PhD Qualifying Exam

The qualifying exam procedure is detailed below. However, some areas have additional requirements that must be satisfied in order to take the PhD Qualifying Exam. For details, contact the Graduate Advising Office in UTA 7.324 or the academic advisor for your Academic Track.

The PhD Qualifying Exam will consist of two parts:

1. A written proposal submitted to the Qualifying Committee
2. An oral proposal presented to the Qualifying Committee. The oral proposal consists of a presentation and an oral exam.

The Composition of the Qualifying Committee must satisfy the following criteria:

- The Qualifying Committee must consist of 5 or 6 members
- The majority of the Qualifying Committee must be ECE Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) members
- The Supervisor or, if there is one, Co-Supervisor must be a member of ECE GSC (i.e. In cases of a sole supervision, the supervisor must be a member of ECE GSC. In cases of co-supervision with a supervisor and a co-supervisor, at least one of them must be a member of ECE GSC.)
- There must be at least one Qualifying Committee member from outside of the ECE GSC
- The Qualifying Committee chair must not be the student's PhD Supervisor or PhD Co-Supervisor
- The Qualifying Committee chair must be an ECE faculty member
- There must be at least two ECE faculty members in the Qualifying Committee
- Co-supervisor cannot be counted as the outside member of the qualifying exam committee

More explanation on the motion:

1. **Qualifying Committee vs Dissertation Committee**
   The Qualifying Committee is the committee giving the qualifying exam while the Dissertation Committee is the one evaluating the PhD Defense. The two committees do not have to be the same, although they usually are. The Graduate School does not have any policy on the Qualifying Committee. The Graduate School does have some guideline on the Dissertation Committee: The membership of the Dissertation Committee, proposed by the student with the consultation and approval of the graduate adviser, is submitted to the Graduate School for approval by the graduate dean. The committee consists of at least five members, at least one of whom must be from outside the major program.

2. **Outside Member**
"There must be at least one Qualifying Committee member from outside of the ECE GSC."
By that, it means a non-ECE GSC member which may include UT-Austin tenured or tenure-track professors, adjunct faculty, Research Scientists or Research Engineers, and offcampus scholars, such as a member from industry or from the faculty of another university. Note that there are UT-Austin faculty from other departments who are, nevertheless, members of the ECE-GSC who will not meet this criterion.

3. **Does the Outside Member have to hold a PhD?**
The Outside Member does **Not** have to hold a PhD. The rationale are:

1. There are many excellent scholars who do not have a Ph.D. degree including some superb adjunct professors in our own department and some excellent engineers/researchers in industry,
2. The Graduate School does not require the Outside Member having a PhD in the Dissertation Committee. So if the same committee serves on both Qualifying and Dissertation, it would make sense to apply the same rule. However, the Dean of the Graduate School reviews each case and determine on an individual basis. The Outside Member must have considerable demonstrated professional/academic experience in the field in order to be considered for inclusion on a dissertation committee.

4. **5 or 6 Members**
"The Qualifying Committee must consist of 5 or 6 members."
If a committee likes to have more than 6 members, it can always invite the additional members as guests. The rationale is that:

1. it would be logistically difficult to schedule an exam with all the members if the committee has 7 or more members
2. the GSC faculty at the meeting don't see any advantage of having more than 6 members in the committee.

5. **Written Proposal**
There is no strict policy on written proposals (e.g. page limit) in the motion. The student should work with the Supervisor in drafting a reasonable written proposal. By the time the student takes the Qualifying Exam, he/she should know what a good proposal looks like. In fact, that is part of the evaluation. The written proposal should be distributed to the committee members at least two weeks prior to the Qualifying Exam.

6. **Oral Proposal**
The oral proposal is composed of two parts - presentation and oral exam. There is again no strict policy on the format (e.g. open presentation or closed room presentation) except that the suggested total time should be ~2 hours.