

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

There are two parts to the Comprehensive Examination

A.) The minor part (bibliography 1)

- basically the same for everyone; it pertains to the Interdisciplinarity question. The bibliography for the minor contains references in both English and French. Students must, at a minimum, include the bibliography in their chosen language of study; other references outside of this bibliography can also be added.
- the written response to this question should be about 20 pages
- it should answer the following questions:
 1. What is the difference between interdisciplinary and monodisciplinary research?
 2. How is my topic interdisciplinary in nature?

B.) The major part (bibliography 2)

- the response should be about 80 pages (total page response about 100)
- contains the literature review for the dissertation, the description of the research question, hypotheses, and a description of the foreseen methodology or approach. Write the literature review in such a way that makes clearer the question you want to ask.
 1. What do you know? What have you read? On what basis can we authorize this knowledge? Have you identified all the problems that come out of the review of the literature?
 2. What do you believe the research in this area has been lacking? Pick the one small area you focus on for your research – here is where you show your readers you know the problems, are aware that you know what ALL the other issues are, and that you are focusing only on one specific part.
 3. How will my research address what is lacking? Make the question/problem you want to answer clear.
 4. What methods will I find most useful in approaching the problematique?

Major = the first part of the thesis

It is:

1. the literature review
2. the research question
3. the hypotheses
4. the foreseen methodology

PROCESS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
(the student should be ready for this by the end of the 2nd year)

1. The student and committee formulate the questions; once agreed upon, the *Agreement on Comprehensive Examination Questions* is signed by the committee members; the agreement along with the questions for the minor, the major and its corresponding literature review are submitted, in paper format, to the program director for approval and the process begins.

2. The time span is elastic: the students have 4 to 12 months to work on the responses. During this time they should be meeting regularly / monthly with the committee to go over what has been written so far, make corrections / adjustments / etc. Students should not work alone, and should consult frequently with the supervisor as well as the committee as a whole.

3. When the committee agrees that the student is ready for the oral part of the examination, the members of the supervision committee must each sign the *Authorization for the Comprehensive Examination oral session*. Once signed, this form is to be submitted to the Program Director, at least four weeks prior to the oral session, with the written part of the Comprehensive Examination.

4. The program's administration is responsible to schedule the examination on a mutually agreed date. The committee members and program director will attend the examination oral session. The general public is also invited to attend. The Program Director will chair the oral session of the Comprehensive Examination.

i. Oral Examination (procedures)

- A meeting will be held between the Supervision Committee and the Program Director 15 minutes prior to oral session to acquaint themselves of the procedures to be followed (closed session);
- The student gives a 30-40 minutes presentation on his/her material for a) minor; b) major (open session);
- The student responds to questions first from the Committee members, then from the general audience (open session);

ii. Examination Committee Decision

- Immediately after the completion of the oral examination, the Committee members will hold a closed discussion to determine the outcome;
- The student and general audience will then reconvene in order for the Chair to convey the committee's decision to the student (open session).
- Possible outcomes are: *Pass*, *Incomplete* or *Fail*.

5. Once the student receives a 'Pass' for the Comprehensive Examination, the student is ready to move to the data collection phase of the Ph.D. process (should be about 1 year) and then to writing the dissertation (another year). The Comprehensive Examination part will provide about one third of the dissertation, therefore by the time the dissertation writing part starts, the student is already one third finished. The student should be ready to graduate at the end of the fourth year.

A special thank you to Annie Wenger-Nabigon, PhD student,
who provided us with her meeting notes to share with all.