Graduate Program PhD Qualifying Exam Procedure for EEOB Students

General philosophy: The exam will be completed in a timely manner, and requirements will be enforced uniformly among candidates.

Supervisory Committee

The Qualifying Exam Committee will consist of 5 members; generally, these will be the same as the student’s Supervisory Committee, including the thesis advisor. The Qualifying Exam Committee will select one member who is not the thesis advisor to oversee the administration of the qualifying exam. It is the responsibility of this committee member to make sure that the Qualifying Exam Committee and student follow the form, rules and timeline of the qualifying exam. A pass or fail decision will be by majority vote of the Exam Committee.

Written and Oral Exam Components for the Qualifying Exam (PhD)

The exam will consist of a written document that will be defended in a single oral defense. If failed, a student can retake the each part of the exam once as per university statutes.

The written portion of the exam will consist of a synthetic review of an area related to the student’s research. The document will include (1) a 300 word summary or abstract, (2) the review not to exceed 15 pages (1.5 space; Arial 11 or Times 12 fonts with one inch margins as per NSF/NIH formats) including figures and tables, and (3) a literature cited section. The review topic will be chosen by the Exam Committee from a list of 3 mini-reviews (one paragraph abstracts) to be provided by the student. A student must complete the written component within 7 weeks from the time an abstract is chosen by the committee. The committee will have two weeks to evaluate the written document. If revisions are requested by the committee, the student will have two weeks to complete them and resubmit the written component of the exam. The committee will then have one week to reevaluate the written component of the exam.

The oral component of the Qualifying Exam cannot be scheduled until the student has passed the written component and must take place within 30 days from the time the student passed the written component of the exam. In the oral defense, the student may give a formal presentation of the review to the Qualifying Exam Committee, but it may not exceed 10 slides. The oral component of the exam may cover any material deemed appropriate by the committee and should not exceed two hours in length.

Exam Schedule

The qualifying exam may be undertaken as early as the second semester of graduate school but no later than the fourth semester of graduate school. If the exam is failed, it may be retaken once by the end of the following semester. Students who have not passed their qualifying exams by the end of their fifth semester of graduate school will judged as not making satisfactory progress toward their degree and will be ineligible for departmental and university support.

First Thesis Committee Meeting*

Following successful completion of the qualifying exam, a student must have a formal thesis committee meeting by the end of the fourth semester of graduate school. For this meeting, the student must furnish a proposal that outlines the student’s thesis work. The proposal should be in the form of a NSF or NIH grant proposal and include (1) a one-page project summary, (2) a
project description not to exceed 10 pages (1.5 space; Arial 11 or Times 12 fonts with one inch margins as per NSF/NIH formats) including figures and tables, and (3) a literature cited section. A budget section is optional.

*Note: The first formal thesis committee meeting will be a PROGRAM requirement. It will not be part of the qualifying exam per se, as it will be in an area on which the thesis advisor and student are expected (and encouraged) to work together closely [and is thus inappropriate for inclusion as part of the formal (intellectually independent) qualifying exam].