

California State University, Long Beach
College of Education

Comprehensive Examination Policy

Per Title 5 (Section 40510) of the California Administrative Code of Regulations, graduate students working towards a master's-level degree in the College of Education must satisfactorily complete a thesis, project, or comprehensive examination as a culminating activity.

The comprehensive examination is “an assessment of the student’s ability to integrate the knowledge of the area, show critical and independent thinking, and demonstrate mastery of the subject matter. The result of the examination evidences independent thinking, appropriate organization, critical analysis, and accuracy of documentation. A record of the examination questions and responses shall be maintained in accordance with the records retention policy of The California State University” (California Administrative Code of Regulations Title 5, Section 40510).

Graduate programs that require comprehensive examinations determine the modality (e.g., online, in-person), duration, and format of the exam.

Please refer to the College of Education [Thesis and Project Guidelines](#) for information related to thesis and project requirements.

Student Procedures for Applying for the Comprehensive Examination

- a. **Eligibility to Take the Comprehensive Examination**
Students are eligible to take the comprehensive examination after they have resolved all incompletes in courses in their degree program plan and have advanced to candidacy. Students must be in good academic standing with a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA to take the comprehensive examination. Additionally, students must be enrolled in order to take the examination in a given semester. In most cases, the comprehensive examination is taken during the final semester of study.
- b. **Timely Submission of Application to Graduate Studies Office**
Students must apply the semester prior to when they plan to take their comprehensive examination by the deadlines published by the Graduate Studies Office.
- c. **Program Coordinator Approval**
The program coordinator will review and approve the list of candidates who have applied for the comprehensive exam. Students who have not resolved all incompletes, have not advanced to candidacy, who are not in good academic standing, or who are not enrolled in the semester when the exam will be administered will not be approved to take the comprehensive exam.

Program Procedures for Administering the Comprehensive Examination

a. Comprehensive Examination Calendar

Comprehensive examination dates are scheduled during the regular academic year by the program faculty in consultation with the department chair. Most programs offer a spring-only exam administration. Comprehensive examinations, including retakes, are not to be administered outside of fall or spring semesters; exceptions require prior approval from the Associate Dean for Faculty Development, Research and Graduate Studies. Program coordinators share the schedule, modality and format for the exams with students by the start of the semester during which the examination is to be taken.

b. Procedures

- i. Programs determine the modality (e.g., online, in-person), duration, and format of the exam.
- ii. Programs establish comprehensive examination timelines in conjunction with the department chair, Technology Integration Specialist, Graduate Studies Office and communicate the final dates/times/modalities to the and students.
- iii. Programs write examination questions and develop scoring rubrics and submit them to the Technology Integration Specialist by the established deadline.
- iv. Programs identify at least three faculty members who are available to participate in the blind review process and submit information on the readers to the Technology Integration Specialist by the established deadline. At least two faculty members from those identified read each examination response. The names of faculty reviewers for comprehensive examinations are not provided to students, and students may not request specific reviewers.
- v. Programs communicate procedures and instructions for taking the comprehensive examination to students in a timely fashion.
- vi. Programs score examinations using the established rubric, resulting in the reporting of a pass or fail score for the entire exam, no matter the number of questions.
- vii. Programs report pass/fail scores to the Graduate Studies Office, which provides official notification of pass/fail results to the students and Enrollment Services. Students receive pass/fail results only and are not provided with details of their scores, rubrics specific to their submission(s), or their examination document(s) with comments or specific feedback. Upon request, students who do not pass the exam may receive aggregate feedback about how they may improve that is pertinent to all students.

c. Accommodations

Students who require accommodations to take the comprehensive examination must make arrangements with the Bob Murphy Access Center. Bob Murphy Access Center verifications of accommodations may take several months to complete; students are advised to plan ahead. Students who require accommodations must provide documentation from the Bob Murphy Access Center regarding the accommodations requested to the Graduate Studies Office a minimum of three weeks prior to the scheduled examination date. Separate and specific documentation is required for

accommodations for the comprehensive examination; testing accommodations written for courses (including 695 courses) or for other purposes may not be used for the comprehensive examination.

Special Circumstances:

Students who have a CSULB program/certificate class time conflict during a scheduled comprehensive examination that has a duration of 48 hours or less may request an exception. The written request, which must be made to the program coordinator with a copy to the Graduate Studies Office, must be submitted a minimum of three weeks prior to the scheduled examination date. Students whose comprehensive examinations are longer than 48 hours may not request an exception. In addition, students may not request exceptions for other scheduling conflicts, such as work or personal responsibilities.

d. Notification of Inability to Take the Comprehensive Examination

In the event that a student is unable to take the scheduled comprehensive examination due to serious and compelling reasons, it is the student's responsibility to provide timely notification, per the program's procedures and instructions, to the program coordinator and the Graduate Studies Office. If a student does not provide timely notification, the examination will be counted as an attempt.

e. Retaking the Comprehensive Examination

Per University policy, a student who has failed the comprehensive examination is allowed to take the comprehensive examination a second time. Generally, the retake will comprise a new set of examination questions that cover the same content area as the original questions.

Students take the program's next standard fall or spring offering of the comprehensive exam. Students who retake the examination must maintain matriculated status and be enrolled the semester they retake the comprehensive examination.

A student who fails the comprehensive examination a second time is discontinued from the program.

f. Partial Attempts of the Examination

Logging in to the comprehensive exam BeachBoard site after the examination questions have been released and/or attempting any portion of the comprehensive exam is counted as one attempt toward the examination. Students may only attempt the exam twice, and must receive a passing score on all components/questions within the two attempts to pass the comprehensive exam.

g. Disregarding Scores on the Examination

A student's scores on an examination attempt will be disregarded only under extreme and catastrophic circumstances and with mutual consent of the student, program coordinator, Department Chair, and Associate Dean for Faculty Development, Research and Graduate Studies. Students are expected to take the exam at the program's next

regular fall or spring offering. In circumstances beyond the student's control, if the program coordinator, Department Chair, and Associate Dean mutually agree to offer the examination within the same semester as the original administration, a new set of examination questions will be developed for this purpose.

Academic Integrity

The comprehensive examination requires original work and must be completed via the student's individual, independent effort. Once comprehensive examination questions have been released, the student may not receive nor offer any information, assistance, and/or meet or converse with others—including family members, friends, classmates, writing coaches, or any other person—concerning either the content or format of responses to the comprehensive examination questions.

All sources must be appropriately cited, including the student's own work. Upon submission of the comprehensive examination, an originality report may be generated via a plagiarism detection software as a check against plagiarism and cheating.

As with all academic work, comprehensive examinations are governed by the university's [Academic Integrity](#) policy (Academic Senate PS 21-01). The policy defines cheating and plagiarism and outlines actions and university disciplinary sanctions related to allegations of cheating or plagiarism.

The College of Education provides further guidelines in its [Graduate Programs Policy on Academic Integrity](#). All students must agree to the College of Education Comprehensive Examination Academic Integrity Statement prior to taking the comprehensive examination.

Students who are found to be in violation of the Academic Senate PS 21-01 and/or the College of Education Graduate Programs Policy on Academic Integrity will be subject to both university and college disciplinary action, may fail the entire examination, and may be dismissed from the program.