

COMPREHENSIVE ORAL EXAMINATION

The Comprehensive Examination

- The oral comprehensive examination is a formal examination focusing on advanced knowledge in the major and any appropriate related areas, including the minor. The examination normally lasts an hour and a half.
- The examination is chaired by the student's major advisor.
- The candidate provides written materials pertinent to the comprehensive exam and to be reviewed by committee members at least two weeks in advance of the oral examination date. This may include copies of the student's written comprehensive exam answers.
- All members of the examining committee (or substitutes approved by the School's Associate Dean for Graduate Studies) are expected to be present throughout the examination. (see Remote Committee Participation approval policy)
- The oral committee shall consist of a majority of faculty from the student's department and must include one regular graduate faculty member from outside the student's department to represent the graduate school. No more than one committee member on the exam may hold an ad hoc or courtesy graduate appointment.
- The student passes the oral comprehensive examination when a majority of the official examining committee (including the committee chair) approves the student's performance.
- A failed oral defense may be retaken based on university, school and departmental guidelines.

Responsibilities of the Outside Member

Although the outside member's area of expertise may not directly pertain to the defense topic, his/her role is very important. As an outside member, the primary responsibility is one of oversight on behalf of the Graduate School assuring that the student's performance in the examination meets the standards of the a student completing her/his graduate studies, that committee members and the student abide by Graduate Studies' regulations, and that the committee treats the student appropriately during the oral defense (e.g., asking questions only germane to the topic, treating the student professionally). Therefore the outside member:

- Evaluates the final exam as being conducted in an orderly manner.
- Evaluates the oral examination process as being fair and reasonable.
- Evaluates the quality of work as consistent with institution-wide expectations and standards.
- Evaluates the candidate's performance and cast a vote.