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*DEPARTMENT OF  
COUNSELOR EDUCATION &  
FAMILY STUDIES*

# **QUALIFYING EXAMINATION MANUAL**



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## Overview of the Qualifying Examination

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### 1.1 The Requirement of the Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination is taken following completion of the Integrative Core Courses that are listed below:

COUC 740 – Advanced Research Design  
COUC 715 – Applied Counseling Theories

### 1.2 The Purpose of the Qualifying Examination

The purpose of the Qualifying Examination is to assess a doctoral student's abilities to analyze and evaluate empirical research from both conceptual and methodological perspectives. The examination taps broad, basic skills in research design and conceptualization and is designed to encourage students to integrate their knowledge of research methodology with substantive theoretical and empirical issues. It also serves as an early assessment of competencies that are relevant to the development of scholarly work. It tests a student's understanding and readiness to apply theories and concepts in positions of leadership in the field of counseling.

### 1.3 The Focus of the Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination consists of two essay questions. Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of counseling theory and practice as well as research and statistics. Their work must reveal expert level knowledge of theory, practice, ethical issues, research, and professional issues related to counseling. All answers must have current and relevant sources cited with dates.

To prepare for the Qualifying Examination, students should be able to answer questions drawn from the program pre-requisites and the content communicated in the core courses listed above.

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## Qualifying Examination Procedures

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### 2.1 Registration for the Qualifying Examination

The doctoral student may take the Qualifying Examination when he or she has met all requirements as outlined in 1.1 of this Manual. To schedule their exam and to obtain proctor approval contact the program support coordinator, Bonnie Gould at [bcsmith@liberty.edu](mailto:bcsmith@liberty.edu).

Any student with a verified disability that inhibits performance on this exam may arrange for the appropriate accommodation when applying for the examination. The “Americans with Disabilities Act” must cover such disability and the Office of Disability Academic Support (ODAS) in TE 127, Main Campus, must make verification of the disability.

### 2.2 Administration of the Examination

Students have six (6) hours to complete the Qualifying Examination. Students may not use any reference materials during the examination (i.e., notes, books, online resources).

Students are strongly encouraged to proofread their answers. The pressure of the Qualifying Examination does not excuse errors in grammar, spelling, and composition.

### 2.3 Evaluation Criteria

The Qualifying Examination Grading Committee grades all examinations over a period of 2-4 weeks (See Writing Instructions and Grading Rubric in the Appendix).

Readers might respond with feedback that includes:

- Insufficient interpretation of key problem areas
- Comprehensive knowledge not demonstrated
- Poorly written responses
- Lacking in factual information
- Lacking in supporting detail
- Did not answer the question
- Information provided was inadequate/incorrect/incomplete
- Poorly organized written response
- Lacking depth in response
- Unsubstantiated assumptions
- Unclear presentation of information

## **2.4 Notification of Performance**

Students will receive notification of their results within four (4) weeks via e-mail. Students who perform well on the examination will receive very little, if any, feedback outside of notification that they passed. In contrast, students who fail the examination, or an exam section, will receive specific feedback on the deficits in their performance.

## **2.5 Policy on Retaking the Qualifying Examination**

Students who fail one or more areas of the exam must retake those areas (at the same time) no sooner than 3 months following the previous attempt. A hold will be placed on their program until they pass the exam. Students failing twice are not permitted to move forward in the Ph.D. program and, under all circumstances, will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program. Students are not permitted back into the doctoral program once they have been dismissed.

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## Qualifying Examination Preparation

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### 3.1 Preparing for the Qualifying Examination

Students should develop a study schedule that allows them to spend significant time preparing for the different areas of content covered on the test. To help prepare for the Qualifying Examination, see the Qualifying Examination Study Guide below.

### 3.2 Performing Well on the Qualifying Examination

The following suggestions may help you maximize the quality of your examination.

1. ***Thoughtfully and thoroughly answer the question.***
2. ***Use your six hours of time wisely.***
  - a. Carefully plan and outline each answer, devoting about 15 minutes of the allotted time for planning and outlining.
  - b. Do not spend too much time on one question.
  - c. Save time to re-read and edit your exam.
3. ***Response skills matter.*** Answers should reflect doctoral level, scholarly writing skills, including plenteous research citations and a reference section (with author names, dates, and titles).
  - a. Use APA style headings to organize your paper and APA style throughout your paper.
  - b. Carefully and skillfully organize your work.
  - c. Scholarly, grammar and syntax correct, empirically supported, and professional writing, is required to pass the exam.
  - d. Think out your answer before you begin writing.
  - e. Write in complete sentences. Make sure each one is clear and concise. Do not list information in outline form or with bullet points. Paragraphs should contain several coherent sentences and should develop one complete thought. Cite all facts with appropriate and relevant, up to date, literature and research.
  - f. Answers should be factual (supported by known facts on the subject), well stated (organized and presented in a reasonable manner), and logical (sequencing of items; follow a logical pattern).
  - g. If you have time, carefully proofread your work before submitting it.
  - h. Emphasize quality rather than quantity in the answer but be thorough.
  - i. Limit your summary or conclusions to one paragraph. Do not include new material in your conclusions.

### **3.3 Study Guide**

- a. Research: Be prepared to create an EXPERIMENTAL study from start to finish that includes all the essential elements and considerations necessary for scholarly, quantitative research.
- b. Theory: Be prepared to apply evidence based, up to date knowledge and skill to a clinical case study. Answers must reflect mastery of ethical and evidence-based assessment, case conceptualization, DSM 5 diagnosis, treatment planning, and empirically supported treatment protocols for a variety of DSM conditions.

### **3.4 Suggested Reading**

Review all the primary texts, journal articles, notes, etc. from both the courses covered on the exam. Consider creating a set of index cards that contains relevant references (last names, dates, and titles are all that are needed) and a brief annotated bibliography that you can memorize. Additionally, create index cards or a personal study guide that contains the primary content covered on the exam to aid you in studying (you cannot bring your study materials into the exam).

## Appendix A

### Qualifying Examination Writing Instructions and Grading Rubric

#### A. Qualifying Examination Writing Instructions

1. Write your exam as if you are writing for an APA journal. It should be scholarly, academic, and replete with citations of up-to-date research in both sections.
2. Write your exam in precise APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition style including title page, abstract, body, and references. Use proper APA style headings to organize your document, including primary headings for each section and sub-heading throughout each section.
3. Section 1: Answer the research and statistics question. Cover each aspect of the question using sub-headings to delineate the parts of the question.  
  
Section 2: Answer the applied theory question. Cover each aspect of the question using sub-headings to delineate the parts of the question.
4. The body of your examination should contain many different professional citations (properly cited in the body and the reference section) to back up all facts stated. References must be up to date, professional (e.g., articles from peer-reviewed journals, primary sources [as opposed to secondary compilations]), and in proper APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition manual format. Be careful to reference every fact you state in your exam. All facts should be followed by primary sources (texts and/or journal articles). Your reference section need only list names, dates, and titles (publisher information is not necessary).
5. Your exam should be double spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman.
6. Review of the Qualifying Exam's Required Formatting:  
  
APA (7<sup>th</sup> edition manual) style formatting (See sample in the APA manual): include proper running head, pagination, title page, abstract, and headings. Include an introduction that clearly delineates what the document covers, proper transitions from topic to topic, conclusion etc., and references (properly cited in the body of the paper and in the reference section.)

Your exam should be as free of grammar, spelling, and syntax errors as possible.



## Appendix B

### Qualifying Examination Grading Rubric

	<u>APA format (7<sup>th</sup> Edition) is required for ALL COMPONENTS OF THE EXAMINATION</u>	
1	Title Page	
2	Abstract	
3	APA headings and sub-headings appear throughout the exam and correlate with the required sections. APA Headings are correct (including proper level & use of subheadings)	
4	Proper introduction and conclusion to the exam	
5	Proper transitions from section to section of the exam	
6	The exam is grammatically and typographically correct (including sentence structure and overall mechanics)	
7	Text is written in a coherent, succinct manner	
8	Points are presented with logic and insight	
9	ALL points and facts are supported by proper use of citations and references	
10	Content is relevant and sufficiently fulfills exam requirements:	
	A. Sufficiently addresses all aspects of the applied theory question.	
	B. Sufficiently addresses all aspects of the research and statistics question.	
11	References are properly cited in the body and the reference section, up to date, professional, from primary sources (e.g., articles from peer-reviewed journals, textbooks), in proper APA 7th edition manual format (publisher information not necessary), and citations on the reference page match the citations in the text.	
12	Assignment is double spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman	
	Grade:	Pass or Fail per Section