The overall goal of the Qualifying Papers is for students to conduct an in-depth, critical analysis of the existing literature relevant to a specific topic (QP A) and, based upon one researchable question from this literature review, to develop a conceptual framework or theory (QP B). The QP process certifies the student’s ability to engage in independent scholarship, and often the response becomes a basis for the dissertation. Whereas the goal of a dissertation literature review is to rationalize a particular empirical approach to a question, the QP involves a comprehensive and critical analysis of relevant literature. In the QP, writers must create thoughtful portraits of the existing literature on their topics. This consolidation process involves the identification of key crosscutting themes, evaluation of the knowledge claims made by others, assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the extant literature, and articulation of the various questions that follow logically from one’s interpretations of the readings.

Selecting a QP committee

By April 1 of the 2nd year, students must recruit a chair for their two-person QP committee and notify Linda Rayle of their preferred chair and the topic they have selected. Faculty members selected for the QP committee must be available for instructional work during the following year, but the chair need not be the current advisor or a future dissertation chair. By the end of April, the CSHPE director will confirm the chair and select an additional faculty member to serve on the committee. This faculty member will normally be outside the student’s area of interest, to ensure that students learn to write for broad audiences. QP committee members evaluate both QP A and QP B.

QUALIFYING PAPER A

The QP A is a critical, integrative literature review focused on a significant issue or problem in higher education that culminates in research questions. Students must create thoughtful portraits of the existing literature on their topics. This consolidation process involves the identification of key themes, evaluation of the knowledge claims made by others, assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the extant literature, and articulation of the various questions that follow logically from one’s interpretations of the readings.

Submission of Three-Page Brief

A three-page brief is undertaken during a student’s fourth semester and the first draft is due by May 1. Prior to the development of the brief and selection of committee members, students should discuss their ideas with their advisors, and initiate literature searches on their topics of interest to get a sense of the scope and nature of the discourse as well as the consistencies and inconsistencies in the literature bearing on the topic. Students should also talk with other faculty
members and peers who have relevant expertise, taking their advice on how to narrow their focus and heeding warnings about the limitations of the available sources.

This three-page brief informs the QP committee about the general topical area and the specific area that students intend to review. It should begin with a brief explication of the problem with research in a topical area; the controversy; or the competing, unsatisfactory or inadequate explanations for the phenomenon of interest. The brief should also explain the significance of the topic to contemporary higher education practice. Students must clarify if the topic they have selected is a persistent one that higher educators have addressed over time or if it is an emergent one which has been examined primarily by scholars in other fields and few, if any, higher education researchers. For example, some problems or issues have been conceptualized or framed in different ways during different historical periods. Others have surfaced recently as a result of unique social conditions or as a result of scholars in other fields and disciplines applying their perspectives to higher education.

Students must also elucidate the general approach they intend to take to their critique and analysis of the literature. In this section of the brief, students should indicate how they will take into account the array of higher education literature on the topic as well as publications in other fields that have bearing on the discussion. If the literature base within higher education does not include empirical and theoretical work, the writer is obligated to identify the related scholarly literature that will be consulted.

The committee expects that students will have significant familiarity with the literature on their topic before submitting the brief. However, they also expect that through the literature review process students will remain open to the multiple possibilities that can emerge when they critically read and consider the array of perspectives on their topics as well as the underlying assumptions of seminal works.

Members of the QP committee critique the brief, and each student’s committee meets with individual students to discuss the feedback and to answer their questions about suggestions for re-drafting the brief. Communication between committee members and students varies between May 1 and the date the final brief is approved, depending on students’ needs. This must be completed by May 31. Upon receiving approval, a student can proceed without delay to work on Qualifying Paper A.

Submission of Qualifying Paper A

*Qualifying Paper A* begins on June 1, after the brief is approved. The student then writes a 30-50 page literature review (excluding references; including any tables, figures, footnotes, and appendices). This paper is due to the committee by September 1.

The QP committee’s task is to evaluate the submission within two weeks, and offer the student feedback in cases that revisions are necessary. The QP committee will evaluate this work using a specific rubric.

During the summer, students may seek procedural guidance, but should not expect faculty to review paper content. Students may work with other students (individually or in groups), but the QP papers must be written in their entirety by the author.
Evaluation of Qualifying Paper A  All responses must meet several common substantive criteria. They must:

- Identify and explain the choice of topic and its importance for practice, policy, research, or theory in higher education;
- Provide sufficient information on the sources used;
- Specify and critique theoretical mechanisms, processes, and/or frameworks, both explicit and implied, in selected sources;
- Develop and apply a rationale for grouping research based on the theoretical frames and/or inquiry approaches;
- Critically evaluate ideas, claims, approaches; and
- Identify research questions that follow from analysis and evaluation of sources.

In addition, students will be evaluated on the quality of the writing. The response must be written with care, with few editorial and citation mistakes, so that readers can readily understand the points being made and the overall logic of the text.

The QP committee’s task is to evaluate the submission within two weeks, and to offer the student feedback in cases when revisions are necessary. Students are provided two additional opportunities to revise and resubmit QP A beyond the original submission, working under a timeline negotiated between the student and the committee.

The committee’s formal response will be provided to the student in writing, and copied to Linda Rayle and the student’s academic advisor. Students may request a feedback conference with the committee after receiving the results. After a positive result on QP A, the student moves directly to QP B. Students may be provided two additional opportunities to revise and resubmit QP A beyond the original submission, working under a timeline negotiated with the committee. If a student does not pass QP A after two opportunities to revise, the student will be discontinued from the doctoral program.

QUALIFYING PAPER B

The QP B serves to develop a conceptual framework or theory based upon one question inspired by QP A, and to identify specific research possibilities that emerge from this framework or theory which can be used as a pathway toward dissertation proposal.

Qualifying Paper B begins when the QP Committee approves QP A. Students are expected to register for three credits and begin QP B in the fifth semester. It is intended to be a maximum of 20 pages (excluding references; including any tables, figures, footnotes, and appendices), and should be organized such that the committee can readily follow the student’s critique, analysis, argument and ideas. As with QP A, the faculty committee will approve a three-page brief. Students work with their committee members to agree upon a submission timeline, but it is expected that this paper will be completed within the semester.

Submission of Three-Page Brief

A three-page brief (including any tables and figures) is undertaken near the start of a student’s fifth semester and the first draft is due by October 1. As with QP A, prior to the development of
the brief students should discuss their ideas with their advisors. Students can also talk with other faculty members and peers who have relevant expertise.

This three-page brief briefly reviews the research questions that emerged from the QP A paper, identifies the elements of the conceptual framework or theoretical propositions that will be discussed, and provides a preliminary discussion of the research possibilities that are expected. Members of the QP committee critique the brief, and each student’s committee meets with individual students to discuss the feedback and to answer their questions about suggestions for re-drafting the brief. Communication between committee members and students varies between October 1 and the date the final brief is approved, depending on students’ needs. This must be completed by October 31. Upon receiving approval, a student can proceed without delay to work on Qualifying Paper B.

Submission of Qualifying Paper B

Qualifying Paper B begins immediately after the brief is approved. The student then writes a 20-page conceptual framework or theory (excluding references; including any tables, figures, footnotes, and appendices) developed from one of the research questions identified in QP A. The deadline for this paper is agreed upon between the student and committee.

The QP committee’s task is to evaluate the submission within two weeks, and offer the student feedback in cases that revisions are necessary. The QP committee will evaluate this work using a specified rubric.

Students may seek procedural guidance, but should not expect faculty to review paper content. Students may work with other students (individually or in groups), but the QP papers must be written in their entirety by the author.

Evaluation of Qualifying Paper B This paper will be evaluated in relation to the requirements of the specific question it is intended to address. However, all responses must meet several common substantive criteria. They must:

a) Briefly review the significance of the problem with the extant research; the controversy; or competing, unsatisfactory or inadequate explanations for the phenomenon of interest;

b) Formulate new conceptualizations, alternative frameworks and/or interpretations that draw on the literature reviewed and enhance scholars and practitioners’ understanding of the focal topic; and

c) Identify the specific directions for empirical research that follow from the analysis.

In addition, students will be evaluated on the quality of the writing. The response must be written with care, with few editorial and citation mistakes, so that readers can readily understand the points being made and the overall logic of the text. For additional specificity on the evaluation, please see the rubric.

The QP committee’s task is to evaluate the submission within two weeks, and to offer the student feedback in cases when revisions are necessary. Students are provided two additional opportunities to revise and resubmit QP B beyond the original submission, working under a timeline negotiated between the student and the committee.
The committee’s formal response will be provided to the student in writing, and copied to Linda Rayle and the student’s academic advisor. Students may request a feedback conference with the committee after receiving the results. After a positive result on QP B, the student may petition for candidacy. If a student does not pass QP B after two opportunities to revise, the student will be discontinued from the doctoral program.
QP Requirements and Guidelines

Technical Format Information  The main text of all documents must have margins of 1 inch at the top, bottom and sides. The text must be double-spaced **and typed exclusively in 12-point Times New Roman font. Use standard paragraph indents of 0.5 inches.** The citations and references should adhere to an established publication format (e.g., American Psychological Association’s Publication Manual). The Bibliography must be complete so that committee may readily check references (it is not counted in the page limit). Please include a Table of Contents. All electronic copies of the briefs, QP A, and QP B must be submitted **as one Word document, and also in pdf** to the committee, with a copy to Linda Rayle.

Outside Assistance  Students are encouraged to consult with others when developing and revising their QP. The Sweetland Writing Center and English Language Institute (ELI) may be consulted at any time.

Nonetheless, all written work must be original to the author. Outside assistance in the mechanical aspects of preparing the QP (such as help with word processing or functions such as spell-checking that are offered within word processing programs) is allowable and appropriate. Outside editorial assistance that serves to alter the content of the ideas presented as the writer’s is never permitted. If there are any questions about the limitations of this policy, please consult your committee.

Registering for Credit  Students should register for three (3) hours of EDUC 899 during their fifth semester (typically Fall semester of third year). This timing should coincide with successful completion of the QP A, and start of work on the QP B. A grade of satisfactory/unsatisfactory is provided for the entire QP process. If students do not finish their work in the fifth semester, no grade will be entered until the process is complete.

Change of Committee Member  If a faculty member can no longer continue on the committee, or if there is some unpredictable and extenuating circumstance, the student may petition the CSHPE director to appoint a new member to the committee. The appointment of a new member is solely at the discretion of the director.

Disability Services  As with all academic work, students who have a documented disability will receive appropriate accommodations, and should discuss these with the QP committee as early as possible. Students should also consult with UM Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) when appropriate.

Technology  It is the student’s obligation to ensure that their work is backed up and protected. We recommend using online cloud-based services (M-Box, Dropbox, etc.) in addition to physical drives. Students should scan for viruses on a regular basis.

Approved by CSHPE Faculty 5/15/2015