

M.A. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION GUIDELINES EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, POLICY AND PRACTICE (EFPP)

There are two options for satisfying the M.A. Comprehensive Examination requirement: a Major Paper or Take-Home Comprehensive Examination. Each is followed by a 60-90 minute oral examination with the Comprehensive Examination Committee, made up of three faculty members. Students must be registered for credit during the semester they defend their comprehensive examination.

MAJOR PAPER

In some cases faculty will expect that the paper be conceived and completed as part of the student's M.A. coursework. In other cases the work for the paper may take place outside the normal coursework under the direction of a professor. In the second case, students may receive up to three (3) hours of course credit for the paper.

The oral defense is designed to be a discussion and defense of the paper. The student will leave the meeting at the end of the oral examination; at that time the committee will discuss the student's performance on the examination. During this conversation, the committee will identify the student's strengths and weaknesses on the examination and determine passing status and, if needed, additional steps necessary to be taken to pass. Students will return to the examination room and be told the information above by the committee chair. As such, students will receive immediate feedback on their performance.

TAKE-HOME COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The written portion of the examination is take-home, consisting of one or more prompt/question(s) for the student to think and write about during a one-week period. Students are expected to work alone, devoting ten pages to the question(s) (double-spaced and using 12-point font and one-inch margins), plus a reference section, which does not count against this page limit. The examination will cover information from among the student's coursework.

The oral portion of the examination is designed to be a structured conversation between the students and members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee. The student will come prepared to respond to questions about the written work, as well as relevant extensions related to the student's primary area of interest. The student will leave the meeting at the end of the oral examination; at that time the committee will discuss the student's performance on the examination. During this conversation, the committee will identify the student's strengths and weaknesses on the examination and determine passing status and, if needed, additional steps necessary to be taken to pass. Students will return to the examination room and be told the information above by the committee chair. As such, students will receive immediate feedback on their performance.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Students are to consult with their advisor in order to plan for the comprehensive examination. The typical process is as follows:

1. In the semester before or very early in the semester of the major paper/take-home re, comprehensive examination, students collaborate with their comprehensive examination committee chair to assign the other two members of their committee; the committee chair then provides the list of committee members to the Graduate Program Assistant. To help the student prepare for the take-home comprehensive examination, the committee will provide the student with information on the content and emphasis of the examination.
2. At the beginning of the semester, students need to fill out graduation paperwork with the Graduate Program Assistant. Comps need to be taken in a semester along with at least one course credit.
3. Students wishing to graduate in a particular semester must plan to defend their major paper/take-home comprehensive examination before the deadline for graduating that semester (usually three weeks before the end of the semester).
4. If pursuing the take-home option, by noon on the first day of comprehensive examination week, the student will receive the take-home questions from the Chair, typically via e-mail.
5. The student will then have one week to complete the take-home comprehensive examination and will turn the papers in to her or his committee by noon one week after receiving the questions, typically via e-mail.
6. The oral examination will then take place approximately one week after the student turns in the completed take-home comprehensive examination. This should be scheduled as soon as the student knows that the examination will be taken that semester.
7. The Chair will send the examination results and a copy of the answers to the Graduate Program Assistant.

DEADLINES

M.A. major paper and subsequent oral examination needs to be completed in accordance with the graduate school deadlines, typically in mid-April. The comprehensive examinations are administered twice during the year, once during the fall semester (typically the first week in November) and once during the spring semester (typically the first week in April).