

University of Illinois School of Music: The DMA Qualifying and Preliminary Examinations: Notes for Students who Matriculated in Fall 2012 or Later

General

1. This exam system applies to all DMA concentrations, and to students who matriculated in fall 2012 or later.
2. What we used to call the Preliminary Exams (taken by students who matriculated before fall 2012) are now broken down into two components:
 - Written exam in the major area and cognate area (known as Qualifying Exam; "Qual")
 - Oral exam (known as the Preliminary Exam, or "Prelim")
3. The Qualifying Exam is a written exam in the Major area and Cognate area that is tailored to the individual student.
4. The Preliminary Exam is an oral exam that comprises the vetting of the research project proposal (which students will develop in 528B) by the four members of the Preliminary Exam Committee.

Logistics

5. The Qualifying Exam is administered by SOM. Students must complete all coursework (excluding Doctoral Project hours) before taking the Qualifying and Preliminary Exams. When students are ready to register for the Qualifying Exam they should submit the SOM's online [approval form](#) and prepare a degree audit checklist for Jenny Phillips (this should be done the semester before the student plans to take the exams, typically when enrolled in MUS 528B). The form requires students to identify four faculty members willing to serve on the Preliminary Exam committee and two faculty members who will form the mini-committee for the Qual; students will also indicate provisional dates for the Qual and the Prelim exams.
6. To comply with Graduate College policy, a student must pass the Qual before proceeding to the Prelim.
7. Both exams can be completed within one semester. Formal appointment of the Prelim committee by the Graduate College must occur no later than 3 weeks before the Prelim Exam; in accordance with the Graduate College's Leave of Absence policy, the School requires students to be enrolled in the semester in which they take exams and need access to resources and facilities.

Qualifying Exam

8. Students must have permission to schedule the Qualifying Exam from their mini-committee (faculty representing the major area and cognate area).
9. The Qual (major/cognate tailored exam) will take place at a date and time to be arranged through the Office of Academic Affairs (Jenny Phillips); students are required to confirm the date at least three weeks ahead of the exam. Students will have developed topic areas for the test beforehand with the two faculty members representing these areas.
10. For the Qual, the major advisor will act as 'chair' of the two-person mini-committee and assemble the questions and report the results. The exam consists of 4 hours of writing in the major area and 2 hours of writing in the cognate area and is administered by the Academic Affairs Office. A result of pass or not pass will be awarded for each portion of the exam, and results will be announced within one week of receipt of the student's written answers. If a student's exam in either area is borderline for pass/not pass, the mini-committee may allow the student to elaborate on the written answers in an oral interview with both faculty members, in order to decide on the result; the oral interview, if held, shall occur within the one-week period so that results are still announced within one week. (The date and time of any such follow-up interview will be organized by the chair of the mini-committee in consultation with Jenny Phillips's office.) If a result of "not pass" is awarded for one or both exams in the Qual, feedback will be offered, and the student will retake the exam(s) in question. The student can retake the written exam(s) two more times. Once both portions of the exam have achieved a result of pass, a PASS result on the Qual will be issued by the SOM.

Prelim

11. The Preliminary Exam will be an oral defense of the research project proposal before the Preliminary Exam Committee and will be scheduled for one hour.
12. The Preliminary Exam committee requires only one member from Composition/Theory or Musicology, not both. Committees must also include a representative from the major division and the research director. A representative from the Cognate area is not required, but may be included. Where one faculty member takes two or even three of these roles, the remaining members will be drawn from across the faculty, preferably drawing on expertise relevant to the topic. Three of the four committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty, including the chair of the committee and the research director; two must be tenured at the University of Illinois. (With SOM's approval, a fifth faculty member can sit on the committee in order to fulfill these requirements.)
13. The Request to Appoint the Preliminary Exam Committee form must be submitted to the Academic Affairs (Jenny Phillips's) Office at least three weeks prior to the scheduled Preliminary (oral) exam; the project proposal will also be given to the committee members at least three weeks before the exam.
14. Per Graduate College regulations, a preliminary exam must result in a decision of PASS, FAIL or DEFER. (A decision of DEFER must result in a PASS or FAIL decision within 180 days of the committee being appointed.)
15. The doctoral project, for which there are three options, requires a student write a research paper. Students should normally ascertain early on whether their major advisor or someone else in their division (or a related division) is willing to serve as research director. Students who wish to take Option 1 or 2 (full dissertation; or thesis + recital) under the research direction of a faculty member in Musicology or Composition/Theory are advised to seek permission to develop a cognate in that area.

For more information on the Preliminary Exam, please refer to the Graduate Handbook.

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