Student Guide to the Comprehensive Examination (3/2014)

Learning and Development Program

The Learning and Development Program within the Department of Educational Psychology offers Masters-level students the choice between authoring a thesis or taking a written and oral comprehensive examination. For students who do not write a Thesis, the Program requires a two-week take-home exam. The exam can be take the last semester of your course work or the semester of your intended graduation. To prepare for the examination, each student chooses three faculty members in the program to ask them one question each.

The faculty in the Learning and Development program offer this Student Guide to the Comprehensive Examination to provide students with a sample of questions that he or she can use as guide to the forthcoming content and scope of the questions professors will ask on the comprehensive exam.

Frequently asked questions regarding taking the comprehensive examination:

1. What questions will be asked on the Examination? Questions will cover a breadth of knowledge that is tailored to the courses you took during your time in the MS program and your specialty. You should contact each of your committee members to ask them for how to best prepare for the exam. The committee members will give you directions for preparing for your exam in a manner that is tailored to the specific question you will be asked. You may receive a reading list, a set of questions to consider and prepare responses to, or an alternate response to guide your preparation.

2. What type of answers are expected? Each question asks for a written answer. The most important characteristics of that answer is not length, but rather, is organization, quality, and your ability to consolidate information and convey your understanding of the material. Organize your answer around themes. Cite theoretical and empirical work. Check for concise writing. Integration of ideas is more important than number of ideas discussed. Focus on formal writing skills that involve the use of correct grammar and the use of complete sentences organized in coherent paragraphs. Typically, each response will be 7-8 pages in length, but you should take the space you need to adequately articulate your response.