



GUIDE TO THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PROCESS



Effective Summer 2010

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination



A Guide to the comprehensive examination process for Argosy University programs in education.



Note: This guide will continually evolve to meet the needs of the students of Argosy University. Always confirm currency of information and interpretation of guidelines with the program chair and/or College Dean.
2010

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

Table of Contents

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: OVERVIEW	1
Introduction.....	1
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: PROCEDURES	2
Eligibility Requirements.....	2
Registration and Course Information	2
Examination Administration Process	4
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: EVALUATION	5
Evaluation Criteria	5
Examination Retake	6
Notice and Record-Keeping	7
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: PREPARATION	8
Basic Rules of Presentation	9
Response Keys	9

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: OVERVIEW

Introduction

The comprehensive examination concludes the formalized course work portion of various College of Education programs at Argosy University. Students in the education specialist and doctoral programs must complete the exam prior to graduation of the Ed. S or moving to the dissertation stage of their Ed.D. The successful completion of the comprehensive process should demonstrate the student's readiness to graduate and or move through the dissertation to complete the program of study. More importantly, the exam assesses whether students are able to function at the level of expertise demanded of those with an advanced graduate degree. The examination process provides an opportunity for the student to document mastery of the curriculum, knowledge base of the profession, and the competencies required of a program graduate.

The format of the examination, including the number and types of questions asked, will vary by program and by year. Preparation for the comprehensive exam should begin with the first course taken in the doctoral program, and continue throughout the course work. The *Guide to the Comprehensive Examination* is designed to help students understand the examination process and maximize performance on the examination. Students should read the *Guide* at the beginning of the program of study and should also revisit the guide annually to remain current and aware of all requirements.

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: PROCEDURES

Eligibility Requirements

The student is eligible to take the comprehensive examination upon verification that all coursework in the program of study is either successfully completed, or is being completed, in the same academic session and that the student is in good academic and financial standing. Student's first attempt at the exam must occur within two sessions (7.5 weeks sessions) after the completion of coursework. If the student fails their first attempt, the student has three sessions (7.5 week sessions) to retake the test. Failure to pass the second test within the allotted time will result in dismissal from the university.

Students who are registered for the comprehensive exam must take the examination in the session registered; failure to complete the exam will be considered a failure.

Registration and Course Information

To enroll for the comprehensive exam, students are to register for ADJCOMP in CampusVue. Many campuses offer an ADJCOMP Workshop. Students will be charged a \$300 fee only for registering in the ADJCOMP Workshop course. The ADJCOMP Workshop course will be offered six times a year. Consult with your program chair for more information regarding the ADJCOMP Workshop.

The comprehensive exam is facilitated through an eCollege course. The eCollege course shell includes: (a) response strategies; (b) APA format and style guide; (c) *Turnitin*® procedures; (d) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs); (e) program rubrics; (f) program outcomes and competencies (g) a table of specifications for the exam; (h) an

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

example of a completed exam and other “toolbox” resources to help students prepare for the test. The eCollege course will be the vehicle in which all student communication will be facilitated, including release dates of the questions.

The comprehensive exam is completed over a one week period and the student is allowed to use notes, books, and research articles to answer the questions.

Students will submit their exam to the campus comp exam administrator by the day and time it is due. Failure to submit the exam on time will be considered a failure. Students are also required to submit their exam to Turnitin.com and must submit the Turnitin.com results when submitting the comprehensive exam. Instructions for using Turnitin.com are available on the eCollege website.

Comprehensive exams are subject to the same university academic honesty and plagiarism policies and practices as stated in the university catalog. Students found to have cheated or plagiarized their comprehensive exam will be dismissed from the university. The comprehensive examination must reflect the student’s original work and must be produced exclusively by that student. Any source used by the student must be documented, using standard citations from scholarly references and citations consistent with the most current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Students who have questions about their enrollment in ADJCOMP should see their program chair.

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

Examination Administration Process

A faculty or designated staff or administrator from each campus and program will be assigned as the comprehensive examination administrator for each examination session. The examination begins with access to the questions available at a time designated in advance and housed on eCollege. Students will receive electronic notification and confirmation and access to the eCollege platform one week prior to the release of the examination. Students registered for the examination must take the examination in the session registered; failure to complete the examination will be considered a failure of the examination attempt.¹

The student is responsible for creating a personal copy of the examination prior to submission.

Examination results will be available prior to completion of the academic session in which the examination was completed, normally by email or other electronic notification. Feedback on strengths and weaknesses identified in the examination process will be provided. In cases where a student's performance is determined to fall short of minimum acceptable standards, detailed comments will be provided to assist the student either in revising the examination or in preparing for a second attempt at the comprehensive examination. Regardless of the result, the campus registrar will be notified and the result posted to the student's official transcript.

¹ In the case of a medical or other personal emergency, the student must make a good-faith attempt to notify the examination administrator prior to the start of the examination period and in all cases, make such notification as soon as is reasonable given the particular emergency.

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: EVALUATION

The evaluation process, including the rubrics used, will vary by program. The comprehensive examination is read by two or more approved and trained faculty members who serve as readers. Examination review is confidential and no student-identifying information is provided to the reader. In addition, the identity of the readers is not provided to the student.

Evaluation Criteria

The examination is scored against established metrics specific to the questions and the program learning outcomes and in accordance with graduate level expectations of performance. Current rubrics for each administration of the comprehensive examination will be available through the comprehensive examination toolbox. The rubrics consist of four categories: a score of 1= Unacceptable and constitutes a failing score, a score of 2 = Emerging indicating the student's answer is not proficient and that revision is necessary², a score of 3=Proficient the student's answer is sufficient to receive a passing score, a score of 4= Exemplary is assigned when the answer exceeds the expectations of a proficient response. Readers will have two weeks upon receipt of the examination to grade and provide feedback to students.

If readers' scores for an individual examination substantially differ³, the examination administrator will consult with all readers to reconcile any concerns and, if reconciliation is not successful, identify at least one additional reader. Based on the set of reviews the comprehensive examination administrator will make a final determination

² This is not true for Question 1 where a score 3 or higher is required to pass.

³ "Substantial" is defined as a difference great enough to impact the success or failure of an individual question or the examination as a whole.

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

of the evaluation rating. If the student has just cause to file a grade appeal they may do so by following the procedures for grade appeal found in the University Catalog.

Remediation may require a student to take additional course work, to pursue special writing instruction, or obtain other special training to address weaknesses identified.⁴

The comprehensive examination must reflect the student's original work and must be produced exclusively by that student. Any source used by the student must be documented, using standard citations from scholarly references and citations consistent with the most current edition of the Publication Manual of the *American Psychological Association*.

Examination Retake

The conditions of re-taking the comprehensive examination will vary by exam format. For the current exam a retake will depend upon the score a student receives in the first question of the exam. The first question requires a rubric score of 3 (proficient) or greater in order to pass the exam. Students who fail the first question will have to retake the entire test. However, students who pass question 1 and then receive a score of 2-2.99 on questions 2 (for doctoral students) and either question 3 or 4 (for both Ed.D and EdS students) of the comprehensive examination on the first attempt will have an opportunity to rewrite their answers to those questions. Students will have 2 weeks upon receipt of the returned exam to revise. A score of 1-1.99 on questions 2, 3 or 4 for doctoral students and 3 or 4 for specialists is considered failing requiring students to retake those questions

⁴ Any special remediation requirements will be at the student's expense.

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

on the next exam administration. Final exam outcomes must be posted by the end of the term.

For all students who are unsuccessful in the initial taking of the comprehensive examination, some remediation and tutoring services are available, either at the campus or through online resources. Students who fail to pass the comprehensive examination on the second attempt will be dismissed from Argosy University and the program. Students may appeal dismissal results to the campus by following the Student Right to Appeal process stated in the Argosy University Academic Catalog.

Notice and Record-Keeping

The university will retain electronic copies of comprehensive examination and related documents for 6 months.

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION: PREPARATION

Students begin preparation for the comprehensive examination with the first course taken in the doctoral program and continue to prepare throughout the coursework portion of the program of study. As a general rule, students should take and catalog notes on all readings assigned to all classes, as well as related readings the students identify as appropriate and relevant to the program of study and individual career aspirations. As the comprehensive examination period approaches,⁵ students should develop a study schedule in order to perform well on the comprehensive examination.

The student is expected to provide carefully articulated and well-reasoned responses to examination questions, based on the applications, practices, theories, constructs, and models presented in the various courses and projects in the education specialist or doctoral program, and through independent reading and research. Responses should reflect an intellectual and practical understanding of topic areas covered. References and sources should be appropriate to the question and a substantial portion should come from current literature but should be used to supplement and support the reasoning, presentation, and conclusions of the student. The comprehensive examination is not a literature review; rather it is an applied exercise requiring methods of problem-solving, synthesis, and scientific inquiry.

Students must arrange work schedules during the comprehensive examination period to maximize time available for the purpose. “Too busy at work” is not an acceptable defense for either bad work or late submission of the exam. Students should seriously consider using vacation or personal time from work for this period.

⁵ This pre-examination preparation should begin at least one full semester prior to taking the comprehensive examination. Students should not see this as an additional academic burden; if done well, the student will also be much better prepared to begin the dissertation process as a result of thorough preparation for the comprehensive examination.

Guide to the Comprehensive Examination

Basic Rules of Presentation

When reviewing the comprehensive examination questions, there are some basic factors that must be followed. These include:

1. Start a new page for each examination question.
2. Post the entire question or topic for each heading at the top of the new page.
3. Use the parts of the questions or topic as the headings.
4. Answer all of the heading questions.
5. Provide an introductory statement to each question and summarize briefly the main points of the response in the conclusion.
6. Use correct writing skills including: mechanics, usage, grammar, and spelling.
7. Make sure to apply APA style conventions for citations, quotations, references, headings, spacing, and writing.
8. Use timely peer reviewed citations, when appropriate, in your responses.

Response Keys

Critical thinking and problem solving competencies are key to satisfactory performance. Demonstration of critical thinking skills include: clarity and succinctness, completeness, internal logic, and relevance.