



**Counseling and Human Development Programs
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
Guidelines and Forms**

The Comprehensive Examination for students in Counseling and Human Development reflects students' ability to review and evaluate scholarship relevant to their particular interest area, and is designed to determine whether students are developmentally prepared to meet the challenges of dissertation work. Dissertation work comprises the most demanding and labor intensive component of the doctoral program and marks the time when students are expected to act in the capacity of independent scholars. As such, the dissertation requires a considerable level of skill, including: (1) the ability to articulate a plausible dissertation question that is supported by a thorough review of relevant empirical literature, (2) an understanding of methodology that enables the student to select a method that is appropriate for their dissertation study, (3) the analytic skills necessary to critically evaluate existing empirical and theoretical literature in the field, (4) the ability to analyze their own dissertation data, and (5) the technical writing ability to present dissertation work to scholars in the field.

The comprehensive examination has **two formats**, namely, the **Three-Question Format** and the **Two-Question Format**.

ALL Ph.D. STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THE THREE-QUESTION FORMAT

Ed.D. STUDENTS, *IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THEIR ADVISOR*, MAY OPT FOR EITHER THE TWO QUESTION FORMAT OR THE THREE QUESTION FORMAT

****INSTRUCTIONS FOR THREE-QUESTION FORMAT****

Procedure for:

- 1) All Ph.D. Students**
- 2) Ed.D. Students Opting for the Three-Question Format**

The three-question format for the comprehensive examination is required of all Ph.D. students in Counseling and Human Development and is one of two options for EdD students. In light of its close relationship to the dissertation process, the comprehensive examination is designed to test students' readiness in the areas enumerated above. The examination consists of three papers, approximately 25 pages in length, with each paper addressing a unique dimension of the student's interest area. In general terms, the three papers are divided as follows: (1) an examination of theories relevant to the student's identified interest, (2) a critical review of relevant empirical research literature that emphasizes primary sources, and (3) in consultation

with your advisor, either a) a critical assessment of methods and procedures that have been used to study work within the student's area of interest or b) an in-depth consideration of a particular method that the student is considering for use in their dissertation. Occasionally, because of the particular nature of an individual's research interest, the student's comprehensive examination committee will modify the three questions to structure the exam in a way that more adequately addresses the student's topical needs. Given the breadth of information to which students are exposed in their classes, this exam is often their first targeted opportunity to provide a critical analysis of theoretical, empirical, and methodological issues specific to their interest area. These papers also provide students with the background they need to prepare their dissertation proposals. **They are not, however, dissertation chapters.**

The procedure for the comprehensive examination Three-Question Format is as follows. (See the table below for a detailing of the dates referenced in this description):

- 1) The comprehensive examination will consist of three questions, with each question being allotted a maximum of 6 weeks to complete.
- 2) Students, in consultation with their advisor, will choose their start date from options #1 and #2 indicated in the first column of the table below.
- 3) Before the start date, students, in consultation with their advisor, and based on feedback from the comprehensive examination committee, will articulate the three questions that will comprise the examination. The questions should provide the student with a broad understanding of the issues related to his or her primary research question. They should also be clearly stated and appropriate within the field(s) to be investigated.
- 4) The examination then officially starts on the date that the student has chosen
- 5) The student then has 6 weeks to complete the exam question as indicated by the due date listed in the table. He or she will then receive feedback within a time frame of two to three weeks (see table for exact dates).
- 6) If the student receives a passing grade on an exam question, they will then proceed to the next start option date in the table to begin the next question. For example, if a student started the exam on September 15th, completed exam one on October 27th, and received a passing grade when their evaluation was complete on November 10th they would then proceed to exam question #2, which would officially begin on November 11th and would need to be completed by December 23. The evaluation for this second question would be completed by January 14th. The third question would then follow the same pattern (assuming that it was passed on the first attempt) with the start date on January 15th, the due date on February 26th, and evaluation feedback

on March 12th. The student, at this point, would have officially passed their comprehensive exams.

- 7) If the student does not pass a question, rather than going on to the next question in their sequence, he or she would take the next six weeks to re-write the exam (see the 6-week revision period in the table below). For example, if the student begins on September 15th, submits the exam by October 27th, and is informed on November 10th that they will need to revise the exam paper, the student will have the period from November 11th to December 23rd to complete the revision and will be informed of its outcome by January 14th. If, after the evaluation period, the re-write is considered to be a “Pass”, the student will then proceed to the next start date available. In our example, with the revision evaluation outcome being received on January 14th, the student would then proceed to the second question beginning on January 15th. This pattern would be repeated for all of the questions where a re-write is required. (See below for consequences of failing a re-write).

Table 1: Comprehensive Examination Three-Question Format Schedule

Start Options	Exam Question Start Date	6-Week Due Date	Evaluation Complete	6-Week Revision Period	Revision Evaluation Complete
#1 Sept. 15	September 15	October 27	November 10	November 11 th December 23	January 14
	November 11	December 23	January 14	January 15 th February 26	March 12
#2 January 15	January 15	February 26	March 12	March 13 th April 24	May 8
	March 13	April 24	May 8	May 8 th June 19	July 10
	May 9	June 20	July 5	July 6 th August 20	September 10

****Below you will find a detailed example of how to read this table.****

Example:

Assume that Suzie Smith, in consultation with her advisor, decides to begin her comprehensive examination process on September 15th. Suzie then has 6 weeks to complete question #1, bringing her to October 27th, which is her completion deadline. By November 10th, Suzie will receive feedback on her question #1. If Suzie has passed question #1, she will then proceed to her second exam question beginning November 11th. Suzie would then have until December 23rd to complete question #2, for which she will receive feedback by January 14th. If she passes question #2, Suzie can then proceed to question #3, beginning January 15th. Suzie has until February 26th to complete question #3 and will receive feedback by March 12th. If she passes question #3, she will have completed the entire comprehensive examination process.

Let's assume in the example above that on November 10th Suzie is asked to re-write her question #1. She then has the period from November 11th to December 23rd to complete that revision. Suzie will receive feedback on her revision by January 14th, and if she has passed the revision, she will then proceed to question #2 beginning January 15th. Assuming that Suzie passes the next two examination questions on the first try, she would complete her comprehensive examination process no later than May 8th. If instead Suzie is asked to re-write question #2 in addition to rewriting question #1, writing for question #2 would begin on January 15th with a revision starting on March 13th, and evaluation being received on May 8th. Suzie would then proceed to question #3, which would begin on May 9th. If Suzie passes question #3 on the first try, she will know her outcome by July 5th. If she has passed question #3, she has completed the comprehensive exam process. If she is asked to revise question three, she would have until August 20th to do so, and would receive the evaluation of the question on September 10th. If Suzie passes question #3 on September 10th, she will have successfully completed the comprehensive examination.

Instructions for Two-Question Format

Procedure for EdD Students Opting for the Two-Question Format

Counseling and Human Development Ed.D. students, in either the traditional or accelerated track, may, after close consultation with their advisor, opt for this two-question comprehensive examination format. In this option, students must demonstrate competency in two areas of inquiry, one of which emphasizes their role as reflective practitioners. The examination consists of two papers, approximately 30-40 pages in length, with each paper addressing a unique set of dimensions related to the student's interest area. In general terms, the two papers are divided as follows:

Paper #1

This paper introduces a general area of inquiry that will become the focus of the student's dissertation. The introduction to the area of inquiry will include a critical literature review articulating the depth and breadth of existing research investigating issues central to the student's identified area of inquiry, and the major theoretical considerations raised by the area of inquiry that will be the focus of the dissertation.

Paper #2:

This paper consists of an elaboration of the student's specific dissertation research question, an explanation of the relevance of the area of inquiry to improving practice, a presentation of evidence that supports the student's claims of relevance to practice, a comprehensive scholarly description of a methodology to address this area of inquiry, and a rationale for the use of the student's chosen methodology.

**The procedure for the two-question format comprehensive examination as follows:
(See the table below for a detailing of the dates referenced in this description)**

- 1) The comprehensive examination will consist of two questions, with each question being allotted a maximum of 8 weeks to complete.
- 2) Students, in consultation with their advisor, will choose their start date from one of the two options indicated in the table below.
- 3) Before the start date, students, again in consultation with their advisor and based on feedback from the comprehensive examination committee, will articulate the two questions that will comprise the examination. The questions should provide the student with a broad understanding of the issues related to his or her primary research question. They should also be clearly stated and appropriate within the field(s) to be investigated.
- 4) Once the student completes an exam question, he or she will then receive feedback within a time frame of two to three weeks (see table for exact dates).
- 5) If the student receives a passing grade on an exam question, they will then proceed to the next exam question start date in the table (column 2) to begin the next question.
- 6) If the student does not pass a question, rather than going on to the next question in their sequence, he or she would take the next six weeks to re-write the exam (see the 6-week revision period in the table below). If, after the evaluation period, the re-write is considered to be a "Pass", the student will then proceed to the next start date available if they have just successfully completed the first question. If they have just successfully completed the second question, they would have officially passed the

comprehensive examination. This pattern would be repeated for all of the questions where a re-write is required. (See below for consequences of failing a re-write).

Table 2: Comprehensive Examination Two-Question Format

Start Options	Exam Question Start Date	8-Week Due Date	Evaluation Complete	6-Week Revision Period	Revision Evaluation Complete
#1 Sept. 15	September 15	November 10	November 24	November 25 - January 6	January 20
	November 25	January 20	February 3	February 4 – March 18	April 1
#2 January 21	January 21	March 17	March 31	April 1 – May 13	May 27
	April 1	May 27	June 10	June 11 – July 23	August 6
	May 28	July 23	August 6	August 7 - September 18	October 2

Example:

Ed.D. student Sam Smith is trying to decide whether to begin his comprehensive exams on September 15th or January 21st. Assume that Sam, in consultation with his advisor, decides to begin his comprehensive examination process on September 15th. Sam then has 8 weeks to complete question #1, bringing him to November 10th, which would be his completion deadline. By November 24th, Sam will receive feedback on his question #1. If Sam has passed question #1, he will then proceed to his second exam question (and jump to the next line in the above table) beginning November 25th. Sam would then have until January 20th to complete question #2, for which he will receive feedback by February 3rd. If he passes question #2, he will have completed the entire comprehensive examination process.

Let's assume in the example above that on November 24th Sam is asked to re-write his question #1. He then has the period from November 25th to January 6th to complete that revision. Sam will receive feedback on his revision by January 20th, and if he has passed the revision, he will then proceed to question #2 beginning January 21st and will have until March 17th to complete question #2. Assuming that Sam passes the second examination question on the first try, he would complete his comprehensive examination process when he receives his feedback on March 31st. If instead Sam is asked to re-write question #2, writing for question #2 would begin on April 1st and would be due on May 13th. Evaluation would then be received on May 27th. If Sam passes the second question on May 27th, he will have successfully completed his comprehensive examination.

Evaluation of Comprehensive Examination Questions

1) **For Students in Human Development**, two committee members are responsible for evaluating each paper, which is assigned a grade of “Pass” or “Fail”. **For Students in Counseling**, a committee member is responsible for evaluating one of the three papers, and will assign a grade of “Pass” or “Fail”. Detailed criteria for evaluating the papers are provided on the last two pages of this document. Under conditions of a Failed exam, students are allowed one resubmission. The following are general reasons for a failing grade:

- a. Further elaboration on a specific issue or area is necessary to represent breadth of knowledge
 - b. The student failed to demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate existing literature or demonstrates an interpretive misunderstanding of the literature
 - c. The student demonstrates a basic misunderstanding of theoretical constructs
 - d. The student failed to appropriately and correctly implement APA formatting
 - e. The technical quality of writing is unsatisfactory and compromises the scholarly presentation of the response
- 8) Once committee members have completed their review, they will send their feedback to the comprehensive exam committee chair who will share and review this feedback with the student.
- 9) If the student receives a failing grade on any of the examination questions, the student has the **one time** option of submitting a revised examination to the committee member(s). The revision periods are specified in the table above. All failed examination questions must be completed within the revision period. **Students must pass the exam within these boundaries to be retained in the program.**

More specifically, the following rules apply if a student receives a failing grade on a revision:

- A student is dismissed from the program if one resubmitted paper is failed. The student can petition faculty for admission that could result in: a) reinstatement with remediation criteria or b) supporting the student's dismissal.
- A student is dismissed from the program if a second resubmitted paper is failed. While a student can petition for readmission, concerns raised by failing the resubmission of a second comprehensive exam will make reinstatement unlikely. If reinstatement is granted, there will likely be remediation criteria.
- A student who is readmitted after failing a second resubmission, and subsequently fails a third resubmission, will be dismissed from the program. In the case of a third resubmission failure, the Counseling and Human Development faculty will not entertain a petition for reinstatement.

General Criteria for Evaluation of Comprehensive Exams

Overview of Comprehensive Exams

Each paper is approximately 25 double-spaced pages, excluding references, and follows APA Publication guidelines. Each paper is expected to meet the general criteria for evaluation as well as the specific criteria for each paper as detailed below. Once an exam has begun, a committee member can provide feedback on key references to explore and help the student to clarify their aims, **but is not to offer feedback on drafts**. Students may consult Warner Writing Support Services during the examination period.

General Criteria for Evaluation

- Ideas are well conceived; writing flows well; transitions are used appropriately.
- Arguments are logical and well-constructed, with appropriate evidence provided for claims made.
- The reader can understand the points the student is trying to convey.
- The material is well organized.
- The document is free of, or has few, grammatical and mechanical errors.
- The quality and style of writing are appropriate for a scholarly paper.
- The submission follows APA Publication guidelines.
- The document is free of any evidence of plagiarism (see the Warner academic honesty policy for more details:
<https://www.warner.rochester.edu/students/matriculated/policies>).

Criteria for Review of Theoretical Perspectives

- Review of literature to determine the range of theories used to conceptualize central question
- Demonstrated knowledge of important theories within area of specialization
- An overview of basic premises, relevance, and any extensions or revisions to the perspective
- Critique that addresses strengths and weaknesses
- A summary that includes a rationale for which perspectives reviewed are particularly relevant for framing the dissertation research.

Criteria for Literature Review

- Research relevant to the chosen question (and/or closely related problems) has been examined
- The review is sufficiently thorough and deep (i.e., not a set of summarized research studies).
- The contributions of specific studies to understanding issues and constructs related to the comps question are made explicit.

- A critical synthesis of the literature reviewed is provided.
- Implications are drawn about where further research is needed (i.e., gaps in the literature are identified).

Criteria for Review of Methods

- Method(s) used to approach a chosen research question have been appropriately identified and described.
- The appropriateness of various methods to the question has been explicitly discussed and critically reviewed.
- Data collection and analysis procedures have been identified and discussed relevant to issues impacting relevant to action research.
- Potential limitations of the various methods used to address the research interest are identified and discussed.

Criteria for Review of Relevance to Practice

- The argument connecting the relevance, to practice, of the chosen research topic reflects knowledge of current practices in the field.
- The student is able to articulate the practice “problem” that the chosen research topic will address.
- The argument connecting the relevance of the research topic to contemporary practices within the field makes a compelling case for improving practice.

Comprehensive Examination Registration

All students taking their comprehensive examination must register for EDE 556 Comprehensive Examination Research for a maximum of 6 credits. It is suggested that students plan to register for the EDE 556 for two consecutive semesters registering for a maximum of 3 credits each of those semesters. Consultation with the advisor is essential in planning registration for the comprehensive examination.

**WARNER GRADUATE SCHOOL Counseling and
Human Development COMPREHENSIVE
EXAMINATION FORMS**

This form consists of 4 parts, A, B, C, and D. *Before completing this form, the student is strongly encouraged to read through the accompanying explanation of how to use the two tables below, which can be found in the introductory pages of this form!*

- 1) Parts A, B, and C are submitted when the student is ready to begin the examination process. The submission of these three parts marks the beginning of the comprehensive examination process clock. Hence, in accordance with the table below, the filing of parts A, B and C would be due on whichever of the 2 start dates that the student and the student's advisor decide that the comprehensive examination process should begin (see shaded area in table below for starting date options).

- 2) Part D is submitted when the student has completed the examination process and must conform to the dates articulated in the tables below.

Comprehensive Examination Three-Question Format Schedule

Start Options	Exam Question Start Date	6thWeek Due Date	Evaluation Complete	6thWeek Revision Period	Revision Evaluation Complete
#1 Sept. 15	September 15	October 27	November 10	November 11 th December 23	January 14
	November 11	December 23	January 14	January 15 th February 26	March 12
#2 January 15	January 15	February 26	March 12	March 13 th April 24	May 8
	March 13	April 24	May 8	May 8 th June 19	July 10
	May 9	June 20	July 5	July 6 th August 20	September 10

Comprehensive Examination Two^o Question Format

Start Options	Exam Question Start Date	8 ^o Week Due Date	Evaluation Complete	6 ^o Week Revision Period	Revision Evaluation Complete
#1 Sept. 15	September 15	November 10	November 24	November 25 ^o January 6	January 20
	November 25	January 20	February 3	February 4 – March 18	April 1
#2 January 21	January 21	March 17	March 31	April 1 – May 13	May 27
	April 1	May 27	June 10	June 11 – July 23	August 6
	May 28	July 23	August 6	August 7 ^o September 18	October 2

A. STUDENT INFORMATION

Name _____

Student ID# _____

Address _____
Street City State Zip Code

Telephone _____
(Include area code)

Email _____

Degree: ___ EdD ___ EdD (Acc) ___ PhD Program Area: ___ Counseling ___ HD

B. FORMING THE EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

The examination committee is composed of three faculty members.

For Ph.D. Committees:

- 1) At least two of the three committee members must be full-time Warner School faculty members (tenure-line or clinical) who hold PhDs.
- 2) One of those faculty members must be from the student's program area, and the other must be from outside the program area.
- 3) The third committee member may be a faculty member from the Warner School, but also may be a faculty member from another school/college in the University. (See paragraph below for further criteria for the third committee member).

For Ed.D. Committees:

- 1) At least two of the three committee members must be a Warner School faculty member who either is on a tenure-track with a rank of at least assistant professor, or is part of the Warner School clinical faculty.
- 2) The third committee member may be a faculty member from the Warner School, but also may be a faculty member from another school/ college in the University. (See paragraph below for further criteria for the third committee member).

The third committee member of the comprehensive examination/qualifying examination committee for both Ph.D. and Ed.D committees may come from a college/university other than the University of Rochester. In this case, the student must obtain a curriculum vita from the third proposed member and submit it to the Associate Dean of the Warner School for his or her approval. The proposed committee member must have an earned doctorate, must be tenured or tenure-track faculty, must have a rank of at least assistant professor, and must be actively engaged in research.

Names (Please print or type)

Signatures*

1. _____ (Chair)	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

***In lieu of obtaining signatures, you or your advisor may send an email to studentservices@warner.rochester.edu, copying each committee member, and stating their willingness to serve on your committee.**

C. DESIGNING THE EXAMINATION (See page 1 of this form under “Procedure for Ph.D. and Ed.D. Students Completing the Comprehensive Examination”. *Note that this process is completed with the full participation of your advisor and your committee. It is a not a task that you are expected to execute without assistance.*)

Three Question Format:

Describe the general field to be examined:

Question 1: (Theory)

Question 2: (Review of empirical literature)

Question 3: (Methodology)

Please note any special considerations that your committee determined would be appropriate for your examination, e.g., reordering your questions, deviating from suggested theory, literature review, methodology format.

Two Question Format:

Describe the general field to be examined:

Question 1: (Theory and review of empirical literature)

Question 2: (Relevance to practice and methodology)

D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION FACULTY SIGN-OFF

Upon completion of the exam, the student or advisor should send an email, copying each committee member, to studentservices@warner.rochester.edu. The email should state that the comprehensive examination/qualifying examination has been successfully completed.