Doctoral Comprehensive Exam

The student can begin the pilot study at any time upon approval of the advisor after completion of the Gateway.

Purpose: from the University website: “[to] ascertain general knowledge of a subject, acquaintance with scholarly research methods and skills, [and ability to] organize and present materials.”

Components of the Exam

Introductory Statement
This statement includes a description of the student’s trajectory of study in the doctoral program that reflects growing knowledge of chosen field(s) and understanding of the major ideas, issues, and research that characterize the field(s). The statement serves as background information to the study. Suggested length is 3-5 double-spaced pages.

Completed study
Students are expected to present their pilot study in two forms: a scholarly paper and a public presentation.

Part I: Scholarly Paper

This paper must be a completed pilot study carried out by the student that demonstrates knowledge of research design and reflects experience with data collection and analysis. This paper can be based on a paper that was previously submitted for a course like ETAP 781 or ETAP 778, or it can be a pilot study conducted as an independent study under the direction of the student’s advisor. This paper will be in a research article format.

This paper must be an executed study carried out independently by the student that:

• demonstrates knowledge of research design.
• reflects experience with data collection and analysis.
• shows readiness to carry out a dissertation study in the students’ chosen area of inquiry.

Format
The research paper is required to be double-spaced, no more than 30 pages (excluding references, appendices, figures, and tables), and formatted according to APA guidelines for research manuscripts.

Part II: Public presentation to the examining committee

Procedures
(1) After consultation with his or her advisor, the student notifies the department coordinator that he/she is ready to submit the exam paper.
The examining committee will have one month to review the exam papers and schedule the public presentation. The committee chair and member are assigned by the department; the advisor is ex officio. The committee will evaluate the exam after the public presentation.

Public presentation - the oral presentation is required to take no more than 20 minutes. After presentations by all students, a 30 minute question & answer session will follow. Questions will be asked by the examining committee and participants. There is no limitation to the number of slides to be included in the presentation. However, the student needs to adequately cover all major parts of the study in an easy to follow and coherent fashion.

The following guidelines provided for presenters at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) should help better prepare you:

• The presenter should prepare an outline of the major points of the paper.
• The paper should not be read verbatim from the text. Not only are such presentations usually dull, but because of time constraints the author may be cut off by the session chair before reaching the most significant aspects of the presentation.
• Presentations should represent, on average, a 15-20 minute summary of the paper. Highlights may be given covering such points as the purpose of the study, description of the sample, methodology, problems, and major findings, conclusions, or recommendations. The amount of time devoted to each highlight will vary according to the author’s evaluation of the importance of each area to the paper.
• Inexperienced speakers are advised to practice beforehand by preparing a reading text of approximately five to seven typed pages. However, the reading text is not allowed during public presentation.

Evaluation criteria: The exam and presentation will be evaluated as a whole. Taken as a whole, the exam should demonstrate:
1. Knowledge of areas of inquiry
2. Knowledge of research methodology
3. Competence in carrying out research
4. Competence in presenting research in oral and written forms

Possible Outcomes:

Pass, demonstrating competence in all four areas.

Revise/Resubmit

• If the student is in need of improvement in areas one, two or three (see above), the student may be asked to revise and resubmit with the same committee.
• The committee will have discretion in specifying what the student needs to do in revising the exam. This would include minor revisions to any one component of the exam as well as complete revisions of parts of the exam.

Fail/Retake
• If the student is in need of improvement in all four areas, the student will be required to retake the exam with a new committee.
• If a revised and resubmitted exam fails to demonstrate competence in all four areas, the student will be required to retake the exam with a new committee.

A student who fails on the first submission of the exam will have only one opportunity to retake the exam within 12 months from the date of the completion of the initial exam process.