Comprehensive Examination Option

Purpose and Requirement of the Comprehensive Examination

As a culminating experience for the master’s degree, students, who elect not to take the thesis (MC 599) or project option (MC 598), will take a comprehensive examination. The comprehensive examination is a set of written test and oral defense on 3 subject areas within the mass communications field.

If the student elects this option, s/he is expected to demonstrate thorough knowledge of main concepts, theories, research methods and major historical developments in the media and communications field. The student will demonstrate integrated knowledge from courses taken in the program.

Preparation for the Comprehensive Examination and Selection of the Committee

- As the student nears coursework completion, s/he should discuss with the advisor the constitution of the examination committee and the topics of the examinations.

- Students will choose a three-person Committee. At least two of those committee members should be from the Department of Mass Communications, and the Committee Chair must be a Mass Communications graduate faculty member.

- The student is advised to check with prospective faculty members concerning their willingness and ability to serve as members on this committee and to clarify expectations for the written exam. The Committee will help develop a list of questions related to the student’s career goals, courses taken, and professional interests.

- Then, the student must submit a Comprehensive Examination Committee Form with signatures and submit it to the Graduate Program Director.

- Students must register for the comprehensive exam by notifying in writing (includes email) to the Graduate Program Director by the Friday of Week 1 of the semester in which they plan to graduate. Summer graduating students must take the exam in the spring quarter prior to the completion of their coursework – the comprehensive exam will not be offered in the summer.

Content and Form of the Examination

The comprehensive exam covers three areas: two general areas including mass communication theory and research methods, and a specific subject area amongst media campaign, advertising research, journalism studies, and etc. in accordance with the expertise of the committee members in consultation with the student’s committee chair.
In all examination areas, the student will demonstrate that he/she 1) has firm knowledge of the terms, concepts and principles; 2) can identify main theories and thinkers who have helped define the Mass Communications field; 3) shows knowledge of major theoretical/methodological ideas; and 4) can integrate concepts, theories and methods in a thoughtful and provocative manner.

The comprehensive exam is a take-home and open-book. Students can take the comprehensive exam at any convenient place. The exam will be emailed to the student by the committee chair and returned to the chair through Turnitin or by email within 2 days. The completed exam must be typed and follow APA style guideline. The student in consultation and agreement of committee members can decide the dates of the exam.

Examination Procedures

- The exam is prepared and graded by the student’s 3-member examination committee.
- Comprehensive examinations will be typically administered 3-4 weeks prior to the end of the student’s last semester in the program.
- Typically committee members distribute the responsibility of examining the student in the different subject areas. Each committee member provides a list of two to three questions on the selected subject area to the committee chair, who would then administer the written exam.
- Once the chair administers the questions, the student will be given 2 days to complete the written exam.
- The chair of the committee will collect the student’s answers to all questions and communicates with other committee members.
- After the written examination, oral defense will be scheduled. The faculty members will ask questions related to the examination areas.

Grading and Remediation

- Committee members should evaluate the written responses and communicate their opinion/result to the committee chair within a week. The Committee meets together to determine a pass/fail grade to be given to the student unanimously.
- A student who did not get the passing grade on the comprehensive examination can schedule one re-examination in the following term. Such re-examination will not be administered earlier than the following semester.
Comprehensive Exam Form

Semester ______________________  Expected Date of Graduation: ______________________

Exam Administration Date: ______________  Student Exam Submission Deadline: ______________

Committee Chair:

Name: _______________________________  Signature: _______________________________

Committee Members:

Name: _______________________________  Signature: _______________________________

Name: _______________________________  Signature: _______________________________

Student’s Name and Signature:

________________________________________  Date: _______________________________

Graduate Director’s Signature:

________________________________________  Date: _______________________________