
Comprehensive exams (PhD milestones)

1. Timing and Scheduling

In advance of dissertation research, students undertake two comprehensive examinations assessing competence in two broad areas.

In PhD year 2 a committee comprised of supervisor, second, and third reader is formed to guide the student's path of inquiry. Research questions and reading lists are finalized.

Signed approval forms are filed with the GPA to document the examination topics.

In PhD 3 comprehensive exams are conducted, generally one in Fall, and one in Winter. The oral exam is scheduled by the supervisor.

2. Format and Structure

The oral comp is a public presentation given by the student, approximately one hour in length, followed by an oral defense conducted by all 3 members of the committee.

The written comprehensive is generally an essay (body approx. 25 pages or 12,000 words, with additional bibliography pages) demonstrating the student's critical knowledge of existing literature and theoretical issues in the area of expertise. Alternative media or other modes of quantitative/qualitative research may be accepted by the committee.

3. Accessibility and Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations are encouraged to contact the appropriate accessibility office at the university well in advance of the examination.

4. Assessment Criteria and Feedback

Oral: The student receives feedback and immediate assessment of pass/fail following the oral examination.

Written: The document is assessed by all committee members. The student makes appropriate revisions until the committee jointly agrees to pass or fail the document.

5. Outcomes of the Examination(s)

Forms indicating the student has passed the examinations are signed and filed with the GPA. Students must pass comprehensive exams to continue in the program.

Comprehensive exams are adjudicated at the Program level only.