Overview

The qualifying examination is a test of one’s ability to synthesize what has been learned about scholarship across course work in doctoral courses inside and outside of the School. Preparation for the exam should not be approached with specific, concrete ideas about what the questions will be. Rather thinking about how one works with concepts, policy approaches, and societal problems as a social work scholar and researcher is critical.

Students taking the Social Work Policy qualifying examination should be prepared to evaluate critically diverse framework and tools for understanding policy, and they should be able to produce a critical examination of these frameworks, concepts, and research as they apply toward a specific piece of state or federal legislation. Students should be able to compare analytic frameworks and assess critically the way that values, theories and assumptions inform policy choices within the larger, dynamic context of welfare state provision. You are expected to know how to apply methodologies of policy analysis to specific substantive areas such as poverty, domestic violence, family policy, health, mental health or other areas related to your own research interests. A critical analysis involves the ability to compare and contrast these frameworks, including identifying strengths and weaknesses in their application to policy. Students should also demonstrate a solid and sophisticated grasp of the context for how the policy developed and how it was intended to resolve a particular social problem. Moreover, students should critically discuss how the policy should be modified and changed to better address the needs of the population it is intended to serve, or the problem it aims to resolve.

This is not a comprehensive list of considerations, but it is meant to give students a general idea of the nature of the exam. It is important to remember that students are not being asked to repeat what is stated in the literature; they are being asked to work with a set of ideas embodied in the readings and demonstrate scholarly, critical ability.

In sum, a candidate for the Ph.D. is a student who has demonstrated advanced conceptual, theoretical, and research skills including an ability to understand, analyze, and communicate social policy analysis.

Reading List

The list below builds upon required and supplemental readings from your course work in social policy analysis; it includes other readings that provide additional insights and current research on critical issues in social policy to help update your knowledge in this area. The list is meant to serve as a foundation for your future work (research, teaching) as well as to provide bibliographic sources related to your qualifying examination. The readings reflect an interdisciplinary approach to policy analysis that utilizes knowledge from a variety of disciplines (e.g. economics, history, political science, sociology and
the law) to enhance critical thinking about policy contexts, policy formation, implementation, and policy evaluation.


**Supplemental resources that might be helpful to you:**


8. For **federal** legislation, including background information on testimony, voting results, etc.:
   b. [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us)
   c. **ProQuest Congressional Publications:** [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/cms/indexes/descriptions/congcomp](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/cms/indexes/descriptions/congcomp)

9. For **state** policies
   a. [www.njleg.state.nj.us](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us)
   b. [www.judiciary.state.nj.us](http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us)