

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING A QUALIFYING EXAM!

Frequently asked questions about the qual in Chemistry at Reed

Q. "What is the qualifying exam?"

A. The Chemistry Qualifying exam is an oral (or written) response to questions about an interesting and approachable published journal article. It is a requirement for students majoring in CHEM, ES-CHEM, BMB, and

answer, or we may simply be excited and engaged and want to know what you think about a related idea. This continues until the time is up, and

Q. “What if I get stuck or overwhelmed in the moment during the oral exam?”

That’s totally okay! Remember this is not the same as a course exam, this is looking forward toward the senior thesis. Yes we are interested in seeing what you know, but we are also interested in seeing what you do when you don’t know something (because that happens in thesis!). Don’t be afraid to say, “I’m not sure, but my guess would be…” or “I was really confused by this, I am not sure what to do with {x}.” That is normal! We will be there to talk you through it. If you feel overwhelmed at any time, it’s okay to pause to take some deep breaths, drink some water, and collect your thoughts. Just tell your examiners that you need a moment.

Q. “OK, so what is the written qualifying

are already spending (or have spent) to get better at parsing journal articles, and look back over the feedback you receive(d) to see how to focus your efforts to improve. In particular, really focus on interpreting graphs and figures! Try talking through not just what the graph shows, but what that for the study described in the paper.

Q. “How do I prepare for qual once I have selected a paper?”

A. We encourage students to limit themselves to no more than 8 hours of focused preparation, but there are many different ways to use those 8 hours. Some general advice: do not start by reading “to” the assigned questions! First, read the paper for what it is, and get a