

University of Northern Colorado  
Master's Degree in Educational Leadership

**Comprehensive Examination  
Policy and Procedure Statement**

**General Description**

Each Master's Degree student must pass a written comprehensive examination or equivalent (as approved by the faculty) as part of their program of studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS). The examination will include the materials addressed in the four core courses (Inquiry, People, Environments, Organizations). Students also may choose to incorporate information from other classes they have taken in the program into their question responses. The intent of the comprehensive examination is to assess the student's overall knowledge in educational leadership; ability to synthesize and apply that knowledge to leadership problems or significant educational issues; and skills in organizing and expressing ideas in a logical, coherent, literate, and convincing fashion.

The exams in Educational Leadership are typically essay exams and address content from each of the core courses. These questions may pose educational issues calling for resolution, leadership problems requiring solutions, situational problems requiring analysis, and/or abstract questions calling for the application of appropriate knowledge.

**Scheduling of Examination**

The examination is scheduled three times during the year (Fall, Spring and Summer Semesters). For specific dates of the exam, please check with your advisor or the administrative assistant in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies office in McKee 418. The exams are usually four hours in length. Students who encounter undue inconvenience in coming to campus to take the comprehensive may take the exam in absentia (providing the student arranges for a place and a proctor), subject to approval of the student's advisor at least three weeks prior to the scheduled examination date.

**Eligibility to Take Examinations**

In order to take the examination, a student must have: (1) been granted regular admission to the program; (2) completed at least 27 hours of work applicable towards the 30 hour degree requirement (including completion of or be enrolled in 12 hours of core classes); (3) maintain a grade average of at least 3.00; and (4) obtained approvals from their program advisor. Eligibility to take the exam must be determined prior to the exam date.

A student must obtain and complete a form titled "Permit to Take Written Comprehensive Examination" from the office or under forms at [www.unco.edu/cebs/elps/forms](http://www.unco.edu/cebs/elps/forms). Although a completed form **must be received by the administrative assistant three weeks prior** to the scheduled date of the exam, students are encouraged to sign up for the exam at the beginning of the semester. Therefore, you must plan ahead to take the exam. A copy of the Policy and Procedure Statement will be given to or mailed to each student several weeks prior to the exam.

## **Examination Day Expectations**

The following conditions shall govern the administration of the comprehensive examination:

1. Students may choose to either hand write the exam, arrange for the use of a computer in McKee ICET computer lab, or use their own personal computer and printer. For those using a personal computer, a printed copy must be turned into the exam monitor at the completion of the exam. Students are required to destroy all electronic responses immediately following the exam.
2. Dictionaries may be brought by the students.
3. Students are permitted to leave the examination room for a short period of time during the exam but not permitted to discuss the examination questions with anyone other than the proctor.
4. Paper and ballpoint pens will be provided. Pencils shall not be used.
5. Students are identified by examination number which is used only in identifying examination materials.
6. Use of unauthorized materials will result in a decision that the exam has been failed. Plagiarism may result in the filing of charges leading to program termination and expulsion from the University.

## **General Criteria on Which the Examinations are Judged**

The responses to the examination questions will be judged using the following general criteria:

1. The responses must be well organized, concisely, and precisely written.
2. The responses must present a clear formulation of the problem/issue.
3. The responses must clearly address all the parts and the parameters of the question.
4. The responses must demonstrate related knowledge and understanding of content, including theories, models, and policies which were addressed in the Educational Leadership Program.
5. The responses must demonstrate an ability to apply knowledge to solve problems or resolve issues which might confront educational leaders.

## **Assessment and Evaluation of the Examination**

The examination will be read and evaluated by two faculty members independently through a blind review process. Where two faculty members disagree about the results, a third will be asked to judge the exam. The following assessment system will be used:

**Honor Pass** – The student has responded to all questions on the examination in an outstanding manner.

**Pass** – The student has responded to all questions on the examination in an acceptable manner.

**Fail** – The student has failed to respond in an acceptable manner to the questions asked.

Students are encouraged to contact their advisors if they would like feedback about their specific responses to the exam questions.

## **Examination Retake**

A student who fails the comprehensive examination may be allowed one retake of the exam. He/she will be notified by the Program Coordinator and/or his/her advisor if a retake is permitted. This retake can not be done until the next semester and will consist of a new exam. A second permit is required for the retake. If a student fails the retake of the examination, his/her degree program will be terminated.

## **Notification of Successful Completion of the Examination**

The coordinator of the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program will notify the student in writing if he/she has successfully passed the exam, including the specific assessment. This will generally be done within two weeks after the exam. The coordinator will also notify the Graduate School. In order to graduate in the same semester that the exam is taken, the results of the exam must be to the Graduate School by their publishing dates.