



## Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Policy

Department of Kinesiology • Michigan State University • East Lansing MI 48824 • <http://www.education.msu.edu/kin>

Adopted by the Kinesiology Faculty on 4/20/01

University regulations require that all doctoral candidates take comprehensive examinations. The purpose of the comprehensive examination in the Department of Kinesiology is to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and apply knowledge acquired through various readings, courses and practice. The exam is an assessment of a candidate's understanding of knowledge considered by the Department faculty to be necessary for doctoral level scholarship, as well as the candidate's ability to communicate ideas in a clear, coherent, and organized manner.

### General Information

1. **Eligibility.** The doctoral student is eligible to take the comprehensive examinations when 80 percent of the prescribed course work listed on his/her program plan has been completed.
2. **Registration.** The student must be registered during the semester in which the comprehensive examinations are taken.
3. **Types.** The comprehensive examinations shall consist of a written examination and an oral examination. Neither may be substituted for the other.
4. **Responsibility.** It is the responsibility of the doctoral student to request the comprehensive examinations. The request should be directed to the student's major advisor.
5. **Scheduling.** The comprehensive examinations may be taken during any semester, or during the summer by special arrangement. The dates of the examinations are scheduled by the student's advisor after consultation with the student.
6. **Deadline.** The comprehensive examinations must be passed within five years of the student's first enrollment. The date on which the oral portion of the comprehensive examinations is passed is the date used to designate successful completion of the comprehensive examinations.
7. **Certification.** Upon completion of the written and oral comprehensive examinations, the *Record of Comprehensive Examinations* must be signed by the doctoral student's major advisor and by the Department Chairperson, then submitted to the Kin Graduate Secretary. The KIN Graduate Secretary will log the information and forward the *Record of Comprehensive Examinations* to the Student Affairs Office to be filed with the student's official records.
8. **Dissertation proposal.** The comprehensive examinations must be passed before defense of the dissertation proposal.
9. **Deviations.** Deviations from the regulations in this document will be permitted only if requested by the doctoral student and approved, as appropriate, by his/her guidance committee, the Student Affairs Office, and the Graduate School.
10. **Availability.** A copy of this document shall be posted on the department web site.

## Written Comprehensive Examination

### 1. Content and format

- A. The written comprehensive examination should cover:
  - i. *Concentration*. This section of the examination should consist of questions pertaining to the core content of the doctoral student's concentration.
  - ii. *Research focus*. This section should cover principles of research design, data analyses, and research ethics. A question (or questions) related to research in the area of specialization should be included.
  - iii. *Related KIN courses*. This section should cover coursework from the student's internal cognate area or breadth requirement within the department.
  - iv. *Related area of study*. This section should cover coursework from the student's cognate area outside of the department.
  - v. *General professional kinesiology*. This section of the examination should consist of a question pertaining to the general field of kinesiology. This section may be included within another section of the examination by agreement of the guidance committee.
- B. The written examination should consist of four to five sections. The time limit for any section conducted according to the standard written format shall not exceed three hours. A take-home format may be used for any section at the discretion of the guidance committee member writing that section, with a time limit not to exceed one calendar week from receipt of the take-home questions.

### 2. Preparation

- A. The doctoral student shall not have prior access to the written examination questions. However, upon the student's request, general information about the form and content of the examination, such as reading lists and/or sample questions, as well as any specific conditions under which the examination is to be taken, shall be given to the student at least two months prior to the examination. The student is responsible for soliciting this information from the individual guidance committee members.
- B. The student's advisor has the responsibility of soliciting questions for the written examination from the members on the student's guidance committee at least three weeks prior to the time the examination is to be taken.

### 3. Scheduling and Procedures

- A. The written examination shall be scheduled by the student's advisor, at a time that is mutually acceptable to the student, the student's advisor, and the guidance committee.
- B. The conduct of the written examination should be supervised by the student's major advisor.
- C. The written examination must be taken under secure conditions as defined by the student's guidance committee.
- D. All sections of the written examination should be administered and completed within a period not to exceed three weeks.

#### 4. **Evaluation and Certification**

- A. The guidance committee member who provides a set of questions for the written examination shall be responsible for evaluating the student's responses to that set of questions, and for notifying the student's major advisor regarding the results of the evaluation. Such notification ordinarily should be made within one week following completion of the examination.
- B. Each set of questions shall be graded on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the maximum score. A minimum score of 7 is required to pass a set of questions. Evaluation of a student's responses should be based on the accuracy, comprehensiveness, and documentation (if appropriate) of the content, and on the quality and organization of the writing.
- C. The student's advisor should notify the student about the results of the written examination **within two weeks** following completion of the examination.
- D. The results of the doctoral student's performance on the written examination must be filed in his/her permanent folder. Both questions and answers for the written examination must be kept on file in the department office for a minimum of three years after the student has either graduated or left the program.

#### 5. **Re-Examination.** If the student fails one or more sets of questions:

- A. It is the student's responsibility to request a second written examination and to have the advisor schedule that examination at a time that is mutually acceptable to the student and the appropriate members of the student's guidance committee.
- B. The second written examination should be taken within four months of the initial attempt if the student is to continue in the doctoral program.
- C. The second written examination should cover subject matter and/or competencies relevant to the failed set(s) of questions.
- D. The conditions for the conduct and evaluation of the second written examination shall be the same as those for the initial examination.
- E. Failure of any portion of the second written examination shall result in termination of the student's doctoral program.

#### **Oral Comprehensive Examination**

##### 1. **Content and Format.** The purposes of the oral comprehensive examination shall be:

- A. To extend the evaluation of the student's knowledge and understanding of subject matter covered in the written examination. Emphasis may be placed on topics in which the student's responses are judged to be weak.
- B. To evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of related subject matter not included in the written examination.
- C. To evaluate the student's ability to respond, in a scholarly and professional manner, to a variety of verbal questions.

## 2. Preparation

The student shall not have prior access to specific oral examination questions. However, upon the student's request, general information about the type of questions to be asked may be given to the student by members of his/her guidance committee.

## 3. Scheduling and Procedures

- A. The oral examination should be conducted during the four-week period immediately following the date the student is notified by his/her advisor that all portions of the written examination have been successfully completed. The oral examination shall be scheduled by the student's advisor, at a time that is mutually acceptable to the student, the student's advisor, and the guidance committee. The student's advisor shall notify the graduate program secretary of the date, time and place of the oral examination. The secretary shall relay this information to department faculty and students through appropriate channels.
- B. The oral examination shall be chaired by the student's major advisor. This examination shall be open to any interested person, but the student shall be examined only by the members of his/her guidance committee.
- C. The duration of the oral examination generally should not exceed two hours.

## 4. Evaluation and Certification

- A. Evaluation of the student's performance during the oral examination shall be conducted, in closed session, by the members of the student's guidance committee immediately after the examination is concluded. The evaluation shall consist of verbal deliberation chaired by the student's advisor. An affirmative vote by a majority (but no less than three) of the committee members present is required for the student to pass the oral examination.
- B. The student shall be notified by his/her advisor of the decision of the guidance committee immediately after the committee has completed its deliberations.
- C. Successful completion of the oral comprehensive examination must be certified by signature and date of the student's major advisor on the *Record of Comprehensive Examination* form.

## 5. Re-Examination. If the student fails the oral comprehensive examination:

- A. It is the student's responsibility to request a second oral examination, and to have the advisor schedule that examination at a time that is acceptable to all members of the guidance committee.
- B. The second oral examination should be taken within four months of the initial attempt if the student is to continue in the doctoral program.
- C. The conditions for the conduct and evaluation of the second oral examination shall be the same as those for the initial examination.
- D. Failure of the second oral examination shall result in termination of the student's doctoral program.