Regulations for Qualifying Papers
Graduate Program Committee
Department of Linguistics
Simon Fraser University
Regulations in effect as of July 2014

1 General regulations
PhD students should complete two Qualifying Papers in the second year of their program. The papers help provide breadth, but also focus the scope of the future thesis. We envision a situation where one paper is an extended and improved version of a final paper in a course, and the other one an aspect of the thesis, such as a small pilot experiment, or a survey of the field the thesis will be carried out in (but more extensive and perhaps more critical than a mere literature review). Ideally, one paper should provide breadth (for the thesis area of research and for the student training in general).

The Qualifying Paper course carries six credits (i.e., full-time equivalent), but the credits cannot count towards the minimum 20 credits of coursework required of PhD students. QPs are assessed as pass/fail (satisfactory/unsatisfactory).

2 Schedule of QPs
The proposed schedule for a PhD student is presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>2-3 courses</td>
<td>2-3 courses</td>
<td>Any remaining courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate Seminar I</td>
<td>Graduate Seminar II</td>
<td>Preliminary research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Approval of QP I proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>QP I</td>
<td>QP II</td>
<td>Thesis proposal research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approval of QP II proposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>Thesis proposal research</td>
<td>Thesis proposal defense</td>
<td>Thesis proposal defense or Thesis research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4 and on</td>
<td>Thesis research</td>
<td>Cont.</td>
<td>Cont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thesis completion and defense any time after successful thesis proposal defense, in Year 4 or 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Proposed schedule for a PhD student
Milestones are set at the end of each year. The end of Year 1 (end of Summer semester) should see the completion of all required courses (with exceptions for students who want to take a particular course only offered in Year 2 or beyond). The end of Year 2 should mean completion of both Qualifying Papers. And by the end of Year 3, the student should have completed their Thesis Proposal Defense. Not fulfilling those milestones results in a report of unsatisfactory progress in any of those years (in the absence of extenuating circumstances), and may result in the student being asked to withdraw from the program.

Although our annual progress reports are completed in Spring, supervisors are encouraged to complete a report of unsatisfactory progress at any time that they feel the student is not making progress. The report should be shared with the student, specifying the areas where progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory, and a timeline for addressing the issues. The report should also be filed with the department.

3 Registration and supervision

Papers are written during one semester each. The student registers for a QP course, with the senior supervisor as principal instructor, and one or two additional committee members. The senior supervisor will normally act as instructor for the course, even if the paper is outside the senior supervisor’s area of expertise. The senior supervisor will thus be in charge of making sure deadlines are met, and that the student is making satisfactory progress.

The committee member would naturally be a faculty member who is an expert in the area of the paper. When the paper is related to the thesis, the committee member may also be a thesis committee member. In cases where the paper is unrelated to the thesis research, the committee member may take the lead in providing intellectual guidance over the senior supervisor.

The student, in consultation with their senior supervisor, should choose a committee member well in advance of the QP semester. Together, they form the QP committee. Each QP paper may have a different QP committee. While we encourage diversity for each QP paper, we understand that in some cases committees for both QPs may be identical.

Normally, the QP committee will consist of two members. In some cases, a third committee member may be necessary. This is left to the discretion of the senior supervisor.

At least one month before the QP semester is due to start, the student should forward to the QP committee:

- A title and abstract of the proposed QP
- A timeline for the QP semester
- Ethics application draft (if necessary)
- Budget (if necessary)

The QP committee should provide feedback to the student within two weeks of receiving the proposal, and state whether the student can start the QP, or whether the plan needs to be adjusted. In all cases, the plan should be finalized and approved by the QP committee by the start of the QP semester.
After approval by the QP committee, the student should send the plan to the Graduate Program Assistant. The plan should also include information on which QP this is (QP I or II), whether it is related to the thesis or not (i.e., breadth QP, thesis-related QP, or second breadth QP), and, if QP II, the topic of QP I. The Graduate Studies Committee approves this plan (or requests modifications), and communicates so to the student and the QP committee. All the information is recorded in a form that is placed in the student’s file, together with the final plan.

The timing of the proposals may vary. A student, for instance, may prepare both proposals at the same time, in the summer of their first year, so that they have a complete plan for Year 2.

4 Quality and previous work

The paper ought to be a work of original research and/or methodology, at the level of quality of a conference proceedings paper (in a high-quality competitive conference).

Previous work (course paper, proceedings paper, journal article or MA thesis) may be submitted to be evaluated as a QP. This should follow the usual process, with a QP committee established and approval by the committee in advance. The QP committee may request changes to the existing version, or additional work. For co-authored work, the student should show that they were the lead author in the initial work, and/or modify the work so that they become primarily responsible for it.

The paper is meant to demonstrate the student’s command of a subject area. The role of the QP committee is primarily advisory. This does not preclude later joint publication, after revision.

5 Evaluation

The finished paper should be sent to the QP committee by the last day of classes of the QP semester (but the committee may ask for an earlier date). After the committee has had a chance to review the paper, the student meets with the committee to answer any questions, in a “mini-defense”. At the end of this defense, the QP committee arrives at one of the following decisions:

1. The QP paper passes as it stands.
2. The QP passes with minor revisions.
3. The QP paper fails.

If revisions are needed, they should usually be done with enough time for the grade to be recorded in the current semester, by the end of the exam period. (See below for exceptional circumstances and extensions.) Revisions may be carried out to the satisfaction of the senior supervisor, but the other committee member’s input may also be requested. After reassessment, the paper will be assigned a final grade of pass or fail.

Suggestions from the committee should also address potential publication, including revisions that would be necessary and maybe a publication venue. Part of the purpose of QPs is to encourage students to publish their work early on in their degree.

Students will be asked to present the results of their Qualifying Papers in the poster session at the end of the semester, organized as part of the Graduate Seminar course (Ling 890/891).
Performance at the poster session is not part of the evaluation, but it is a requirement of the course, and the grade may be changed retroactively if the presentation is not completed.

Ling 890 and 891 are offered in Fall and Spring, respectively. If students finish their QPs off schedule, then they do the presentation the next time 890/891 is offered. If two QPs are finished in the same semester, then the student should do two poster presentations in the same semester.

A record of each QP paper, together with a copy (physical or electronic) is placed in the student’s file.

Publication of the QPs, or at least of the abstracts, will likely be made through the departmental web page.

6 Order of QPs

QPs are assessed on a pass/fail basis (satisfactory/unsatisfactory). When QP I (Ling 894) is evaluated favourably, the student then moves on to QP II (Ling 895).

It is possible to work on two Qualifying Papers at the same time. The student may be finishing one, and starting the research on the next one. We believe, however, that the two courses should be taken in separate semesters.

7 Exceptional circumstances

7.1 Deferred grades

If for any reason, a student is not able to finish the QP by the end of the semester, the QP committee may assign a grade of DE, and grant an extension. As per SFU regulations, DE grades in graduate courses are only extended until the last day of the first month of the semester immediately following the semester in which the DE grade was assigned.

- Fall semester course: Deferred grade should be changed to a final grade no later than January 31.
- Spring semester course: Deferred grade should be changed to a final grade no later than May 31.
- Summer semester course: Deferred grade should be changed to a final grade no later than September 31.

There may be cases in which it is reasonable to extend a deferred grade past the deadline. In such cases, a request for an extended deferral should be submitted to the Graduate Chair, together with supporting documentation. The request is then sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies for approval. The request must be submitted before the end of the first month of the semester following that in which the course was taken.

If DE is assigned for QP I, and the work remaining is minimal, the student may still register for QP II in the following semester. The same deadlines for providing a plan ahead of time and submitting by the end of the semester will apply to QP II.
If DE is assigned for QP I, and revisions are extensive, the student may postpone QP II registration for another semester.

Only one such DE is allowed per QP. If the paper is not finished by the end of the second semester, the grade is recorded as fail.

7.2 Re-registration

If a student has failed a QP, they are allowed to register again in the same QP course (Ling 894 or 895) only once. This applies both to cases where the student failed the first time of registration, or when they failed after having been granted a DE.

A fail grade for the second time of registration in a QP will likely lead to a request to withdraw from the program.

After a first fail in a QP, and in consultation with the QP committee, the student may re-register for a QP with a different topic and a different plan, and may form a new QP committee. The same timelines apply: The new plan has to be submitted a month before the semester of re-registration.

If the student has re-registered for a QP course, the student cannot take a DE in that re-registered course. The paper must be finished during the semester in which the student is taking the re-registered course.

7.3 Leave

A leave, whether for extenuating circumstances or not, falls under the General Graduate Regulations (please consult the calendar). Typically, a student who goes on leave will have these deadlines moved by however many semesters they are on leave. They are expected to resume the schedule as soon as they return from leave.

7.4 Progress in the program

In all such cases of exceptional circumstances, the extension will likely negatively impact student progress, and a new plan for completion may be necessary. Unsatisfactory progress is always reported on students’ progress reports, and may lead to a request to withdraw.

All requests for extensions and for re-registration have to be approved by the Graduate Studies Committee.

In all cases, both QPs should be finished by the end of Year 3 in the program. This is also the time when the Thesis Proposal Defense should be finished. A student who needed extra time to complete QPs may request an extension to the deadline to complete the Thesis Proposal Defense.
8 QP timeline at-a-glance

Regular progress will look like something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By</th>
<th>QP 1</th>
<th>QP 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15</td>
<td>Talk with supervisor about QP1 topic and committee membership; write</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>abstract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1</td>
<td>Submit title and abstract, timeline, ethics and budget (if necessary) to committee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15</td>
<td>Get feedback on proposal; fix proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 1</td>
<td>Submit form “Approval of Proposal” for QP1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Talk with supervisor about QP2 topic and committee membership; write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1</td>
<td>Finish, “defend”, revise QP1</td>
<td>Submit title and abstract, timeline, ethics and budget (if necessary) to committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Get feedback on proposal; fix proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last day of Fall</td>
<td>Submit form “Completion of Qualifying Paper for PhD” for QP1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>term</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Submit form “Approval of Proposal” for QP2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finish, “defend”, revise QP2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last day of Spring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Submit form “Completion of Qualifying Paper for PhD” for QP2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>term</td>
<td></td>
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</table>