

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About Qualifying Exams

How do I form a committee for a Qualifying Exam?

Students will select two Examination Committee members, one of whom is chair. Committee members are tenured and tenure-track faculty. Furthermore, the committee is two main members representing each subfield and a third faculty who reads both exams and is present for the defense. The student and committee members will decide on the exam topic. Past exam topics include social stratification, urban sociology, economic sociology, gender, and race/ethnicity.

What is the scope of the reading list and exam?

The student will take the lead in drafting a detailed reading list, in consultation with the committee. Reading lists typically comprise roughly 50 readings on a range of subtopics subsumed within the exam subfield. The scope of the exam is typically a subfield of sociology, similar to those aligned with American Sociological Association [sections](#), such as Cultural Sociology, Social Stratification, or Urban Sociology.

What does the exam entail?

The Examination Committee will write two questions, and will share them with the student via email, at a mutually-agreed upon date and time. The student will then have exactly 72 hours to respond to both questions. The student will submit the Word file to the committee members via email. Each answer will typically be 10-15 pages, and will include a full bibliography of all work cited in the answers.

What forms do I need to fill out?

Prior to the exam, the student will complete and submit the Examining Committee Petition. This form will record the exam outcome after the exam has been graded. Upon completion, your Examining Committee will complete a Report of Examinations with the Department Administrator.

How is the exam graded?

The two committee members, and a third reader appointed by either committee members or student, will read the exam and grade the exam as Pass or Fail. The results will be delivered to the student within one week of the exam's due date. At least two members must agree that an exam is satisfactory. In the case that an exam is deemed not satisfactory, the student may request a second opportunity to complete a satisfactory exam or to write an essay within the following four months.