Prior to the end of the sixth semester, the student is required to pass a Qualifying Examination to assess their overall ability in the selected area of specialization. The examination will be in two parts (one written, one oral), and will normally be completed within a two-week period. Upon satisfactory completion of the examination, the student is deemed to have met the departmental standards and becomes a candidate for the DVSc degree.

The Qualifying Examination is an examination by the academic unit in which the student is enrolled and the Examination Committee is appointed by the departmental Graduate Program Coordinator. The examination is conducted by a committee consisting of five members, as follows:

- The Departmental Graduate Program Coordinator of the Program Committee, who acts as chair of the Examination Committee except when this person is also a member of the advisory committee. In that event, the Chair will designate another member of the regular graduate faculty of the unit to chair the examination;
- Two members, normally of the regular or associated graduate faculty who are not members of the Advisory Committee, at least one of whom must be a member of the department in which the student is registered;
- Two members of the Advisory Committee.

Note:

- The Chair serves to administer and ensure the proper conduct of the examination. The Chair is expected to exercise full control over the proceedings and does not participate directly in questioning the candidate during the examination. In unforeseen circumstances where an examiner is unable to attend due to sudden illness, accident, etc., the Chair will attempt to receive questions to ask on behalf of the absent member, to be answered by the student to the satisfaction of the examiners.

The Qualifying Examination will primarily assess the student’s knowledge of the area of specialization, the basic sciences supporting this area, and to a lesser extent, the student’s area of research. The student’s general ability to integrate and apply this knowledge is also assessed. In addition, the Examination Committee will take into account a written submission from the student’s Advisory Committee evaluating the quality of the student’s applied skills and performance to date in the program.

The student is deemed to have passed the Qualifying Examination if not more than one of the examiners votes negatively. An abstention is regarded as a negative vote. The results of the Qualifying Examination will be reported to the Assistant Vice-President (Graduate Studies) through the Chair of the Program Committee. The report to the Assistant VP will record the decision as unsatisfactory or satisfactory. If unsatisfactory, the student may be given a second attempt at the examination. A student who fails the Qualifying Examination and who is being given a second opportunity to pass the examination will be required to repeat it no later than six months after the failed attempt. Academic units may impose a shorter time limit. A second unsatisfactory constitutes a recommendation to the Board of Graduate Studies that the student be required to withdraw (see Unsatisfactory Progress (calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/unsatisfactory-progress/) and Appeals of Decision (calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/appeals-decisions/)).