

# COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

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The written and the oral comprehensive examinations together constitute a comprehensive examination of the student's command of the field.

This is the exam of breadth. The definition of "comprehensive" varies by academic program, but here means an examination whose thoroughness in all ways conforms to the best accepted practices within the discipline. The form of the comprehensive examination in any degree program is described in that graduate program handbook and all students shall be subject to the written policy and procedures.

The overarching purposes of the comprehensive exam are to:

- evaluate the student's overall proficiency in a body of knowledge and skills after most of the program of study is completed;
- test the candidate's knowledge of all transferred courses;
- discover any weaknesses in the candidate's knowledge that need to be remedied by additional courses or other instruction; and
- determine the candidate's fitness to continue work toward the doctorate.

Each doctoral student is required to pass the doctoral comprehensive examination. A student may attempt the comprehensive examination only on the recommendation of the advisory committee and only after a student has satisfactorily completed all prerequisite course work, removed identified deficiencies, satisfied language requirements, and completed most of the course work contained in the program of study. Individual departments may have additional requirements. The exam should be taken one or two semesters before the semester of anticipated candidacy to allow the committee to make changes to the Plan of Study if necessary.

The written part is scheduled and prepared based on what is indicated in the program handbook. The questions may cover any aspect of the course work taken by the student during the period of this graduate study or any subject logically related and basic to an understanding of the subject matter of the major and minor areas of study. Any transferred course work is subject to examination at the time of the comprehensive examination. The questions are designed to measure the student's proficiency in their field and the adequacy of preparation for research. The result of the written exam must be filed with the Graduate School before the oral portion may be held.

The written exam may result in one of three determinations:

- Pass
- Conditional (*Put conditions in writing and be clear on a due date*)
- Fail

Any requirement for re-writes of any portion (or all) of the exam constitutes a Conditional result. Conditional grades must be reported to the Graduate School indicating the conditions and due date. If the committee so determines, any identified weaknesses may be addressed during the oral portion of the exam, which constitutes a Pass. In the case of a Non-Pass, the student must petition the committee for permission to retake the exam. If granted, the student must wait until the following semester to ensure enough preparation time.

The oral portion of the comprehensive examination should be scheduled within one month following the passing of the written examination. The

purpose of the oral examination is to explore in greater depth questions on the written exam and to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the field of specialization and related areas. Many programs also require students to present and/or defend the dissertation proposal as part of the oral comprehensive exam. In such cases, the dissertation committee must be formally appointed and in attendance for the oral portion of the comprehensive exam.

The oral exam may result in one of three determinations:

- Pass
- Conditional (*Put conditions in writing and be clear on a due date*)
- Fail

Any requirement for re-examination constitutes a Conditional result. Conditional grades must be reported to the Graduate School indicating the conditions and due date. In the case of a Non-Pass, the student must petition the committee for permission to retake the oral exam. If granted, the student must wait until the following semester to ensure enough preparation time.

Any student who fails either portion of the comprehensive examination twice or whose petition for a re-examination is denied will be dismissed from the program.