

GRADUATE CERTIFICATION OF COMPREHENSIVE KNOWLEDGE  
Policy and Procedure for the MS in FCS degrees  
School of Family & Consumer Sciences  
Eastern Illinois University

**Comprehensive Knowledge and Examinations for Graduate Degree Candidates**

Degree candidates are expected to achieve comprehensive knowledge in the area in which the degree is to be offered. Many programs require formal documentation of this achievement through the Certificate of Comprehensive Knowledge and/or completion of comprehensive examinations. Candidates should consult with graduate coordinators regarding the requirements for the certificate if it is part of the graduate degree program. Programs establish procedures that are used to examine the candidate's comprehensive knowledge. Procedures may include written examinations, oral examinations, national or state examinations, or other assessments of knowledge. Upon the candidate's successful completion of the required procedures, the coordinator of graduate study will electronically document achievement of the Certificate of Comprehensive Knowledge. Electronic documentation must be completed by the last class day published in the *Class Schedule* during the final term of study. Some programs also record completion of comprehensive examinations on the graduate transcript. Programs may designate completion of the examination as "pass" or "pass with distinction."

**Graduate Thesis**

A thesis is a required component of some master's and specialist's degrees or options. The thesis is a scholarly contribution to knowledge in the candidate's selected area of study. Thesis research is conducted by degree candidates in consultation with a thesis committee and under the direct supervision of the thesis director who must be a regular member of the graduate faculty.

(EIU on-line Graduate Catalog 2009-2011: <http://catalog.eiu.edu/index.php> )

Following is the policy and procedure for graduate certification of comprehensive knowledge for the MS in Family & Consumer Sciences. Students will demonstrate comprehensive knowledge by both written and oral means as outlined below:

Part I. Written

A. Satisfactory completion of a thesis and defense, approved by the student's graduate committee. <http://www.eiu.edu/%7Efamsci/academics/FCSthesisguide.pdf>

OR

B. Satisfactory completion of the written component of the comprehensive examination. A streaming video resource for preparation for the written and oral comprehensive examination is provided at: <http://www.eiu.edu/~msfcs/comprehensiveexam.ram>

1. A time for the written comprehensive examination will be scheduled by the Graduate Coordinator near the midterm of fall and spring semesters. This examination time will be proctored by the Graduate Coordinator or designee. Individual examination arrangements are possible and are the responsibility of the student and the advisor.
2. Requirements for taking the written examination:
  - GPA must be 3.0 to be eligible to begin the comprehensive examination;
  - it is expected that students will take the written comprehensive examination in the semester they expect to graduate;
  - the student must have completed and/or be registered for at least 26 hours of their course work, as determined by their approved study plan;
  - grades of 'Incomplete' for previous terms in courses other than Internship or Independent Study must be removed; and
  - exceptions require approval of the advisor, Graduate Coordinator, and the Chair/Assistant Chair.

3. Each member of a student's graduate committee will submit one question to the student's advisor. The advisor is responsible for preparing the typed exam and submitting it to the Graduate Coordinator no less than five (5) days before the date of the exam to be proctored by the Graduate Coordinator. At least one question is expected to require the student to demonstrate an understanding of the integrative focus of knowledge within family and consumer sciences and it is the role of the advisor to monitor this aspect in the selection of questions.
4. Students will select two questions from those listed on their individual exam and will have two hours to write. The student should be instructed to plan to write about one hour for each question and that well organized, well written and legible responses are expected. References/authorities in the field may and should be cited as appropriate. Theoretical applications are required to be integrated into the responses.
5. Students may elect to answer questions using computer or paper/pen. All pages of the student's exam must be numbered and the student must initial each page of the original document.
6. Copies of the exam and responses will be provided within 24 hours of the exam to the student's committee for review. If there is a serious deficiency preventing the student from progressing to the oral examination, the advisor must notify the student following consultation with the student's committee. The 72-hour notification period begins the day after the exam is taken and concludes 72 hours later. If the exam is administered on Monday morning, the exam distribution period extends until Tuesday morning and the notification period continues until the end of day on Thursday. Arrangements for remediation requirements and/or retaking the written will be the responsibility of the advisor, following consultation with and agreement by the student's committee as to the terms and conditions.
7. In the event that there is an impasse in the committee regarding decisions about the student's level of performance on the written exam or extenuating circumstances make a committee member unable to participate, the decision may be reached by a majority vote in consultation with the Chair/Assistant Chair.
8. If a student does not successfully complete the written exam the committee may allow one additional opportunity to meet the requirements of the written exam. The requirements that comprise the additional opportunity are determined by the committee. The advisor, in consultation with the committee, will communicate to the student the terms under which the deficits will be met and the documentation that is required. This communication will be in writing and copied to the committee and the Graduate Coordinator. The opportunity to successfully complete the requirement for the written exam must be completed within the two academic terms following the term in which the written exam was first attempted and must be within the six-year time limit on graduate coursework included on the student's study plan. In the event that a student does not pass the written exam, the student is dropped from the program and no longer holds candidacy status for the MS in Family and Consumer Sciences degree.

## Part II. ORAL

- A. Satisfactory presentation and defense of thesis approved by the student's graduate committee. Students should also be prepared to discuss family and consumer sciences philosophy, issues and trends.

OR

- B. Satisfactory discussion of family and consumer sciences philosophy, issues and trends, knowledge of the student's focus of study, research principles, relevant theoretical framework, and key research findings.
1. Requirements for taking the oral examination:
    - the oral component of the comprehensive exam will occur only after the student's successful completion of the written component demonstrating adequate and appropriate knowledge, logical organization, written expression and/or any remediation that has been required by the committee; and
    - GPA must be 3.0 to be eligible to continue the comprehensive examination.
  2. Early in the term in which the comprehensive examination is planned, the student is responsible for contacting his/her advisor to set a time for the oral examination. The exam should be scheduled no earlier than 7 days after the written exam and no later than two weeks prior to the last published day of class for the semester.
  3. Committee members are required to provide flexibility in order to schedule oral exams during the hours of 8:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. In unusual circumstances these normal hours of examination time may be supplemented by additional hours if there is agreement by the student and the committee.
  4. The student is responsible for initiating the arrangement options for the time/date of oral exam with the advisor after checking the schedules of all committee members. When the advisor and student have selected possible times/dates, the students will contact the other two committee members to arrange a time/date. Once the oral exam has been set, it is the responsibility of the advisor to reserve a room and notify the student. It is suggested that the student confirm the date, time and location with the other committee members. A follow-up reminder sent to the committee by student is recommended 24 hours before the oral exam.
  5. The oral exam is conducted by members of the student's committee and chaired by the student's advisor. Two hours should be allowed for the oral exam. After the exam, the student will leave the room while the committee evaluates the total comprehensive exam and considers the merit of the written and oral exams in the aggregate. Following this deliberation, the student is asked to rejoin the committee and promptly notified of the result. When successfully completed, two copies of the "Certification of Comprehensive Knowledge" form are signed by the committee. The advisor sends one signed form to the Graduate School and the other to the Graduate Coordinator for the student's file.
  6. In the event that there is an impasse in the committee regarding decisions about the student's overall comprehensive exam level of performance or extenuating circumstances make a committee member unable to participate, the decision may be reached by a majority vote in consultation with the Chair/Assistant Chair.

7. If a student does not successfully complete the oral exam the committee may allow one additional opportunity to meet the requirements of the oral portion of the comprehensive exam. The requirements that comprise the additional opportunity are determined by the committee. The advisor, in consultation with the committee, will communicate to the student the terms under which the deficits will be met and the documentation that is required. This communication will be in writing and copied to the committee and the Graduate Coordinator. The opportunity to successfully complete the requirement for the oral exam must be completed within the two academic terms following the term in which the oral exam was first attempted and must be within the six-year time limit on graduate coursework included on the student's study plan. In the event that a student does not pass the oral portion of the comprehensive exam, the student is dropped from the program and no longer holds candidacy status for the MS in Family and Consumer Sciences degree.

Final certification for graduation depends upon documentation of the completion of all graduation requirements being submitted to the Graduate School by their stipulated deadlines. The completed and signed "Thesis Deposit Certificate" or "Certification of Comprehensive Knowledge" form must be submitted to the Graduate School by the last class day published in the Class Schedule of the student's final term.

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