

Qualifying Exam Legacy Scoring System

Requirements for students who entered our program in Fall 2023 or earlier

For PhD students who entered our program in Fall 2023 or earlier, the following are the requirements to complete the qualifying exams.

- Each exam is assigned one of four grades: PhD Pass, Provisional PhD Pass, Masters Pass, and Fail. The grade cutoffs are determined by the instructors who create/grade the exams; those cutoffs are not released to students.
- Students must **pass at least 3 qualifying exams**.
 - At least one exam must have a PhD Pass.
 - At least one additional exam must have a Provisional PhD Pass or better.
 - At least one additional exam must have a Masters Pass or better.
- Students must pass at least **one exam from Area 1**, and at least **one exam from Area 2**.
- Students must have two exams, each with a Provisional PhD Pass or better, from **two different Areas**.
- Students must pass at least one exam with a Provisional PhD Pass or better **before the start of their 4th quarter**.
- Students must complete all the qualifying exams **before the start of their 7th quarter**

Principal Differences between Legacy Scoring System and System Adopted in Fall 2024

The new system has more flexibility: students no longer have to take quals from both Areas 1 and 2, simply from 2 distinct Areas among 1, 2, and 3. The standards for completion are simplified. Although Masters Pass is no longer a sufficient standard for PhD students, the PhD General Pass standard is lower than the old Provisional PhD Pass standard, and more consistent with the intent of the exams: to prepare students for focused research in one main area.

Phasing In Period

Any current PhD students (who entered in Fall 2023 or earlier) still progressing towards completing the qualifying exams **may satisfy either the current or the new requirements.**

To be precise:

- Each Spring and Fall (in fact starting this past Fall 2023), qual instructors will select cutoffs corresponding to **all five** possible grades:
- PhD Pass = PhD Area Pass > Provisional PhD Pass > PhD General Pass > Masters Pass > Fail
- At each qual session, each PhD student's file will be evaluated using both the current and the new requirements. It will be judged complete if it satisfies the current requirements **or** if it satisfies the new requirements.