

UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE

ELOD PhD Comps Guidelines

Overview & Timeframe

The comprehensive exam is designed to provide an integrative and summative evaluation of a student's progress in developing knowledge of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical research in the student's chosen field of study. **Educational Leadership and Organizational Development (ELOD) students sitting for comprehensive exams are provided 30 calendar days to complete a written comprehensive examination.** Comprehensive exams must be completed by the student no later than:

- Fall, by October 30
- Spring, by March 30
- Summer, by July 30

Faculty members have three weeks to report the results to the program chair, who then has one week to submit the results to the Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development (ELEOD) department office.

Applying for the Comprehensive Examination

Students must inform their Program Committee Chair of their intent to sit for their Comprehensive Exam the semester prior to their chosen exam start date. This advanced communication permits the development of the examination questions and helps facilitate an adequate timeline for student preparation. Typically, faculty members of the student's Program Committee prepare and read the comprehensive exam (Please see the 'Comprehensive Exam Declaration Form' [PDF]). The Comprehensive Exam Declaration Form should be submitted to the ELEOD Office in the semester prior to a student completing the Comprehensive Examination. It is the student's responsibility to submit this form.

Because students must initiate the examination process by submitting the Comprehensive Exam Declaration Form to the ELEOD office in the semester prior to sitting for examination, students should know ahead of time which semester they will sit and thus, should have at least 90 days to prepare. In addition to the declaration form, the student declaring for the exam should also provide an abstract and one page bibliography of relevant research associated with their topic of interest. In instances where this timeline could be construed as detrimental to a student's progress in a program, the student may elect to waive the constraints of the established timeline.

Students will take the comprehensive exam no earlier than the last semester of coursework. Students do not need to be actively enrolled in classes to register for comprehensive exams.

Content

The exam is related to the student's proposed research project, which may serve as the student's preliminary work feeding into the dissertation prospectus. A student's program committee chair will work with the student to shape the scope and focus of the question. In addition to touching on the student's dissertation topic, the exam should encompass the key content fields (e.g., organizational theory, perspectives on leadership, history of higher education, sport administration) of the student's concentration, as determined by the student and by his/her/their chair.

The exam is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mastery of the content, writing competency, and independence as a scholar, prior to the dissertation. Therefore, allowable sources include the extant research literature. Students cannot consult other students, faculty or other individuals on the content or style of their writing.

Formatting Responses

Students must submit one typewritten, coherent Word document. The document must be double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins, and adhere to APA 6th edition formatting standards. The final product should be between 25-30 pages in length, not including the Reference Section.

Submitting Responses

Upon completion of the comprehensive examination, each student will submit the exam via Blackboard and run it through Safe Assign.

Reporting Results and Possible Outcomes of Comprehensive Examinations

Program Committee Chairs are responsible for notifying students of the results. Other Committee members should treat all exam information in the strictest confidence. If the student has questions about results, the other faculty members should refer the student to the Program Committee Chair. Consensus among the Program Committee members is optimal, but 2 out of 3 (or a simple majority) will suffice with the Program Committee Chair approval. Students will receive three potential ratings as explained below --

- a. A pass with honors is defined as exceeding minimal standards. No minor deficiencies need to be addressed
- b. A pass is defined as meeting minimal standards with minor deficiencies that must be addressed to the satisfaction of the Committee members. The minor deficiencies must be addressed within two weeks. If the deficiencies are not addressed within two weeks the rating converts to a fail.
- c. A fail would require the student to retake the failed sections of the exam within an agreed deadline set by the Program Committee. The student cannot retake the exam in the same semester in which they initially failed the exam

Only after the entire Committee reaches a decision on the results of the Comprehensive Exam should students be notified. Faculty members have three weeks to report the results to the Program Chair, who then has one week to submit the results to the Educational Leadership, Evaluation, and Organizational Development (ELEOD) department office.

There are three outcomes for comprehensive exams: pass with honors, pass or fail. **If a student fails the exam, the Program Committee Chair is responsible for contacting the student, explaining the conditions, and setting up the deadlines and requirements for meeting the conditions.** This may include phone conversations, emails and written answer dialogues, and/or face-to-face meetings. During meetings where a retake is being discussed, more than one faculty member should be present to help provide additional guidance.

After a student successfully completes the Comprehensive Examination, the Program Committee Chair informs the designated staff person in ELEOD who notifies the CEHD Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies and Educational Advising Center who then forwards this information to the Dean of

the School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies (SIGS). SIGS will then notify the student of the new status of Candidacy. All documentation of a student's status shall move to electronic storage as soon as possible.

Rewrite/Retaking Comprehensive Examinations

Students receiving a fail on the first attempt would need to address all deficiencies within an agreed timeline set by the Program Committee but it must take place no more than one year after the initial fail. Students may retake the Comprehensive Exam only once. (See [http://louisville.edu/graduatecatalog/degree-requirements/.](http://louisville.edu/graduatecatalog/degree-requirements/)) Failing twice will result in dismissal from the ELEOD PhD program.

It is the responsibility of the student's Program Committee to help students take any steps necessary to manage potential weak areas that may have been revealed by the Comprehensive Examination and develop a timeline with the student for addressing the deficiencies. **The retake for the Comprehensive Exam may be in the same format as the original.** Except under extraordinary circumstances, the student has one year from date of notification to complete the retake.

Students who receive a fail in their second attempt would be required to meet with the Program Committee. Please refer the Graduate Student Handbook for details (See <http://louisville.edu/graduate/current-students>)

Comprehensive Exam Schedule

	Activity	Fall	Spring	Summer
1	Deadline to sign up for exams for upcoming semester	July	December	April
2	Comprehensive Exam Start Date	October 1	March 1	July 1
3	Comprehensive Exam End Date	October 30	March 30	July 30
4	Program Committee members grade exam and submit results to Chair	Within 3 weeks of exam end date	Within 3 weeks of exam end date	Within 3 weeks of exam end date
5	Program Committee Chair notifies student of results	1 week after hearing from Program Committee	1 week after hearing from Program Committee	1 week after hearing from Program Committee

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM GUIDELINES

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The Comprehensive Exam revolves around a research question. Students will develop a paper around an area of study in which they are interested. Ideally, students will write their Comprehensive Exam on their research topic of interest, which will serve as preliminary work towards their dissertation prospectus, but they are not limited to only that topic. Response to the comprehensive examination must include the following sections:

- I. Introduction
- II. Literature Review
- III. Research Design / Methodology
- IV. Potential Implications for Research, Theory, and Practice
- V. Summary / Statement of Significance
- VI. References

The final product should be between 25-30 pages in length, not including the Reference Section.

I. Introduction

The introduction should include an overview to the background to the problem and situate the research topic within the current (field specific) literature. This section should build toward a case for the research and lead up to a problem statement. Relevant research should be used as a means to frame the issue/challenge/opportunity the student is proposing to investigate.

In this section, students must: (a) state the significance of the question(s) in terms of their specific field; (b) provide a relevant context for the study; (c) provide a clear purpose statement for the research; and (d) outline the research questions/hypothesis/objectives (if applicable).

II. Literature Review

The literature review must be connected to the purpose statement and provide an overview of variables/constructs the student is proposing to explore in their research. The review of the literature need not be comprehensive, given the shortened length of the proposal, but it should identify relevant bodies of literature and include key studies on the subject, as well as integrate and synthesize of the prominent literature. Students must highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the works cited and explain how the literature builds the case for the study.

Additionally, this section should outline the major theoretical or conceptual framework(s) that ground the specific research within the student's field of study. Remember that a theoretical or conceptual framework provides the explicit lens to view the wholeness of the work.

III. Research Design / Methodology

The research design/methodology portion must discuss how the student plans to examine and answer the research question(s)/hypothesis(es)/objective(s) by explaining the following:

- **Methods:**
 - Discuss the proposed plan for carrying out the study. Start with identifying a broad methodological approach (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, action research). Then add details, becoming as specific as possible. For example, if using a regression analysis, then write out the equation(s) that will be used to estimate and clearly identify the coefficients of interest. Or, if using a qualitative approach, explain the choice for the particular methodology— i.e., ethnography, case study and discuss relevant issues related to the chosen approach.

- **Sources of Data:**
 - Discuss the data to use in the study. If doing a quantitative study, include a description of the constructs or variables that operationalize the conceptual framework. If collecting data, describe how to go about doing so and provide a short list of key survey/protocol items. If qualitative, describe the data to collect and why. If pertinent, provide a sample protocol.

- **Sample:**
 - Identify the sample of interest. Discuss why this sample was chosen, how to select the sample and what size will it be. If using the entire population, state it. If not, explain the rationale behind the sample and the sampling procedure.

Regardless of which approach is chosen, be clear about its strengths, weaknesses, and limitations for the given research question.

IV. Potential Implications for Research, Theory, and Practice

This section will detail specific implications of the research for advancing research, theory building, and practice. For example, what does the research proposal suggest for impacting practice, or further theory building in a particular field? Ultimately, this section should address the “so what” question (e.g., how would the results of the study be used to help promote best practices in your discipline’s industry?). If conducting research relevant to other fields, this inquiry should be articulated in terms of significance in this section as well.

V. Summary/ Statement of Significance

The summary/statement of significance should provide a summary of the research proposal.

VI. Reference List (not included or counted in the 25-30 page limit)

All sources used must be parenthetically referenced in the text of the proposal and fully cited in a reference list. The reference list must follow APA 6th edition format.