

**Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program
Comprehensive Examination
Master's Degree Policy and Procedure Statement**

General Description

Master's degree students must pass a comprehensive examination to successfully complete their program of studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. 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 administrative assistant in the ELPS office three weeks before the exam is due.

Assessment and Evaluation of the Written Examination

The examination will be read and evaluated by three 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.

Examination Retake

Students who fail the comprehensive examination may be allowed one retake. They will be notified by their advisor if a retake is permitted (this retake cannot be done until the next semester). A second "Permit to Take Written Comprehensive Examination" is required for the retake. If students fail the retake of the examination, the degree program will be terminated.

Notification of Successful Completion of the Examination

Students will be notified via email if they have successfully completed the exam within three to four weeks after the comprehensive exam has been turned in to the ELPS office. The ELPS administrative assistant will also send the results of the comprehensive exam to the Graduate School by the deadline each semester. Please note that, in order to graduate in the same semester the exam is taken, the results of the exam must be 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

Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Master's Comprehensive Exam and Rubric

The comprehensive exam is intended as a final assessment of students' ability to integrate important knowledge and skills learned throughout the program into a final product that will aid in their development as an educational leader. To this end, the comprehensive exam requires students to assess the resources, relationships, and data required to successfully build a collaborative vision for a school and plan strategies that support that vision.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM ASSIGNMENT:

Identify a principal position at the level of your choice (elementary, middle, or high school) in a school other than the one where you are currently, or have most recently been, employed. Develop an entry plan for this position based on information available from the school district, the school, and the community (students are encouraged to access websites, newspapers, the Colorado Department of Education, and any other information sources that may prove helpful). Be sure to discuss the specific school circumstances (supported by data), how a vision to address the needs of the school will be collaboratively developed, and what strategies you will lead to support the development of that vision for school improvement (i.e. student achievement, teacher effectiveness, improved school climate, etc.). Be sure to discuss how you will monitor your efforts to reassess and redirect strategies as needed.

Maximum 25 page limit. Suggested length—20-25 pages.

- ✓ You may organize your response in whatever way you think is appropriate but **explain your choice of organization in the introduction to your exam response.**
- ✓ Be sure to clearly label/identify your responses so that evaluators can be certain that you addressed the Colorado Principal Quality Standards and each stakeholder group in your responses. Reference portions of your responses indicating the relationship to specific principal standards and elements. A particular action might meet more than one element. Example: (COQPS 2.B; 4.A).
- ✓ Include concepts learned in your program coursework in support of your entry plan actions to demonstrate your application of knowledge.
- ✓ Be sure to address the needs and perspectives of all stakeholder groups and consider what resources and contexts each group brings to the educational process, such as the following:
 - Students (achievement and assessment, safety, equity/diversity, culture)
 - Teachers (supervision and evaluation, professional development resources and needs, culture)
 - Parents (perceptions, support, school interactions, communications)
 - Community (perceptions, resources, support, interactions, communications)

- School District Office (reporting requirements, resources, rules/regulations, finance, communication lines, hiring/termination processes, evaluation process, negotiated agreements)
- State (reporting requirements, rules/regulations)

Clearly and logically articulate the following in the entry plan:

- 1. The data-supported needs of the school**
- 2. What actions you will take to address these needs**
- 3. How these actions you plan to take will positively impact the identified need(s)**
- 4. How the action steps in the entry plan align to the Colorado Principal Quality Standards**

Students are encouraged to review the rubric that will be used to assess the final entry plan. The rubric can be found in this document.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Entry Plan (for the six months)

- What kinds of data/resources have/will I use to identify the needs of the school?
- What will I do to address the needs I find within my six months at this school?

Data Use

- How did I integrate the data into my entry plan to illustrate school needs for each of my entry plan steps/strategies?
- How will I use and communicate these data to my stakeholders?
- Are my entry plan steps clearly discussed in response to the data?

Relationship Building

- To whom do I reach out initially and then to sustain school improvement efforts?
- How will I reach out to my target contacts/groups?
- How will I continue to build and sustain relationships with the various stakeholder?

Colorado Principal Standards

- Have I integrated the Colorado Principal Quality Standards into my plan?
- Did I clearly reference the specific standard(s)/element(s)? Example: (COQPS 2.B)?
- Did I clearly explain how my plan aligns with the Colorado Principal Standards throughout the paper for each entry plan step?

Demonstration of Program/Course Learning Application

- How have I integrated the ELPS course content into my plan?
- Have I cited (E.g., Shields, 2009) and explained how course materials and concepts helped in the analysis of the situation?
- Have I cited and explained how course materials and concepts support the entry plan steps I created?
- Is it clear throughout my plan that I have grounded my responses on research rather than just my own opinion?

ELPS MA Degree Comprehensive Exam Scoring Rubric

Domains	Distinguished Command (4)	Strong Command (3)	Limited/Partial Command (2)	Weak Command (1)	Rating
	Candidate demonstrates...				
Application of concepts from ELPS coursework	sophisticated understanding, synthesis, and application of concepts from a broad range of coursework with explained references to program course materials or concepts	understanding, synthesis, and application of concepts from coursework with explained references to program course materials or concepts	some specific knowledge of concepts from coursework generally referred to and/or not explained clearly	general, or superficial, knowledge of concepts in educational leadership which may be referenced but not explained	4 3 2 1
Alignment with Colorado Principal Standards	plan steps are clearly linked to the Colorado Principal Standards and the explanation of how the entry plan steps address each standard is thorough and clear, reflecting the use of the standards in guiding the plan development	plan steps are clearly linked to the Colorado Principal Standards and the explanation of how the entry plan steps address each standard is thorough and clear	plan steps are linked to the Colorado Principal Standards with minimal or general explanation of how the entry plan steps align with and reflect each standard	plan steps are linked to the Colorado Principal Standards with little or no discussion of how the entry plan steps align with and reflect each standard	4 3 2 1
Data Analysis and Use	thorough analysis and use of a diverse array of data while acknowledging the nuances of their implications	thorough analysis and use of relevant data	identification of data with some, or superficial, analysis and minimal application	superficial references to data, with little or inaccurate analysis and minimal application	4 3 2 1
Relationship Building Strategies	specific and innovative strategies for building relationships/coalitions with stakeholders	strategies for building relationships/coalitions with stakeholders	references to stakeholders and relationships, with some discussion of relationship building	few, if any, references to stakeholders and relationship building	4 3 2 1
Overall use of APA formatting, organization and expression throughout the Entry Plan	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 or minimally integrated steps; inconsistent or incorrect use of APA style and formatting	a disorganized or confusing discussion of action steps; APA style and formatting not used	4 3 2 1

Overall Rating	<p><u>Note:</u> 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>
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Colorado Quality Principal Standards (Proposed 2019)

QUALITY STANDARD I

Principals demonstrate organizational leadership by strategically developing a vision and mission, leading change, enhancing the capacity of personnel, distributing resources, and aligning systems of communication for continuous school improvement.

ELEMENT A: Principals collaboratively develop the vision, mission, and strategic plan, based on a cycle of continuous improvement of student outcomes, and facilitate their integration into the school community.

ELEMENT B: Principals collaborate with staff and stakeholders to implement strategies for change to improve student outcomes.

ELEMENT C: Principals establish and effectively manage systems that ensure high-quality staff.

ELEMENT D: Principals establish systems and partnerships for managing all available school resources to facilitate improved student outcomes.

ELEMENT E: Principals facilitate the design and use of a variety of communication strategies with all stakeholders.

QUALITY STANDARD II

Principals demonstrate inclusive leadership practices that foster a positive school culture and promote safety and equity for all students, staff, and community.

ELEMENT A: Principals create a professional school environment and foster relationships that promote staff and student success and well-being.

ELEMENT B: Principals ensure that the school provides an orderly and supportive environment that fosters a sense of safety and well-being.

ELEMENT C: Principals commit to an inclusive and positive school environment that meets the needs of all students and promotes the preparation of students to live productively and contribute to the diverse cultural contexts of a global society.

ELEMENT D: Principals create and utilize systems to share leadership and support collaborative efforts throughout the school.

ELEMENT E: Principals design and/or utilize structures and processes which result in family and community engagement and support.

QUALITY STANDARD III

Principals demonstrate instructional leadership by aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment, supporting professional learning, conducting observations, providing actionable feedback, and holding staff accountable for student outcomes.

ELEMENT A: Principals establish, align, and ensure implementation of a district/BOCES plan of instruction, instructional practice, assessments, and use of student data that result in academic growth and achievement for all students.

ELEMENT B: Principals foster a collaborative culture of job-embedded professional learning.

ELEMENT C: Principals demonstrate knowledge of effective instructional practice and provide feedback to promote continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

ELEMENT D: Principals hold all staff accountable for setting and achieving measurable student outcomes.

QUALITY STANDARD IV

Principals demonstrate professionalism through ethical conduct, reflection, and external leadership.

ELEMENT A: Principals demonstrate high standards for professional conduct.

ELEMENT B: Principals link professional growth to their professional goals.

ELEMENT C: Principals build and sustain productive partnerships with key community stakeholders, including public and private sectors, to promote school improvement, student learning, and student well-being.