

Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Purpose

The comprehensive examination in Communication Sciences & Disorders (CSD), Department of Communication Sciences & Disorders, is the culminating activity leading to the Master of Science degree. The examination may be taken during the final semester of coursework or the semester following completion of coursework. Satisfactory completion of the comprehensive examination requires that the student review the content of completed course work, demonstrate mastery of a body of knowledge, and effectively communicate this knowledge in a written format.

II. Overview and Procedures

Dates and Deadlines

The Graduate Coordinator, or designee, of CSD will meet with faculty members at the beginning of each semester to review University policies related to the comprehensive examination process and to establish the following:

- a. date of orientation for students taking comprehensive examinations
- b. dates of written and oral portions of comprehensive examination
- c. content of comprehensive examination questions
- d. scoring of comprehensive examinations
- e. deadline for notification of students

Qualifying

Students must have regular status in the graduate program in CSD and have filed a degree plan with the Dean's office within their first 9 hours of coursework.

Comprehensive examinations will be administered to graduate students who have no more than 6 credit hours remaining or may be administered following completion of coursework (but within the 6-year maximum time period of graduate study.) Individual circumstances will be considered by the Graduate Coordinator, the Department Head and the Dean. Comprehensive examinations will be given in the fall and spring semesters of each academic year. **NO SUMMER COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS WILL BE GIVEN.**

Students must have "good standing" status (refer to current catalogue) in order to be eligible to take the comprehensive examination.

In accordance with University procedures, students must apply for graduation and complete an application with the Dean of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences the semester prior to taking the comprehensive examination. Refer to the University schedule for the appropriate deadline to apply for graduation. The College of Nursing and Health Sciences will notify students in writing concerning their candidacy; the Department will notify students regarding the comprehensive examination orientation meeting date.

III. Administration of the Examination

Examination Procedure

The comprehensive examination will be scheduled once each semester, tentatively from 8:30-12:00 a.m. and from 1:00-3:30 p.m. On the designated date, all students taking the examination will meet in the assigned room and will be allowed to bring with them only the items and materials necessary for completion of the examination.

Security

Test questions are secured and the entire examination will be monitored by faculty members. The faculty monitor will collect electronic storage devices (i.e., diskettes, flash drives) immediately following each section of the examination. The answers will typically be disseminated by email among the faculty for scoring.

Duties of Faculty Monitors

The faculty monitors will be responsible for assisting students if problems arise, reminding students of time remaining, and ensuring that students do not remove any examination materials. During the examination, questions relating to specific examination items will not be answered.

IV. General Student Information

Attendance

All students who have filed for graduation will receive written notification of a mandatory comprehensive examination orientation meeting. The meeting will be scheduled approximately 4-6 weeks prior to the comprehensive examination. At that time, students will be informed about examination procedures and policies. Questions will be answered at that time.

Test Dates

The comprehensive examination will be scheduled approximately 8 weeks prior to each semester's graduation date.

Testing Conditions

Students taking the examination will include only their Student Identification Number (W number) within the computer files they create with their answers, thereby ensuring objectivity and confidentiality in scoring. Students will answer each question in a separate computer file, and save the document on the electronic media provided.

Test Questions

Students will answer five of seven questions that integrate information from coursework in communication sciences and disorders. Four questions will be given in the morning session, and the student will choose three to answer. Three questions will be given in the afternoon session, and the student chooses two to answer. Six hours (morning session 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m., and afternoon session 1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.) will be allotted for completion of the examination process, thereby ensuring adequate time for students to address questions of a truly comprehensive nature.

Each question will integrate information about the normal processes of speech, language and hearing, basic sciences, research methods, and the diagnosis and

treatment of individuals with communication and swallowing disorders. Questions will **not** be area or course specific; they will assess the student's understanding of interrelationships among the "Big 9" areas designated to encompass practice in speech-language pathology.

All CSD graduate faculty will submit and then select the required number of questions for the examination. Faculty will generally include those who have taught courses in the students' degree plan, but not necessarily so. Students will be responsible for information covered across the CSD curriculum.

Accommodations

Qualified students with disabilities who are seeking test accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act must provide appropriate documentation to the graduate coordinator by the date of the comprehensive exam orientation meeting.

V. Student Orientation Meeting

Purpose

Procedures for the comprehensive examination will be discussed at the comprehensive examination orientation meeting. Faculty members will be available to answer and clarify general issues and concerns, however faculty will not discuss specific comprehensive examination questions at the meeting or thereafter.

Coursework

The College of Nursing and Health Sciences and the Department will verify candidacy requirements for the comprehensive examination. Students and faculty members then confirm satisfactory completion of required coursework or current enrollment in the final semester of classes. The Graduate Exit Exam and a Graduate Structured Interview must be completed at this time.

Location of the Examination

The time, date, and place scheduled for the comprehensive examination will be announced at the orientation meeting. A nearby computer lab is the most common location. Six hours will be allowed for the examination.

Preparation

At the orientation meeting, the format, type, and number of questions for the comprehensive examination will be discussed. Students will use Microsoft Word to record their answers. Spell checking is allowed.

Study strategies to help students prepare for the examination will be discussed. Students should review class notes, key terminology, syllabi from all courses, course textbooks, and related material. Textbooks, professional journals, class notes and reputable internet sites should be utilized as resources for study. (See examples in the Graduate Student section of the CSD Majors website.) Broad questions requiring synthesis of information from the entire program of study should be anticipated. While preparing for comprehensive examinations, students may not contact individual faculty members for specific examination questions. However, faculty will be available to clarify course content and to answer general questions.

It is suggested that students plan answers by briefly outlining key points for each question in a logical, sequential order. Graphic organizers may be helpful. Answers

must be written in a clear and direct manner, making sure that each question is answered completely and that all portions of each question are addressed. Citations should be included where applicable. Time should be allocated to answer each question and to proof for spelling and grammatical errors.

VI. Scoring of the Examination

Comprehensive examinations are scored using the designations of satisfactory, “Pass”, “Incomplete”, or “Fail”. The evaluation process permits outright passage of the comprehensive exam when scores on all written answers are “Pass”. Students who receive one or more “Incomplete” scores will be required to come to the oral examination. Students who receive one “Fail” and one or more “Incomplete” scores will be required to come to the oral examination. The scheduling order for the oral examination will be determined by the faculty. Students who fail two or more of the written questions fail the examination, and will not have the opportunity for an oral examination. Passage of the comprehensive exam is a prerequisite to graduation and awarding of the Master’s Degree in CSD.

The scores are defined as follows:

Pass. The student satisfactorily answers a question as determined by two faculty members. If there is disagreement between the two readers on any question(s), a third reader will be required to score the answer.

Incomplete. The student does not satisfactorily answer an examination question due to minor errors and/or omissions. The student will be notified that an oral examination is required. The oral examination will be scheduled as soon as possible following the written examination. Content from the question(s) that was/were incomplete will be included in the oral examination.

Fail. The student fails to satisfactorily answer a question due to major errors and/or omissions. Two or more Fail scores means the comprehensive examination may be retaken. It is strongly recommended that a remediation plan be developed with at least two faculty members. After review, the plan should be signed by the student, and returned to the Department Head. It is the student's responsibility to follow the plan, meet with faculty regarding progress, and request re-examination.

VII. Notification of Examination Results

Students will be notified of the examination’s outcome by phone, text, or email after the written examination. The graduate coordinator, or designee, will request preferred contact information, but students may also call the Graduate Coordinator, or designee, for notification.

VIII. Preparation for the Oral Examination

Students should prepare to completely re-answer any question(s) scored as Incomplete or Fail on the written examination. Students may meet with members of the faculty for further direction, readings, and resources. Students are encouraged to

rehearse oral responses prior to the examination. Students may not request “approval” of practice answers or outlines between the written and oral examinations.

Faculty will meet before the oral examination to establish consensus as to the nature of what shall constitute an acceptable level of performance for the examination. Oral questions will allow students to express their knowledge with a minimum of interruption and redirection. Although the Department Head (ex-officio member) and all CSD faculty members may attend oral examinations, only the CSD Graduate Coordinator and the faculty who read the question may vote on the examination outcome. Faculty will vote anonymously on each oral examination outcome after each examination has been completed, but students will not be notified as to whether they have passed or failed oral examinations until all oral examinations are completed.

Failure of the oral examination or failure of two or more written questions will constitute failure of comprehensive examinations, and will necessitate repetition of comprehensives during another time so designated by the University and the CSD Program. Students may only re-take the comprehensive examination **twice** (3 times total) within the 6-year period imposed by the University for completing the Master’s degree.

Students failing the comprehensive examination for any reason are responsible for gaining knowledge in areas of deficiency before re-taking the examination and for planning completion of all requirements with the 6-year time period mentioned above. They should confer with their faculty advisor in planning whether to re-take or audit courses, engage in self-study, or participate in any endeavor likely to remediate inadequate skills/knowledge. While faculty may guide students in this process, it is not the faculty’s sole responsibility to determine courses of remedial action or to monitor the student’s progress. Students are responsible for documenting those procedures that they have completed that could contribute to the remediation of inadequate skills/knowledge prior to re-taking the comprehensive examination.

IX. Grievances

Students who contest comprehensive examination results should follow the University policies relative to grievances. Students also have the right to address concerns that relate to accreditation standards by contacting the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association’s Council on Academic Accreditation. More information can be found at the following link:

<http://www.asha.org/about/credentialing/accreditation/accredmanual/section8.htm>