

**Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program
Comprehensive Examination
Educational Specialist Policy and Procedure Statement**

General Description

Educational Specialist Degree students must pass a comprehensive examination as part of their program of studies in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS). 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) 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" 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

Students will be notified via email or in writing if they have successfully completed the exam within 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 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

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program
Comprehensive Examination
Educational Specialist Program

The purpose of the Educational Specialist 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 Students should view the comprehensive exam as a way to demonstrate their learning and a forum to integrate **all** of the salient leadership theories from their program, as well as relevant outside readings. 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.

Students are to analyze the situation and develop a strategic 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. Identification and explanation of the current situation

- Discuss key **decision-makers, followers, and stakeholders/constituents** of current situation
- Identify **key policy or personnel decisions** that have created the current situation
- Identify **values/epistemologies** of past leaders that have influenced the current situation
- Identify any **organizational structures** that have influenced the current situation
- Identify **resource issues** that may have contributed to the current situation (human resources, including skill and knowledge, as well as financial resources)

2. Explanation of why the current situation is undesirable

- Discuss why the current situation does not align with the **purpose, mission, and/or values** of the organization
- Discuss the **effect on members** of the organization of the current situation (e.g., morale, motivation, efficacy, etc.)
- Discuss why the current situation is **not acceptable to current stakeholders**

3. Articulation of a more desirable situation

- Explain the **goal** of the proposed change, **addressing the purpose/mission/values** of the organization
- Discuss the effect on members of the organization of the proposed change, addressing issues of **equity** that are applicable
- Explain the **leadership qualities/behaviors/values** necessary to enact the proposed change
- Articulate the **benefits** of the change on external stakeholders, specifically to student learning

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.

4. Development of strategies to implement the proposed change

- Identify and discuss **key structural, human resource, financial, and political elements** of the organization that are necessary for successful implementation of the proposed change. (Discuss any policy changes that would be necessary, as well.)
- Outline a **strategic plan** for implementing the proposed change, including approximate timelines and key personnel with rationales for each element of the plan
- Identify possible **challenges** to implementation and discuss **methods for dealing with those challenges**
- Discuss a possible plan for **monitoring and evaluating the change**

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

APA style must be used.

References must be cited at end of exam.

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Comprehensive Examination
 Educational Specialist Degree Program
 Scoring Rubric

Domains	Distinguished Command (4)	Strong Command (3)	Limited/Partial Command (2)	Weak Command (1)	Rating
	Candidate demonstrates...				
Identification and explanation of the current situation					4 3 2 1
Explanation of why the current situation is undesirable					4 3 2 1
Articulation of a more desirable situation					4 3 2 1
Development of strategies to implement and evaluate proposed change					4 3 2 1
Use of concepts and materials from ELPS program courses in problem analysis and to support change strategies components					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>				
	4	3	2	1	

Level 4 (High)

Written responses to all parts of questions evidence excellent knowledge in educational leadership related to most or all of the Plan of Studies courses and/or state and national standards; ability to synthesize and apply that knowledge to leadership problems or significant educational issues; ability to present a clear formulation of the problem/issue which includes social, economic, legal, human resource, structural, political, and policy factors; clear and correct analysis of the leadership skills/styles/attributes/values needed to handle various factors in changing the situation discussed; clear and logical development of strategies to implement and evaluate the changes desired; and skills in organizing and expressing ideas in a logical, coherent, literate and convincing fashion.

Level 3

Written responses to all parts of questions evidence satisfactory knowledge in educational leadership related to many of the Plan of Studies courses and/or state and national standards and include many of the qualities presented in Level 4; however, the response to one or more parts of questions is deficient in several ways.

Level 2

Written responses to questions evidence minimally acceptable knowledge in educational leadership related to the Plan of Studies, concentrating primarily on ELPS 603, and include many of the qualities presented in Level 4; however, the response to one or more parts of questions is deficient in many ways.

Level 1 (Low)

Written responses to questions do not evidence knowledge in educational leadership related to the Plan of Studies and/or state and national standards and/or the response to one or more parts of questions are severely limited in the qualities outlined in Level 4.