



HED COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION POLICY for Ph.D and Masters

Educational Policy Studies & Practice

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER
EDUCATION

HED Ph.D Written Comprehensive Exam Policy

We have revised our PhD written comps exam policy. The new form of the exam is the required format, and will be the format for students who began in the Fall 2017 semester or later. Students who began taking classes prior to the Fall 2017 semester have the option of taking their written exam utilizing the old format or the new one.

The format for the Ph.D written comp exam includes two parts (see below), both of which are take home assignments, which students will have one week (total, for both parts) to complete.

The old format for the Ph.D written comp exam includes two parts – the Methods Critique (5-7 pages), described below in the new format, and responses to questions (5-7 pages on each response) on three of the substantive core classes of the program (HED 601, HED 609, and either HED 636, 628, or 619). Both parts of the exam are take-home assignments, which students will have one week (total for both parts) to complete:

Part I

Methods analysis of an article (5-7 pages, double spaced)

The focus of the methods analysis of an article is on the research methods used in the article. The student will choose whether they want to critique an article that utilizes primarily quantitative or qualitative methods. The faculty will choose the particular article. The student will write their responses, concentrating on the methods used. An analysis does not mean simply criticizing the weakness of the methods, it should also speak to the strengths of the methods employed in the research.

Part II

Framing a research problem (15-20 pages, double spaced). The question will be set by the student's advisor, after consulting with the student about their interests and dissertation plans.

The focus of this paper is fourfold:

- a) An integrative literature review on a problem that identifies the key schools/traditions in the literature, key authors within those schools/traditions, and gaps in the literature (what we don't know), specifying the contribution you are going to make;
- b) Working out of that literature review, develop a conceptual framework, coming out of the theories that you've addressed in your integrative literature review. Having identified the gap, you need to synthesize literature you've reviewed to challenge, confirm, disrupt, or extend the theories and concepts in that literature. So your conceptual framework should be aligned with the lit review, and elaborate on the idea of the contribution you are going to make to the literature and theories on your chosen topic area;
- c) Develop some research questions, and then frame working propositions or hypotheses around them that utilize the concepts in your conceptual framework. Again, make sure you have "alignment" between your integrative lit review, your conceptual framework, and your research questions.
- d) In a couple of pages, discuss the methods you will utilize to address and answer these questions. Again, be sure to think about alignment of each part of this paper.

HED MA Written Comprehensive Exam Policy

Goals: In the written examination, the student is expected to demonstrate a deep understanding of foundational and contemporary higher education literature, models and theories.

Format for Comprehensive Exam: The format for the comprehensive exam includes questions from HED 601 and two other courses, selected by the student and the advisor.

The exam is a take-home assignment which students have one week to complete. Copies will be distributed to the instructors of these courses and reviewed blindly. Students must successfully pass (not "low pass") at least two out of three areas of the Comprehensive exam. Students who fail all three questions, two of the three questions, or one question and marginally passes one other question have failed the Comprehensive exam. Students who fail their Comprehensive Exam may repeat their exam once if the committee determines that the result was a marginal pass/fail. Students who fail their Comprehensive exam a second time are subject to dismissal.

Timeline for Ph.D and MA Exams:

Exams will take place the second Friday in April and the second Friday in November unless those dates conflict with holidays or conferences. Students can petition to take the exam at a different time.