

Comprehensive Examination Policy for the M.A. in Gerontology (non-thesis option) **Student Guide**

One of the requirements in nearly all EIU master's degree programs is successful completion of a comprehensive examination. The format and procedures are determined by the Gerontology Faculty Affiliates. The student should refer to the Graduate Catalog for degree requirements.

A. Procedure for Applying to take the Comprehensive Exam

Graduate students must complete 32 semester hours of course work or be at the conclusion of their final courses for a Masters in Gerontology degree before taking the comprehensive examinations. In addition, graduate students must complete a form the semester before they will be taking the exam, which will inform the Coordinator of the Gerontology Program of the student's intention to take the exam. The form must be signed by the student and his/her advisor.

The Coordinator of the M.A. in Gerontology Program will confirm the date and time of the examination and each student's eligibility to take the examination by sending a letter to the student. Examinations are scheduled to allow time for evaluation prior to the date the reports of the results are due to the Graduate School.

The written exams should be viewed as a **three-part process**:

- 1. The student selects members of the comprehensive exam committee**
- 2. The student completes the written exam**
- 3. The student completes the oral exam; The oral exam is based on the written exam and is administered by the student's committee. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the oral exam. Further, the coordinator of the Gerontology Program must be invited to attend the oral exams.**

In extreme circumstances, a student may be allowed, with permission of the Gerontology Program Coordinator; to postpone taking the comprehensive exam the semester it was requested.

Students graduating in the summer must **apply** within the first 10 days of the Spring semester and declare their intention to take the exam in the Spring.

Students who have failed the examination may be allowed to take it again (“retake”) on the next scheduled examination date. (See Section E for information regarding “retakes” and “rewrites”).

B. Format and Content of the Comprehensive Exam

Comprehensive examinations are intended to encourage students to integrate what they have learned during their graduate studies at EIU. The examinations are “comprehensive” in that they evaluate students’ knowledge of material from all required course work and relevant current literature.

Comprehensive examinations may be taken on a computer. If the exam is handwritten, the student must have the exam typed. **Immediately** after completing the exam, a photocopy of the handwritten exam must be turned in to the coordinator prior to it being typed. The copy will be duplicated and sent to each of the student’s committee members. The committee members are to notify the student’s advisor if there are any concerns regarding the exam.

C. Administration and Evaluation of the Written and Oral Exams

The written exam will be administered once in the Fall semester and once in the Spring. The dates will be determined and announced each semester. The exam will be three hours in length. Time, date, and place of the exam—To Be Arranged.

Before taking the exam it is the **student’s responsibility to schedule a two hour oral exam** with the student’s committee.

a. Evaluation of Written Exam

Each question stands alone in the evaluation process – in other words, the student should not say when writing the answer to one question, “please refer to [my other answer].”

Each examination question is evaluated independently by members of the student’s committee.

Each question is evaluated on a Pass/Fail basis. Students must receive passing marks from all committee members. Students who fail their written comprehensive exam will not be allowed to proceed with the oral examination.

The examinations are evaluated on accuracy, objectivity, specificity, scope/breadth, organization, relevancy, clarity, documentation, course references, and comprehensiveness.

b. Evaluation of the Oral Exam

The oral exam questions may be based on any questions on the written exam, not just those selected by the student.

Upon successful completion of the oral exam the student’s committee “signs off” on two copies of the Certificate of Knowledge. One copy is retained for the student’s file and the other is sent to the Graduate School. The student can Pass or Pass with Distinction. Immediately after the oral exam the student is notified of the results.

D. Reporting of Examination Results

The M.A. in Gerontology Program Coordinator informs the School Chair of the results of the examination. Examination results are treated confidentially.

In the event that a student fails the examination, the student’s advisor will provide written constructive critiques of the relevant examination items.

E. Retaking or Rewriting the Comprehensive Exam

a. Rewrite

In the event that a student passes three of the four examination questions, graduate faculty may choose to allow the student to re-write answers to the fourth question during the same semester before reports of examination results are due to the Graduate School. Such re-writes may be requested by the graduate faculty when items seem incomplete or unclear, and when the student seems to lack a fundamental grasp of the material. Variations on the original question or more specific questions may be used for the re-write.

If the student chooses not to **rewrite** at the designated time after being notified of the results, then the student will have to **retake** the exam during the next semester's comp exam time. The student will need to reapply for this retake. (See Retakes in section b).

b. Retake

Students who have failed two or more questions on the examination must take the entire comprehensive exam again ("retake") on the next scheduled examination date. The student will need to reapply for the retake. Students who fail the exam on their third attempt are dropped from the program.

The student's advisor notifies the student of the exam results.

F. Appeals of Examination Results

Students who have failed the examination or failed a question and its re-write may appeal to the Gerontology Program Committee for reconsideration of the examination results. Appeals must be written and must state the grounds on which the appeal is based. Students should discuss these options with their advisors.

**For Questions Please Contact:
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