

PhD. Program Comprehensive Exam Guidelines

Compiled from different sources (e.g., Universities and Government agencies' websites) to help and guide the candidates

INTRODUCTION

The PhD program comprehensive exam assesses the student's ability to integrate the knowledge of applied linguistics, show critical and independent thinking, and demonstrate mastery of the applied linguistics subjects. The results of the exam provide evidence of independent thinking, appropriate organization, critical analysis, and accuracy of documentation. The exam is the ultimate outcome of the PhD program coursework. The examinees will take comprehensive exams in terms of theoretical content, methodological approaches, and research paradigms acquired from the taught courses in the first two years of the program.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM OBJECTIVES

The comprehensive exam aims at measuring the ability of the students in the following respects:

A. Knowledge Acquisition: The exam measures the depth and comprehensiveness of students' understanding of the main topics of applied linguistics.

B. Analytical Ability/ Intellectual Growth: The exam aims at measuring the student's analytical ability to think and analyze, infer and assess concepts, and suggest appropriate solutions to given questions in the field of applied linguistics.

C. Research Ability: The exam aims at measuring the student's research abilities to conduct and write applied linguistics research according to scientific research methodologies.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM PARTS

A. Comprehensive Written Exam

Each student must take the written exam during the semester after the student has finished the required courses. A passing score for the written exam is a 70%. If a student fails to pass the written exam, he/she may be granted another chance to take the written exam during the next semester. If he/she again fails to pass the written exam, the Department Council will recommend his/her dismissal for poor academic performance in the exam.

B. Comprehensive Oral Exam

After passing the written exam, each student must attend an oral exam at a time decided by the exam committee. A passing score for the oral exam is a 70%. The exam consists of questions from the members of the comprehensive exam committee on the content of the student's written answers from the first part of the exam. The oral exam may include additional questions related to the student's program of study. If a student fails to pass the oral exam, he/she may be granted another chance to take the oral exam. If he/she again fails to pass the oral exam, the Department Council will recommend his/her dismissal for poor academic performance in the exam.

EXAM COMMITTEE

- The related department council forms a committee of at least three teaching staff members of professors and associate professors, with competence in the student's main specialization.
- The Committee is fully responsible for the exam including determining its fields, preparing its questions, determining the result and evaluating the student.
- The committee members should not have a direct relationship with the student.
- The committee for the written and oral exams should be the same.
- The committee should present the written and oral exam results to the department council for approval.

EXAM PROCEDURES

- The exam should take place during the semester that directly follows the end of the curriculums (the PhD program coursework years).
- The department's council set a date for the exam at least one month before its actual date.
- The head of the department should inform students about the exam date at least 20 days before the exam. The report should contain the following for both oral and written exams:
 - Date: Time: Place: Duration:
- The oral exam should take place after the written one. However, the period between the two should not exceed 21 days.
- The duration of the written exam should be at least 3 hours and does not exceed 5 hours.
- The duration of the oral exam should be at least half an hour and should not exceed 2 hours.
- The total marks for each exam should be 100.
- The passing grade in each part of the exam is 70%.

READING LISTS

All content that has been covered during the first two years of the program (the coursework part). This includes articles, books, and other learning materials that were discussed directly or indirectly in the courses. There are no unified reading lists. The questions will change from one year to another, depending on what the instructors have covered.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM OUTCOMES

In the comprehensive exam, the examinees will demonstrate:

- Reflection (personal, theoretical, research-based, practical) related to professional trajectory including an emerging sense of self as an agent of change in education.
- Comprehensive understanding of a research topic, theoretical/conceptual framework, relevance to the field and/or problem of practice, drawing on coursework and practical experiences.
- Basic knowledge of research methods: systematic literature review, research questions, data collection and analysis, research design.
- Critical thinking skills: creativity, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, reflection.
- Effective writing skills: organization, coherence, voice, grammar, writing conventions, APA style.

OBLIGATORY CRITERIA FOR ANSWERS TO THE EXAM QUESTIONS:

A passing exam response:

- meets the specified requirements of the task.
- demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the task.
- reflects an accurate understanding of concepts and terminology.
- develops arguments and/or presents information in a coherent, well-focused manner.
- includes insightful analysis.
- integrates appropriate evidence, including examples and previous scholarship, to support assertions and develop arguments.
- appropriately cites sources of information where required.
- features clear, accurate sentence structure and word choice

GENERAL BENCHMARKS FOR COMPREHENSIVE SCORING

A. (High Pass) A response graded (excellent) is comprehensive, detailed, and well organized. All parts of the question are addressed. The answer is not only accurate and shows a thorough understanding of the material, but it also shows substantial depth and insight. The response includes a discussion of several specific studies and findings, where appropriate, and notes counter-arguments, where appropriate. The answer is well developed and coherent, and it offers logical analysis or synthesis of information as required by the question. The writing is clear, fluent, and effective.

B. (Pass) A response graded (pass) is adequate and well organized. All parts of the question that are posed directly are addressed; the answer shows a firm understanding of the relevant material as evidenced by the use of correct, specific, and up-to-date references to theorists and researchers in the field. Compared to a "high pass," the "pass" response is somewhat narrow in the scope of discussion, range of studies/findings discussed, or coherent synthesis of ideas. Overall, a "pass" is accurate in terms of presentation of all material, generally well developed, and clearly organized.

C. (Poor/Fail) A response graded (poor) shows some knowledge of the field, but is problematic for any of several reasons: the answer includes some correct and relevant material, but it also includes incorrect and/or irrelevant information; one or more parts of the question are not addressed; it is so short that it presents insufficient information or only vague generalizations; it is not well organized and circumvents the question rather than answering it directly; and/or references are inaccurate, very few, or both.

D. (Fail) A response graded (Fail) demonstrates no knowledge of the area in question. It has more than one of the following problems: The answer does not address the question at all; the major parts of the question are not addressed; the question is answered in such brief and vague terms that there is not enough information to determine whether or not the writer understands the area; it presents little correct information; it presents substantial incorrect information; references are inaccurate, irrelevant, or absent; it is not well organized. (Note: Any question left entirely blank will receive a 0.).

GENERAL RULES AND TERMS

1. The comprehensive exam consists of two parts: written and oral.
2. The Council of Deanship of Graduate Studies shall terminate the registration of a student if he/she fails the comprehensive exam (where applicable) twice.
3. A student is deemed a doctorate candidate after passing the exam.
4. The passing grade in the exam (both oral and written) is 70%.
5. Those who do not pass the exam (written or oral or both) can be granted one chance during the following semester. If they fail, they will be dismissed from the program.
6. The department notifies the Deanship of the Graduate Studies about the result of the comprehensive exam (written and oral) within two weeks (maximum) from its date.
7. The committee declares its decision in a period not more than one week from the date of the oral exam. And the decision will be final and non-negotiable.

HELPFUL LINKS WITH SAMPLES OF QUESTIONS FROM RELATED PROGRAMS

<https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2016-January.pdf>

<https://nau.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2014-January.pdf>

https://www.memphis.edu/english/pdfs/al_phd_comps.pdf

<https://www.ccsu.edu/english/tesol/files/TESOLCompsRubric.pdf>

https://education.utsa.edu/images/6.6_Language_Teaching_Methods_Study_Guide.pdf

https://education.utsa.edu/images/6.4_SLA_Comprehensive_Exam_Study_Guide.pdf

https://education.utsa.edu/images/6.7_Assessment_Study_Guide_Spring2014.pdf

NOTE:

Compiled from other universities' websites and government agencies to help students have a clear idea about the comprehensive exam.