Purpose
The ILS qualifying exam (or quals) requires students to research a problem area in sufficient depth to identify critical theoretical and methodological issues that pertain to the problem area, to write a lengthy paper summarizing their findings, and to defend their work in an oral presentation to the full faculty.
This format is intended to develop the student's research skills and to test a student's abilities to produce work of methodological and theoretical rigor. Upon successful completion of the quals, the student may proceed to dissertation work.

Output
The qualifying exam paper involves more than just a literature review that will form the basis of several chapters in the student's dissertation, although it is not unreasonable to assume that the final output may have application there. The student is expected to address explicitly and in depth the theoretical and methodological issues pertaining to his or her research area. The research must focus on a problem area of relevance to the field of ILS and the final product must establish this relevance to the audience.

Theoretical rigor
The student is expected to demonstrate competence in analyzing the theoretical state of the art in the chosen research area. This will require the student to synthesize and extend empirical analysis of a problem area to embrace the theoretical issues as well. The final report should also include recommendations for advancing theory in this area.

Methodological rigor
The student is expected to evaluate critically the methods employed in the research area explored. Clear evidence must be provided of the breadth and depth of this review. The relative advantages and disadvantages of the methods employed must be considered; and any previous or current methodological debates in this area should be addressed.

Written output
The student must produce an extended written review of his or her work.

Presentation
At a time to be arranged by mutual agreement, the student will present his or her work to the full faculty and other doctoral students. The student's outside minor representative should be invited to attend the presentation.

Grading
The qualifying examination operates on a Pass/Pass with changes/Fail grading system with the outcome determined by an ad hoc evaluation committee of five faculty consisting of the members of the student's Advisory Committee supplemented, if necessary, by other ILS faculty members selected by the student in consultation with his or her Advisory Committee.

Members of the evaluation committee raising objections or requesting changes to the qualifying paper must make explicit the requirements to be met by the student. The decision on how the student should respond to objections will be determined by discussion among the faculty members evaluating the student's paper, with the final decision based on a simple majority vote of those participating in the discussion. In the unlikely event that participating faculty are not able to reach a resolution, the final arbiter will be the Dean. If changes to the paper are required, the student will be expected to respond within three months in a manner deemed appropriate by the faculty evaluating the paper, who may request a further public defense wherein decision making will proceed as before.

A failing grade will generally occur only in a very rare case where the student has maintained little or no involvement with his/her Advisory Committee and/or insists on premature submission and defense of the qualifying paper. In this case, the student must restart study for the qualifying exam pending negotiation with the Advisory Committee. Two failures will render the student ineligible to continue in the doctoral program.
Students are assessed on their ability to produce competent written work in line with the purpose of the qualifying exam as stated above. Although defended orally in a public venue, final determination of the student's grade will rest on the quality of the written paper, not the presentation skills of the student.

**Faculty involvement**

Selection of a problem area is crucial to success of the qualifying exam process. Faculty serving on the student's Advisory Committee will be expected to discuss potential research areas with the student and provide advice on readings to enable the student to proceed. The chair of the student's Advisory Committee should obtain agreement in advance from all committee members and the student on the general problem area to be studied and should arrange regular review sessions with the student to assess his/her progress.

Performance of a student in the qualifying exam is considered a reflection of the Advisory Committee's ability to encourage and nurture the intellectual development of the next generation of scholars. By agreeing to serve on a student's committee, faculty members accept responsibility for providing the necessary support to ensure successful progress. However, no faculty member is obliged to serve on any student's committee.

**Student involvement**

The student is responsible for all work carried out in the qualifying process. Decisions on the problem area to research, content of the review, style of presentation, etc. rest ultimately with the student but should be made with input from the student's Advisory Committee. In forming an Advisory Committee for quals work, the student should consider the likely expertise and support that will be needed to complete this work.

Students are responsible for the final write-up and for making sure that copies are circulated in advance to all appropriate recipients, including making copies publicly available for interested faculty and fellow doctoral students.

**Procedure**

Study for the qualifying exam will likely involve at least two semesters of work. Because preparation for the qualifying exam carries no credit, a student will be expected (but not required) to register for Z765 study with relevant faculty to ensure adequate treatment of issues.

The written report will be made available to faculty no less than two weeks in advance of the public presentation. All faculty members who will be evaluating the student's qualifying paper must receive a copy from the student. Other copies are to be made available to interested faculty and doctoral students.

The public presentation will last for approximately 90 minutes, and will involve a 45 to 60 minute presentation by the student, followed by open questioning and discussion. In organizing the presentation, sufficient time should be allowed to explore all questions and issues raised by the faculty. The chair of the student's Advisory Committee will be expected to ensure that time keeping and protocols for adequate questioning are followed.

The qualifying exam defense is open to all faculty and currently registered doctoral students. However, under no circumstances can the public presentation be held on a date that prevents attendance of all faculty who will be evaluating the qualifying paper (including the outside minor member if he or she chooses to attend). Faculty unable to attend the presentation may submit comments or questions to the chair of the student's Advisory Committee in advance of the presentation, where they will be read out and the student expected to respond appropriately.

Rev 2014-08