

QUICK REFERENCE • RESEARCH DOCTORAL STUDIES

Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

Comprehensive examinations ensure that students have a broad, working knowledge of their chosen field of study before advancing to doctoral candidacy and dissertation writing.

Eligibility Requirements

Students may only sit for comprehensive examinations after completing all of the following:

- All coursework required in the Foundational Phase
- All coursework required in the Advanced Phase, with the exception that Higher Education (81300) and Course Development and Design (81270) may be taken concurrently with or one semester after the exams
- Research languages or methodology requirements
- All Prospectus Development courses (I–IV)

Students must register for the comprehensive exam course at the beginning of the semester in which they intend to sit, after consulting with their supervisor.

Structure of the Examinations

- Examinations are administered over three separate days
- Each exam day covers content corresponding to the student's major area of study
- Students receive a department-specific study guide to assist in preparation. Students should contact the RDS office for their study guide and exam expectations.

Administration

- Exams are administered by the RDS office twice per year at set dates
- Examinations are not administered or proctored remotely; students must travel to campus
- The RDS office collects exams and distributes them to faculty for grading

Outcomes and Remediation

In the event of a failing grade on any or all exams, the RDS office will determine one of two courses of action:

- Permit a retake of the failed exam(s) within four months of the original exam date
 - If the student passes on the second attempt, the program continues normally

- If the student fails again on the second attempt, they will be administratively withdrawn from the program

Upon Successful Completion

Students who pass their comprehensive examinations are advanced to doctoral candidacy and proceed to the Candidate Phase, which involves prospectus approval and dissertation writing and defense.

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