

PROTOCOL FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

What is the comprehensive examination?

The comprehensive examination is a culminating activity that fulfills the requirements for students in the coursework and comprehensive examination route of the Master of Education Program in our department. The examination aims to assess the student's ability to demonstrate *breadth* of understanding about their program specialization, to describe how areas *interrelate*, and to *synthesize* knowledge gained from a variety of courses. These requirements of breadth, interrelation, and synthesis across different areas of study make the comprehensive examination distinct from term papers and theses which require depth of understanding of relatively narrow areas of knowledge.

How does the comprehensive examination compare to the thesis in terms of workload and course equivalency?

The comprehensive examination is different from the thesis in terms of workload and course equivalency. While the thesis is equivalent to completing the assignments for 12 credit hours of 7000 coursework, the comprehensive examination would compare with completing the assignments for one 3 credit hour course at the 7000 level. It follows then that the workload for completion of a comprehensive examination should be much less than for a thesis.

What is the format for a comprehensive examination?

The form and content of the comprehensive examination can vary and is negotiated by students with the program advisor. Examples of various forms include: Study of Teaching Project, Curriculum Application Project, Curriculum Development Project, Literature Review Papers, Multi-Media Presentation or Creative Work, Professional Publication Project, Take Home Open-Resource Examination, Closed-Book On-Campus Examination, or Small-Scale Research Study.

What is the process for initiating and completing the comprehensive examination with students?

The following steps outline a process for program advisors who are working with students who are nearing the completion of their coursework:

1. During the term that your students are completing their coursework initiate a conversation with them about the timing, nature and form of their examination. At this point, the student should draft a written proposal which reflects what their advisor has negotiated with them. The advisor and student can also begin thinking about possibilities for a second member of the examining committee.

2. Students must notify their program advisor in writing of their intention to write the exam **30 days before the start of the term during which the examination will be completed.** A formal written proposal and outline addressing how the examination option is to be fulfilled should accompany this notice. There is no formal proposal defense for comprehensive examinations.
3. Ensure that your students are registered for GRAD 7010, the Master's Comprehensive Examination course, in the appropriate term. The comprehensive examination is normally written after all coursework is completed. Students may register in the same term that they complete their coursework; however, the examination will not be read until all coursework is successfully completed.

What are the recommended timelines for graduation?

In order that sufficient time is provided for the process of negotiating and approving the examination option, preparing the written manuscripts and artifacts, adjudicating by the examiners, scheduling a presentation (if necessary), completing of any revisions that may be required, and the timely reporting of results to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, the following timelines are strongly recommended:

Convocation	Notification & Proposal	Submission of Examination	Reports for Faculty of Graduate Studies
February	August 1	October 14	First Week January
May	December 1	January 20	First Week of April
October	April 1	June 16	Third Week of August

How is the comprehensive examining committee established?

The comprehensive examining committee consists of a minimum of two faculty members familiar with the student's program specialization, one of which is normally the student's program advisor. The maximum size of the committee is three members and the third member may represent another unit at the University or a colleague from the field familiar with the student's program specialization. The third member must be willing to serve and qualified for the assignment. Two members of the committee must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

What are the responsibilities of the comprehensive examining committee?

At the discretion of the examining committee, the comprehensive examination may include a presentation which is public or closed to the committee. Once a student completes their comprehensive examination, a presentation can be scheduled for the committee by the program advisor. Two weeks prior to the presentation, the written manuscript and/or artifact resulting from the culminating activity should be distributed to committee members for independent review. Upon receiving the student's work and in time for the presentation date, examiners prepare written feedback and a recommended grade.

Scheduled presentations give students the opportunity to share a summary of their work, participate in an academic dialogue on their topic, and celebrate their achievement with the committee and others. Examiners take into account the student's presentation in their final assessments, if determined to be a requirement. Students will be asked to leave the presentation room while the committee deliberates and arrives at an assessment of the presentation and comprehensive examination.

Examiners may agree to a grade of *Pass*, *Fail* or *Pass Subject to Minor Modifications*. In a case requiring minor modifications, the student has two weeks to complete the revisions and re-submit them to the examining committee. A Pass grade must be agreed to by all committee members. In the case of a failing grade, the student will be given the opportunity to take the comprehensive examination a second time, for which a second culminating activity will be negotiated. Any student who fails the comprehensive examination a second time will be required to withdraw from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination and presentation (if required), a *Report on Master's Comprehensive Examination* is signed off by the examiners and the Department Head, and then forwarded to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.