

Guidelines and Score Sheet for Qualifying Exam UCSC Economics Department

The qualifying exam is a key step towards graduation. For many students the oral exam will be based on and extend ideas developed in the second-year paper. For all the students, the objective is to develop a proposal that will provide a strong foundation for the Job Market Paper and overall dissertation.

This document contains a few guidelines for the paper(s) you will submit, the oral presentation of your work, and the deadlines; it also contains the score sheet your committee members will use to evaluate your work.

You should attempt the oral examination no later than the **end of the spring quarter** of your third year of study. To this end, you should have an interim advisor (that is, a faculty member who agrees to advise you), at the least, by the **beginning of the fall quarter** of your third year. You should agree with your interim advisor on your readiness to present the qualifying exam a minimum of one month before doing so, and submit the corresponding form to Sandra Reebie (screebie@ucsc.edu).

The committee for your qualifying exam should have four faculty members. One of the four members of your committee should not be a ladder-rank faculty at UCSC. Finally, one of the four members of your committee will act as chair ---keep in mind that Assistant professors and/or your interim advisor cannot serve as the chair. You must have the four faculty sign a form agreeing to serve on the committee, and submit the corresponding form to Sandra Reebie (screebie@ucsc.edu).

Guidelines

1. From the beginning of your third year, you should work closely with your interim advisor. You should discuss with him/her your ideas and plan for the year, and share your progress regularly.
2. Your qualifying exam has two main components: A) A written document that describes your proposal; and B) The oral presentation of your proposal. In your written document you should explicitly state the timeline for the unfinished parts of your proposal, and further elaborate on the timeline when you present your oral exam. Make sure your timeline is consistent with your expectations about graduation and the Job Market.

While you prepare your exam, keep in mind the following elements.

- What are the central questions of your main project(s)? Motivate the main topics: why are these interesting questions that merit more research?
- How is your project different from previous work? You should be able to precisely describe the main related papers, be specific as to how your work relates and adds to the existing literature, and be ready to reply to clarifying questions the committee members may ask during the qualifying exam.
- If you are constructing your own model, make sure to highlight the key ingredients and assumptions of the model. Explain what you want the model to show.
- If your project is empirical, what data do you want to use? Why are you using this data specifically? Know the properties of your data—for example, what exactly they measure, how they were collected, whether they describe the whole population or only a subset. State clearly you either have all the data you describe, or will have it available to finish your dissertation on time.
- What econometric techniques will you be using? Write out regression specifications. Clearly describe your identification strategy. If you have some preliminary results, show them. If you do not yet have results, show motivating stylized facts.
- Present your written proposal as you would an academic paper in terms of formatting and structure. The paper should include all relevant sections, use uniform and clearly legible font (type and size), have tables and graphs with clear and consistent titles and notes, and writing should be in the active voice throughout. Consider using LaTeX. Make sure to edit the paper for grammar. Use spell check.
- The timeline for the unfinished parts of the project should be clear.
- Carefully prepare your slides for the presentation, keeping in mind the logical sequence of ideas you want to convey. Each slide should be succinct and convey a single idea.

3. Keep in mind that most of your letter writers for the Job Market will likely come from your committee for the qualifying exam. Thus, during the qualifying exam process you should try to extract from them as much feedback as possible to strengthen your dissertation, and follow up with them when the exam is over. You should also use this opportunity to make a positive impression on them!

Important Dates

1. By the beginning of your third year, you should select your interim advisor. You need to contact the professor to request his/her approval.
2. You should plan your oral exam by the spring quarter of your third year.
 - A) One month prior to your intended date for the qualifying exam, you should agree with your interim advisor on your readiness and submit the corresponding form to Sandra Reebie (sreebie@ucsc.edu).
 - B) You also need to identify four faculty who agree to serve on your qualifying exam committee, have them sign the committee form, and submit it to Sandra Reebie (sreebie@ucsc.edu).

Qualifying Exam Internal Score Sheet

Student Name: _____

Prospectus Advisor: _____

Qualifying Exam Chair: _____

Other Committee Members: _____

Criteria	Fail	Pass with Reservations	Pass	High Pass
Intellectual merit of proposed research questions	The research question is <u>not clearly</u> formulated to contribute to existing literature; OR it is <u>not complex</u> enough for a dissertation chapter.	The research questions have potential to contribute to the existing literature but need <u>more detail</u> . The proposal may lead to a dissertation chapter but needs more work.	The research questions are <u>well-defined</u> AND have potential to contribute to the existing literature. The proposal will lead to one or more dissertation chapters.	The research questions are <u>well-defined</u> AND have <u>clear potential</u> to make <u>substantial</u> contribution to the existing literature. The proposal could lead to a published paper in a recognized journal.
Command and connection to the literature	Does not mention most relevant work; OR incorrectly describes the relevant work; OR does not	Mentions relevant research without discussing its relevance; OR provides limited	Clearly describes relevant existing research AND explains in a <u>sufficiently clear</u>	Clearly describes relevant existing research AND explains in a <u>precise</u> way how

	place the question in the literature cited; OR <u>struggles to answer most clarifying</u> questions.	references to relevant literature; OR is not clear about how the question adds to the literature; OR <u>struggles to answer some clarifying</u> questions.	way how their work relates and adds to the existing literature. The student answers <u>most</u> clarifying questions.	their work relates and adds to the existing literature. The student answers <u>all</u> clarifying questions.
Feasibility of proposed research	Is not feasible due to an inadequate empirical design or data limitations; OR the theoretical model is not appropriate to address the question (e.g., the mechanism in the model is not related to the research question); OR the timeline is not realistic.	Includes <u>limited results and unclear</u> evidence of the project's feasibility; OR unclear description about the underlying mechanisms in a model or how to calibrate it; OR the unfinished part of the project may not be viable within the expected timeline for graduation.	Is likely to be feasible but does not include a full set of preliminary results. Evidence is presented to demonstrate the project's feasibility within the expected timeline for graduation.	Includes a full set of initial results or definitive evidence of the project's feasibility within the expected timeline for graduation.
Clarity of writing in a standard format	Needs <u>extensive</u> revisions to meet a standard format for economics.	Only some parts of the proposal are organized in a clear, logical way; needs <u>some</u> revisions to	<u>Most</u> of the proposal is organized in a clear, logical way AND may need <u>minimal</u> revisions to meet a standard	The <u>entire</u> proposal is organized in a clear, logical way AND expressed in a standard format for economics.

		meet a standard format for economics.	format for economics.	
Organization of the oral presentation	The presentation lacks logical organization (it is hard to follow).	The presentation is partly unclear or somewhat lacks logical organization; OR the slides contain errors or too much/too little information.	<u>Most</u> of the presentation is clear, logically organized, and most slides show correct information in a concise, professional way.	Delivers a clear, logically organized presentation with the slides that show correct information in a concise, professional way.

Overall grade 1. [] High Pass 2. [] Pass 3. [] Pass with Reservations 4. [] Fail