

# D.S. in Information and Interaction Design

## Qualifying Exam

### Rationale and Criteria

The Qualifying Examination determines whether a doctoral student is ready to begin the dissertation, the final phase of degree work. Students demonstrate their readiness through written and oral responses to questions they develop in consultation with an examining committee. Success is judged by three criteria:

- Intellectual fitness: Is the student prepared to undertake research and/or development at an advanced professional level?
- Conceptual framework: Is the student conversant with research, theory, and commentary in professional or scholarly areas related to the proposed project? Does the project's design reflect an adequate grasp of knowledge in the field?
- Project design: Is the proposed doctoral project well conceived? Is it practical? Will it make a demonstrable contribution to the student's profession, community, or discipline?

### Procedure

The Qualifying Examination entails four tasks:

1. Putting together an examining committee (which will also serve as dissertation committee)
2. Proposing and refining examination questions
3. Writing responses to the approved questions (Written Examination)
4. Meeting with the examining committee to discuss the written responses (Oral Examination)

### Scheduling

Students may take the Qualifying Examination after completing 24 credits of coursework. These courses should include all required core courses and must include the Proseminar. If possible, students should schedule their examinations for the academic term following Proseminar.

- Fall Semester: Students must begin their exam in August or the first two weeks of September; exact dates depend on the academic calendar. Your questions must be approved by your committee by Sept. 20, and a copy must be submitted to the graduate program director. Your exam must be submitted to your committee eight calendar weeks later.
- Spring Semester: Students must begin their exam between the second week of January and the second week of February. Your questions must be approved by your committee

by Feb. 1, and a copy must be submitted to the graduate program director. Your exam must be submitted to your committee eight calendar weeks later.

- Summer: Students must begin their exam in the first two weeks of June. Your questions must be approved by your committee by June 1, and a copy submitted to the program director. Your exam must be submitted to your committee eight calendar weeks later.

Students should allow at least 12 weeks for completing the four steps of the examination process. Oral examinations will typically be scheduled about two weeks after the written exam is turned in to the examining committee.

Students may not register for doctoral project credits until they have passed the qualifying exam.

## **Examining Committee**

The committee consists of 3-5 members, at least two of whom must be full-time faculty at the University of Baltimore; one of these must be the student's dissertation adviser.

Students should choose professionals and researchers who are able and willing to advise their dissertations. Committee members should hold terminal degrees. It is generally assumed that the examining committee will become the dissertation committee should the student successfully complete the Qualifying Examination. Students may seek advice from their faculty advisers and ask their assistance in assembling a committee.

The director of the Information and Interaction Design program must approve membership of the committee.

## **Examination Questions**

At the beginning of the process the student should draft between 5-8 substantial questions relating to the proposed doctoral project and its social, professional and conceptual background.

Questions should be informed by the focus and larger social context of the intended dissertation, as well as by the student's continuing reading and research, both in and out of courses. A question should be neither too broad (e.g., "What has been the impact of information technology on the publishing industry over the last 10 years?") nor too narrowly concerned with details of the project (e.g., "Describe six aspects of the navigation system that will make [a particular website] a success"). Previous written examinations are on file with Professor Kathryn Summers; consult them for examples.

The student will send the initial draft questions to the examining committee for comment. This comment period will normally take 2-3 weeks, after which the student and the examining committee will prepare a revised set of questions for approval by the faculty advisers. Questions may be altered, eliminated or consolidated by the examining committee.

At the end of the drafting process the student should have no fewer than three and no more than five working questions.

## **Written Examination**

The student will prepare thorough responses to the approved questions. Answers take the form of substantial scholarly essays each between 2,500-4,000 words. The overall scope of the written examination will thus fall between 10,000-20,000 words.

In their written answers students should draw productively on reading and research they have done during coursework and project development. Source citations in the written examination should be given in American Psychological Association (APA) style. Students should include a list of works cited in APA style with the written examination.

## **Oral Examination**

The oral part of the Qualifying Examination will be scheduled for two and a half hours, but will normally take between 90 minutes and two hours. Having read and reflected on the student's written answers, the committee will engage the student in critical discussion of the document. The student is expected to show good grounding in relevant knowledge domains, acute understanding of the proposed project and its foundations and adequate intellectual preparation for carrying out the project.

## **Results**

Ordinarily students will be notified of results directly after the Oral Examination; however, the examination committee may deliberate for up to one week if necessary. Three results are possible: pass or fail.

Students who pass should immediately prepare for adviser and committee a plan and timetable for completing remaining course requirements and the doctoral project. In some cases these plans may be discussed on the occasion of the Oral Examination.

If some aspects of a student's performance in the Written or Oral Examinations are not satisfactory, the result will be a fail or partial fail. The examining committee will ask the student to submit revised answers to one or more of the written questions. Timetable for these revisions

will be set by the committee, but the time limit is generally one month. If the resubmission is not found acceptable, then the student will receive a second mark of fail and may not continue in the doctoral program. However, the student may apply for the Graduate Certificate in Information Design.

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## **Dissertation Guidelines**

### **Dissertation Timeline**

#### **The semester before you register for Proseminar (IDIA 810)**

Meet with your adviser or the professor assigned to teach Proseminar to informally discuss your thesis topic. Once you have informal approval, complete the Thesis Proposal Form. You will then be given permission to register for Proseminar.

#### **The semester after Proseminar**

You should take your qualifying exam. See D.S. Qualifying Exam for more information.

#### **During semesters you are registered for dissertation hours**

Weekly emails: you are required to submit a weekly email to the program director and your adviser documenting your dissertation progress.

Continuous Enrollment: You must register for a total of 12 D.S. project credits. You can register for a minimum of one credit per semester and for a maximum of six credits a semester. Once you have completed your 12 D.S. project credits, you are required to register for one credit of continuous enrollment IDIA 898 every fall or spring semester until graduation. You should continue to send a weekly email about your progress to the program director.

#### **During your final semester of dissertation**

- Apply for graduation with the Office of the University Registrar at the beginning of the semester in which you plan to graduate.
- Turn in a complete draft of the dissertation to your advisor by Oct. 1 (or March 1 for Spring).
- Submit a revised and approved version of your project to your full committee by Nov. 1 (or April 1 for Spring). A decision will be made at this time whether or not to approve your participation in the graduation ceremony for the fall (your adviser must notify the program director).

- With the approval of your committee, schedule your project defense to occur before Dec. 1 (or May 1 for Spring). The defense should not occur until the project is presumptively ready for approval.
- The final project must be signed by the committee and submitted to the library for binding within **less than 60 days** from the date of the graduation ceremony.

## Literature Review for Dissertation

### Purpose of a literature review

A literature review forms an essential element of most thesis and dissertation work because it allows the author to complete two essential rhetorical tasks:

1. to establish what is already known in a specialized field (and thus to bolster the credibility of the lit review's author)
2. to provide the basis for a new hypothesis or area to be researched.

Along the way, you should also accomplish the following:

- See what has and has not been investigated.
- Develop general explanations for observed variations in a behavior or phenomenon.
- Identify potential relationships between concepts and to identify researchable hypotheses.
- Learn how others have defined and measured key concepts.
- Identify data sources that other researchers have used.
- Discover how your research project is related to the work of others.

Pull your sources from Google, Google Scholar, the ACM Digital Library, the ASIS&T digital library, ERIC, DAAI and PsycINFO. Other databases may also be useful. Most of these databases are available through the [Langsdale Library](#).

The ability to find, understand and evaluate best practices from industry and academic research is one of the abilities that can set you apart from other practitioners, so this is an important skill. The idea is to harness the best of what others have learned and done in support of your own interaction design.

### Structure of literature review

Like all essays, a literature review should have an introduction and conclusion. The material should be organized around subtopics that explore a field's structure. In other words, avoid organizing the lit review as a string of summaries of each article. Instead, find overall themes

that will help you and your reader understand the field of inquiry better. You are summarizing, synthesizing and providing critical analysis of the information you have collected.

## **Institutional Review Board Approval**

With the literature review complete, you must request approval from the Institutional Review Board before conducting the user research piece of your dissertation project. Your adviser must sign your request for approval. You can find the [latest information on the UB Institutional Review Board website](#).

## **Dissertation Formatting and Submission**

Your dissertation must include a properly formatted title page and meet the library's requirements for binding. This [sample format template](#) can be used as a guide.

The final thesis must be approved by the program director, signed and submitted to the library for binding less than **60 days** from the date of graduation. The library must sign a thesis verification form to confirm submission.

The library requires two bound copies of the dissertation; a third bound copy must be provided to the program director. It is normal to provide a fourth bound copy to the dissertation advisor as a courtesy.

Your thesis must be turned in with both the [Thesis/Dissertation Binding Request Form](#) and the [Thesis Verification Form](#) from the library. Always review the [Library submission guidelines](#) for the most up-to-date information.

Return a copy of the signed verification form to the program director. Once the signed form is turned in, the 'CS' grade for the thesis will be removed and your degree will become final.