

Administering Comprehensive Examinations
Exam Procedures
PhD in Communication

Overview

This document spells out the standard procedures for administering the three modules of the PhD in Communication comprehensive examination. The rules with regard to when comprehensive exams may be taken, the composition of exam committees, and the structure of the exams themselves can be found in the document entitled "*PhD Comp Exams–Overview.*"

Format of the Exam

The doctoral comprehensive exam consists of three modules in the form of eight hours of closed book exam writing time over two consecutive days, plus three questions in "take-home" form to be completed in one week's time. The take-home portion of the exam can be taken either directly before, or directly after, the closed-book, "in-house" exams. Students must not be informed of the specific questions on these exams in advance.

Description of Exam Modules

1. *Theory* – closed book exam (no internet connection), four hours writing time.
2. *Methodology* – closed book exam (no internet connection), four hours writing time (with no less than one hour devoted to qualitative research and no less than one hour devoted to quantitative research).
3. *Specialization* – three questions, take home, one week deadline.
4. *Oral defense* – the committee and student meet once for an oral defense of all exams at the end of the exam process.

Procedures for In-House Exams (Theory and Methodology)

A. Exam Timing – Three "Windows"

Students can take their comprehensive exams during one of three "windows" during the academic year. The student's examination committee must approve the window the student selects, and the oral defense must be scheduled for a date *within* the window. Students may not sit for their comprehensive exams outside of these windows.

Window 1: May 15 – June 15

Window 2: August 1 – August 31

Window 3: January 2 – January 31

B. Exam Duration – Two Days, Four Hours Each Day

The eight hours of in-house exams (theory and methodology) must be taken across two consecutive days, with one four-hour block of writing time each day. For this reason, faculty proctors must withhold the second day's exam questions until the student sits for the second day's exams. In other words, students must not be allowed to "sleep on" any exam questions during the two-day span.

C. Exam Proctor – The Committee Chair

The Committee Chair must personally administer the exam, or secure a graduate faculty member to serve as substitute proctor. If the Committee Chair secures a substitute faculty proctor, he or she must still be available by phone or video chat during the in-house exam to answer any questions the student might have about the questions or the process.

C. Take-home and In-House Exam Questions – Faculty Policy

No exam questions may be shared with students in advance of the exam.

D. In-House Exam Days – Procedures

1. At least one week prior to the exam days, the Committee Chair should email the Graduate Coordinator (Jessica Hall) the exam questions (both theory and methodology). In this email, the Committee Chair should specify the questions the student will address during each day's writing sessions.
2. On the first exam day, the Committee Chair (or faculty proctor substitute) prints out the exam questions to be completed *on that day* and gives them to the student.
3. The student then uses a computer provided by the Committee Chair to complete their answers to that day's exam questions.
4. Once the student's allotted time is up and the exam answers are completed, the files are saved on the hard drive of the Department's computer, and then transferred to the Graduate Coordinator's computer.
5. On the second exam day, the Committee Chair (or faculty proctor substitute) repeats steps 2 through 4.
6. Once all in-house exams are completed and stored on the Graduate Coordinator's computer, the Committee Chair then distributes the completed exam responses to the examination committee.

Procedures for Take-Home Exam (Specialization)

As noted above, the take-home exam (specialization) consists of three questions, and the student must submit their responses *exactly one week (7 calendar days) to the hour from which they were received by the student*. The take-home exam can be taken either directly before, or directly after, the in-house exams, at the discretion of the Committee Chair.

A. Distributing the Questions

The Committee Chair begins the process (and the one-week clock) by emailing the three exam questions to the student. The Committee Chair should “cc” the Graduate Coordinator in this email. At this point, the student has seven days to complete his or her response.

B. Submitting the Responses

When the student has completed his or her essays (or when the seven day clock has expired), he or she should email the essays to the Committee Chair. The student should also “cc” the Graduate Coordinator in this email.

C. Sending to the Committee

At this point, the Committee Chair sends e-copies of the specialization essays to the examination committee.

Time-Limits and Procedures for Evaluation, Rewrites, and Oral Defense

After the student completes the 2-day, in-house exam, the examining committee must provide written evaluation and notice of results, including any requirements for re-writes, within one week. After the student completes the one-week, take-home exam, the examining committee must provide written evaluation and notice of results, including any requirements for re-writes, within one week. If the committee requires any re-writes on either exam, students have one week to complete re-writes after receiving the results. An oral defense of all exams and re-writes must be completed no more than 28 days after the completion of the in-house exam. The student may be asked to rewrite all or part of the exam *one time*. An oral examination attended by all members of the committee is required for all students. After the oral examination is successfully completed, the committee signs the departmental *Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Results* form.

Here is a description of the timeline for completing comprehensive exams:

- The 2 day, in-house exam begins the timeline.
- 1 week (from 2nd day of in-house exam) -- take-home exam due to committee and in-house results due back to student.
- 1 week later -- rewrites from in-house exam due to committee (if necessary) and take-home results due back to student.
- 1 week later -- take home re-writes due to committee (if necessary) OR deadline for oral defense (if no re-writes were required).
- 1 week later -- final deadline for completion of orals.