

Procedures for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination

Students may apply to complete the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination once they have completed the three core courses and the two consecutive summer residencies. Generally, students will have also completed the elective courses. The comprehensive examination consists of two written responses to questions identified by Graduate Studies in Education:

Question 1

Place your thesis project within the context of the theoretical discourses that inform educational research and scholarship. Identify at least two theoretical traditions that have informed your understanding of educational sustainability in your area.

Question 2

Outline the methodological issues that you are considering in the design of your research study. Be clear about the ways in which the methods and methodologies being considered relate to the central problem or question that frames your study. Your discussion should be informed by relevant issues identified in your reading to date.

In the written responses to these questions, students are expected to bring a variety of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies to their intended area of research. The examination responses afford students the opportunity to situate their intended area of research in the broad educational context, consistent with the commitment to the program's interdisciplinary approach to education studies.

There is no course weight for the Comprehensive Examination.

Preparing for the Comprehensive Examination

Before applying to complete the comprehensive examination, students must:

- complete all core courses and two consecutive summer residencies;
- define their intended area of research;
- complete required reading in the areas covered by the questions and their intended area of research;
- establish and register, with Graduate Studies in Education, their Ph.D. Supervisory Committee;
- seek advice and consult with their supervisory committees to confirm their readiness for the examination and/or establish a plan to prepare the student to write the comprehensive examination.

It is recommended that:

- students have the opportunity to meet with their supervisory committee or individual members, as needed, to establish the scope of the comprehensive examination questions within their intended area of research and confirm/clarify interpretation of the comprehensive examination questions;
- the supervisory committee suggest additional readings or research experiences as necessary in order to help prepare the student to write the comprehensive examination;
- students adhere closely to the information encountered in the course work.

*Please note that the supervisory committee may not provide feedback on the actual written responses before or during the comprehensive examination process.

Applying for the Comprehensive Examination

Ph.D. students must apply to complete their comprehensive examination at least four weeks in advance of the date upon which they intend to submit their written responses. The application will be approved by the Chair of Graduate Studies in Education, and the composition of the Comprehensive Examination Review Committee will be confirmed and communicated to the student. Potential conflicts of interest must be declared in writing to Graduate Studies in Education in advance of the commencement of the comprehensive examination period.

Two weeks prior to the student-identified submission date, the comprehensive examination period will commence. At this time, the Graduate Studies in Education office will provide students with details regarding the format, length, and procedures to be followed for the comprehensive examination.

The Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Application is available on the [SGS website](#) under Supplementary Graduate Studies in Education forms.

Composition of the Comprehensive Examination Review Committee

The Comprehensive Examination Review Committee for each comprehensive examination response will be composed of:

- a. the dissertation supervisor;
- b. at the discretion of the dissertation supervisor, the supervisory committee or other full members of Graduate Studies in Education who are chosen for their level of expertise (optional);
- c. a full member of the Education graduate faculty assigned by Graduate Studies in Education.

Comprehensive Examination Evaluation Process

For each exam response, there is a minimum of two reviewers including the dissertation supervisor and one full member of Graduate Studies in Education, both of whom must indicate a grade of Pass in order for each exam response to be considered successful. In the case where the Supervisory Committee or other members of Graduate Studies in Education are also reviewing the comprehensive examination responses, their assessment is factored into the Dissertation Supervisor's grade. Both comprehensive examination responses must receive a grade of Pass in order for the student to be deemed successful.

For each examination response:

- If both reviewers indicate a *Pass*, the comprehensive examination response is deemed to be successful, and no further work on the comprehensive exam question(s) is required;
- If one reviewer indicates a *Pass*, and the other indicates *Revise and Resubmit*, the comprehensive examination response(s) must be revised to the reviewer's satisfaction by the date specified (see Guidelines for Decisions made by Comprehensive Examination Review Committees). If the comprehensive examination response(s) is not revised to the reviewer's satisfaction, then it is considered a failed comprehensive examination;
- If both reviewers indicate *Revise and Resubmit*, the comprehensive examination response(s) must be revised to the satisfaction of the Comprehensive Examination Review Committee by the date specified (see guidelines for decisions made by Comprehensive Examination Review Committees). The same reviewers will evaluate the revised response(s). If the comprehensive examination response(s) is not revised to all reviewers' satisfaction, then it is considered a failed comprehensive examination;
- If both reviewers are uncertain as to whether the student can *Revise and Resubmit* successfully, they may choose *Fail* (Fail #1), in which case it is a clear fail and the student does not progress to the next stage of their Ph.D. work until the comprehensive examination has been re-attempted (see Guidelines for Decisions made by Comprehensive Examination Review Committees). The same reviewers will evaluate the re-attempted comprehensive response(s). Students may re-attempt the comprehensive examination once after a six to twelve month waiting period. The same reviewers will evaluate the resubmitted response(s);
- On a second failed attempt (Fail #2), the student will receive an F and will be required to withdraw from the Ph.D. program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to a failed comprehensive examination are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program at any time.
- If a reviewer notes and verifies Academic Dishonesty, the student will receive an F, a charge of AD on his/her transcript, and will be required to withdraw from the Ph.D. program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to Academic Dishonesty are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program at any time.

Guidelines for Examination Committee Decisions

Decision	Details	Timeline
Pass	The student has demonstrated solid awareness of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies as they are related to their intended area of research.	None
Revise and Resubmit The responses are to be revised with committee feedback and resubmitted.	The student has demonstrated awareness of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies as they are related to their intended area of research, but needs to revise and/or clarify response components. Detailed feedback and expected standards of achievement must be provided to the student in writing, along with times for completion.	Revise and resubmit within two weeks to two months as specified by the committee.
Fail #1 - Repeat with remediation The responses are to be completely redone.	The student has not demonstrated awareness of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies as they are related to their intended area of research. The responses need to be re-conceptualized and rewritten. The examination committee may require additional course work, readings, etc. in the students' identified areas of need. The student (in collaboration with the examination committee) should develop an action plan; records of correspondence with committee members should be appended to the second attempt. Students are permitted, without prejudice, one repeat of the comprehensive (in whole or in part). The first time a student fails, the student must be informed in writing of details related to the failed attempt and conditions relating to the repeat of the examination (including time frame, nature of the re-examination, committee membership, etc.)	Re-apply to write exam no sooner than six to twelve months after the failed attempt.
Fail #2 - Removal from Program	In the event that the reviewers do not agree on the results of the second attempt an External Expert <u>may</u> be engaged to review the material and assist the Comprehensive Examination Review Committee in rendering a final decision. To identify an External Expert, the committee must submit the names of three arms-length researchers to the Graduate Chair who will select one reviewer and arrange to have the question assessed. The External Examiner's form, available on the SGS website under Supplementary Graduate Studies in Education forms, may be used to guide the selection of external experts. In the event of a second failure, the student will receive a grade of F and must withdraw from the Ph.D. program. Failure to pass the second attempt results in termination of graduate studies and dismissal from the academic program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to a second failed comprehensive examination are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program at any time.	Immediate
Academic Dishonesty – Removal from Program	In the event that Academic Dishonesty is noted and verified, the student will receive an F and a charge of AD and will be required to withdraw from the Ph.D. program. Students who are dismissed from the program due to a failed comprehensive examination are ineligible to reapply to the same degree program at any time.	

Appeal Procedures

1. If the student wishes to appeal the final outcome of the Comprehensive Examination on procedural and/or academic grounds, the appeal must be lodged formally with the Dean of Education.
2. The student will document in writing the reasons why he or she believes the academic decision was unjust and/or procedures were not followed. This should be done as early as possible after the decision is announced and, normally no longer than ten working days.
3. After reviewing the appeal, including consultation with the student, members of the Comprehensive Examination Review Committee, the office of Graduate Studies in Education, and the External Expert (if applicable), the Dean of Education may find that:
 - i. The decision is academically and procedurally sound (a procedural review should be conducted even in cases where the appeal is on academic grounds);
 - ii. An error in procedure or academic judgment has been made. In this case, the Dean of Education will proceed to find a solution.
4. If the Dean finds that the decision of the Comprehensive Examination Review Committee was academically and procedurally sound, and recommends that the student be required to withdraw from the program, the student may appeal the Dean's recommendation to the Senate Student Appeals Committee who will make a decision to deny the appeal or uphold the appeal.
5. If the appeal is not based on academic or procedural matters, but rather on extenuating circumstances, the Dean of Education will recommend to the student that he or she directly address the Senate Standings and Petitions Committee.

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