

Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

Higher Education

(Master's Degree Candidates)

This document is designed for the Warner Higher Education Master's candidate where a comprehensive examination may be a better alternative to the thesis. It is not intended to be a lesser alternative to the thesis paper. The comprehensive examination is a non- credit (0 credit) option and the candidate may need to take an additional course to meet the 36 credit requirement for the Master's degree.

I. The Comprehensive Examination serves the following purposes:

1. Enables candidates to apply the concepts, theories, and frameworks that they have learned in their coursework.
2. Provides evidence that the candidate has mastered the knowledge that they need to be a successful professional practitioner and leader in higher education.
3. Certifying that the candidate has met the culminating experience requirement of all Master's degree students at Warner.

II. Prerequisites to the Comprehensive Examination:

1. Candidates may take the comprehensive examination as they complete their coursework.
2. Candidates must be enrolled for at least one credit the semester that they complete the comprehensive examination (as noted in section III. 3. Registration below).

III. Comprehensive Examination Process:

1. Advisor Notification:

- a. It is candidates' responsibility to notify their faculty advisor that they are interested in sitting for the comprehensive exam instead of completing the thesis project.

2. Examination Scheduling:

- a. The faculty advisor will determine the examination periods in conjunction with the candidate's schedule.

3. Registration:

- a. Candidates taking the Master's comprehensive exams must register for EDE461 Master's Culminating Requirement: Higher Education (0 credits) in the semester that the exam occurs. The faculty advisor will be the designated instructor for the EDE461 registration. The Warner registrar will set up the registration with advisor permission.

IV. Components of the Qualifying Examination

1. Papers/Essays:

- a. The comprehensive examination requires that candidates provide written responses to **two major examination questions**.
- b. Each written response should be no more than 12-15 pages (double spaced, 1 inch margins, Times New Roman 12 pt. font), excluding the cover page and references. Proper APA style is required.
- c. Because the submissions are expected to be at the highest level, candidates may anticipate request for revisions and resubmission.
- d. Examiners may assist the candidate by providing general suggestions regarding how to approach the exam, but will not advise the candidate on how to respond to the specific questions, nor meet about the examination with the candidate while the candidate is writing the exam. Similarly, candidate should not discuss his/her question with other candidates.
- e. Candidates may seek outside support strictly related to **editing** of their exams. Editing assistance may include proofreading, help related to spelling, grammar, and APA formatting. Content, research strategies, or any and all other types of support are **prohibited** given the independent nature of the exam process.

2. Allotted Time:

- a. Candidates will have **15 days** to respond to each question.
- b. The advisor will work with the candidate to schedule the exam dates. All writing periods will allow two weekends for writing.
- c. If the candidate does not complete the examination on time for legitimate reasons as determined by the faculty advisor, a replacement question may be given and a new 15 day examination period will begin.

V. The Grading Process

1. Examiners:

- a. Two faculty members will administer the comprehensive examination – the (1) faculty advisor and (2) second examiner.
- b. The candidate's faculty advisor will serve as the lead examiner and identify the second examiner. Candidates do not select the examiners.
- c. Each examiner will serve as the primary reader for one of the questions.

2. Evaluation: In evaluating the candidate's responses during the written submission the examiners will take into consideration the following factors:

- a. The clarity of the written responses.
- b. The breadth and depth of the responses.
- c. The understanding of key theories, concepts, practices, etc.
- d. The originality of the insights and analysis.

3. **Successful Completion of the Exam:**
 - a. Candidates must successfully pass each question to complete the exam.
4. **Ratings Options for Examiners:**
 - a. Each examiner will make the determination of whether the candidate has earned a Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail rating on the question under his/her supervision.
5. **Pass Rating:** If examiners award a submission a Pass rating the candidate will have successfully completed the expectations for that question.
6. **Revise and Resubmit Rating:**
 - a. If the examiner awards a submission a Revise and Resubmit rating, they will provide the candidate with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their performance.
 - b. Candidates will have one (1) week from the receipt of feedback to revise and resubmit that submission.
 - c. If the examiner determines the revised submission meets expectations the candidate will have successfully completed the expectations for that question.
 - d. If the examiner determines that the resubmission does not meet expectations, the other examiner will review and assign a rating for the question.
 - e. The examiners will meet to determine a consensus rating (Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail) and proceed accordingly.
 - f. If both examiners award a fail rating, then Section V. 8 below applies.
7. **Fail Rating:**
 - a. If the examiner awards a submission a Fail rating and that a revise and resubmit rating is not appropriate they will ask the second reader to review the submission for a second rating. They will determine a consensus rating (Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail) and proceed accordingly.
 - b. If both examiners determine that the original or a revised submission does not meet expectations for the comprehensive examination, the submission will be awarded a Fail rating.
8. **Consequences of a Fail Rating:**
 - a. If a candidate receives a Fail rating for either question in the comprehensive examination, the candidate will be withdrawn from the Master's program.

VI. Successful Completion of the Comprehensive Examination

Upon earning a Pass (S) rating for both examination questions or a Fail (u) rating for an unsuccessful question the faculty advisor will submit the appropriate grade for EDE461. The faculty advisor will inform Warner Student Services of the results of the comprehensive examination regarding meeting the culminating experience requirement for all Master's candidates.