

Policy and Procedures **Comprehensive Examinations in SPPA**

Purpose

The comprehensive final examination is one of the culminating activities for the graduate program in speech-language pathology. Students must demonstrate their ability to synthesize concepts and theories learned in the classroom and applied during clinical practicum. The student's ability to merge academic and clinical concepts reflects the interdisciplinary nature of the profession and the broad range and complexity of the clients served by speech-language pathologists.

Format of Exams

The comprehensive examination has two parts: I) 140 multiple-choice questions and II) a case study question.

Part I. Multiple Choice

Each of the faculty members submit multiple-choice questions representing each of their specialty content areas. A subgroup of 20 multiple choice questions is randomly selected from the total group of questions submitted by each faculty member.

Objective multiple choice questions address the following content areas:

- Articulation and phonology including motor speech disorders, cleft palate, myofunctional disorders
- Pediatric/adult dysphagia
- AAC
- Social Communication Disorders including adult and child pragmatic disorders, autism, Asperger's Syndrome, PDD
- Receptive and Expressive Language Disorders including aphasia, reading and writing
- Hearing including basic audiometry, hearing and speech science, aural rehabilitation
- Fluency Disorders
- Cognitive Disorders including right hemisphere, dementia, cognitive processing and ABI
- Voice Disorders including laryngectomy and tracheotomy and ventilator dependent populations

Part II. Case Study. Pairs of faculty members create **one** case study that will address content areas within each faculty member's expertise. The case study includes inter/intra-disciplinary issues such as identification of basic etiology, selection of appropriate assessment tools, interpretation of information, and appropriate choices for remediation. All of these issues must be addressed by the student in the answer to the case study question.

Members of the Comprehensive Examination Committee review the case study submitted from each faculty pair. The purpose of this step is to assure that each case study is equitable in terms

of the level of difficulty and that each case study requires the student to synthesize and apply information across coursework and clinical practicum. The case study is selected at random from among those provided each year by faculty.

Deadline for submission of case studies is Friday of the week of midterms of the preceding semester. The current members of the graduate comprehensive examination committee review the case studies. It is also the charge of this committee to determine faculty pairs and send reminders and notices of deadlines. Comprehensive Examination Committee members can change from year to year as all departmental and program committees.

Procedure

The dates for comprehensive exams are as follows:

Fall Semester	- first Friday in October
Spring Semester	- first Friday in March
Summer Semester	- first Friday in June

Students answer the 140 multiple choice questions in one session of the examination and write on **one** of the randomly selected case studies in the second session of the examination.

Students are given 2 hours for each session of the examination. The proposed schedule is:

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Objective questions
11:30 – 12:00 p.m.	Break
12:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Case Study

Comprehensive Examination Committee designee(s) proctor the examination. Students are expected to be seated in the examination room 15 minutes prior to the designated start time. Students begin and complete the examination only at the designated times. No late arrivals are permitted to write the examination.

Grading of Multiple Choice Examination

Multiple-choice questions are scored on a correct or incorrect basis. Students must receive a minimum 76% to pass the multiple choice portion of the examination. Below is the scale for student performance on the multiple choice examination:

Multiple-Choice Questions
< 76% - does not meet expectations
77 – 91% - meets expectations
92 – 100% - exceeds expectations

Grading of Case Studies

Each case study is evaluated on four qualities: depth and breadth of knowledge, effectiveness of written communication, ability for analytical thinking, and evidence of best practice, values and ethics of the profession. Each faculty member independently scores their case study on a 1 to 5

rating scale for these four qualities. Each faculty member averages the quality scores for a final score for their case study.

The rating scale is indicated below (see *Grading Rubric for Case Study* in this document):

- 1= poor
- 2= below average
- 3= average
- 4= above average
- 5= excellent

Given that a five-point scale is used for scoring, the following scale reflects the student's performance level:

- Case Study
- < 3.0 – does not meet expectations
- 3.0-4.0 – meets expectations
- 4.1 -5.0 – exceeds expectations

Examination Pass/Fail Criteria

Students must achieve 76% accuracy on the multiple-choice questions and attain an average of 3.0 or above from each faculty member on the case study in order to pass the comprehensive examination.

Students who do not meet the criteria must retake the examination within two weeks after notification of failure of one or both sessions. The date of the retake examination is assigned by the program director. The retake examination schedule is the same as the initial examination schedule and the student participates only in the session(s) they failed. The examination will be proctored.

Retake guidelines are outlined below:

1. Students who earn below 76% accuracy on the multiple-choice questions must retake the first section of the comprehensive examination and achieve pass criteria.
2. Students who earn below a 3.0 from one or both faculty on a case study must retake the second section of the comprehensive examination and be reassessed by the faculty pair of the initial examination question.
3. Students who fail one or both sections of the retake examination must orally present a case from their practicum experience in the areas of concern and satisfactorily respond to questions presented by faculty during the presentation.
4. Students who fail the oral presentation of a case study must retake the written comprehensives the following semester during the scheduled examination date. Students must be enrolled in 1.0 hour of University 500 during the semester they retake the exam if they are not taking course work that semester.

Upon failure of any part of the examination the student should contact the specific faculty member to discuss concerns or needed areas of review. At no time is the student allowed to review their examination alone. Review of the examination must be completed with the involved faculty member present in order to discuss any questions or concerns. Information provided to the student is up to the discretion of the faculty member(s) involved.

The comprehensive exam must be passed prior to receiving the master's degree. This degree is necessary in order to attend graduation ceremonies and to begin a Clinical Fellowship Year as a speech and language pathologist.

Grading Rubric for Case Study

(if student's response spans several scores, the lowest score is the final score)

I. Demonstrates breadth and depth of knowledge in the discipline	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: no more than 1 significant inaccuracy; and specific, detailed information for each tested area with connections across tested areas, clear understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by explanations and elaborations.					
4 = Above Average: no more than 2 significant inaccuracies; and general information for each tested area with connections across tested area, use of minimal explanations and elaborations.					
3 = Average: no more than 3 significant inaccuracies; and general information for each tested area with connections across tested areas, limited understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by lack of explanations and elaborations					
2 = Below Average: no more than 4 significant inaccuracies, vague information for each tested area with no clear connection across tested area, limited understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by lack of explanations and elaborations					
1 = Poor: 5 or more significant inaccuracies; and vague information for some of each tested areas with no clear connection across tested area, no evidence of understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by lack of explanations and elaborations					

II. Demonstrates effective written communication in the discipline	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: easy to read, professional language, well organized, clear response to question, proper reference citation(s)					
4 = Above Average: informal language, some organization, clear response to question, minor difficulties with citations(s)					
3 = Average: informal language, lacking organization but response imbedded in writing, minor mis-citation					
2 = Below Average: difficult to read, disorganized, confusing answer, major mis-citation					
1 = Poor: difficult to read, cannot discern answer, no citation used					

III. Demonstrates an ability for analytical thinking in the discipline	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: Consistently integrates classroom knowledge throughout response with case specific analysis, differential diagnosis, conceptual understanding, and clearly stated rationales					
4 = Above Average: Usually integrates classroom knowledge throughout response with general analysis, differential diagnosis general understanding of concepts and some rationale					
3 = Average: Frequently integrates classroom knowledge throughout response with general analysis, differential diagnosis, general understanding of concepts and weak rationale					
2 = Below Average: Occasionally integrates classroom knowledge throughout responses, general understanding of concepts, no rationale stated					
1 = Poor: Rarely integrated classroom knowledge, limited understanding of concepts, no rationale stated					

IV. Exhibits the best practices, values, and ethics of the profession	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: Response adheres to scope of practice and preferred practice patterns of ASHA and does not violate any aspect of the Code of Ethics and demonstrates evidence-based practices through references and application of relevant, current research.					
3 = Average: Response adheres to scope of practice and preferred practice patterns of ASHA and does not violate any aspect of the Code of Ethics, and demonstrates evidence-based practices through the application of related research.					
1 = Poor: Unable to demonstrate understanding of scope of practice and preferred practice patterns of ASHA, violates portions of the Code of Ethics, and is unable to use evidence-based practices demonstrated through lack of related research.					

Total Score _____ Final Average Score _____ Pass/Fail _____

Case Study

< 3.0 – does not meet expectations

3.0-4.0 – meets expectations

4.1 -5.0 – exceeds expectations

Guidelines for Case Study Oral Presentation

Students may choose a case from their practicum experiences to present as their case study. The case study must be able to address the areas of concern and students should discuss the case with the faculty prior to preparing the oral presentation.

The student should prepare a power point that accompanies the oral presentation. After the oral presentation, faculty will ask questions to clarify any concerns that they may have. The entire evaluation should take about an hour.

The oral examination begins with a presentation that is designed to replicate a treatment team meeting where the student presents pertinent background information on a client for discussion on the treatment plan. Background information is important for several reasons: it sets the stage

for the examination, demonstrates an ability to communicate effectively, and provides the overview of the client's status upon entering treatment. Students will have no more than 30 minutes to present background information. The background information should include:

1. General Information – fictional name, sex, age, ethnicity, education, occupation, residence and referral source
2. Presenting Complaint – conditions, symptoms, and /or behaviors that have precipitated referral
3. History – medical, educational, developmental including speech and language, and social history pertinent to case
4. Assessment – identify speech, language, hearing and any other collateral assessments including the rationale for the assessment, the results, and interpretation of the results
5. Diagnosis including prognosis, possible etiology, and rationale from assessments
6. Recommendations – evidenced-based recommendations from diagnosis and information from the literature
7. Treatment – describe the treatment plan and course of treatment which was implemented including overall treatment approach, long term goals and short term objectives, useful methods, and reinforcement. Describe how the treatment addresses the client's motivation, learning style, strengths and weaknesses, special needs based on gender, age, ethnic origins, physical, emotional, behavioral, social or other developmental limitations. Provide a rationale for the treatment based on evidenced-based practices.
8. Describe the treatment outcomes – the client's response to treatment, any modifications or changes that will be recommended as a result of these outcomes. Provide an explanation for the outcomes.

Procedures During Oral Presentation

The Chair of the Comprehensive Examination Committee begins the oral presentation by inviting the student to present the case study background information. The time allotted for this purpose is no more than 30 minutes.

At the end of the oral presentation, the Chair of the Committee then invites the faculty examiners to question the student on the presentation and in the areas of concern as they relate to the case study. The student is asked to leave the room and each faculty examiner independently completes the grading rubric for the case study oral presentation. The Chair of the Committee collects the grading rubrics and completes a consensus rubric that reflects the shared evaluation of the faculty examiners. The rubric will also be shared with the student as part of the evaluation process. Students must receive at least a 3.0 average on each of the quality indicators that measure student performance of the case study oral presentation.

Grading Rubric for Case Study Oral Presentation

(if student's response spans several scores, the lowest score is the final score)

I. Demonstrates breadth and depth of knowledge in the discipline	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: no more than 1 significant inaccuracy; and specific, detailed information for each tested area with connections across tested areas, clear understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by explanations and elaborations.					

4 = Above Average: no more than 2 significant inaccuracies; and general information for each tested area with connections across tested area, use of minimal explanations and elaborations.
3 = Average: no more than 3 significant inaccuracies; and general information for each tested area with connections across tested areas, limited understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by lack of explanations and elaborations
2 = Below Average: no more than 4 significant inaccuracies, vague information for each tested area with no clear connection across tested area, limited understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by lack of explanations and elaborations
1 = Poor: 5 or more significant inaccuracies; and vague information for some of each tested areas with no clear connection across tested area, no evidence of understanding of complexity of information demonstrated by lack of explanations and elaborations

II. Demonstrates effective oral communication in the discipline	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: Accurately and concisely responds to questions, uses professional language throughout presentation, no instances of disorganization or lack of clarity, effectively uses power point to support presentation, all aspects of background information presented in a thorough, professional and timely manner					
4 = Above Average: Accurately responds to questions, uses professional language throughout presentation, minor instances of disorganization or lack of clarity, effectively uses power point to support presentation, all aspects of background information presented in a professional and timely manner					
3 = Average: 1 or 2 inaccuracies, uses professional language throughout presentation, minor instances of disorganization or lack of clarity, for the most part power point supports presentation, all aspects of background information presented in a professional and timely manner					
2 = Below Average: More than 2 inaccuracies, minor lapses of professional language, several instances of disorganization or lack of clarity, for the most part power point supports presentation, some important background information not presented, presentation is either too long or too short					
1 = Poor: More than 2 inaccuracies, several lapses of professional language, several instances of disorganization or lack of clarity, power point ineffective, some important background information not presented, presentation is either too long or too short					

III. Demonstrates an ability for analytical thinking in the discipline	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: Consistently integrates classroom knowledge throughout response with case specific analysis, differential diagnosis, conceptual understanding, and clearly stated rationales					
4 = Above Average: Usually integrates classroom knowledge throughout response with general analysis, differential diagnosis general understanding of concepts and some rationale					
3 = Average: Frequently integrates classroom knowledge throughout response with general analysis, differential diagnosis, general understanding of concepts and weak rationale					
2 = Below Average: Occasionally integrates classroom knowledge throughout responses, general understanding of concepts, no rationale stated					
1 = Poor: Rarely integrated classroom knowledge, limited understanding of concepts, no rationale stated					

IV. Exhibits the best practices, values, and ethics of the profession	5 Excellent	4 Above Average	3 Average	2 Below Average	1 Poor
5 = Excellent: Response adheres to scope of practice and preferred practice patterns of ASHA and does not violate any aspect of the Code of Ethics and demonstrates evidence-based practices through references and application of relevant, current research.					
3 = Average: Response adheres to scope of practice and preferred practice patterns of ASHA and does not violate any aspect of the Code of Ethics, and demonstrates evidence-based practices through the application of related research.					
1 = Poor: Unable to demonstrate understanding of scope of practice and preferred practice patterns of ASHA, violates portions of the Code of Ethics, and is unable to use evidence-based practices demonstrated through lack of related research.					

Total Score _____ Final Average Score _____ Pass/Fail _____

Case Study Oral Presentation

< 3.0 – does not meet expectations

3.0-4.0 – meets expectations

4.1-5.0 – exceeds expectations

Study Guidance

Students are provided with sample questions to use as a study guide. They should be prepared to discuss speech, language and hearing disorders; explain the assessment process; generate a treatment plan; justify follow-up and referral; and demonstrate an understanding of research methodology, counseling, collaboration and teaming for each particular case. Normal speech, language and hearing development along with the science course work (phonetics, anatomy & physiology, speech & hearing science, and neurophysiology) are incorporated into the multiple choice questions and the case study as deemed necessary by each faculty. SPPA 560 provides students with review information, sample case studies and multiple-choice questions, and other study guidance.