

## School of Graduate Studies Education Department Policies and Guidelines COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

All programs in the Graduate School have a comprehensive examination as a degree requirement. The comprehensive examination is structured to assess students' familiarity with research and problem-solving methods, and to provide them with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to synthesize knowledge from many sources and to apply it in a real-life situation.

The comprehensive examination may be taken no earlier than during the student's final semester of coursework for the degree. At the latest, the student is expected to complete the comprehensive examination within three months after all coursework has been completed. Comprehensive examinations must be successfully completed by PhD students before they are approved for candidacy status.

Comprehensive examinations are given once per term and once during the intersemester. The student must register for the comprehensive examination through IUTUS, and must also fill out the departmental comprehensive request form. The request should be received by the Department no later than one month prior to the expected examination date. At that time, the student will be provided with a comprehensive preparation document containing instructions for preparing for and taking the comprehensive examination, objectives and outcomes, and the grading rubric/guidelines which will be used in scoring the exam.

Comprehensive questions are designed to integrate fields of knowledge and critical thinking, and may consist of a case study or an application problem focusing on a real-life situation. All comprehensive examination answers (MA, MBA, MSA, MPH, EdS, and PhD) will be evaluated according to international academic writing standards as well as criteria and procedures explained in the departmental comprehensive examination preparation document. Comprehensive examinations vary in length and procedures for different programs. Consult the department chair for more information.

All comprehensive examination questions are evaluated by a minimum of two professors, and a letter grade is assigned to the student's response for each question. The two grades for each response are averaged. The final grade for the entire exam consists of an average of the grades for each question. Results are assigned as follows:

- **PASS: B** average grade or better overall, with an average grade no lower than **C** on any single question.
- **PASS SUBJECT TO ORAL OR WRITTEN FOLLOW-UP: B** average grade or better overall, with an average grade lower than **C** on one question.
- **NO PASS:** Lower than a **B** grade average overall.

The Department Chair will notify the student in writing of the results of the examination, normally within four weeks after the comprehensive examination has been completed.

In the case of a "Pass Subject to Oral or Written Follow-up" exam result, the follow-up examination will address only the focus area in which the grade lower than a **C** average was earned. This exam can be taken no sooner than one month after the student has been notified of the examination results. In the case of a "No Pass" result, a repeat of the entire comprehensive examination can be taken no sooner than three months after the student has been notified of the examination results, but not later than 12 months. It is appropriate to contact the Department Chair and request specific guidelines as to how to improve performance before attempting the exam again. The comprehensive examination, or portions thereof, may be repeated **only once**.