FAQs Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Comprehensive Exam

What is the graduate comprehensive exam?

The graduate comprehensive exam assesses attainment of the graduate program goals in both core and concentration areas. The exam measures the knowledge and experiences gained in graduate programs as a student, as well as the degree to which knowledge and experiences can be applied to real world practice as education professionals.

When is the graduate comprehensive exam administered?

All students enrolled in graduate programs offered within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction are required to take the graduate comprehensive exam during the semester in which they are enrolled in their concentration area capstone course.

How does the graduate comprehensive exam affect graduate program completion?

Successful completion of the graduate comprehensive exam is required for graduation. Students who do not pass the graduate comprehensive exam will not graduate. Students may take the graduate comprehensive exam a maximum of three times. All attempts must be taken during consecutive semesters.

What graduate program requirements must be met before application for the graduate comprehensive exam is made?

Graduate students ready to take the graduate comprehensive exam must meet the following conditions:

- Degree plan filed in the registrar’s office.
- Current enrollment in the concentration area capstone class.
- Registration for graduation made through the College of Graduate Studies.

How is the graduate comprehensive exam administered?

The graduate comprehensive exam is administered electronically each semester. Students taking the graduate comprehensive exam receive their individualized exam questions by email during the designated window of availability each semester.

What does the graduate comprehensive exam look like?

The graduate comprehensive exam consists of six essay-type questions separated into two sections: three responses relate to knowledge and skills gained from core courses, and three responses related to knowledge and skills gained from concentration area courses. Students respond to two of the three responses from each category.

How are the questions on the graduate comprehensive exam developed?

Prior to enrollment in the capstone course, students identify a faculty committee from graduate faculty members from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. One member is named as the committee chair. Committee members develop exam questions.
How will the graduate comprehensive exam be evaluated?

Students’ exams are submitted to Blackboard for evaluation by faculty committee members. A departmentally approved rubric is used to assess student responses. Students must earn a passing score on all four exam responses from all assessors to successfully complete the graduate comprehensive exam.

What are the expectations for successful completion of the graduate comprehensive exam?

The questions on the graduate comprehensive exam are designed to measure attainment of Curriculum and Instruction Graduate Program goals:

1. Knowledge of research-based curriculum and instructional best practices,
2. Application of curriculum and instructional best practices, and
3. Communication of best practices in curriculum and instruction to professional audiences.

To demonstrate mastery of these goals, students are expected to consult valid research-based resources while following the writing conventions of the APA Publication Manual (6th edition).

When will students be notified of the results for their performance on graduate comprehensive exam?

Students will be notified of their results within 14 days after the comprehensive exam completion date.

What happens if a student is not successful with one or more questions on the graduate comprehensive exam?

Students must receive a passing score of 12/15 points to successfully complete comprehensive exams.

- If a student receives a score of 11, based on weak content, he or she may be offered the opportunity for oral response with the approval of the comprehensive exam committee.
- Students receiving a score of 11 based on weak writing or research may be permitted to rewrite their responses after remediation, with the approval of the comprehensive exam committee.
- Students receiving a score lower than 11 will have to retake the exam during the following semester. Students can take the exam up to 3 times, within three consecutive semesters.

How should students prepare for the graduate comprehensive exam?

The following activities promote successful completion of the comprehensive exam:

- Review the Student Learning Outcomes associated with each course taken. These knowledge and skills are found in course syllabi and reflect expected mastery.
- Review all activities and assignments completed within each course and consider how each relates to the Student Learning Outcomes. Re-read notes and text passages emphasized in class.
- Review important theories, principles, and concepts, as well as well-known theorists, researchers, and writers.
• Gather valid, reliable, and credible sources that might be referenced during administration of the graduate comprehensive exam.

• Search online for sample comprehensive exam questions and test taking tips.

**Who can I contact if I have questions about the comprehensive exam?**

• Contact your capstone course instructor for questions concerning exam administration or procedural issues.

• Contact your committee chair for questions regarding the nature of exam questions.

• Contact the Curriculum & Instruction Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Elizabeth Garcia (degarcia@tarleton.edu)

• Faculty contact information is available at [https://www.tarleton.edu/teachered/people.html](https://www.tarleton.edu/teachered/people.html)