Freed-Hardeman University
School of Education
Graduate Studies

Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

Comprehensive examinations are administered twice during the fall and spring semesters and once during the summer semester. Students can take the examinations only once during a semester

Comprehensive examinations are considered to be an important culminating experience during which graduate students are provided the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply knowledge and skills to practical professional situations. A working knowledge of course content and the ability to express one's thought in a thorough, orderly, graduate-level manner are combined in this endeavor.

Although nothing will replace taking the time to adequately review and study course materials in preparation for exams, the following suggestions are intended to provide guidance in preparing for and in answering the questions. Please take the time to read and give serious thought to the information provided below.

Courses to be Covered by Exams

Students will select four courses from among a number of courses provided on which to be tested. They will also choose which type of test is to be used in the testing process for each course. Two types of questions will make up the exams. Three courses will be covered by objective type questions, usually multiple choice. One course will require an essay response in order for the student to show a working knowledge of the content and the ability to effectively express oneself in written form.

Essay questions are intended to provide you the opportunity to take the basic knowledge and skills associated with a course and apply it to a school-related situation in which you might find yourself as a classroom teacher, school counselor, or an administrator. A faculty member who teaches the course or has taught the course will read the essay response and will evaluate the response based on a rubric for the course. Written comments will be given to the student for the essay test, if "fail" is the reader's response. Readers will not know the identity of the writer. The objective tests will be machine scored.

Preparing for the Exam

As you prepare for your exams, the following suggestions are provided

1. Use those good notes, tests, handouts, etc. which represent the main thrust of each class. Go through and make lists of key concepts, terminology, stages/steps, authorities in the field.
2. Read over these on a regular basis as you gradually refresh your memory and have these set in your mind and ready for recall. Obviously, to cram the last few days before the exam could be a serious error in judgment.
3. Although group work (one or two others) can be very useful in filling the gaps in each other's notes and generating possible exam questions, and appropriate degree of private study, without interruptions, is needed.
4. Make sure you have some understanding of the meaning of concepts, etc. so that you can apply the information. Dropping terms, stages, etc. in answers without an adequate understanding behind them significantly weakens the answer.
5. Don't assume you know the question which will be asked you regarding a class because a similar question has been asked on previous exams.

6. Review the textbook to see if there are main areas not reflected in your notes and to confirm the adequacy and accuracy of your notes.
7. The night before the exam, take a lengthy break from books, try to relax, and get to bed at your regular bedtime. Have a light meal and get to the testing site early to avoid generating within yourself a hurried and panicky frame of mind.
8. Carry to the exam several pens (black ink), white out optional, and small snacks (gum, mints, etc.). everything else you will need will be provided.

Writing the Essay

1. It is important that you read and give careful thought to the question you selected so that appropriate application is made. An answer that gives isolated and/ or random information related to the class, but yet does not address the specific question, will not be acceptable. A knowledge of content is necessary to adequately answer the question but the application must be made.
2. Make an outline on scratch paper of the main points you will include in your answer. Double check to see that these points specifically answer the parts of the question being asked.
3. As you write, introduce your main points and then elaborate on each one with relevant explanations, examples, references, etc. that demonstrate your understanding of the material. This will strengthen your responses and can make the difference in a reader's evaluation. However, it is important that your elaborations are appropriate to the question, factual (not a vast amount of unsubstantial opinions), and understandable to the reader.
4. Write in a narrative format (not in an outline, using the principles of good writing (well-constructed paragraphs, no run-on sentences, no misspelled words, correct grammar, etc.). a dictionary will be provided each student. Don't hesitate to use it.
5. Although quantity does not substitute for quality, comprehensive exam questions are such that an adequate answer would require a minimum of 10-12 pages. An answer less than this would likely be considered too brief to cover the topic at hand. Students must pick those questions with which they can be thorough in their responses.
6. Reread your responses to pick up any obvious errors gaps.

Exams will begin at 9:00 a.m. in the designated location and will continue until 4:00 p.m. when the exams are given on Saturdays. Exams are also given on two consecutive Friday evenings. Objective tests are given from 5:00-8:00 p.m. and essay tests are given from 5:00-9:00 p.m. If you would like to bring a snack/sandwich to eat during a break, you may do so. Students will not be able to leave the floor where the test is being administered.

Readers will be given copies of your essay response Monday morning following the exam and will attempt to read them within one week. Students will be notified of the results as soon as possible; likely within ten days. We realize your apprehension and will contact you as soon as we can. Please do not call or email the offices asking for results.

Please feel free to contact the Director of Graduate Studies in Education (731-989-6087) if you have any questions or concerns. Best wishes in your efforts!

Portfolio

As a part of this process, students will submit their professional portfolio on TaskStream and complete a dispositions self-assessment on TaskStream for a final review. The enclosed portfolio checklist should be used in making sure all has been done that is expected. The portfolio should be submitted at least two weeks, before the comprehensive exams via TaskStream to your advisor. It

should be submitted by _____. The portfolio score will be averaged in with the three multiple choice tests.