Revised Format

The revised format is available to all students.

For students who entered the program BEFORE Fall Semester 2012, this is one of three format choices for satisfying the comps requirement.

For students who entered the program in Fall Semester 2012 or after, this is the format you will use to satisfy the comps requirement.

Applications for Revised Format:

CompsApp-revisedformat-Update.doc

- Details
- Download
- 46 KB

Send your application (with signed signature page) as an email pdf attachment or paper document to the CITE Program Secretary at cite@msu.edu

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Overview of the Revised Comps Format

Part 1: Craft a Scholarly Essay on Education Issues
This is a three-day sit-down exam in which students respond to one question from a set of five developed by the Comps Committee. The department Comps Committee evaluates this portion of the exam.

Part 2: Research and Inquiry Artifact
This is a single-authored report of education research and inquiry, the genre of which is negotiated with the student's guidance committee. The guidance committee evaluates this portion of the exam.

See below for more complete descriptions and instructions.
Part 1

Craft a Scholarly Essay on Education Issues

Description

In the revised format, the intent of Part 1 is to assess students’ ability to engage in an authentic scholarly process in a manner that approximates a commonplace task demand for scholars: to write a brief scholarly essay that analyzes, critiques, and locates an educational issue for an informed reading audience within a specified time frame. The Part 1 task requires students to draw on a range of literature as they author a scholarly argument on current issues and enduring dilemmas in a thoughtful, sound, and coherent way. It is not meant to be an assessment of a student’s particular knowledge base per se. The format of the exam (time period of three days, completed without assistance) is used to assess students’ skills at making and defending an argument efficiently and independently (without feedback) given these constraints.

The sort of questions that will be asked are similar in nature to those asked in the Department portion of Option 1. Click here to see a list of questions that have previously been asked for Option 1 exams.

Format

- Students prepare a scholarly response to a department-authored question.
- The comps committee prepares a set of four to six questions which focus on teacher education, curriculum, methodology and policy.
- Students select one of the proposed questions to answer.
- Responses should be no more than 5000 words (excluding references).

Time Limit

- Students have 3 days to complete the exam.
- Students will have from 8am on the first day through 5pm on the third day to complete their response.

Authorship

- Must be single-authored by student, with no discussion with others about the assigned question. However, students may ask questions of the Comps Committee as to how to complete the exam.
- Students may consult texts, notes and other resources as they prepare the response.

Genre

Students may respond using a number of genres with which they may have experience or familiarity:

- research & policy briefs;
- solicited pieces for magazines like New Educator or practitioner venues;
- the sort of thing you’d write in a New Yorker piece, the Sunday Review in the NYT, or the New York or London Review of Books;
- white papers;
- prepared testimony for state or federal lawmakers, etc.
Samples of such genres have been collated and posted at the bottom of this page to aid students in preparing for this part of the exam.

The expectation is not that students master any one of these genres. Rather, there are two goals:

- In providing exemplars of these genres, the intent is to illustrate that developing research-based stances on enduring issues in education, often with limited time, is part of an education scholar's practice; and
- to give students more flexibility in voice and format in responding to an otherwise standardized portion of the comprehensive exam.

Assessment

- The exams will be reviewed and scored by the Comps committee using the Comprehensive Exam rubric.
- Evaluation letters will be emailed approximately 2 months after the exam is completed.

Revisions Policy

Should revisions of the Part 1 department-level exam be required, students will have **90 days from receipt of the evaluation letter** in which to complete and submit revisions.

To support students in making the revisions:

- they receive thorough feedback in the evaluation letter reflecting reviewers' concerns and suggestions;
- a member of the Comps Committee will be assigned to oversee the revision process. Students are entitled to one meeting with this faculty member to seek consultation on the feedback provided in the evaluation letter and how best to go about making revisions;
- students are also entitled to one meeting with their advisor in which to seek consultation on the feedback provided in the evaluation letter and how best to go about making revisions.

Special Accommodations

- Students for whom English is a second language may request up to an additional 48 hours for the exam - this means that the response would be due by **5pm on the 5th day**.
- Students with documented special needs may make requests for changes in format (i.e., time allotment). Requests must be received at the time of the application, unless a special need is formally documented after the application, in which case the request should be forwarded as soon as possible after documentation.

Past questions
Description

The intent of Part 2 of the comprehensive exam is to assess students’ ability to prepare an authentic scholarly artifact in a manner that approximates current practices in the field for research and publication. The expectation is that students prepare a single-authored scholarly artifact that addresses a significant and timely question using appropriately employed standards of rigor for the genre and methodological tradition that withstood the examination of peer review. The Part 2 task requires students to draw upon a specific domain of scholarship as they author an original piece that is significant, sound, rigorous, and clear. It is meant to be an assessment of a student’s knowledge base on a specific topic or issue. The format of the exam (no time period specified, single-authored, but in collaboration with the guidance committee), is used to assess students’ skills at producing a long-form scholarly artifact efficiently and independently (with feedback) given the single constraint of sole authorship.

Format

- In collaboration with their committee, students will design and submit a scholarly artifact of their choice.
- Students may draw from a wide variety of genres and artifacts, including educational inquiry, critical literature reviews, position papers, scholarly analysis of education artifacts and issues of practice (i.e., teaching reflections and course analyses), or a detailed policy brief.
- Artifacts should be 12,000 words or fewer.
- Artifacts can be previously published if the student is the sole author.

Time Limit

Artifacts will be due on a date mutually agreed upon by the student and their committee, which must be in the same semester for which they enroll in the comprehensive exam. Students may begin to work on artifacts as early as they desire. While there are no formal requirements for formative feedback, students are encouraged to seek critical input from peers and experts in the field.

Authorship

Must be single-authored by student.

Special Accommodations

Students with documented special needs may make requests for changes in format. Requests must be received at the time of the application, unless a special need is formally documented after the application, in which case the request should be forwarded as soon as possible after documentation.

Special Note

The practicum paper or report is intended to fulfill a very different requirement of the doctoral program, namely ensuring that every TD doctoral student, and not just Research Assistants, gain some experience in conducting research before the dissertation stage. Therefore submission of that paper or report in the same form as submitted for the practicum is not allowed to fulfill the Part 2 comprehensive examination requirement. However, a substantially revised version of that report, one that is written in such a way that approximates current practices in the field for publication, is acceptable to fulfill the Part 2 requirement. It is up to the student’s advisor to determine if adequate revisions to the practicum artifact are made to allow it to be submitted for the Part 2 requirement.

FAQs

1) What if I passed part of option 1 (or option 2) in a previous semester? Can I just do part 1 (or part 2)
of the new option in order to pass comps?
You must complete either the entire comps process for whatever option you initially began, or the entire process of the revised format.
For example, if you passed part of Option 1 comps in a previous semester, but not the other parts, you must either finish the rest of Option 1 comps or apply for the revised format and do both Part 1 and Part 2 of it.

2) How is part 1 different from the current option 1?
They are similar in that both ask you to develop an argument with respect to a given question and substantiate it with relevant literature.
They are similar in that the questions are meant to be broad enough so as not to be "content" exams, that is, exams based on a canon of TE-related literature.
They are different in that the revised format gives you more time and asks for a longer response.

3) How is part 2 different from the current option 2?
The part 2 artifact is not that different from the department level Option 2 artifact. Both are meant to be single-authored write ups of educational research and inquiry. The key differences are these:

- External formative and summative reviews are no longer required. You are encouraged to seek such feedback from peers and leaders in your field on this artifact. However, the formal process is no longer required.
- Certain genres of artifacts that were allowed for the committee level pieces of Option 2 are no longer allowed. Examples include annotated syllabi, wikis of one's teaching. However, scholarly analysis of one's teaching practice or artifacts from one's teaching are both allowed and welcomed. Also, book reviews that explore only one title are not allowed. Instead, essay book reviews that explore a number of recent titles or that situate one title in the context of the field are allowed.

4) Why does everyone now have to do a timed test?
Being able to develop a coherent, reasoned and substantiated argument about an enduring or urgent issue in education - and being asked to do so with limited time - is a regular feature of practice for educational scholars, policy makers and leaders. This timed portion of the exam is intended to assess your ability to craft such arguments.

5) How much revision is required for a practicum piece to be resubmitted to fulfill the part 2 requirement?
This question is largely up to the adviser to determine. As a general response, however, one must begin with the expectations for the practicum. These expectations vary widely across TE. In some cases, the expectation is solely that students get some valuable experience in conducting and learning from their own research, and the form that the write up takes is of secondary importance. Other faculty committees view the practicum as a "dry run" or mini-level dissertation, where the write up is critical. The amount of revision required to take the first example from its "practicum" form to its "comps" form will be much greater than that for the second example. For this reason, the adviser is asked to make that judgment call.

In general, though, the expectation is that the artifact submitted for Part 2 of the revised comps format
approximate the quality and guidelines for current practices in the field for research and publication.

6) Do I have to fill out an application if I want to take the new option?
Yes, an application is required for the revised format. A copy of that application is linked near the top of this page.

7) Does the single-authored requirement mean that I can't submit a piece that I worked on independently but that is part of a larger research project?
No. If your inquiry is related to a larger research project, but the question, design, data and analysis are done independently from that project, you may then use that piece for Part 2 of revised comps exam.

8) Could you give some examples of artifacts that would meet the current option 2 requirement?
Students may draw from a wide variety of genres and artifacts, including educational inquiry, critical literature reviews, position papers, scholarly analysis of education artifacts and issues of practice (i.e., teaching reflections and course analyses), or a detailed policy brief.

Part 1 exemplars

The purpose of offering exemplars is not to suggest that you must master or even mimic any of the genres of writing that are offered below. Rather, the purpose is to demonstrate that crafting fairly succinct arguments around key issues in teaching, teacher education, curriculum and education policy are regular parts of academic and professional life. They also provide examples of how to use different writing voices, perspectives, and "grain sizes" to get into a critical analysis.

Policy briefs
Click here to get to a series of policy briefs published by the National Education Policy Center. Some are longer than the word count allowed for this exam, but you get the idea.

Click here to get to a series of policy briefs published by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice.

Research reports/briefs
Click here to get to a series of research reports/briefs published by the Center for Applied Linguistics. Most of these are of a similar length as that required for this exam.

Click here to get to a series of research reports/briefs published by Rand Education. Most of these are a little shorter than required for this exam, but you get the idea.

Click here to get to a series of research reports/briefs published by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Click here to get to a series of research reports/briefs published by the University of Alabama. Most of these are a little shorter than required for this exam, but you get the idea.
Media exemplars

Got Dough? How Billionaires Rule Our Schools, Dissent Magazine

School 'Reform': A Failing Grade, New York Review of Books

See the ongoing blog exchange between Diane Ravitch and Deborah Meier for a more dialogic exemplar crafted by two prominent education researchers and public intellectuals.

Still have questions?

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