

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND FOUNDATIONS DOCTORAL
EXAMINATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES
(Revised and Approved November 14, 2007)

In addition to taking courses, doctoral candidates must have the opportunity to draw connections between materials covered in various classes and apply the diverse themes and modes of inquiry that drive educational thought and practice. The doctoral exam provides one such opportunity.

Examination questions are individualized, requiring each student to relate the concepts and skills learned in the curriculum to his or her particular area of interest. The area of interest may encompass the broad arena from which the student's dissertation topic will be drawn, but work on the examination should not be confused with work on the dissertation itself. For example, a student interested in community college education may write an examination that focuses broadly on the administrative, leadership, and assessment problems associated with open-access institutions. In this scenario, the doctoral examination serves as a transition between coursework and preparation of the dissertation proposal. Eventually, this student might complete a dissertation on a specific research problem related to community college education. In such a case, work on the examination aids the student in grappling with broad conceptual frameworks that may guide the dissertation.

DOCTORAL EXAM STEPS

Students are strongly encouraged to identify a faculty member interested in the topic and willing to serve as the doctoral exam and dissertation chair as early as possible. They should work with the faculty member at least one semester prior to the semester in which they desire to take the examination. All exams must be reviewed and approved by the departmental faculty. Beginning the process early will insure sufficient time for the review and approval of the examination by the full departmental faculty well in advance of the student's desired examination date.

Steps in the process include the following:

1. The student identifies and works with an adviser to secure at least one additional faculty member for the examination committee. Together, the student and adviser plan the examination, following the parameters outlined on the following page.
2. The student prepares for the examination by creating, maintaining, and updating bibliographies of key readings related to classes one takes and of reading related to one's selected dissertation topic area.
3. The full departmental faculty reviews individualized questions, directing any objections or making any suggestions for change to the advisor directing the exam. The examination committee makes revisions as needed. The doctoral exam then will be sent to the student and the EAF staff person who archives exam questions and student responses.
4. The student writes the exam response.
5. The examination committee evaluates the results, requesting rewrites if needed.
6. The chair of the exam committee will notify the student whether the doctoral exam has passed or needs to be rewritten. The committee will provide substantive feedback that will permit the student to attempt to successfully rewrite the exam. The committee chair will keep a copy of the feedback for future reference.
7. The department chair will send a written letter officially communicating the committee's decision.
8. Students have a maximum of one year and two additional attempts to successfully rewrite and pass doctoral exams starting from the date they received written notification to rewrite from the department.
9. If the exam is not passed within 3 tries (one original and 2 rewrites), students may not continue in their program of study and are dismissed from their degree program.

DOCTORAL EXAM PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

1. Basic parameters for doctoral exams
 - a. The exam uses an open-book, take home format that relies on an honor system.
 - b. The exam committee will identify the referencing style the student will use.
 - c. The exam will be administered over a time period determined to be sufficient by the committee. (See Appendix 1: sample instructions and questions.)
2. Schedule for faculty deliberations of format and questions.
 - a. The timing during the year and the amount of time allotted for completing the response will vary with each student. The specific time and means for administering the exam shall be determined by the student's examination committee.
 - b. A minimum of 7 working days shall be given to departmental faculty to review questions presented by the examination committee before they are released to the student. Care will be taken to avoid time periods during which departmental faculty are especially busy.
3. A system of faculty approval of exam questions.
 - a. The full departmental faculty will be sent each student's exam questions. Faculty are invited to submit written comments. The examination committee will review faculty comments and make appropriate revisions. In light of faculty comments, possible revisions of questions and consultation with the examination committee, the committee will send the final copy of the exam to the department chairperson to be entered into the official record.
4. A system of accountability
 - a. The chair of the doctoral exam committee will work with the department staff to assure doctoral exam responses, committee decisions, and student notifications are processed and stored as part of the department's official record.
 - i. The doctoral exam chair will send the department staff an electronic copy of the final faculty approved exam question before releasing them to the student.
 - ii. The student is responsible to provide both electronic and hard copies of the exam response to the department staff. The hard copy is mailed to the department staff on the date the electronic copy is sent.
 - iii. The student sends the doctoral exam chair and the office staff the electronic copy of the students' answer. Please name the file student full name doctoral exam attempt#.doc. That is, provide the name, and the attempt (1, 2, or 3). Example: shawnsmithdocexamattempt1.doc
 - iv. Once the doctoral exam committee has decided whether the student passed the exam or needs to rewrite, partially or in full, the exam chair is responsible for
 1. Personally notifying the student, and if the exam must be rewritten sends substantive written feedback the student may use in his or her attempt to successfully rewrite the exam;
 2. Obtaining committee signatures on the "Doctoral Exam Record." The chair then gives this record to the department staff and sends an official letter notifying the student of their exam status. See Appendix 2. Leave the date blank; the department will report the date the letter was sent.
 - v. Steps ii-iv above are repeated for each exam rewrite attempt, if needed.
 - vi. If the student exceeds the one-year limit or the 3-try maximum, the department chair will send the student and Graduate School a letter officially dismissing the student from the doctoral degree program.

EAF Doctoral Examination Expectations (added 1-2011)

In order to help both Department faculty and students to be synchronized in thinking and understanding of the expectations for doctoral examinations, the following list of expectations was created.

1. Writing. The paper must be scholarly and articulate, reflecting generally accepted expectations for a doctoral-level manuscript. The exam should demonstrate understanding and use of objective research writing; correct grammar and spelling; content arranged logically to flow from beginning to end; organization that demonstrates clear and reasonable sequencing; APA (or other approved) formatting; use of past tense in the writing; and written from a well-developed outline that is included at the end of each answer.
2. Coverage. The examination essay should completely address the examination questions and demonstrate coverage without significant omissions or excesses. Articulate how theory is embedded and embodied in good practice supported, not by opinion or experience, but by a good presentation of research with both primary and secondary sources.
3. Application of scholarship. The student's response must reflect a thorough understanding of key readings in the EAF doctoral curriculum, as well as the literature related to the student's area of interest. It is not enough to summarize key readings. The student is expected to knowledgeably apply these readings in responses to the essay questions, rather than to present simply a summary of specific literature.
4. Argumentation. Arguments/positions made/taken in the examination essay should be sound. That is: they should be grounded in appropriate scholarship; the premises used in the arguments should be accurate; and the links between premises and conclusions in the arguments made by the author should make sense.
5. Implications. The student's response should change the way the reader thinks about the problem; the "so what?" and "what now?" aspects are spelled out for readers, especially practitioners. There is significance to the problem being answered - or it is similar to others. The response is useful for practice in the field.
6. Format and style. The paper should be formatted according to APA guidelines (minus the abstract). References should follow these guidelines as well; the reader always knows when the author is speaking and when the author is quoting or paraphrasing someone else.
7. Other points.
 - a) Work from an outline to develop a coherent line of reasoning for each answer, building in each case to a conclusion that is supported by the key ideas and evidence presented in the earlier sections. Construct appropriate headings and subheadings for the major topics and sub-topics found in the question. Include the key works of scholarly and professional literature in your discussion and analysis.
 - b) Develop a conceptual framework that is guiding your thinking and can be used as a critical lens for your argument/position.

APPENDIX 1 SAMPLE DOCTORAL EXAM INSTRUCTIONS

Doctoral Examination for XXXX

The student will receive the exam via e-mail attachment by X from the EAF Department. An electronic copy of the completed exam responses will be submitted to Y (@ilstu.edu) with a cc: to Carol Pfoff (capfoff@ilstu.edu). A hard copy of the exam should be mailed to the EAF Office after Z. Mail to: Illinois State University, Attn: Carol Pfoff, Campus Box 5900, Normal, IL 61790-5900.

The student may consult and use any inanimate source or reference in the process of writing the doctoral exam, although the emphasis is to draw from reliable, scholarly sources.

The student should use the referencing style approved by the doctoral exam committee.

The student is to complete all parts of this examination.

Responses should be well written and well-reasoned. The student will be expected to demonstrate command of relevant research and professional literature.

The following criteria will be used to assess the examination paper:

Writing: The paper should be well written, reflecting the care that educational leaders should take when writing to other professionals or scholarly audiences.

Coverage: Examination responses should thoroughly address examination questions.

Application of Scholarship: The student's responses should reflect a thorough understanding of relevant key readings in the EAF doctoral curriculum as well as the readings related to the student's broad area of interest. It is not enough to summarize key readings. Rather, the student should knowledgeably apply these readings in responses to the exam questions.

Argumentation: Arguments made in the examination essay should be sound. That is: they should be grounded in appropriate scholarship; the claims should be supported by appropriate evidence; the premises used in the arguments should be accurate; and the links between premises and conclusions in the arguments made by the author should be explicit and clear in their logic.

Format and style: The paper should be formatted according to style guidelines selected by the doctoral exam committee. In-text and bibliographic references should follow these guidelines as well; one's reader must always know when the source's author is speaking and when the author is quoting or paraphrasing someone else/another source.

NOTE: EAF Procedures and Policy for Doctoral Exams

- The chair of the doctoral exam committee will notify the student when he or she has passed the exam or if one or more sections must be rewritten. The department chair will send a written letter officially communicating the committee's decision.
- Students have a maximum of one year and two additional attempts to successfully pass doctoral exams starting from the date they receive written notification from the department chair.
- If the exam is not passed within 3 tries (one original and 2 rewrites), the student may not continue and is officially dismissed from the doctoral degree program.

SAMPLE DOCTORAL EXAM QUESTIONS

Sample P-12 Doctoral Exam

While a discussion of the history of school finance is necessary to understand current issues in school funding reform, knowledge of the current law is also crucial. For educators with superintendent credentials, an understanding of how the law affects or impinges positively or negatively on the work of the superintendent is also required. Please address the following questions in an extended integrated essay of approximately 75 pages (approximate response page counts for each section of the question are suggested):

1. Discuss the role of district level leadership (superintendent and board) with regard to policy issues of finances generally, including both the local and state levels. (10 pages)
2. Describe Illinois' Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) and describe its historical context. Include the following in your description:
 - a. A discussion as to how and why the law came into existence
 - b. A discussion regarding the law's limitation on the growth of property taxes
 - c. A discussion comparing and contrasting the law to other laws and/or limitations placed by the state on the ability to tax and/or spend
 - d. A discussion of how PTELL has affected the total amount of General State Aid designated to pay off the "double whammy" and offer another solution that would solve the "whammy problem but would not take away so much money from the non-PTELL county school districts (25 pages)
2. Discuss the relationship between 2-3 school reform concepts/models and issues of equity including but not limited to finance equity (10 pages)
3. Present 3--5 key principles of organizational theory as they relate to processes of managing a district in the face funding inequities and uncertainties (10 pages)
4. Frame 3--5 key leadership concepts/approaches from your courses in terms of the role of a district superintendent striving to work productively with the community with regard to funding inequities and tax caps. (10 pages)
6. Discuss two school finance problems that need further research and present the appropriate methodology for investigating each of the problems. One of these may be the PTELL problem you wish to research for a dissertation. (10 pages)

Sample Higher Ed Doctoral Exam

A new trustee at your institution (a private four-year college) has expressed her opposition to the president's insistence that the university has an obligation to promote student learning both inside and outside the classroom. This trustee argues that out-of-class activities are frills that divert student attention from the classroom and the learning that classroom experiences are designed to impart. In addition, she argues that the president's view of learning as a function of both in-class and out-of-class activities runs counter to the historical role of knowledge acquisition in higher education.

In preparation for a full report to the Board of Trustees, the president has asked you to educate the Board about the important contributions out-of-class activities make to student learning. Specifically, you have been asked to defend the collaborative system of student involvement within the campus activities area and to argue for the development of student run programming boards have a positive impact on learning and student development campus-wide. In addition, your presentation should explain how a healthy out-of class learning environment can be administered and evaluated. Your response should take the form of an essay with the following sections:

1. *History/philosophy (6--8 pages)*: Trace the historical and philosophical origins (to the present **day**) of **higher education's awareness of and important contributions made by out-of-class** learning at four-year institutions. What scholars of higher education helped raise this awareness and what were their arguments? Include information on the evolution of student-led programming boards and their role in promoting educational opportunities for students outside the classroom. This section will also serve as an introduction to your essay.
2. *Administration/leadership (12--15 pages)*: How might theories of administration and leadership help student affairs administrators enhance the institution's capacity to provide out-of-class programming that complements in-class learning? Propose an effective organizational model for administering a campus programming board/student activities office that emphasizes student development. Include examples from other model programs nationally and discuss specific leadership theories that could be of help.
3. *Planning, finance, and legal issues (8--10 pages)*: Describe how strategic planning might be used by the institution to enhance its capacity to create and sustain an out-of-class learning environment that benefits students. Describe how college leaders can ensure that planning results will actually be examined and put to use by faculty and staff for the benefit of students. Finally, note how the planning process and results can be used to allocate fiscal resources for out-of-class student programming and anticipate and address legal issues the college may need to be aware of in providing such out-of-class programming for students.
4. *Outcomes (8--10 pages)*: Discuss intended benefits and potential outcomes to students who participate in campus programming boards. Why should this type of involvement be encouraged as you think about student learning at four-year institutions today? Apply current student development theory and research in your response.
5. *Assessment (8--10 pages)*: Propose a comprehensive procedure for assessing learning outcomes and the potential of participation on a campus program board to affect student learning. Use both qualitative and quantitative methods in your assessment plan and specify who will be involved in the assessment efforts.

Future Research (6--8 pages): Using current literature and theory on the subject, explore future directions for research about learning that occurs through participation in out-of-classroom activities such as programming boards. Incorporate what you have learned from quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in suggesting future directions. This section will also serve as a conclusion to your essay

