Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

Applies to students who began fall 2013 and after:

The comprehensive examination evaluates the student’s ability to integrate knowledge of counseling or marriage and family therapy, display critical and independent thinking and research skills, and demonstrate mastery of the field (teaching and supervision). The results of the examination provide evidence of independent thinking, appropriate organization, writing competency, critical analysis, and accuracy of documentation. The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to encourage students who are nearing graduation to engage in a systematic review of their coursework. The exam also provides faculty with one form of evidence to make determinations regarding the student’s readiness for graduation.

The comprehensive exam will be given in two parts: written and oral (formal student presentation). Only those students in the last semester of their coursework will be allowed to attempt the comprehensive exam. The written portion of the exam will be composed of four questions and will be completed in four segments of time (all four segments typically scheduled to take place on the same day). The comprehensive exam will be offered every summer semester and on a case-by-case basis during the fall or spring semesters, based upon the discretion of the program director/docoral program coordinator.

The oral portion of the comprehensive exam will be in the format of a formal student presentation that occurs at the end of the semester in which the written exam is passed. During the Dissertation Proposal Development I course, each student will submit a research topic that will be the focus of his/her oral presentation. The presentation will be delivered after the written comprehensive exam has been passed and prior to the completion of the Dissertation Proposal II course. Any exception to this established schedule for the comprehensive exam process will be made based upon the discretion of the program director/docoral program coordinator. Presentations will be delivered to a committee of faculty members from the doctoral program and will be evaluated based on breadth of knowledge (quantity and quality of the research) and depth of understanding (degree to which the student comprehends and understands the research topic). Furthermore, oral presentation skills and the ability to engage and respond to questions from the committee will be a part of the evaluation.

Three possible grades may be assigned to the written and oral portions of the examination: pass with distinction, pass, or fail. Students who do not successfully complete the comprehensive exam will have a remediation plan developed and enacted before scheduling a second attempt. If the second attempt is failed, the student will be dismissed from the program. Regarding the written portion, in some cases the retake may include all questions; in other cases, the retake may be limited to select questions.