

Comprehensive Examination

Purpose

A comprehensive examination is required by the Faculty of Graduate Studies in all doctoral programs. The examination is intended to assess students' analytical, problem-solving and critical interpretative abilities, their breadth and in-depth knowledge of the discipline, their ability to conduct independent and original empirical research and their degree preparation for their dissertation research follow.

In the PhD degree in Cross Faculty Inquiry in Education program, the supervisory committee decides whether the students' programmatic needs will be best served with (a) the preparation of two or three comprehensive papers and (b) the particular content focus of each of the two or three papers. Coming at the end of the student's coursework and before the heavily specialized research of the proposal and dissertation, the papers should pursue a more comprehensive goal, in a critical fashion, taking on one or more of the leading questions at the intersection of policy, theory, research and practice for both areas.

One model that might guide students in writing these papers is the scholarly journal Essay Review article that, rather than present the results of an empirical research project, seeks to advance knowledge within a specified field of inquiry by contributing an engages and systematic scholarly analysis. The first step in the comprehensive examination process is for the student to seek approval from their supervisory committee, of a set of questions and related reading lists to lay out the conceptual and bibliographic scope of the comprehensive papers.

The time frame for writing the two or three papers is discussed and agreed upon by the student and his/her supervisory committee. Historically, papers are written over a period of two to four months. Once decided, the specific due date must be registered with the CCFI Graduate Advisor/Director of Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Education one month prior to the submission deadline.

Students work with their supervisory committee to develop:

- A general issue or question that will provide the focus of the argument within each paper
- A preliminary reading list of key works in the area of ten or more items for each paper

Each paper should be 5000-7000 words in length and be of scholarly fashion. The student's supervisory committee will examine the resulting papers. Since these papers articulate the CCFI PhD student's own substantive review of the scholarly literature the examinee should be careful not to make use of/rely on multiple lengthy direct citations. A typical examination paper would not include more than three direct citations of authors' "own words" that are excess of ten words in length.

Timing

Students meet with their supervisory committee ahead of time to confirm his/her readiness for the comprehensive examinations, explore and identify questions and suggest timing and sequence of the examination. Each of the two (or three) papers is typically 20-35 pages and normally takes 4-6 weeks to

complete. The entire examination generally takes 3-4 months to complete. Each paper is expected to be of publishable quality; indeed, students are encouraged to view this as an opportunity to publish one or more papers in an academic journal.

Committee Evaluation of Comprehensive Examination

The supervisory committee generally reviews the two or three comprehensive papers as a set and decide by consensus, after reading the papers and attending the formal discussion, whether it is an Unconditional Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail. The assessment and reasons for the decision reached by the supervisory committee, include strengths and weaknesses of the papers, are communicated to the student orally following the formal discussion in order to allow the student to understand the decision. If a student receives a Revise and Resubmit, the requirements to achieve an Unconditional Pass will be provided to the student in writing by the supervisory committee. Expected standards and times for completion should also be included.

The student has the right to appeal the committee's decision through the CCFI Graduate Advisor/Director of Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Education. The committee submits the student's papers to the CCFI Graduate Advisor/ Director of Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Education. The supervisor will then email the CCFI Graduate Advisor/ Director of Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Education with notification of the outcome of the exam (Unconditional Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail). The Faculty of Graduate Studies is notified with the appropriate form and signatures.