Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Policy
Department of Educational Policy Studies

Comprehensive Examination

This policy applies to all Ph.D. students who enter in the Fall semester 2021 and beyond. Students enrolled prior to Fall 2021 will have the option of taking the comprehensive examination in accordance with the previous policy or selecting the current version. The comprehensive examination includes a written take-home exam and an oral exam, and it is administered during the Fall or Spring semester. Students may not complete comprehensive exams during the summer semester.

The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to evaluate the students’ ability to use the subject content of the major, core, and cognate areas to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate that content. The comprehensive examination will include the following three sections:

- Question A - Concepts explored and/or related to the major
- Question B - Concepts explored and/or related to the research method/methodology
- Question C - Concepts explored and/or related to the cognate/specialty

Each student’s doctoral committee determines what coursework must be completed before they may take the comprehensive examination. The committee will determine the content of the examination questions and the scoring of the responses. The examination questions will be sent to the department administrative coordinator to distribute to the student. The examination questions will not be distributed in advance, but students may discuss the content of the examination with their committee prior to formally receiving the examination questions.

The comprehensive examination includes the following procedures and requirements:

1. A student’s cumulative grade point average in the doctoral program of study must be no less than 3.50.
2. Students must notify the department chair in writing of their intention to take the examination by September 15 for Fall semester or February 1 for Spring semester.
3. The written take-home exam is scheduled over a three-week period beginning on or prior to the 9th week of the semester.
4. The oral exam is scheduled at least two weeks after the committee has received the written exam responses, but not after the last day of classes in the same semester that the written exam is completed.

Once the questions are distributed, students must work independently on their written responses. Students will send their completed written responses to the administrative coordinator according to the timing specified by their committee. The administrative coordinator will then send the responses to the committee at least two weeks in advance of the oral exam. If an interruption occurs that prevents the student from starting or completing the written and/or oral exam, the student must notify the committee chair who will then coordinate with the department chair to determine if an alternate plan to meet the comprehensive examination requirements is feasible.

The committee will assess each section of the examination on a pass/fail basis; however, the committee may require revisions or additional work before determining if a student has passed or failed a section. A simple majority vote of the committee is required to pass each section, and all sections must be passed. A student who does not pass one or more sections may retake those sections a second time no earlier than the following Fall or Spring semester. The committee will determine the content of the retest. Those who do not pass the examination on the second attempt are not permitted to continue in the doctoral program.

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Notice of the examination results will be forwarded by the department administrative coordinator to the Office of Academic Assistance by the end of the semester.

**Requirements Following Successful Completion of the Comprehensive Examination**

Enrollment for a minimum of three semester hours of credit is required during at least two out of each three term period following successful completion of the comprehensive examination until the students have graduated. This enrollment must include a minimum of 15 semester hours of dissertation (9990) credit but may also include other coursework that is part of the program of study.

Enrollment for dissertation credit is permitted only after successful completion of the comprehensive examination.