




MEMORANDUM

TO: All Current Students in the School Leaders PhD Program

FROM: Daniel Reyes-Guerra, School Leaders Program Coordinator 

SUBJECT: School Leaders PhD Program Qualifying Exam Policy and Procedures

DATE: March 15, 2025

Qualifying Exam Policy

The following bulleted list describes the School Leaders PhD Program's policy concerning the Qualifying Exam:

- Upon admission to the PhD program, students are expected to begin their coursework with a strong idea concerning the subject of the research they wish to investigate for their dissertation.
- This dissertation topic will be fleshed out in the form of a Concept Paper.
- Students are expected to be working on the Concept Paper beginning in the Context course, which is the first course in the doctoral program's sequence.
- Concept Paper expectations will be presented and reviewed during the Context course.
- All School Leaders Program professional knowledge courses will include some review of the evolving Concept Paper to receive feedback from the faculty concerning the direction and quality of the research they are proposing.
- As students progress through the coursework, students should identify a *prospective* dissertation chair and enter a dialogue with that faculty member to receive guidance and feedback concerning their dissertation topic and formulation of the Concept Paper.
- Once students have completed the majority of their coursework, students will be eligible to sit for the Qualifying Exam with consent of their *prospective* dissertation chair and submission of the Qualifying Exam application form.
- A student who wishes to take the Qualifying Exam will be eligible to do so if the *prospective* dissertation chair has agreed to become the student's dissertation chair upon passing the exam and becoming a PhD candidate.
- By passing the Qualifying Exam and having an **ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE FORM 8** that is signed by three faculty members on file in the ELRM department students will then be considered PhD candidates.
- Students can submit their Qualifying Exam during either the Spring or Fall semester.

- Failure to pass the Qualifying Exam will result in the student choosing from the following set of options:
 1. Complete and submit the Specialist Program of study and graduate with that degree, or
 2. Withdraw from the program, or
 3. Follow the procedures specified above for taking the Qualifying Exam in the next semester. **Note:** *Failure to pass the Qualifying Exam a second time will result in the student only being able to exercise Option 1 or 2 listed above.*

Qualifying Exam Procedures

The following bulleted list describes the School Leaders PhD Program's procedures concerning the Qualifying Exam. These procedures are designed to allow for the PhD student to prepare their Concept Paper with their prospective dissertation chair and then submit it for the Qualifying Exam. The manuscript required for the Qualifying Exam is a completed Concept Paper.

- Students will prepare for the exam with their prospective dissertation chair.
- The prospective dissertation chair will work with the student to provide feedback and guidance concerning what are the required expectations of a passing exam.
- The [Qualifying Exam rubric](#) serves as the guide for assessing the Concept Paper.
- A week before the set date of the Qualifying Exam the student must submit a signed application to the School Leaders Program Coordinator and ELRM Program Assistant to be eligible to take the Qualifying Exam.
- Qualifying Exams are due the first Monday of November in the Fall semester, and the first Monday of April in the Spring Semester.
- Qualifying Exams will be submitted on the due date via email to the School Leaders Program Coordinator and ELRM Program Assistant as a WORD document attached with the student's first and last name as the name of the document. The WORD document should be anonymous - contents should not contain the student's name nor the name of their prospective dissertation chair.
- Qualifying Exams will be graded by a committee of faculty excluding the prospective dissertation chair.
- Students will be informed by the end of the semester concerning whether they have passed or failed the exam.
- Students passing the exam will meet with their dissertation chair to determine who will form their dissertation committee. Upon approval by the dissertation chair, the faculty members to join the committee will be sent an email invitation which includes the Concept Paper for consideration.
- Once students have formed their committee, the students submit a signed ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE FORM 8 to then become a PhD candidate.
- Students not passing the exam will exercise one of the three options listed in the Qualifying Exam Policy.