

PhD in Environmental Studies

Integrated Essay: The Qualifying Exam (QE)

The Qualifying Exam (QE) is a written essay demonstrating the student's:

- ability to engage in independent thinking
- mastery of content matter in the fields relevant to the student's dissertation area
- capacity to synthesize published work in fields pertinent to the student's area(s) of inquiry, and
- ability to write well
- The student must complete Phase 1 and 2 before submitting the Qualifying Exam (QE) and must pass the QE before defending the Dissertation Proposal (DP). The student's Dissertation Advisor and a second AUNE core faculty member (selected by the Dissertation Advisor in consultation with the student) evaluate the exam. To select the second reader, the student can discuss possibilities with their advisor; the advisor is the one to contact the second reader and make these arrangements. The exam may be no longer than 50 pages (including Literature Cited or Bibliography) using double-spaced, 12-point font with one-inch margins. The exam will be returned to the student for revision if it exceeds 50 pages.

Students have two opportunities to pass the QE. If a student does not pass on the second submission, the student cannot continue in the doctoral program.

To pass the Qualifying Exam, the student's written work must exemplify the Qualities of a Scholar and Qualities of a Successful Essay as identified in the Qualifying Exam Evaluation Form in the Doctoral Student Handbook

In addition to serving as the mechanism for assessing a student's preparedness to proceed with the dissertation, the QE also serves the following educational functions:

- The exam helps solidify the student's scholarly voice by providing opportunity for the student to organize, interpret, and amplify a key scholarly interest emerging from the Learning Domain.
- The exam gives the student opportunity to interpret and critique existing theories, empirical research, and/or other scholarly material related to the core interest.
- The exam presents the student with the challenge of reasoning out her or his own arguments in original and meaningful ways.
- The exam gives the student opportunity to express the theoretical and practical significance of her or his ideas and to consider the consequences of these ideas for scholarship, research, and/or professional practice.
- The exam prepares the student for the doctoral dissertation, by formulating the theoretical foundation and suggesting avenues for future inquiry.
- The exam allows the student opportunity to further refine skills in scholarly writing.

Within 16 months after all Phase 2 course work is credited: The first submission of the Qualifying Exam (QE) is due to the dissertation advisor (unless special written approval for extension is given by the Program Director(s) in response to an extenuating circumstance)

Within 24 months after all Phase 2 course work is credited: The deadline for successful dissertation proposal defense (unless special written approval for extension is given by the Program Director(s) in response to an extenuating circumstance)

May: The dissertation advisor and student meet for evaluation, and Annual Progress Review form is submitted by advisor for each student.

Examples of recent Qualifying Exam Essays:

- Conservation and Development in a New England Town: The Evolution of Ecological Concern and Economic Desire
- Science, Environmental Decision Making, and Conservation Biology
- The Collision of Totemic Lifeworlds: Between Sacred and Sacrificed
- From Agawam to Merrimac: Lessons to be Learned from the Landscape
- Reflective Practice in the Development of the Non-formal Environmental Educator
- The Effects of Canopy Herbivory on Soil Micro Anthropods in the Tropical Rainforest
- Community-Based Environmental Education in Developing Countries: A Tool to Connect
- Protected Areas and People
- Exploring the Concept of Learning-Based Coastal Management