

Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

Higher Education

(Ed.D. Accelerated and Traditional Dissertations)

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 leader in higher education.
3. Successful completion is required before students can advance to the proposal writing stage of a field-based dissertation (i.e., Program Evaluation or Decision Analysis) or traditional dissertation.

II. Prerequisites to the Comprehensive Examination:

1. Candidates may take the Comprehensive Examination only after they have passed the Portfolio Evaluation and completed most of their coursework.
2. Coursework officially listed as part of the dissertation process in the candidate's program of study need not be completed prior to undertaking the Comprehensive Examination (i.e. ED540, ED541, ED542, ED543, ED544, or ED599).

III. Comprehensive Examination Process:

1. Advisor Notification:

- a. It is candidates' responsibility to notify their program advisor that they are eligible and would like to sit for the comprehensive exam in the next scheduled exam period.

2. Examination Scheduling:

- a. The Higher Education faculty will determine the examination periods for the year and publicize them to eligible students. Examinations for that semester will be administered during that period and students should plan their schedules accordingly.

3. Registration:

- a. **Traditional Dissertation:** Candidates who intend to complete a traditional dissertation must register for EDE551, Qualifying Case Analysis – Higher Education (0 credits) the semester they are completing or immediately following the completion of their coursework.
- b. **Accelerated Program Evaluation or Decision Analysis Dissertation:** Candidates who will have met all the academic requirements (completed required coursework, finished incomplete classes, etc.) and intend to enroll in a dissertation cohort and complete a Program Evaluation or Decision Analysis dissertation must register for EDE551, Comprehensive Examination – Higher Education (0 credits) the semester immediately preceding entrance into a dissertation cohort.

IV. Components of the Qualifying Examination

1. Papers/Essays:

- a. The comprehensive examination requires that candidates provide written responses to two qualifying 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. 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 with the candidate while the candidate is writing the exam. Similarly, candidate should not discuss his/her question with other candidates. **Students may seek outside support strictly related to editing of their exams. Editing assistance includes help related to spelling, grammar, and APA formatting. Any and all other types of support are prohibited given the independent nature of the exam process.**

2. Allotted Time:

- a. Examiners will allot candidates **ten (10) days** to respond to each question (Friday to Monday).
- b. Candidates must complete both questions the scheduled examination period detailed in Section II. 2 above.
- c. Candidates who wish to join a dissertation cohort must submit their response to the second prior to the first meeting of the dissertation proposal seminar.
- d. Individual adjustments to this schedule may only be made with the consent of the Department Chair and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and will be granted only because of the **most unusual and compelling exigencies** (e.g., health problems certified by a physician).

V. The Grading Process

1. Examiners:

- a. Two “examiners” will administer the comprehensive examination – the (1) Lead Examiner and (2) Second Examiner.
- b. The candidate’s advisor will serve as the Lead Examiner. The Lead Examiner will identify and solicit 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 exam the examiners will take into consideration the following factors:

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

3. 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.
- b. Candidates must successfully pass each question to complete the exam.

4. Pass Rating: If examiners award a submission a Pass rating the candidate will have successfully completed the expectations for that question.

5. 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 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 final pass or fail rating (see section 6 for submission determined to have failed).
- f. If both examiners award a “fail” rating, then Section V. 7 below applies.

6. Fail Rating:

- a. If the examiner awards a submission a Failing rating 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.

7. 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 doctoral program.
- b. Depending on the circumstances, the faculty will determine if the candidate has qualified for awarding of a Master’s Degree in Higher Education.

VI. Successful Completion of the Comprehensive Examination

Upon earning a Pass rating for both examination questions the Higher Education faculty member of record for EDE551 will record the passing grade in the grading system (and for the transcript).