QUALIFYING EXAM FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES (DELPS)
(http://www.coedu.usf.edu/main/gradhandbook/advhandbook/Adv_QualExam.html)

Nature and Purpose of the Qualifying Exam for the DELPS Ph.D.

In addition to demonstrating mastery of major academic content areas, understanding of research methodology, and implementing theory into practice, students scheduling a qualifying examination should be able to demonstrate the abilities to:

1. Describe and explain at least one area of content knowledge and potential research questions;
2. Compare, contrast, critique and discriminate between competing conceptions of the research knowledge bases;
3. Verify ideas with evidence; and,
4. Make logically-based choices and draw conclusions based on data.

Accordingly, passing the DELPS Qualifying Exam (DQE) is a milestone in a student’s journey toward completion of a doctoral degree. Following the completion of nearly all required coursework, the DQE is an opportunity for students to show expertise in both content areas and research methodologies. Prior to scheduling the examination, students will have the opportunity to discuss the DQE options with their major professor and committee members before deciding on an examination format.

DELPS Ph.D. Qualifying Examination Procedures

After the examination begins, no DELPS faculty member should be consulted during the exam period. There are no restrictions on the written materials or non-DELPS resource persons that might be consulted by the student in the process of writing the examinations. Unless otherwise noted, the qualifying examination will not be defended orally. Specific procedures are as follows:

a) Each student should meet with their major professor before or upon course completion to develop a three (3) page prospectus for the written exam and present it to the other committee members.

b) Qualifying examinations may not be scheduled later than September 1 during fall semesters – and no later than February 1 during spring semesters. Upon special request, and with committee approval, an exam may be offered during the summer.

c) Completed qualifying examinations must be submitted for review no later than November 1 during fall semesters – and no later than April 1 during spring semesters. Qualifying examinations not submitted by the semester due dates will be assigned a failing grade. (Please note the summer exception.)
All committee members will read and assess the qualifying examination using the DELPS rubric (see attached) within four (4) weeks of receipt by the major professor. With a maximum of thirty-five (35) points per reviewer, a minimum of 84 out of 140 total points is required to pass.

**Three (3) Options for DELPS Ph.D. Qualifying Examination**

**Option 1 – Critical Review of Literature:** In writing a critical review of the literature, students will prepare a lengthy, detailed narrative that justifies the research topic chosen. In such a piece, students are required to include a detailed statement of the problem, purpose of the proposed literature review, and a statement of the research question (or hypothesis). Students also should describe general socio-historical and political contexts that influence the proposed literature review; and, define any specialized terms introduced. Next, students will evaluate the current – and influential – research in the field critically to provide specific reasons why the proposed literature review will make a contribution to existing research literature. This task may involve (a) building on or extending previous research, (b) showing how new knowledge will improve theory or practice; or, (c) identifying weaknesses in previously used methodologies. Remember, in analyzing existing literature, students are attempting to show why the literature review proposed provides a better way to investigate the stated research question. Students may write on their future dissertation topic - and use some of the material generated for the exam – but obviously will need to update and improve their efforts to generate a quality dissertation literature review. Format for final submissions should comply with all APA (6th Edition) conventions; and, should be a minimum of thirty-five (35) double spaced, typed pages excluding references.

**Option 2 – Research-Based Mini-Proposal:** The purpose of the research-based mini-proposal is to allow students to develop, delineate, and describe a research project that is deemed professionally appropriate as a plan to conduct the research proposed. The research-based mini-proposal should include – but is not limited to – the following: 1) A detailed description of the research problem and purpose of the study; 2) A detailed description of the primary research question; 3) A detailed description of key terms (if necessary); 4) A detailed literature review containing theoretical and conceptual frameworks that support the necessity of investigating the primary research question (and sub-questions as necessary); 5) A detailed description of the research design and associated research methodology; 6) A detailed description of analytical techniques and data to be utilized; and, 7) A detailed description of the importance of the study. Format for final submissions should comply with all APA (6th Edition) conventions; and, should be a maximum of thirty (30) double spaced, typed pages excluding references.

**Option 3 – Critical Essay:** In writing a critical essay, students will prepare a high-quality narrative (e.g., suitable for a national conference presentation or publication) on a specific educational leadership or education policy topic. Students will detail the chosen topic from its intellectual origins to currency, critique how the topic is addressed by major scholars in the discipline, discuss the importance – or lack of importance – of the topic to the discipline, and provide recommendations that enhance educational practice, education policy, academic research, or theory. As such, this effort may require a summary, an analysis, an interpretation, or an evaluation of a collection of works, a single work (e.g., book, article, or policy study), or a methodological approach. After an extensive examination of the work(s) or methodological
approach, students will formulate a political-pedagogical position on the topic; and, support this position with evidence. After submission, it is expected that students will utilize evaluations from their dissertation advisor and committee to amend and submit the critical essay for peer review as part of the process leading to a national conference presentation or publication. Unless the intended venue for the essay requires an alternative format, final submissions should comply with all APA (6th Edition) conventions; and, should be a minimum of thirty-five (35) double spaced, typed pages excluding references.

Policy on Acceptable and Unacceptable Academic Performance

After successful completion of qualifying examinations, students will be promoted to doctoral candidacy and allowed to develop their dissertation proposal. Students who do not meet the acceptable level or higher on the written DQE have only one opportunity to retake the examination. The opportunity to retake the exam will follow the guidelines of the College of Education and cannot occur sooner than ten weeks after the first exam and no more than one year later than the first exam. Such students will receive written and oral feedback on their previous DQE submission. Students who do not meet minimum requirements at the first opportunity may be required to take additional coursework over a period of time specified by the student’s committee, followed by the second qualifying examination.

Administrative Processing of Examination Results

The major professor and student will process all paperwork necessary to support a qualifying examination. Applications for the DQE must be routed through the COEDU’s Student Academic Services office at least one month prior to the DQE; and, all paperwork must be filed within stated deadlines of the college and university.

Exceptions

If, and only if, there are extraordinary circumstances such as an officially documented medical condition, a natural disaster, or a catastrophic personal tragedy, examinations may be rescheduled with committee approval.
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Ph.D. Qualifying Examination Rubric

Please review the descriptors below that address each of the following areas: a) Subject matter knowledge; b) Theoretical base; c) Framing the problem of study; d) Critical appraisal of field; e) Understanding of formal conventions of writing, including organization and coherence in composing responses; and, g) Substantiation of claims, insights, and arguments. Responses should include a general statement on expected research methods used to conduct a potential study if selecting the literature review or research-based mini-proposal option. Scoring within each category is based on the following criteria:

**Exceptional** *(Score = 5).* Candidate demonstrates expert or near expert knowledge of at least one major theory related to educational leadership, framing a problem, and/or the contexts and educational underpinnings of educational leadership. Candidate articulates a clear critical position regarding the field that is integrated with the discussion of the professional knowledge base, and responses exhibit a high degree of understanding of conventions of academic discussion, argumentation, and a statement of research methods is articulated within the narrative and suitable for the research area of interest.

**Proficient** *(Score = 4).* Candidate demonstrates broad knowledge of at least one major theory of educational leadership, framing a problem, and/or the contexts and educational underpinnings of educational leadership. Candidate adopts and articulates a critical position regarding the field, and the responses exhibit an acceptable degree of understanding of conventions of academic discussion and argumentation. A statement of research methods is included for the potential study if the literature review option is selected.

**Satisfactory** *(Score = 3).* Candidate demonstrates adequate knowledge of at least one major theory related to educational leadership, framing a problem, and/or the contexts and educational underpinnings of educational leadership. Candidate shows some evidence of adopting a critical position regarding the field, and the responses exhibit inconsistent but emergent understanding of conventions of academic discussion and argumentation. In addition a statement of potential research methods is clear if the literature review option is selected.

**Emerging** *(Score = 2).* Candidate demonstrates minimal knowledge of at least one major theory of educational leadership, framing a problem, and/or the contexts and educational underpinnings of educational leadership. Candidate shows little evidence of adopting a critical position regarding the field, and the responses do not convincingly or consistently employ conventions of academic discussion and argumentation. Candidate mentions research methods related to the potential study if selecting the literature review option.

**Unsatisfactory** *(Score = 1).* Candidate does not demonstrate minimal knowledge of a major theory of educational leadership, framing a problem, and/or the contexts and/or educational issues related to educational leadership. Candidate does not attempt to articulate a critical position regarding the field, nor are the responses composed using conventions of academic discussion and argumentation. Candidate does not mention related research methods.

A rating scale is provided on the back of this rubric.
# Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
## Doctoral Qualifying Examination Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Exceptional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Subject matter knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Theoretical base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Framing the problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Critical appraisal of the field</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Research methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Formal writing conventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Substantiation of claims, insights, &amp; arguments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL SCORE:** ____

**Evaluator Narrative:**

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Students must earn a combined 84 or higher to pass the exam.