

INDI Revised Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

At the doctoral level, students are required to write an examination testing their basic knowledge of the relevant areas of each component discipline comprising their program of study.

The comprehensive process takes place after students have completed their coursework, typically at the beginning or middle of year two. The committee and student should meet to determine the general format of the comprehensive exam. The INDI comprehensive examination process is flexible, in keeping with the diverse nature of interdisciplinary studies. For most students, however, the format will involve a 72-hour take-home exam.

Development and Approval of Reading List

- The student prepares an initial draft of a reading list for each area of their program of study, consisting of roughly 20 titles per area.
- The student supplies this initial draft to the principal supervisor and committee members for review and comments.
- The student revises the reading list in response to any comments, and distributes this copy to all committee members for final review and approval.
- Following committee approval, the student submits the reading list to the INDI Coordinator.

Development of Examination Questions

- The principal supervisor coordinates the drafting of the exam by requesting fellow committee members to submit their examination questions (or broad problem).
- The committee then provides the finalized three questions (or broad problem) to the INDI Coordinator.

The Examination

- The student will be given an adequate amount of time to prepare, usually two to three months.
- The INDI Coordinator transmits the questions or problem to the student at the start of the exam.
- The examination itself usually takes the form of a three-day, or 72 hour, take-home exam.
- The required length of the written responses to the questions is at the discretion of the committee, corresponding to their disciplinary standards, but typically ranging from 1600-2400 words per question.
- The student submits the completed exam within the given timeframe to the INDI Coordinator.

Important Note: INDI sometimes serves as an incubator for departments or fields without their own graduate program. In these cases, the comprehensive approach outlined above may not

meet the committee and student's needs. In consultation with the student, the committee may propose an alternative mechanism for the comprehensive examination. This proposed alteration will be provided to the INDI Director for approval.

Exam Grading

Exams should be graded within a two-week timeframe.

The committee must decide on the evaluation mechanism in advance of receiving the completed exam from the student. If each committee member developed an individual question, the committee may decide to grade each question separately. In this case, the committee may agree that passing 2/3 exams will be considered an overall pass or may decide on a procedure so that a consensus decision is reached.

If the committee developed the three questions together, they may then want to each assess the exam in its entirety. In most cases, an exam is considered a pass if a majority of the committee members deem the entire exam a pass.

Failed Comprehensive

At the discretion of the committee, students who fail their comprehensive exam will be given one opportunity to rewrite the exam.

Mandatory Committee Meeting

Following the exam, the student meets with the entire committee to discuss the results of the exam and plans for the proposal. If desired, the student may provide a brief overview of the plans for the proposal.

During this meeting, the student and committee members will complete a short checklist establishing the expectations of the thesis, which they will then transmit to the INDI office. The goal of the checklist is to provide a common understanding of the expectations for the dissertation and general plans.

Sample checklist items

- The dissertation will consist of _____
(this might be three published papers, an introduction, and a conclusion, or, critical review of methodologies along with a research creation piece, or any other. constellation the committee and student mutually find appropriate)
- The topic of the dissertation will be _____.
- We anticipate the defence will take place during Semester/Year.

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