



## HED COMPREHENSIVE EXAM POLICY

### Educational Policy Studies & Practice

#### CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

#### MA

**Goals:** In the written examination, the student is expected to demonstrate a deep understanding of foundational and contemporary higher education literature, models and theories.

**Format for Comprehensive Exam:** The format for the comprehensive exam includes questions from HED 601 and two other courses, selected by the student and the advisor.

**Timeline:** The exam must be taken in the last semester of the MA coursework. Exams will take place the second Friday in April<sup>1</sup> and the second Friday in November. The student will have about an hour and twenty minutes to complete the question(s) from each course. Copies will be distributed the instructors (or substitute faculty member) of these courses and reviewed blindly. Students must successfully pass (not "low pass") at least two out of three areas to pass the Comprehensive Exam. Students who fail all three questions, two of the three questions, or one question and marginally passes one other question have failed the Comprehensive Exam. Students who fail their Comprehensive Exam may repeat their exam once if the committee determines that the result was a marginal pass/fail. Students who fail their Comprehensive Exam a second time are subject to dismissal.

---

<sup>1</sup> If the second Friday of April is the weekend of the Easter holiday, the exam will be moved to the third Friday of April.

<sup>1</sup> If the second Friday of November is during the ASHE conference, the exam will be moved to the first Friday of November.

## PhD

**Goals:** In both the written and oral comprehensive examination, students are expected to demonstrate a deep understanding of foundational and contemporary higher education literature, models and theories and the ability to critique their choice of a previously published study that employed qualitative or quantitative methods.

**Format for Written Comprehensive Exam:** The format for the written comprehensive exam includes questions from each of the three core courses (HED 601, 609, and 650/696c—Finance or a Higher Education Course on College Access) (7-10 pages for each question) and an article critique (5-7 pages). Students are expected to use proper APA style in their responses to all examination questions.

**Timeline:** Exams will take place the second Friday in April<sup>1</sup> and the second Friday in November<sup>2</sup>. Exact dates will be announced by end of the semester prior to the exam. Students can pick up the questions from the HED administrative associate beginning at 8am on the first day of the exam. Students must submit their completed exam to the HED administrative associate by no later than noon of the 7th day. Copies will be distributed to faculty members and reviewed blindly. Faculty members will be given 2 weeks to read and grade the exams. Feedback on the exams will be given directly to each student's advisor who will notify the student to tell them whether or not they have passed the written exam. Students must perform successfully on all four exam questions (including article critique) to pass the Comprehensive Exam. For each question, the grading scale includes High Pass; Pass; Low Pass; Fail. Students who earn a "Fail" on at one or more question or earn a "Low Pass" on *at least two* questions have failed the Comprehensive Exam. Students who fail their Written Comprehensive Exam are subject to dismissal. Students who fail may repeat their exam once if the committee determines that the result was a marginal pass/fail. Students who fail their Comprehensive Exam a second time are subject to dismissal.

Once a student has been informed that s/he has passed, s/he will then schedule a date for their oral comprehensive exam. The oral exam can be scheduled after the appropriate paper work has been processed. The student is responsible for securing signature, routing the form, and scheduling the exam.

**Oral Comprehensive Exam:** The Oral exam will be a minimum of 1 hour and a maximum of 3 hours. The exam will cover the written exam and content from any course that the student has taken in the doctoral program. Students will be asked to demonstrate an understanding of research design and methodology necessary to complete a dissertation as part of the exam. Students may opt to include their dissertation proposal meeting to immediately follow their Oral Comprehensive Exam on the same day and approximate time.

Students who fail their Oral Comprehensive Exam are subject to dismissal. Students may repeat their exam once if the committee determines that the result was a marginal pass/fail. Students who fail their Oral Comprehensive Exam a second time are subject to dismissal.



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF ARIZONA

## **HEd PhD written comprehensive exam policy**

4/6/17

We are revising our PhD written comps exam policy. The new form of the exam will be available to students immediately, and will be the format for all students admitted beginning in the Fall 2017. Current students in the program have the option to take their written exam utilizing the old format or the new format.

The (new) format for the PhD written comp exam includes two parts, both of which are take-home assignments, which students will have one week (total, for both parts) to complete.

### **Part I**

Methods analysis of an article (5-7 pages, double spaced)

The focus of the methods analysis of an article is on the research methods used in the article. The student will choose whether they want to critique an article that utilizes primarily quantitative or qualitative methods. The faculty will choose the particular article. The student will write their responses, concentrating on the methods used. An analysis does not mean simply criticizing the weakness of the methods, it should also speak to the strengths of the methods employed in the research.

### **Part II**

Framing a problem (15-20 pages, double spaced), selected by student in consultation with their advisor

The focus of this paper is fourfold:

- a) An integrative literature review on a problem that identifies the key schools/traditions in the literature, key authors within those schools/traditions, and gaps in the literature (what we don't know), specifying the contribution you are going to make;
- b) Working out of that literature review, develop a conceptual framework, coming out of the theories that you've addressed in your integrative literature review. Having identified the gap, you need to synthesize literature you've reviewed to challenge, confirm, disrupt, or extend the theories and concepts in that literature. So your conceptual framework should be aligned with the lit review, and elaborate on the idea of the contribution you are going to make to the literature and theories on your chosen topic area;
- c) Develop some research questions, and then frame working propositions or hypotheses around them that utilize the concepts in your conceptual framework. Again, make sure you have "alignment" between your integrative lit review, your conceptual framework, and your research questions.
- d) In a couple of pages, discuss the methods you will utilize to address and answer these questions. Again, be sure to think about alignment of each part of this paper.