

HMSLS Policies and Procedures for Comprehensive Examinations to Satisfy Graduation Requirements for Culminating Experience

I. Timeline for Selecting Comprehensive Exams as a Culminating Experience

Students submit the Declaration of Intent to Take a Comprehensive Examination form during the semester before they plan to take the exam. If a student does not initially elect to take comprehensive exams as their culminating experience, they may file an appeal to sit for comprehensive exams by the 1st week of their last semester. Such an appeal must be coordinated with, and approved by, the student's academic advisor and the graduate coordinator.

II. Comprehensive Exam Committee Selection

A comprehensive examination committee shall be composed of three (3) graduate faculty members. The committee shall be selected with consideration given to the coursework of the student in their graduate studies, their vocational/professional objectives, and/or overall academic experience in the program. Each student must coordinate with their academic advisor to invite two additional graduate faculty members in their specialty/field of interest. The student's academic advisor shall serve as chair of the committee. If a student's academic advisor is unwilling or unable to supervise a comprehensive exam, a new advisor can be selected in consultation with the current advisor and graduate program coordinator. Any graduate faculty member identified as a prospective chair replacement for the academic advisor reserves the right to decline the chair position. The deadline for committee selection is the semester prior to when the student plans to sit for their comprehensive exam.

III. Administration of Comprehensive Exams

All students who elect to take the comprehensive exam as their culminating experience will be administered a written comprehensive exam. The format of the exam will be determined by the comprehensive exam committee chair while taking into consideration the student's discipline and career goals.

The written comprehensive exam shall consist of three questions integrating content from a student's coursework and professional or academic goals. The academic areas for which a student is to be assessed will be determined in coordination with the student's academic advisor.

Possible format options include but are not limited to:

- 1) Timed exam, where the student provides written responses to exam questions that are not provided in advance. The time allotted to the student to complete the responses will be determined by the Committee.
- 2) Timed exam, where the student provides written responses to questions within a set time period, that they have been allowed to review in advance. The time allotted to the student to complete the responses will be determined by the Committee.
- 3) A take-home exam. The Committee will provide exam questions to the student who must complete responses to the Committee within a specified timeframe not to exceed 7 calendar

days. The committee will determine the specific length of time for exam completion.

Responses on all exams formats should be well conceptualized; clearly, concisely, and persuasively express ideas; use appropriate grammar; and be well organized. Take-home exams are expected to be free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors; adhere to APA format; and should include appropriate citations and references.

The committee members will decide what guidance to provide the student for studying for the exam. This may be written or oral instructions. The committee also will decide whether the student may use notes or other resources as they complete their exam.

If a student earns a score of unacceptable competency on any of the three exam questions, the student then must complete a follow-up assessment (described below). The follow-up assessment shall be held at an agreed upon time acceptable to the student and the committee within the timeline described below.

Students will be permitted to take comprehensive exams during the summer semester only if they are a follow-up assessment due to an initial insufficient rating on the 1st exam. A summer follow-up assessment is only allowable if approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

An extension of any deadline for the exam process, due to an emergency or other extenuating circumstance, must be approved by the Committee prior to the original deadline.

Any student who fails the comprehensive examination should consult with the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate College policy.

The chair of the committee will forward the scores earned on the exam to the graduate coordinator within one day after sharing the grades with the student.

IV. Evaluation of Comprehensive Exams

Each question will be evaluated for: accuracy of content, depth of theoretical mastery; critical thinking/ argumentation; and scholarly, technical writing skill; and will receive a rating of proficiency, (b) minimum competency, or (c) unacceptable competency (see scoring rubric below). Score ranges include:

- 10-12 points = proficiency
- 7-9 points = minimum competency
- 4-6 points = unacceptable competency

If a student earns a rating of minimum competency or proficiency on all three comprehensive examination questions, no subsequent examination is required. If a student earns a rating of unacceptable competency on any of the exam questions, the comprehensive exam committee may select from one-of-three options to address the material for that specific question.

1. The committee may request written clarification/additional detail for a specific aspect of a question.
2. The committee may request that the student rewrite the answer to a question entirely.
3. The committee may request that the student appear in-person (may be virtually) to complete an oral examination addressing the content from the question(s) rated 'Unacceptable Competency.'

If the student earns a follow-up rating of ‘Minimum Competency’ or proficiency for all of the questions requiring additional assessment, the student earns a ‘Pass’ for the comprehensive exam. If the student does not earn a rating of minimum competency or proficiency for all of the questions requiring additional assessment, the student shall ‘Fail’ the comprehensive exam.

Any student who fails the comprehensive exam should consult with the graduate coordinator and Graduate College policy.

V. Comprehensive Examination Evaluation Criteria & Rubric

Students who earn a ‘*Proficient*’ rating will have demonstrated the following quality in their responses:

- Provide logical and well-organized answers
- Demonstrate thorough, in-depth understanding of the topic with answers that provide depth and detail over the topic
- Provides logical, well-defended arguments
- Exhibits competent level of scholarly technical writing with no to minimal deficiencies

Students who earn a ‘*Minimum Competency*’ will have demonstrated the following characteristics in their responses:

- Provide answers that demonstrate some logic and organization although not at an advanced level
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the topic with responses that demonstrate basic integration of theory and practice
- Provide arguments that are valid with no major logical fallacies or errors of fact.
- Communicate with an acceptable scholarly technical writing skill although some few minor deficiencies in voice, audience, grammar, or mechanics may be present.

Students who earn an ‘*Unacceptable Competency*’ rating will have demonstrated an unacceptable level of competency in their responses by demonstrating the one or more of the following characteristics:

- Disorganized or illogical answers to the question
- Lack of understanding of the topic illustrated by superficial responses with little detail
- Provide overly-simplistic or weak arguments
- Communicate with an unscholarly technical writing skill that is unacceptable due to inappropriate voice, lack of attention to audience, and frequent grammatical or other mechanical deficiencies

Table 1. Comprehensive Examination Evaluation Rubric

Performance Criteria	Proficient (3 pts)	Minimum Competency (2 pts)	Unacceptable Competency (1 pt)
I. Accuracy of Content	Answers show depth and detail of understanding	Content mastery demonstrates minimum competency	Lack of content mastery/superficial
II. Depth of Theoretical Mastery	Demonstrates theoretical mastery	Depth of understanding shows minimum competency	Lack of theoretical mastery
III. Critical Thinking/Argumentation	Sufficiently strong critical thinking/argumentation	Thinking/argumentation demonstrates minimum competency	Illogical, disorganized thinking/argumentation
IV. Scholarly, Technical Writing Skill	Scholarly writing shows acceptable technical skill (voice, audience, grammar, mechanics)	Scholarly, technical writing reflective of minimum competency	Unacceptable scholarly, technical writing skill (lack of voice, audience, grammar, mechanics)

VI. Timeline for administration of Comprehensive Exam

Comprehensive examinations will be completed no later than 6 weeks before the last day of classes in that semester.

Students will receive exam scores no later than 2 weeks after submitting the completed exam.

If a follow-up exam is needed, it will be scheduled a minimum of two weeks after receiving exam scores.

Students will receive follow-up exam scores no later than 1 week after the oral exam meeting or submission of a written follow-up exam.