

MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING

Procedures for Doctoral Comprehensive Examination
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of South Carolina

Doctoral Student:

XXXXXX

Substantive Area:

XXXXXX

Committee Members:

XXXXXX (Chairperson)

XXXXXX

XXXXXX

XXXXXX (Outside Member)

General Objectives

The doctoral comprehensive exam is designed to test broad theoretical and methodological understanding and basic competence in the general area of the student's dissertation research. The exam is committee-driven (3 department faculty members and one outside member). The comprehensive exam paper is expected to demonstrate an ability to synthesize and critically evaluate relevant literature and provide a well-developed, even-handed, and thorough answer to 3 questions: theory, methods, and substantive area. The comprehensive exam paper should be logical and organized, with writing that is easy to follow and of a publishable quality. Parts of the comprehensive exam are expected to inform the student's dissertation and may (with additional work) be developed into a possible publication for some students. During the oral defense portion of the comprehensive exam, students are expected to defend their written exam and address related theory, methods, and content questions from committee members.

Exam Schedule

Exam distribution is XXXXXX

Written comprehensive exam submission date is XXXXXX

Oral defense to be held between XXXXXX

If you experience extenuating circumstances that interfere with your ability to complete your comprehensive exam, you should notify the chairperson who will then discuss with the committee.

Exam Questions

Question 1 (theory): XXXXX

Question 2 (methods): XXXXX

Question 3 (substantive): XXXXX

Formatting Guidelines

The exam response should be structured in a peer-reviewed journal article format, using proper subheadings, references in APA format, 1" margins, and 12 point Times New Roman font. The submission should also be double spaced and somewhere between 40 and 60 pages in length.

Grading Procedures

Upon receipt of the written portion of the comprehensive exam, committee members will have approximately 2-3 weeks to review it. An oral defense of the exam will be scheduled within 4 weeks of the written exam being submitted to the committee.

Committee members will have an opportunity to question the student concerning the content of the written exam, as well as related theory, methods, and topical questions in their substantive area. At the end of the oral defense, committee members will meet outside the presence of the student and vote to score it as a pass, fail, or conditional and in need of additional work.

- **Passing Result:** If all four committee members agree that the responses (written and oral), collectively constitute a passing answer, the student passes the comprehensive exam.
- **Conditional Result:** If any member of the committee regards the comprehensive exam as being incomplete and in need of additional work, committee members must decide whether the student is deficient in the written exam, oral defense, or both parts. Following the committee's decision, the committee reports the results to the student and provides him or her with immediate feedback about the deficiencies. The committee specifies a new timeline for addressing the required changes (2nd submission date for written work, 2nd oral defense when applicable). After the revised written comprehensive exam is submitted to the committee and/or a second oral defense is held, the committee must determine if the additional work adequately addressed the deficiencies (i.e., the committee must give the exam a pass or fail at this point). All four committee members must agree that the responses, collectively, constitute a passing answer for the student to pass the comprehensive exam.
- **Failing Result:** If any member of the committee regards the comprehensive exam as failing, the student fails the exam. Following the committee's decision, the committee reports the results to the student and provides him or her with immediate feedback. When a student fails the comprehensive exam, he or she will have a second opportunity to take

the exam. At this stage, the chair of the committee can determine, in consultation with the student, if the student should change their focus area (which may result in a change of committee members, including the chair) or be given new questions in the same focus area.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Suspected violations will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Violations of the University's Honor Code include, but are not limited to, improper citation of sources, using another student's work, giving or receiving unauthorized assistance, and any other form of academic misrepresentation. For more information, please see the University Honor Code Policy. If an Administrative Hearing (or College Committee Hearing, should a student pursue one) finds the student responsible for a violation of the Honor Code, the comprehensive exam answer will receive a failing grade.

Signatures

Student Name

Date

Committee Chair Name

Date