

## **Guidelines for the Master's Comprehensive and Doctoral Candidacy Examinations**

The UA Graduate School requires that masters and doctoral students be assessed as they approach the end of their coursework with either a Master's Comprehensive or Doctoral Candidacy Examination. The Graduate School provides for some flexibility in accomplishing this task and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction provides two options (discussed below).

### **General Instructions**

- 1) At the beginning of the semester in which the student will be finishing their final 2-3 classes, the student must communicate his/her desire to take either exam. There is no application but the student must inform 1) his/her advisor, 2) Ms. Johnson-Mertz and the 3) Graduate Coordinator with an email containing "Comp/Candidacy Exam Request" in the subject line of that email. This email must be submitted in the first four weeks of the semester in which the students plans to take the examination.
- 2) The advisor will make the determination as to the use of the exam option. In the case of Option A, the advisor will be responsible for determining the test dates; there is not a standard exam time for Option A.
- 3) Rather than post new dates for each semester, the exam period will take place each Fall and Spring semester beginning no earlier than the third week of classes and completed by the end of the twelfth week of classes. In other words, no matter which option is used, the student must schedule the exam and complete the work between these dates. This includes having scheduled any necessary committee meetings in which the student defends his/her work. Such meeting may not take place in the final weeks of the semester to permit advisors to attend to regular course-related responsibilities.
- 4) Following the successful completion of either the Comprehensive or Doctoral Candidacy Exam, the signed form will be sent to the Department Graduate Coordinator who will transmit the form to the UA Graduate School.

When a student passes the Masters Comprehensive Exam, this should be noted on the students' record of progress: <http://grad.uark.edu/forms/student/progress-record.pdf>

When a student passes the Doctoral Candidacy Exam, this should be noted on the Candidacy Exam Form available at the UA Graduate School website or simply notify the graduate school that the student has passed the examination.

### **Examination Options**

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction offers two options to faculty in assessing students with respect to the Comprehensive and Qualifying Exams.

Option A: One option is to give the tradition examination which the Department has used for some time. With this assessment model, students are asked to respond to a set of questions while seated for a prescribed period of time at a secure computer or by responding in a "bluebook." We recognize that for some distance resident programs this is the only practical option. The responses are then evaluated by a committee which makes the final recommendation regarding the "pass / fail" decision.

### ***Guidelines for Option A***

This is the traditional examination in which students will receive the questions at the time of the examination itself. Students have the option of answering examination questions by writing their responses longhand or using a computer with word processing capability (preferred).

1. Students not using computers must provide their own writing materials. Students using computers must provide their own computer media for saving their work. In either case, the exam proctor will review the materials in ensure that they contain no previously constructed responses.
2. Students must indicate on the application form that they wish to take the examination on computer or using bluebook at the time of application.
3. Students may not bring any materials into the testing area. Exceptions may be made for a student needing the use of a calculator or international students needing a dictionary for translation purposes. Any request for an exception must be made in writing to the Graduate Coordinator of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction
4. The College of Education and Health Professions and off-campus sites (as arranged) will not be responsible for the loss of any data during the examination period. Media for data storage is the responsibility of the students taking the examination.
5. Conversation between students during the examination is not allowed.
6. Once the examination is finished handwritten responses will be turned over to the proctor and will be forwarded to the students' advisor. All computer-generated files will be sent to the students' advisor as an attachment by the proctor.
7. Personal software will not be loaded on testing computers; however, eligible students with special needs may request to use assistive technology. Notify your adviser at least two weeks before the examination date.
8. Students accessing the Internet before or during the examination will be immediately expelled from the examination.

Option B: Another option is to have each member of the students' committee write a question for the student based on the students' interests, dissertation goals and/or plan of study. The chair of each committee reviews these questions to ensure that they were both comprehensive and not significantly overlapping and provides them to the student. At this point the student will have 30 days to craft a response using the kinds of resources that scholars would be expected to access. At the end of the 30 day period each committee member will receive a copy of the students' work. Within the next 30 days a defence meeting must be set up by the student during which he/she spend an hour or more responding to committee members' questions.

### ***Guidelines and Sample Format for Option B***

This is only a sample with respect to the actual questions, but for consistency, faculty members are encouraged to use this common set of directions:

**University of Arkansas**  
The College of Education and Health Professions  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Qualifying Exam Questions for John Q. Student  
Advisor: Dr. Ima E. Valuator

**Directions to Student:** You are to develop a set of typed essays to respond to each of the following challenges. The total number of pages must not exceed 50 in 12 pt type with single spacing in the paragraphs with a blank line between the paragraphs (this page limit does not include the references). Each essay should be well written and represent a complete response reflecting both deep understanding and creative insights. You are encouraged to make links between the individual items, where possible and appropriate. Please use APA reference style throughout.

If you are unclear about the spirit/intent of any question you should ask the professor who provided the question as soon as possible.

You may use any references that you need, but you may NOT collaborate in any significant fashion with anyone else as you complete this assignment.

A hardcopy of your responses must be delivered to each of your committee members no later than 30 days following your receipt of these questions. It will then be your responsibility to set up a time for a 90 minute session with your committee members during which you will defend your responses. This meeting must be scheduled no later than 30 days following the delivery of the copy of your responses to your committee members.

The (SAMPLE) Questions:

- 1) Professor A: Compare and contrast your theory of instruction to two theories of learning. Use these three theories to look at one educational phenomenon and use them to predict practice. Why do you think they might predict the same or different practices?
- 2) Professor B: Review the recent literature on the current state of physics teaching (strengths and weaknesses of the current situation) and explore the level of preparation of physics teachers themselves and 1) make some suggestions for how this situation could be improved and 2) review calls for such improvement that have been made in the last 10 years.
- 3) Professor C: Consider the kinds of maps contained in the Atlas of Science Literacy and provide a rationale for the development of these “maps,” discuss the mechanisms for their development, discuss the use that teachers and other science educators are expected to make of them and conclude with a critique of the Atlas, its products and strategies (both good and bad points).
- 4) Professor D: Define constructivism and give a brief overview of its history and the controversy surrounding the use of constructivist principles in the teaching of science. Mention what teaching would look like if it were done in a wholly constructivist fashion and discuss how a constructivist orientation for instruction might be impacted by culture.