

Qualifying Paper Rubric

Faculty grading qualifying papers will use the following rubric. The rubric is qualitative: along each dimension, faculty will provide relevant commentary but not quantitative scores. The rubric describes what a clearly passing qualifying paper should achieve. If you have any questions about how to interpret any of these criteria, or about how well any given criterion applies to your writing, please use this as an opportunity to speak with your Reader.

1. *Thesis*: Identifies a problem or issue in the existing literature. Develops and states a clear thesis. In particular:
 - The intended meaning of polysemous words articulated in the thesis should be (a) defined or (b) illustrated by example. Further, if necessary, the intended meaning should be distinguished from possible misinterpretations.
 - The author's thesis should be distinguished from those of other authors. In particular, if the student is defending a thesis that has already been defended in the literature, then they must state so and explain in what way their argument is novel.
2. *Argumentation*: The paper should have a well-developed argument. In particular,
 - The paper should, in its interpretation, synthesis, approach, or argument, make a clear philosophical "move" by the standards of the sub-field in which the paper engages.
 - The paper should articulate key premises and assumptions and show how they support the author's main point(s).
 - The paper should defend its thesis by anticipating likely objections - especially those that have already been made, in print, to relevantly similar arguments.
 - The paper should have a scope appropriate for accomplishing all of the above.
3. *Engagement with literature*: The paper displays awareness of existing literature relevant to the paper's topic. Paper engages conceptually with existing scholarship and makes good use of this material. Paper includes an appropriate reference list, and sources are cited according to existing academic norms.
4. *Organization*: There is a clear and logical organizational plan that builds discussion - through its use of paper sections, paragraphs, topic sentences, and transitions - to defend the thesis and anticipate and respond to likely objections. Avoids extraneous material and tangents.
5. *Prose*: Presents ideas clearly and concisely, with an academic writing style appropriate to area and that avoids inappropriate informality, overly ornate language, and unnecessary jargon.

In addition, in the faculty wide conversations of each qualifying paper, they will talk about the process by which students wrote their papers. In particular, they will discuss:

1. *Independence*: In the process of writing the qualifying paper, the student should demonstrate the capacity to do relatively independent work (outside of a class structure): the student should take some initiative in articulating their thesis, finding articles, identifying likely objections, and developing the organization and prose. Student should also demonstrate independence in scheduling and meeting draft deadlines with the Reader.
2. *Responsiveness to comments*: The paper should be responsive to the Reader's critiques and comments. This involves charitably understanding the spirit of the Reader's comment or critique and its implications for the strength and content of one's claims, interpretation, argument, and/or approach to situating the project within the literature. In cases of Reader objections/critiques, appropriate responses can include: (1) adding to or modifying one's view so that the objection/critique is no longer relevant, (2) biting the bullet and explaining why one's view is preferable over modifying it so as to avoid the objection in the first place, (3) finding a way to explain why the objection/critique is not as big a concern as one might think.