

Teaching and Teacher Education Comprehensive Examination

For admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree, the student must pass a written and an oral Doctoral Comprehensive Examination. This examination is intended to test the student's comprehensive knowledge of the major and minor subjects of study, both in breadth across the general field of study and in depth within the area of specialization.

For the major subject in Teaching and Teacher Education, the comprehensive examination is comprised by three parts, two written and one oral. In these three components, the student must demonstrate sophisticated, accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the field of teaching and learning, widely construed. The student must also demonstrate the ability to construct a scholarly argument that 1) articulates contrasting perspectives on an issue and 2) uses a theoretical framework as an analytic lens. The formulation of the actual questions for the examination is the responsibility of the committee, but the student may be involved as well. The topics of the questions will be at the discretion of the committee, and they will be selected from a variety of sources, including the candidate's coursework, interests of the candidate, major themes in teaching and learning, and contemporary issues in the field of education.

For the minor subject of the comprehensive examination, the minor committee chair (and any other minor committee members) may require a written component different from that of the major, or the minor committee chair may use the major written exam components as satisfying the minor. The minor committee chair will render this decision based on his or her prerogative and the tradition of the department that houses the minor. The oral examination however will combine both the major and minor subjects.

A. Written Exam

The description below refers to the major subject.

Format

The written examination for the major subject has two components:

- 1) An in-house exam in which the committee poses two questions and the student chooses one of them. The questions are designed to test the student's knowledge of the field broadly conceived, beyond the specific topic of the student's dissertation. The student will have 8 hours to answer the question. Below are directions for taking this exam.
 - You will have a total of eight hours to write a 10-page, double-spaced response (around 2500 words) to one of two questions.
 - This is an open-book exam, which means that you may access any written resources (hard copy or electronic) that you deem necessary. You may not, however, receive assistance from any person. For example, you may not converse with another person about the content of these questions during the eight hours of the exam.

- Your response must be mostly comprised of writing that you generate during the hours of the examination. While you may access and draw from your prior writing, the intent of this examination is to evaluate work generated during the examination and not, for example, portions of writing generated for course papers or other uses.
- 2) A scholarly paper of about 25-30 pages, doubled-spaced, APA style. The paper may be a comprehensive literature review or a theoretical essay. The topic or question will be determined between the student and the committee, and the student is strongly encouraged to write the paper on his or her dissertation topic. Once the theme for the scholarly paper has been decided upon, the student must submit an approval form to the TLS Graduate Coordinator with the signatures from the Comprehensive Committee that lists the question or topic that will be addressed. The Graduate Coordinator will send the paper along with a ballot to all of the committee members. The committee is given two weeks to provide their responses. The Graduate Coordinator will keep track of the ballots and send reminders to the members who have not submitted their response. Once all ballots are submitted, the advisor will inform the student of their results.

You must adhere to the University Code of Academic Integrity (see <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity>) for more information), maintaining integrity and ethical behavior as you take all parts of this exam. Violation of any of these directions for the exam or of the University Code of Academic Integrity may result in failure of this portion of the comprehensive examination.

General Guidance about What Responses Should Demonstrate

- An understanding of ideas from the field of teaching and teacher education: Your response should demonstrate a broad understanding of key ideas in the field of teaching and teacher education. You should clearly explain/define any terms you use and note the appropriate reference associated with that explanation/definition.
- The use of evidence: Your response should be clearly elaborated by detailed evidence, including articles and other examples. You should be able to correctly articulate, use, and cite main ideas from key writings that connect to your question.
- The quality of your writing: We understand that this exam is time limited, so we do not expect a fully polished product. However, your writing should make a well-reasoned, scholarly argument that is clear and coherent with limited grammatical or spelling errors

Timing

While the timing for doing the written portions can be adjusted as needed by the committee, it is advisable that the student employs the following timing of events: The in-house exam will be done towards the end of the second-to-last semester of coursework, while the scholarly paper will be turned in towards the middle of the last semester of coursework. Not more than 12 months should pass from the moment the first written component is approved to the moment the student takes the oral exam. In the case in which the major and minor subject components are

different, the student must pass the minor subject written component within this same 12-month time frame before the student may proceed towards the oral exam.

Criteria for Passing

The candidate must demonstrate a sophisticated ability to synthesize, analyze, and write in a scholarly manner. Some questions that will be considered by the committee are: Does the candidate show in-depth knowledge of the field, and as appropriate, breadth of knowledge as well? Does the candidate exhibit understanding of current issues of the field, including presenting both/many sides of the same topic? Can the candidate use knowledge of the field to take a position and articulate an argument? Is the information provided accurate and rich in substance?

Processing of the Written Exam

Once the written exam is submitted, students should expect results in two weeks, and ask the Graduate Secretary to get responses from committee members if that time is exceeded.

Each component of the written exam needs to be passed before the student may proceed to the next stage. That is, the student will be allowed to turn in the scholarly paper once he or she has successfully passed the in-house exam, and the student will be allowed to do the oral component once the student's scholarly paper has been approved. This applies to the instance in which the major and minor subject components are the same. In the case in which the major and minor subject components are different, the student must pass the minor subject written component independently of the major subject before the student may proceed towards the oral exam.

For all three components, the voting tally will be the same: In a committee composed by four faculty members, the minimum vote to pass will be 3 votes in favor, one against. If the vote is tied, the student fails the exam. An abstention counts as a vote to fail the exam.

In a committee composed by five faculty members, the minimum vote to pass will be 3 votes in favor, two against. An abstention counts as a vote to fail the exam.

The above tallies apply to the instance in which the major and minor subject components are the same. However, in the case in which the major and minor subject components are different, and the major committee is comprised by only three members, the minimum vote to pass will be 2 votes in favor, one against. An abstention counts as a vote to fail the exam. In the case in which the subject components are different, and the major committee is comprised by four members (as opposed to three), the voting tally will be the same as that described above, that is, the minimum vote to pass will be 3 votes in favor, one against. If the vote is tied, the student fails the exam. An abstention counts as a vote to fail the exam.

Failing the Written Exam

If a student fails any of the components, he or she will be allowed to re-take it once. The committee will inform the student about the specific areas of deficiency and will provide ample time for the student to prepare to take that component again. Unless the committee decides otherwise, the composition of the committee will remain the same.

If the student fails any one component of the examination a second time, the student shall *not* be allowed to proceed to the other stages of the comprehensive examination. At this point the committee will request that the Graduate College disqualify the student.

B. Oral Exam

Upon successful completion of both components of the written comprehensive examination, the student will then take the oral portion of the exam. The exam will be scheduled for three hours and it is expected that all members of the doctoral committee are present—including the minor member(s). The exam will last a minimum of 60 minutes and a maximum of three hours.

The oral examination will test the student's comprehensive knowledge of the major and minor subjects of study, both in terms of breadth across the general field of study and in depth within the area of specialization. Questions may be posed on a variety of subjects related to the student's major and minor fields, which may include research design and methodology. The committee may decide to pose questions related to the topic and content of the written examination, but in general the oral exam will *not* be a defense of the written components. Even though the oral examination is not a dissertation proposal meeting, in consultation with the committee prior to the exam questions about the dissertation may be included as well.

Timing

While the timing for doing the oral portion of the exam can be adjusted as needed by the committee, it is advisable that the student schedules the oral exam towards the end of the last semester of coursework or towards the beginning of the following semester thereafter. The oral exam must be taken no later than 12 months after passing the first written component of the major subject. This same time frame applies towards the minor subject component, in the case in which the requirement is different from the major subject.

Criteria for Passing

The criteria for passing the oral portion will be similar to the written portions. The candidate must demonstrate a sophisticated ability to synthesize, analyze, and present in a scholarly manner. Some issues that will be considered by the committee are: Does the candidate show in-depth knowledge of the field, and as appropriate, breath of knowledge as well? Does the candidate exhibit understanding of current issues of the field, including presenting both/many sides of the same topic? Can the candidate use knowledge of the field to take a position and articulate an argument? Is the information provided accurate and rich in substance? The committee will expect the same level of accuracy, thoroughness, clarity, and eloquence that is required at an advanced graduate seminar or presentation at a national conference.

The Committee voting tally required for passing the oral exam will be identical to that of the written portions. In a committee composed by four faculty members, the minimum vote to pass will be 3 votes in favor, one against. An abstention counts as a vote to fail the exam. If the vote is tied, the student fails the exam.

In a committee composed by five faculty members, more than one negative vote will constitute a failed exam. An abstention counts as a vote to fail the exam.

Failing the Oral Exam

If a student fails the oral exam once, he or she will be allowed to re-take it again. The committee will inform the student about the specific areas of deficiency and will provide ample time for the student to prepare to take the exam again.

If the student fails the oral exam a second time, the student shall *not* be allowed to take the exam again. At this point, the Department will request academic disqualification for the student.

Advancement to Candidacy

When the student has an approved doctoral Plan of Study on file with the Graduate Student Academic Services, has satisfied all course work, language requirements, and passed the written and oral portions of the Comprehensive Examination, their bursar account will be billed the fee for candidacy, dissertation processing, and archiving. This is a one-time fee and the student will not be billed again if they change their anticipated graduation date. Copyrighting is optional and carries an additional fee.