

## Comprehensive Knowledge and Examinations for Graduate Degree Candidates

Degree candidates are expected to achieve comprehensive knowledge in the area in which the degree is to be offered. Many programs require formal documentation of this achievement through the Certificate of Comprehensive Knowledge and/or completion of comprehensive examinations. Upon the candidate's successful completion of the required procedures, the coordinator of graduate study will electronically document achievement of the Certificate of Comprehensive Knowledge. Programs may designate completion of the examination as "pass" or "pass with distinction."

Below is the policy and procedure for the Master of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics Certification of Comprehensive Knowledge. Students will demonstrate comprehensive knowledge by both written and oral means as outlined below:

### Part I. Written

- A. Satisfactory completion of a thesis and defense, approved by the student's graduate thesis committee.

**OR**

- B. Satisfactory completion of the written component of the comprehensive examination.
1. A time for the written comprehensive examination will be scheduled by the Graduate Coordinator near the midterm of fall and spring semesters. This examination time will be proctored by the Graduate Coordinator or a designee. Individual examination arrangements are possible and are the responsibility of the student and the advisor.
  2. Requirements for taking the written examination:
    - GPA must be 3.0 to be eligible to begin the comprehensive examination;
    - it is expected that students will take the written comprehensive examination in the semester they expect to graduate;
    - the student must have completed and/or be registered for at least 26 hours of their course work, as determined by their approved study plan;
    - grades of 'Incomplete' for previous terms in courses other than Internship or Independent Study must be removed; and
    - exceptions require approval of the advisor, MSND Graduate Coordinator, and the SFCS Chair/Assistant Chair.
  3. Each member of a student's graduate committee will submit one question to the student's advisor. The advisor is responsible for preparing the typed exam and submitting it to the Graduate Coordinator no less than five (5) days before the date of the exam to be proctored by the Graduate Coordinator. At least one question is expected to require the student to demonstrate an understanding of the underlying principles of nutrition education. The student's graduate advisor will monitor this aspect in the selection of questions.
  4. Students will select two questions from those listed on their individual exam and will have two hours to write their responses. The student will be instructed to plan to write about

one hour for each question and that well organized, well written and legible responses are expected. References/authorities in the field should be cited as appropriate. Theoretical applications are required to be integrated into the responses.

5. At the completion of the two-hour time block, the student will submit a flash drive with the responses to two of the three submitted questions. The contents of the flash drive will be saved to the proctor's computer with the flash drive being returned to the student upon successful completion of the oral component of the comprehensive exam.
6. A copy of the exam and the student's responses will be emailed within 24 hours of the exam to the student's graduate committee for review. If there is a serious deficiency preventing the student from progressing to the oral examination, the advisor must notify the student following consultation with the student's graduate committee. The 72-hour notification period begins the day after the exam is taken and concludes 72 hours later. Arrangements for remediation requirements and/or retaking the written exam will be the responsibility of the advisor, following consultation with, and agreement by, the student's committee as to the terms and conditions.
7. In the event that there is an impasse in the committee regarding decisions about the student's level of performance on the written exam or extenuating circumstances make a committee member unable to participate, the decision may be reached by a majority vote of the graduate committee. In the event that the graduate committee is reduced to two members, and they disagree on the student's performance, a third member with subject matter expertise will be added to the committee by the MSND Graduate Coordinator.
8. If a student does not successfully complete the written exam, the graduate committee may allow one additional opportunity to meet the requirements of the written exam. The requirements that comprise the additional opportunity are determined by the committee. The advisor, in consultation with the committee, will communicate to the student the terms under which the deficits will be met and the documentation that is required. The advisor and/or committee will provide guidance through the remediation process, as determined by the student's committee. The communication regarding the remediation will be in writing and copied to the student, the committee, the Chair/Assistant Chair, and the Graduate Coordinator. The opportunity to successfully complete the requirement for the written exam must be completed within the two academic terms following the term in which the written exam was first attempted and must be within the six-year time limit on graduate coursework included on the student's study plan. In the event that a student does not pass the written portion of the comprehensive exam after the second attempt, the student is dropped from the program and no longer holds candidacy status for the MS in Nutrition and Dietetics degree.

Part II. ORAL

- A. Satisfactory presentation and defense of thesis approved by the student's graduate committee.

**OR**

- B. Satisfactory discussion of the field of nutrition and dietetics, including nutrition education principles, food science, food service management, clinical dietetics, and research.
1. Requirements for taking the oral examination:
    - the oral component of the comprehensive exam will occur only after the student's successful completion of the written component demonstrating adequate and appropriate knowledge, logical organization, written expression and/or any remediation that has been required by the committee; and
    - GPA must be 3.0 to be eligible to continue the comprehensive examination.
  2. Early in the term in which the comprehensive examination is planned, the student is responsible for contacting his/her advisor to set a time for the oral examination. The exam should be scheduled no earlier than 7 days after the written exam and no later than two weeks prior to the last published day of class for the semester.
  3. Committee members are required to provide flexibility in order to schedule oral exams during the hours of 8:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. In unusual circumstances these normal hours of examination time may be supplemented by additional hours if there is agreement by the student and the committee.
  4. The student is responsible for initiating the arrangement options for the time/date of oral exam with the advisor after checking the schedules of all committee members. When the advisor and student have selected possible times/dates, the students will contact the other two committee members to arrange a time/date. Once the oral exam has been set, the advisor will reserve a room, and notify the student and committee members of the final date, time and location. A follow-up reminder sent to the committee by student is recommended 24 hours before the oral exam.
  5. The oral exam is conducted by members of the student's committee and chaired by the student's advisor. Two hours should be allowed for the oral exam. Once the student has responded to all of the questions, the student will leave the room while the committee evaluates the total comprehensive exam and considers the merit of the written and oral exams in the aggregate. Following this deliberation, the student is asked to rejoin the committee and promptly notified of the result. When successfully completed, the "Certification of Comprehensive Knowledge" form is signed by the committee. The graduate committee advisor will place the signed copy in the MSND Graduate Coordinator's mailbox for entry into Banner.
  6. In the event that there is an impasse in the committee regarding decisions about the student's overall comprehensive exam level of performance or extenuating circumstances make a committee member unable to participate, the decision will be reached by a majority vote of the graduate committee. In the event that the graduate committee is reduced to two members, and they disagree on the student's performance,

a third member with subject matter expertise will be added to the committee by the MSND Graduate Coordinator.

7. If a student does not successfully complete the oral exam, the committee may allow one additional opportunity to meet the requirements of the oral portion of the comprehensive exam. The requirements that comprise the additional opportunity will be determined by the committee. The advisor, in consultation with the committee, will communicate to the student the terms under which the deficits will be met and the documentation that is required. The advisor and/or committee will provide guidance through the remediation process, as determined by the student's committee. The communication regarding the remediation will be in writing and copied to the student, the committee, the Chair/Assistant Chair, and the MSND Graduate Coordinator. The opportunity to successfully complete the requirement for the oral exam must be completed within the two academic terms following the term in which the oral exam was first attempted, and must be within the six-year time limit on graduate coursework included on the student's study plan. In the event that a student does not pass the oral portion of the comprehensive exam after the second attempt, the student is dropped from the program and no longer holds candidacy status for the MS in Nutrition and Dietetics degree.

### Part III. APPEAL PROCESS

If a student chooses to appeal the revocation of their candidacy status after failure of the written and/or oral comprehensive exams, they may submit an appeal in writing to the Council on Graduate Studies with a copy sent to the MSND Graduate Coordinator and SFCS Chairperson. The written appeal request must be received no later than the Midterm Day of the following term (after the revocation of the candidacy status). After the appeal is received, a time for the remediation hearing will be scheduled by the MSND Graduate Coordinator with the entire graduate faculty and the student will be notified in writing of the remediation date. Seventy percent of the graduate faculty present at the remediation hearing will need to agree that the student demonstrated sufficient competency in order to overturn the revocation of the student's candidacy status. In the event that the student does not pass the exam with the graduate faculty, the student will not be eligible for degree candidacy status for the MS in Nutrition and Dietetics degree.

### Part IV. CERTIFICATE OF COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE

Final certification for graduation depends upon documentation of the completion of all graduation requirements being submitted to the Graduate School by their stipulated deadlines. The completed and signed "Thesis Deposit Certificate" or "Certification of Comprehensive Knowledge" form must be submitted to the Graduate School by the last class day published in the Class Schedule of the student's final term.

Approved by SFCS Graduate Faculty: January 22, 2015.