Guidelines for Communication Studies M.A. Comprehensive Exams

Students who opt to complete the academic track on their plan of study should be prepared to take comprehensive exams during their final semester in the program. In consultation with a faculty advisor, students will decide which two other faculty members (three total with advisor) will write questions for the exam. It is recommended that students should pick faculty members with whom they have had courses. The exam should serve to demonstrate your mastery of learning from the courses included in the plan of study, both generally and specifically.

Although modifications of the structural procedure may occur, in general, comprehensive exams include timed written essay tests (total of 6 hours) administered over two or three days. Dates of exams are determined by the academic advisor and exam committee in consultation with the student. Exam areas must include core theory (2 hours), methods (2 hours), and emphasis or electives (2 hours). No notes, materials, or access to the internet will be allowed during the written exams.

If the faculty committee evaluates the written exams as not meeting expectations for passing, the following results are possible: (a) the student proceeds to an oral defense (b) the student will re-write one or more parts or the exam and then proceed to an oral defense, or (c) the student fails the exam and is allowed to take the exams again in the next term. If a student fails comprehensive exams in two consecutive terms they will be suspended from the program.

**Oral Defense:** After completing the written part of the comprehensive exam and the committee has recommended moving to the oral defense, the student is ready to schedule the oral portion of the examination. Students should discuss with their advisor about scheduling the oral defense. Typically the oral defense is scheduled 2 weeks following the written exams to allow the committee to review the written exams. Faculty advisors will schedule the oral defense with the committee.

The defense should last no more than one hour and is intended to allow committee members to question the student more fully about answers from the written exam.
Preparing for Comps

Students should start preparing early in the semester in which they plan to take comprehensive exams.

- Meet with the faculty advisor and committee members to get insight materials to review and about what exam questions will entail.
- Study and review all course work, papers, exams, course projects and course related materials.
- Become familiar with key theories and scholarship covered in each course and assessed in the comprehensive exams.
- Be ready to demonstrate how theories and methods of communication inquiry can be applied to areas of interest, career objectives, and everyday life.