

Comprehensive Exam Paper Guidelines

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Purpose

The comprehensive exam was designed for all students to demonstrate mastery of their ability to integrate knowledge, analyze research gaps and weaknesses, and discuss the implications of the study in practice and policy. Completing the complete paper and the coursework allows students to advance to the dissertation.

Comprehensive Exam Paper

The student will develop a comprehensive exam paper. The student will work independently on the paper without consultation from any other person. The university's academic honor code applies to this comprehensive exam paper. The guidelines on plagiarism, including citing sources, paraphrasing, and the use of direct quotations found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA) should be followed. The paper should be double-spaced using 12-point font and 1-inch margins. The paper will integrate policy, practice, theory and research evidence concerning a substantive area of social work or social welfare. The paper will include: a) identification of a substantive area of social work or social welfare; b) integrated discussion of the theories, policies and social work practices associated with the identified substantive area of social work or social welfare; c) critically analyze the existing research, including substantive gaps and methodologic weaknesses in the research; d) identification of research question(s) critical for the advancement of knowledge in the identified substantive area of social work or social welfare; d) a research proposal for an empirical study that addresses the research questions; e) an appendix containing a systematic literature review focused on the identified research questions. The comprehensive paper will be a maximum of 25 pages, not including the references and appendix.

Comprehensive Paper Proposal

Students will submit a proposal for the comprehensive exam paper. The paper proposal must be approved before beginning work on the paper. There are three deadlines for submission of comprehensive exam paper proposals: September 1, December 1, and May 1. Students will receive feedback on the proposal within three weeks after submission. All submission must occur by 5:00 pm. The paper is due four months after receiving approval for the proposal. Grading of comprehension will only occur during the regular academic school year.

The proposal will include the following: 1) a problem statement, description of the substantive area of social work or social welfare that will be the focus of the paper, and its relevance to social work; 2) Preliminary identification of policy, practice and theories that will be addressed, and 3) list of references cited in the proposal in APA format. The length should be a maximum of 10 pages, excluding the reference list. The paper should have 1-inch margins, double-spaced using 12-point font.

Comprehensive Paper Structure

The page ranges here are suggestions within the maximum of 25 pages, not including the title page, references, and appendix. The paper should be double-spaced using 12-point font and 1-inch margins. All pages should be numbered.

1. Definition and scope of the topic (including main subtopics (1 to 2 pages)
2. Synthesis of existing policy, practice and empirical and theoretical literature (organized according to the subtopics) (14 to 17 pages)
3. Strengths and limitations of the literature on this topic
 - a. Methodologic issues

- b. Research questions addressed
- 4. Future research (1 to 2 pages)
 - a. Topics to be addressed
 - b. Methodologic issues to consider
- 5. Research Proposal (3 to 4 pages)
 - a. Research questions and study aims (1 to 2 pages)
 - b. Methodology (using correct terminology throughout) (3 to 4 pages)
 - i. Study design (including name of design, unit of analysis)
 - ii. Sample (including target population, study population, sampling plan, eligibility criteria)
 - iii. Measures (including independent variables, dependent variables, potential confounding variables, and other key variables)
 - iv. Data collection strategy
 - v. Data analysis plan
 - vi. Strengths and weaknesses of the methods with respect to the study aims
 - c. Practice and policy implications (1 page)
- 6. Appendix
 - a. References
 - b. Systematic literature review using the table and guidelines in Appendix B

Oral Defense

An oral defense will be conducted within one month of the submission of the comprehensive exam paper. Oral defenses can only occur during the regular academic school year.

Comprehensive Exam Paper Committee

The Comprehensive Exam Paper Committee will consist of two faculty members. The committee will be responsible for approval of the proposal, the final paper, and the oral defense.

Timeline

Comprehensive exam paper proposal approval - The comprehensive exam proposal must be approved within one semester after completing course work.

Proposal revision - If the Comprehensive Exam Paper Committee requests revisions, these must be submitted within three weeks. A maximum of one revision is allowed.

Comprehensive paper submission – The comprehensive exam paper must be submitted within four months after approval of the proposal.

Comprehensive paper revision- If revisions of the paper are requested, these must be submitted within three weeks. A maximum of one revision is allowed.

Oral comprehensive exam paper defense - The oral defense will be conducted with three weeks of submitting the paper, or revised paper if applicable.

Comprehensive exam paper decision – Students will receive a decision about the comprehensive exam within two weeks after the oral defense is conducted.

Note: The proposal and completed paper should be submitted to the director of the doctoral program by 5 pm of the due date.

Appendix A: Comprehensive Exam Paper Grading Rubric

Students must earn an average score of 3 to pass the comprehensive exam. A score of 4.5 or higher is a “high pass.” If students do not earn an average score of at least 3 on both the written paper and oral defense, they may submit a revision within one month.

Please evaluate the quality of the review/proposal by using the scale below, with 1 indicating the poorest and 5 indicating the highest possible rating. Descriptive anchors are provided to facilitate your rating. Please circle the number that reflects most closely your evaluation.

Comprehensive Exam Paper Grading Rubric					
Identified key theme(s) in the literature	1 No coherent theme identified	2	3 Theme(s) identified and clearly stated	4	5 Theme(s) and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of theme(s) are identified and clearly stated.
Identified a key topic with policy and practice relevance	1 No coherent topic(s) identified	2	3 Topic(s) identified and clearly stated	4	5 Topic(s) and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of Topic(s) are identified and clearly stated.

Comprehensive Exam Paper Grading Rubric

Identified key theories relevant to policy and practice	1 No themes/theories identified	2	3 Themes/theories identified and clearly stated	4	5 Themes/theories and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of gap(s) are identified and clearly stated.
Considered related perspectives	1 Does not acknowledge other possible perspectives	2	3 Acknowledges other possible perspectives, although not clearly stated	4	5 Synthesizes other perspectives and considers implications
Integrated Literature	1 Literature not integrated	2	3 Literature somewhat integrated and synthesized	4	5 Synthesizes literature across a diversity of areas
Covered Breadth of Literature	1 No breadth	2	3 Good coverage of breadth	4	5 Excellent coverage of the breadth of literature
Potential for publication	1 Low potential for publication	2	3 Moderate potential for publication	4	5 High potential for publication

Comprehensive Exam Paper Grading Rubric					
<u>Writing/Format</u>					
Organization	<p>1</p> <p>Unstructured; most paragraphs rambling, unfocused; no clear beginning or ending of paragraphs; inappropriate or missing sequence markers</p>	2	<p>3</p> <p>Structured; most paragraphs are focused; discernible beginning and ending paragraphs, some appropriate sequence markers</p>	4	<p>5</p> <p>Well-structured; paragraphs are clearly focused and organized around a central theme; clear beginning and ending paragraphs; appropriate, coherent sequences and sequence markers</p>
Technical Writing Skills (grammar, spelling, etc.)	<p>1</p> <p>Very poor</p>	2	<p>3</p> <p>Acceptable</p>	4	<p>5</p> <p>Exemplary/ Outstanding</p>
Documentation	<p>1</p> <p>Documentation generally inconsistent and incomplete; non-standard citation; citation information not incorporated into document</p>	2	<p>3</p> <p>Documentation is fairly consistent but incomplete; general use of standard citation; citation information is somewhat incorporated into document</p>	4	<p>5</p> <p>Documentation clear, consistent and complete; standard citation; cited information is incorporated effectively into document</p>
APA Format	<p>1</p> <p>Very poor</p>	2	<p>3</p> <p>Acceptable</p>	4	<p>5</p> <p>Exemplary/ Outstanding</p>

Comprehensive Exam Paper Grading Rubric

Diversity & Individual Differences - ALL

Relevant psychometric issues (e.g., cross-cultural validity, norms)	1 Very poor	2	3 Acceptable	4	5 Exemplary/ Outstanding
Relevant sociocultural issues (acculturation, language, SES, quality of education, etc.)	1 Very poor	2	3 Acceptable	4	5 Exemplary/ Outstanding

Appendix B: Instructions for the Systematic Literature Review

Conduct a literature review on the specific topic and subtopics described in the paper. Specify the search terms you used, the bibliographic databases included in searching for the articles, and the eligibility criteria that you used for selecting the articles.

Include ten studies. Choose the studies most relevant to your topic. If there are more than 10 studies, choose those that are most rigorous and recent.

NOTE: In the comprehensive exam paper, the systematic literature review does NOT include conducting a meta-analysis. Existing meta-analyses can be incorporated into the systematic literature review.

Search terms used:

Bibliographic databases searched:

Inclusion criteria for studies:

Systematic Literature Review Table					
Citation	Study Design	Sample	Measures	Main Findings	Comments
		Study population: Sampling strategy: Eligibility criteria: N: Response rate:	IV: DV: Moderating variable (if any): Key Covariates:		
		Study population: Sampling strategy: Eligibility criteria: N: Response rate:	IV: DV: Moderating variable (if any): Key Covariates:		

Citation	Study Design	Sample	Measures	Main Findings	Comments
		Study population: Sampling strategy: Eligibility criteria: N: Response rate:	IV: DV: Moderating variable (if any): Key Covariates:		

Note: In the comments column consider the implications of the finding for the study you are proposing.

Grading Rubric Systematic Literature Review					
# of articles	1 ≤4 articles are included and/or more articles are included but most are not directly relevant	2	3 6 or 7 articles are included and all are directly relevant	4	5 10 articles are included and all are directly relevant
Information provided	1 Methods are mostly not clear and/or mostly incompletely described, and correct research terminology is mostly not used	2	3 Methods are mostly clear and mostly completely described, and correct research terminology is mostly used	4	5 Methods are clearly and completely described using correct research terminology

Appendix C: Grading Rubric Oral Presentation

Grading Rubric Oral Presentation					
Presentation was clear and had a coherent theme	1 No coherent theme identified	2	3 Theme(s) identified and clearly stated	4	5 Theme(s) and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of theme(s) are identified and clearly stated.
Presentation followed a logical format	1 No logical format	2	3 Good logical format, or inconsistent logic	4	5 Logical format was excellent and easy to follow
Questions were addressed clearly, and clarifications of written material provided when relevant	1 Questions not addressed; clarifications of written material not provided		3 Questions mostly addressed and some clarifications of written material were provided		5 All questions were addressed clearly and clarifications of written material were provided whenever relevant