

**Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Comprehensive Examination
Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) Program**

General Description

Educational Specialist Degree (Ed.S.) students must pass a comprehensive examination as part of their program of studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) program. The intent of the comprehensive examination is to assess the student's overall: 1) knowledge in educational leadership, 2) ability to synthesize and apply that knowledge to develop a cogent discussion of leadership problems or the resolution of significant educational issues, and 3) skill in organizing and expressing ideas in a logical, coherent, literate, and convincing fashion. The examination is a take-home exam found at the end of this document.

Eligibility and Scheduling of the Examination

In order to take the examination, students must have done the following: (1) have been granted regular admission to the degree program, (2) have an approved plan of study on file with the Graduate School, (3) have completed 20 semester hours of work applicable toward the degree, not including the internship or practicum, (4) have maintained a grade average of at least 3.00 in the graduate degree program, and (5) have obtained approval from their assigned advisor signifying that eligibility has been verified.

The "Permit to Take Written Comprehensive Examination" from the [ELPS Forms webpage](#) must be received by the program coordinator at least three weeks before the exam is due.

Assessment and Evaluation of the Written Examination

The examination will be read and evaluated by two ELPS faculty. The following grading system will be used:

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 one or more of the questions asked.

Please see the rubric included in this document for more details regarding grading of elements of the comprehensive exam.

Examination Retake

Students who fail the comprehensive examination may be allowed **one** retake. If permitted, the retake may be taken in a future semester. A second "Permit to Take Written Comprehensive Examination" form is required for the retake. If students fail the retake of the examination, their degree program will be terminated.

Notification of Successful Completion of the Examination

ELPS faculty will send the results of the comprehensive exam to the Graduate School by the deadline each semester for each of their advisees within approximately four weeks after the exam has been turned in. Students will receive a notification of their exam results via email. Please note that, in order to graduate in the same semester that the exam is taken, the results of the exam must be submitted to the Graduate School by the published date. Thus, if a comprehensive exam is submitted after the due dates listed below, the results may need to be considered the following semester:

Fall semester—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in October

Spring semester—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in March

Summer term—comprehensive exams are due by 5 pm the first Monday in June

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The purpose of the Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree comprehensive exam is to assess a student's ability to synthesize and apply the theories, knowledge, concepts and skills that the student has studied throughout the graduate program in a practical, complex, and pertinent organizational change situation. To achieve this end, students are to identify a situation in their current, or most recent, organization that involves the need for complex change that addresses the learning and achievement of all students.¹ *The comprehensive exam is a student's opportunity to demonstrate what has been learned and can be appropriately applied in a real situation from across all courses taken in the program. Failure to demonstrate this learning by a clear discussion of concepts, knowledge, theories, and skills from ELPS coursework, as well as any additional relevant readings and research, will result in failure of the comprehensive exam.* This means that students should include leadership styles, strategies, and theories; change theories/process; relevant political, economic, and social forces; legal contexts and constraints; discussions of equity and diversity; relationship to and/or impact on instructional leadership, and other significant topics covered *throughout their program of study*. Students should be sure to fully explain all concepts that they introduce and apply. It is strongly advised that the paper be organized as outlined below with clear section headers. Be sure to address all parts of each section. **Maximum of 30 pages. Suggested length—25-30 pages.**

Students are to analyze the situation and develop an action plan, assuming the role of leader (e.g., school leader, district level leader, director of student services, as appropriate to the student's program), addressing the following elements:

1. Explain the current organizational situation and why it is undesirable.
 - In one paragraph, provide a brief overview of the organization that is the focus of this exam.
 - Describe the current situation. Use relevant data (quantitative and qualitative) and other forms of evidence to illustrate the situation and explain why it is problematic for one or more educational stakeholder groups (student and adult groups).
 - Explain how policy, resource, and/or personnel decisions have contributed to the current problem situation.
 - Discuss the values, epistemologies, and/or philosophies that are represented by the current situation and how these conflict with the purpose, mission, and goals of the organization.

¹ This is *not* the assignment that you completed in ELPS 603. You may select the same topic, but this paper should go much beyond the four frames in analyzing the situation and the change context and process.

2. Articulate proposed changes to address the problem situation identified in section one. For each proposed change, clearly explain the following:
 - The proposed change
 - The intended effects (benefits) of the proposed change on the educational stakeholder groups identified in section one including any applicable equity issues
 - How the proposed change aligns with the purpose/mission/vision/goals/values of the organization
3. Develop strategies to implement and evaluate the proposed change.
 - Explain in clear and logical steps the strategies that should be implemented to enact the changes you have proposed.
 - Identify and discuss the critical organizational elements—structural (including policy), human resource (including professional development), political, and financial—that are necessary to implement the proposed changes, providing a rationale as to why each element is important to bring about change.
 - Outline an action plan for implementing the proposed changes, including approximate timelines, key personnel, and rationales for each element of the plan.
 - Identify possible challenges to implementation and discuss methods for dealing with those challenges.
 - Discuss a feasible plan for monitoring and evaluating the changes to ensure that the problem situation is addressed satisfactorily for stakeholders.

Students must use both materials from ELPS course content and outside resources.

APA 7th edition style must be used.

References must be cited at end of exam.

Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) Degree Comprehensive Exam Scoring Rubric

Domains	Distinguished Command (4)	Strong Command (3)	Limited/Partial Command (2)	Weak Command (1)	Rating
Identification and explanation of the current situation and why it is undesirable	The organization is introduced and undesirable situation is described using a variety of data. Explains policy, resource, personnel decisions, and leadership contributing to the situation and the impact on various stakeholders.	Undesirable situation is explained using data/evidence. Provides contributing factors and explains the impact of the situation on stakeholders.	Undesirable situation is explained but may lack data, explanation of contributing factors, leader characteristics, and impact on stakeholders.	Lack of clear definition of the organizational issue. Lack of data to support why the situation is undesirable.	
Articulation of a more desirable situation	The proposed change(s) are clearly articulated. Intended effects, equity issues, and alignment to mission/vision/goals/values are explained.	The proposed change(s) are clearly articulated. Effects and alignment to organization are explained.	Changes are superficial or tangentially related to the situation. Lack of explanation regarding intended effects or alignment.	Changes are unrelated to issue and/or not explained.	
Development of strategies to implement and evaluate proposed change	Strategies are comprehensive to address the complexity of the issue. Action steps are logical and contain sufficient detail to be implemented with timelines and person(s) responsible. Strategies to monitor and evaluate the changes are aligned and feasible.	Strategies address the issue. Action steps are logical and detailed; timelines and persons responsible are included. Strategies to monitor and evaluate the changes are included.	Strategies address the issue. Action steps, timelines, person(s) responsible, and methods to monitor and evaluate changes lack sufficient detail.	Strategies, action steps, timelines, and/or ways to monitor the changes may be missing or severely lacking in detail.	
Use of concepts and materials from ELPS program courses in problem analysis and to support change strategies components	Multiple connections to course materials and concepts from the program and leadership standards are integrated throughout exam. Other resources are cited.	Adequate connections to ELPS course materials or concepts. Other resources are cited.	Minimal or superficial use of materials from the ELPS program, relying mostly on one or two courses or outside resources.	Few connections to outside resources or ELPS course/program materials.	
Overall formatting, organization, and expression throughout the exam including use of APA.	Skills in organizing and expressing ideas in a holistic, logical, coherent, literate, and convincing fashion. Consistent, correct use of APA style and formatting.	Skills in organizing and expressing ideas with clarity and persuasiveness. Generally consistent and correct use of APA style and formatting.	Presentation in discrete parts with little overall coherence. Inconsistent or incorrect use of APA style and formatting.	Disorganized or confusing discussion of problem and proposed changes. APA style and formatting contains errors that detract from paper or APA is not used.	
Overall Rating	<p>Note: A rating of “1” for any category above will result in overall failure on the exam. An overall rating of “3” or higher from at least two readers is required to pass the exam.</p> <p>4 3 2 1</p>				