



PhD Comprehensive Exams

The Comprehensive Exams are intended to assess the comprehensive knowledge of selected fields of study through two major exams and mastery of a specific field of specialization in two minor exams. The comprehensive exams must take by the end of the second academic year.

By the beginning of the fall semester of the second year, the advisor and student will fill out the Comprehensive Exam Approval Form that lists the proposed titles of all exams and the proposed faculty to assess the exams. This will be approved by the Director of the PhD program.

The exams are as follows:

1- *Two Major Exams*: In collaboration with their advisor, students will suggest the topic and scope of their exams and select sources for each exam drawn from the literature review and additional works agreed upon by the advisor and student. The reading list should be agreed upon by the beginning of the fall term of the second year.

From these sources, the advisor and Director of the PhD program will draw up questions for the student. The student will be given these questions two weeks before the exam.

The exams will normally be set on a Tuesday and Thursday of the same on or around the first week of May.

Students will have six hours to complete each exam, between 10 am and 4 pm, that includes a one-hour break. (International students or those for whom English is not their primary language will be given an additional hour to complete the exams.) The student should respond to the questions as comprehensively as they are able within the time limit. The exam location will be a secure and proctored.

These exams will be assessed by a panel of two faculty whose expertise is relevant to the two chosen subjects. If possible, an external examiner will be utilized.

2- *Two Minor Exams*: students will be required to propose two subjects relevant to their research focus to produce to scholarly/research papers on. The papers need to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and sufficient competence to engage in original research in these selected areas.

The focus and scope of the minor papers should be established in consultation with the Advisor by the end of the fall term of the second year. Both are due by March 1st of the spring term.



The papers should be considered as potential submission to peer-reviewed scholarly journals and follow the normal conventions for the relevant journals of the field in which the student is researching and are normally between 6,000-8,000 words each. The papers will be read and assessed by two faculty whose expertise is relevant to the two chosen subjects.

In lieu of one or two minor exams, a student may submit a previously submitted and accepted, or published paper from a scholarly peer-reviewed journal during their first stage of the PhD program, in one of the areas of examination. This would demonstrate competency in said fields.

After the completion of the exams, the examination panel will meet to assess the exams. The recommendations from the panel will be given to the PhD committee that will then report to the student. For the major exams, the committee may elect to: pass, ask for the student to retake one or both exams (after a three-six month period), or fail. For the minor exams the committee may elect to: pass, ask for a re-write one or both papers, or fail.

In the case in which the student has failed two or more exams, the committee may elect to terminate the student's candidacy, and award an M.A. degree.