



Comprehensive Examination Policy
Master's Program in Educational Psychology
School of Psychological Sciences
effective for comprehensive exam topics approved after July 1, 2007

Purpose of Examination

This document defines the purpose, requirements, and procedures for comprehensive examinations for students in the master's program in Educational Psychology. The purposes of this examination are (a) to fulfill the requirement of the Graduate School for the administration of a comprehensive examination for master's students, and (b) to evaluate the ability of master's students to synthesize research and theory in Educational Psychology and to present this information in an effective written format. The student's paper that comprises the comprehensive examination may have one of several origins: It may be related to one of the required courses in the Educational Psychology; it may be the student's revision of a paper prepared for a graduate class; or it may be a new paper prepared by the student specifically for the purposes of this comprehensive examination. Additional information on requirements is contained in the remainder of this document.

General Requirements

Written comprehensive examinations are required for all graduate students in the master's program in Educational Psychology. Students are advised to refer to Graduate School requirements for comprehensive examinations. See the University catalog section on "Master's Degree, Specific Requirements," and particularly sub-section "Written Comprehensive Examinations." Students are also advised to consult policies and requirements of the Graduate School related to graduation. Typically, students will apply for graduation prior to taking the comprehensive examination.

Permit to Take Comprehensive Examination

Master's students are eligible to take the comprehensive examination (according to Graduate School policy) when they have:

- Been granted regular admission to the program
- Completed 15 credit hours of required coursework in Educational Psychology. In unusual cases, the advisor will endorse the student's eligibility prior to completing the full 15 hours.
- Earned a GPA of at least 3.0 in the program
- Received approval from the student's advisor about the paper's topic and the student's fulfillment of the previous criteria.
- (After obtaining the advisor's signature), secured a signature from the graduate program coordinator.

Students apply for a comprehensive examination permit in the office of the School of Psychological Sciences and are issued a permit for the examination. This permit verifies the students' fulfillment of requirements for taking the examination and notifies the School of Psychological Sciences of students' intentions to take the examination. Students are encouraged to apply for this permit early in the term or semester for which they hope to complete the examination. Students may begin preparation for the examination prior to filing the permit (for example, they might discuss their interests in preparing a paper on a particular topic with their advisors early in their program). However, students cannot formally begin or complete the comprehensive examination until they have an approved permit.

Format, Criteria, and Evaluation of Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination will follow the format of a capstone paper or literature review. The paper will focus on a topic related to Educational Psychology and will be approved as a topic by the student's advisor. The paper may be an extension of the student's work in a graduate class at UNC, but at least 25% of the content must be new and not previously submitted as a course assignment. However, the student should be aware that the criteria for evaluation for the comprehensive examination will differ from criteria for evaluation used by an instructor for a particular assignment in a course (these criteria are outlined below).

Students may receive feedback from the advisor prior to formal submission of the paper as the comprehensive examination. However, the paper should be predominantly the work of the student, not the advisor, another instructor, or some other person. Should the student wish to seek other advice (e.g., from a statistical consultant or an editor), the student needs to discuss this matter ahead of time with the advisor. The advisor will consult with the student and ensure that any such guidance is limited and does not detract from the attribution that the paper is primarily an accomplishment of the student. Students will be asked to sign an affirmation that confirms that the work is primarily their own work and does not reflect an act of plagiarism.

The paper should be formatted according to the latest style manual of the American Psychological Association (5th edition or later). Length should be approximately 30 pages and more specifically between 25 and 35 pages (title page, reference list and any tables or figures are above and beyond the 25 - 35 page range). Paper should be double spaced, with one-inch margins, and with a legible 12-point Times Roman font.

The examination paper will be read by the advisor and one other faculty member in the School of Psychological Sciences with concentrated expertise in the area. If the two faculty members disagree in their recommendations (pass or fail), a third member will read the paper. It generally takes two weeks for students to receive the results of the examination.

A student who fails the comprehensive examination is permitted one retake of the examination according to Graduate School policy (which must be scheduled in a subsequent semester from the original examination). The student will submit a rewrite/revision of the paper to be submitted the following semester to be reevaluated according to the criteria described above. According to Graduate School policy, failure of a retake of an examination results in the student's termination from the master's program.

Resources for Completion of Examination

Students may use resources (e.g., dictionary, journal articles, books, internet) as they compose the paper. Citations of the work of theorists and researchers need to be included.

Rubric for Evaluation of Comprehensive Examination

See separate document