam as a program requirement.

The Doctoral Qualifying Exam is a summative evaluation of the core program competencies, successful completion of which should demonstrate students' readiness to move beyond the prescribed core coursework phase of the program of study. More importantly, the exam assesses whether students are able to function at the level of expertise demanded of those with advanced graduate degrees. The examination process provides an opportunity for students to document mastery of the curriculum, knowledge base of the profession, and competencies required of program graduates.

Eligibility Requirements

- Students are eligible to take the doctoral qualifying examination upon verification that all prescribed core course work in their program of study has been successfully completed. Students must also be in good academic and financial standing.
- Students are required to take the doctoral qualifying examination the session after successfully completing all required core courses and must pass the exam within three sessions of completing all required core courses.
- Students who fail their first attempt of the examination may continue taking courses while retaking the exam; however, students may not proceed beyond 36 credit hours or participate in R7035/Residency II until the exam is passed.
- Failure to pass on the second attempt, within the allotted time, results in dismissal from the university.
Registration and Course Information

- The Doctoral Qualifying Examination is offered each session and is facilitated through an eCollege course platform.
- To register for the Doctoral Qualifying Exam, students should consult with their academic advisor/counselors about the timing and process.
- Within the first four weeks of enrollment in the core course preceding the DQE (per the program course sequence) students must submit the Petition for the Doctoral Qualifying Examination, along with unofficial transcripts, program of study, and a signed Add/Drop form to their faculty advisors (or other program designee) for approval.
- The petition must be approved in the term before the DQE is scheduled. Once the petition has been approved, the student will be registered for the examination.
- Students must register using the program-specific code assigned in CampusVue.
- Students who have questions about their enrollment in the exam course should contact their academic advisor.

Doctoral Qualifying Examination: Preparation

Preparation for the doctoral qualifying exam should begin with the first course taken in the doctoral program and continue throughout the core course work. The Guide to the Doctoral Qualifying Examination is designed to help students understand the examination process and maximize performance on the examination. Students should read the Guide at the beginning of their program of study and should also revisit the guide annually to remain current on and aware of all requirements.
Planning and Organization

Generally, students should take and catalog notes on all readings assigned to all classes, as well as related readings the students identify as appropriate and relevant to the program of study and individual career aspirations. As the Doctoral Qualifying Examination period approaches,¹ students should develop a study schedule in order to organize their preparation for the examination effectively.

The DQE is offered through an eCollege course platform. Students registered to take the DQE will receive access to the eCollege platform during the term of enrollment, prior to the exam dates. The eCollege course shell includes sample questions, response strategies, APA format information, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), rubrics, information related to ethical scholarship, and other resources to help students prepare for the exam. The eCollege course is the vehicle used to facilitate all student communication related to the doctoral qualifying examination, including release dates of the questions and examination results.

Response Guidelines

The Doctoral Qualifying Exam is not intended to serve as a literature review. Rather, it is an applied exercise that requires problem-solving, critical thinking, synthesis, and scientific inquiry in order to produce satisfactory performance. Demonstration of critical thinking skills includes clarity, succinctness, completeness, internal logic, and relevance. Responses should reflect an intellectual and practical understanding of topic areas addressed. A current and relevant research and literature base should be used to

¹ This pre-examination preparation should begin at least one full semester prior to taking the doctoral qualifying examination. Students should not see this as an additional academic burden. If done well, the student will be much better prepared to begin the doctoral research process as a result of thorough preparation for the doctoral qualifying examination.
supplement and support students’ reasoning, presentation, and conclusions. Students
should use the following guidelines when developing their responses.

1. As appropriate, use relevant, current, peer-reviewed sources with citations in
developing responses.
2. Apply APA style conventions for citations, quotations, references, headings, spacing,
and writing.
3. Apply academic writing conventions that include standard mechanics, usage, and
spelling.
4. Provide an introductory statement to each question and briefly summarize the main
points of the response in the conclusion.
5. Answer all of the questions including all sub-questions.
6. Begin each response on a new page, and post the entire question or topic for each
heading at the top of the new page.
7. Use the topic, keywords, or parts of the questions as headings.
8. Include an appropriately formatted Title page listing your Exam ID number that is
available to you through the gradebook in your eCollege DQE course shell (no names
should be listed on the exam. The Exam ID should be the only identifier on the exam
response document).
9. The length of the entire exam should not exceed 30 pages. A reference section should
be listed but is not included in the page length/question mentioned here.

**Doctoral Qualifying Examination: Administration**

**Examination Administration Process**

Each session, a faculty member or department chair is assigned as the Doctoral
Qualifying Examination administrator. Students receive electronic notification, confirmation, and
access to the eCollege platform at the beginning of the session in which they are registered for
the exam and at least one week prior to the release of the examination. Students complete the exam over a one-week period in which they are allowed to use notes, books, research articles, and internet resources to answer the questions; however, students may NOT consult with each other or seek assistance from any other individuals. Students are advised to create a personal copy of their responses prior to submitting them.

Students who are registered for the Doctoral Qualifying Exam must complete and submit their responses via the eCollege Dropbox by the specified due date. Failure to do so is considered a failure of the examination attempt. In the case of a medical or other personal emergency, the student must make a good-faith attempt to notify the examination administrator prior to the start of the examination period and in all cases, make such notification as soon as is reasonable given the particular emergency.

**Plagiarism Evaluation**

Once submitted to the Dropbox, exams are automatically evaluated by Turnitin.com for similarity to other sources. Consequently, students should not submit their responses to any other Turnitin account. Work that is plagiarized is not acceptable. Exam responses that contain plagiarism will be reviewed and students will be notified of the exam result, as per the University Academic Honesty Policy.

Doctoral Qualifying Exams are subject to the same university academic honesty and plagiarism policies and practices as stated in the university catalog. Students who are found to have violated these policies in the completion of the exam are dismissed from the university. Student responses must reflect original work, and be produced without assistance from others, including Argosy’s writing and tutoring services. All sources used must be documented, using standard citations from scholarly references and citations consistent with the university-approved edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 
Doctoral Qualifying Examination: Evaluation

Examination Reading and Review

Doctoral Qualifying Examination readers are university faculty members who have completed training on Argosy’s exam administration, with a particular focus on the review and evaluation process. Each Doctoral Qualifying Exam is read by two or more approved and trained faculty members who, upon receipt of the examination responses, have ten days to score the exam. Their names remain confidential and are not known to the students, just as students’ names remain confidential and are not known to the faculty readers.

If readers’ scores for an individual examination substantially differ\(^2\), the examination administrator consults with all readers to reconcile any concerns. If reconciliation is not successful, the exam administrator identifies at least one additional reader. The administrator then makes a final determination of the evaluation rating, considering all reviews. If students demonstrate that they have just cause to file a grade appeal, they may do so by following the procedures for grade appeal found in the University Catalog.

Evaluative Scoring

Students are expected to provide carefully articulated and well-reasoned responses to examination questions, based on the applications, practices, theories, constructs, and models presented in the various courses and projects in the doctoral program, and through independent reading and research.

Exams are scored against rubrics specific to the questions and the program learning outcomes, and in accordance with graduate level expectations of performance. Scoring rubrics are available through the eCollege Doctoral Qualifying Exam course shell. Students are expected to meet the same standards of success, regardless of their campus affiliation.

\(^2\) “Substantial” is defined as a difference great enough to impact the success or failure of an individual question or the examination as a whole
Students may earn a score of “2” on no more than two of the competencies but must earn a score of at least a “3” (on a scale of “1” to “4”) on all remaining competencies to receive an evaluation of CR (Credit/Pass) for the Doctoral Qualifying Examination. Students earning a score of “1” on more than one competency or earning a score of less than “3” on four or more competencies receive an evaluation score of NC (No Credit/Fail). Students taking the Doctoral Qualifying Examination the first time, may earn lower than a “3” on no more than three of the competencies with no more than one of those being a score of “1” in order to receive an evaluation of PR (Progressing with Revise and Resubmit) which will require portions of the examination to be rewritten. Only responses to questions that received scores below “3” are required to be revised and resubmitted. The student may also elect to decline the Revise and Resubmit option, accept the “fail” evaluation, and prepare for the second and final attempt at the Doctoral Qualifying Examination. The final revise and resubmit/decline to revise and resubmit decision rests with the student. Students who fail to submit responses to a specific question will earn a zero for that question and fail the comp exam automatically without an option to revise and resubmit the missed question.

Examination Results

Examination results, which include feedback on responses are posted to the exam dropbox within eCollege. In cases where student performance is determined to fall short of minimum acceptable standards, detailed comments are provided to assist students either in revising their responses or in preparing for a second attempt. All students who fail the exam the first attempt will work with the comprehensive exam administrator on next steps and necessary preparation.
First Attempt. A student who attempts the comprehensive exam the first time can be assigned a grade of Credit (CR), Progressing (PR), or No Credit (NC) and the results are posted to students’ official transcripts.

**CR** = A grade of CR is assigned when the student passes the Doctoral Qualifying Examination. Upon receiving the grade of CR, the student will be permitted to continue to the next course.

**PR** = A grade of PR is assigned when the student is asked to “Revise and Resubmit.” This grade is given when the evaluative score requires certain portions of the Doctoral Qualifying Examination to be revised and resubmitted and final grading of the revisions will not be completed before the next term’s classes begin. Students receiving a PR grade will review the feedback on responses provided to help them prepare for the rewrite. Students will have five days upon notification of the PR grade to revise and resubmit their responses. Failure of the student to submit the revised portion of the exam within the required timeframe will result in a grade of NC. Readers will have seven days upon receipt of the revised exam to grade the exam, and all PR grades will convert to a grade of CR or NC. Students who receive a PR will be permitted to continue to the next course but may not proceed beyond 36 credit hours or participate in R7035/Residency II until the exam is passed. If the student does not successfully complete the “Revise and Resubmit,” a grade of NC will be assigned, and the student will take the Doctoral Qualifying Examination a second time.

**NC** = A grade of No Credit (NC) is assigned when the student fails the Doctoral Qualifying Examination. Upon receiving the grade of NC, the student will be permitted to continue to the next course and register to take the Doctoral Qualifying Examination a second time; however, the student may not proceed beyond 36
credit hours or participate in R7035/Residency II. Students who must retake the Doctoral Qualifying Examination are assigned to the comprehensive exam administrator who will guide them on next steps. Upon receiving the second NC, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Remediation is possible for students retaking the exam. This may require students to take additional course work, pursue special writing instruction, or obtain other special training to address weaknesses identified.\(^3\) The remediation plan must be completed and the qualifying exam retaken within the timeline of three 7.5-wk sessions; failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program.

**Second Attempt:** A student who attempts the comprehensive exam the second time can be assigned a grade of Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) and the results are posted to students’ official transcripts.

**CR** = A grade of CR is assigned when the student passes the Doctoral Qualifying Examination. Upon receiving the grade of CR, the student will be permitted to continue to the next course.

**NC** = A grade of No Credit (NC) is assigned when the student fails the Doctoral Qualifying Examination. Upon receiving the second NC, the student will be dismissed from the program.

**Notice and Record Keeping**

The university retains student responses to the Doctoral Qualifying Examination and related documents for six (6) months or until any appeal process is completed.

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\(^3\) Any special remediation requirements are at the students’ expense.