

Qualifying Examination (Quals)

Rules and Instructions

The Qualifying Examination (Quals) is an important checkpoint meant to show that students are on a promising research track toward a Ph.D. degree. The Quals includes a written report and an oral presentation of dissertation proposal and ongoing work.

The Quals is administered by the student's Dissertation Committee, which should consist of four PIs from TBSI. The committee shall evaluate both the proposal and progress of the student's dissertation work.

The purpose of the Quals is to test students' mastery of the knowledge in their academic fields, understanding of basic theoretical knowledge and to examine students' capability of independent research, dialectical thinking and ability to complete their doctoral dissertations.

1. Exam Format:

- 1) Format: Oral presentation and written report
- 2) Language: English
- 3) Score: Pass or Fail

2. Dissertation Committee:

A student should invite four TBSI PIs suggested by the student's academic advisor(s) to form the committee. The four committee members must include at least two inside members (PIs from the student's home track) and one to two outside members (PIs from another track). One of the four committee members must be a TBSI PI from UC Berkeley. Occasionally, a non-TBSI expert who is entitled to advise doctoral students can be included as a committee member upon approval by Committee of Student Education (CSE). In this case, the student must submit credentials of the expert and a statement articulating reasons and benefits for the inclusion of this non-TBSI expert.

3. Application Requirements:

- 1) Average Grade: An average grade of at least B in all courses taken at TBSI.
- 2) Minimum Total Credits: 20 credits and above.
- 3) Time Requirements:
 - a) Eligible applicants should have completed at least one year of residence at TBSI and have passed the Preliminary Examination;
 - b) Usually, students should make their exchange visit to UC Berkeley prior to Qualls and may apply for Qualls during their visit at UC Berkeley;
 - c) Students should pass the Qualls by the end of their fourth year of program study;
 - d) After passing the Qualls, a student must spend at least one semester (or better one year or more) at TBSI before defending his/her dissertation.

4. Examination Procedure:

- 1) To start the process, the student first consults with his/her advisor(s), who should evaluate the student's dissertation progress and, if satisfactory, recommend a list of TBSI faculty members as candidates for the student's dissertation committee.
- 2) The student invites three faculty members from the list to serve on his/her Thesis Committee. The whole committee should consist of four members, including the dissertation advisor(s). At least two members are inside-track PIs; one to two members are outside-track PIs, and one TBSI UCB PI. See details in Rule "Dissertation Committee" above.
- 3) After the Dissertation Committee is determined, the student submits a written report to all Dissertation Committee members at least three weeks prior to the Qualifying examination date. The report should be prepared in the form of a Ph.D. (partial) dissertation documenting any research progress to date (including, but not limited to, proposed dissertation title,

abstract, literature review, preliminary results, and future work), demonstrating feasibility and potential academic values of the dissertation.

- 4) Two weeks after submitting the report, the student fills out a Qualifying Examination application form obtainable from the Education Office. The form must be signed by advisor(s) and at least another thesis committee member.
- 5) At least one week before the exam, student must submit the signed application form to the Education Office. Education Office will verify and inform the students whether all application requirements are met.
- 6) On the day of the exam, the student gives a 40-minute oral presentation to the Dissertation Committee. General public can be invited to the presentation at the discretion of the student's dissertation advisor. The presentation is followed by a Q&A session of no less than 20 minutes.
- 7) After the Q&A, the student is asked to wait outside the room while the Dissertation Committee hosts a closed-door discussion on the result of the exam. The Dissertation Committee is obliged to comment and grade (pass or not) the student's Quals. The student is invited back to the room when the Dissertation Committee has reached an agreement.
- 8) The Dissertation Committee should make every attempt to reach a unanimous decision (that is, pass or fail). After a unanimous decision is made, each Dissertation Committee member must sign the Qualifying Examination form, which should be returned to the CSE.
- 9) If unanimity cannot be reached even after an extensive discussion, the Qualifying exam is considered a failure. Each Dissertation Committee member should then write a detailed assessment of the student's dissertation progress for submission to the CSE. Advisor(s), in addition to his/her own assessment, should prepare and submit to the CSE an unbiased summary explaining what the disagreement was and why.

5. Important Notification:

- 1) Once a Quals application is approved by the Education Office, the applicant should pass the Quals within 18 months. Eligibility continues if the student fails on the first attempt and he/she can retake the Quals within the 18-month period. If a student does not pass the Quals within the 18-month period, he or she must file a new application.
- 2) Students who fail twice will not be able to continue their doctoral studies, and therefore, actions can be taken according to the “Procedures and Rules of Tsinghua University Graduate Degrees”, such as dismissal from the program.