



POLICY TITLE:	Doctoral Comprehensive Written & Oral Examinations
PURPOSE:	To outline the procedures for the comprehensive written and oral examinations taken by doctoral students in the School of Public Affairs & Administration.
APPLIES TO:	Doctoral Students
RESPONSIBLE PERSON:	Doctoral Program Director
APPROVED BY:	SPAA PhD Committee
APPROVED ON:	05/03/2013
REVIEW CYCLE:	Ongoing
RELATED POLICY/DOCUMENTS:	Candidacy for Doctoral Degree Graduate Student Oral Exam Committee Composition Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Examinations

COMPREHENSIVE WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

School of Public Affairs and Administration doctoral students are required to take two separate written exams: one in the foundations area and the other in their area of specialization. These two exams are referred to as the Comprehensive Written Examinations.

Preparing to take the exams:

- The student must complete the course credit and Ph.D. student residency requirements before registering for a comprehensive written examination.
- Only students who complete the required courses in the Foundations, Specialization, Cognate and Methods Sequence, with a GPA of 3.0 or better may proceed to the comprehensive written examinations.
- Students should consult their advisor to plan a schedule of course work and seminar preparation in anticipation of the comprehensive written examinations in public administration foundations and specializations.

- Students must declare their area of specialization **six months** prior to taking the exams. For their specialization exam, the student will only be required to answer questions in their declared specialization.

Foundations Exam:

The foundations exam will be taken on the next available date after the completion of foundations courses. (For example: if foundations courses are completed in the Spring semester, the student should plan to take the comprehensive written exam in September.)

The foundations exam will be eight hours with students allowed two pages of notes (double-sided page).

The drafters and graders of the foundation exam will be the members of the School of Public Affairs and Administration Ph.D. committee and any other faculty member who would like to participate.

Specialization Exam:

The specialization exam will be taken after successfully passing the foundation exam, on the next available date after completion of specialization courses.

The specialization exam will be eight hours with students allowed two pages of notes (double-sided page).

The drafters and graders of the specialization exam will consist of two or three faculty members within the School of Public Affairs and Administration who have expertise in the student’s chosen subfield, and who will serve as member of the student’s committee.

Registering for the exams:

The comprehensive written examinations are offered twice each calendar year, in February and September. The exams are given seven calendar days apart, and are generally administered on the first two consecutive Fridays in February and September.

In order to be eligible to take the exams, the student must register by the specified deadline:

<i>For the February exam:</i>	<i>For the September exam:</i>
Declare specialization by: August 1	Declare specialization by: March 1
Registration Deadline: December 1	Registration Deadline: August 1

Students may register by contacting the Graduate Secretary in the School of Public Affairs and Administration. Students must ensure that their Ph.D. summary spreadsheet is complete and up-to-date prior to contacting the School to register for exams. A copy of the spreadsheet is maintained in your student folder; please contact the Graduate Secretary if you need a copy.

On the day of the exam:

- A member of the School of Public Affairs and Administration faculty will be designated as the exam supervisor. The exam supervisor may provide brief remarks or directions to those taking the exam prior to beginning the exam.
- The time allocated for each exam is 8.5 hours, which includes a 30 minute lunch break. The exam will begin promptly at 8:00 a.m., with a lunch break from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m, and conclude at 4:30 p.m. (Note: students may bring their lunch, and utilize the refrigerator and microwave located in the break room.)
- Your exam room has been chosen to provide an environment conducive to thoughtful scholarship and writing. If there is a problem (e.g., excessive noise or disruption), please contact office staff immediately (864-3527) and they will find another space for you. In such an event, your time allotment will be adjusted accordingly.
- The exam is closed-book, but you may bring two pages of notes (two single pages or front and back of the same page). You may not bring any other written materials or computer flash drives into the exam room, and you may not access the internet during the exam period.
- Each student will be provided with a laptop computer, USB drive and a hardcopy of the exam questions. Internet connectivity will be disabled. Students will be asked to respond to each question in a word document. At the conclusion of the exam, the student should download the completed document onto the USB drive provided by the School. (Students may not bring their own USB drives to the exam.)
- Once you have completed your exam and downloaded exam answers, please take your laptop, USB drive and the question sheet to the supervising Professor's office, where he or she will print out a copy of your answers and determine if everything is complete.

Grading the exams:

- The SPAA Doctoral Director will notify each student of their exam results within two weeks following the second (specialization) exam.
- If an aspirant receives a grade of “unsatisfactory”, the comprehensive written examinations may be repeated but under no circumstances may a student take them more than twice.

COMPREHENSIVE ORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Following the successful completion of the written comprehensive examinations, the student must satisfactorily complete a comprehensive oral examination and present a dissertation proposal in order to “advance to candidacy”, i.e. become a Ph.D. candidate.

Oral exams will be held after the completion of all coursework and within six months after successfully passing both written examinations.

Students must have satisfied the research skills requirement as appropriately applied and established for the student’s particular program.

Scheduling your Oral Exam and Exam pre-approval (Progress to Degree form)

The date and time for the oral examination should be scheduled in conjunction with the student’s committee chair. The student and/or chair should notify the School’s graduate secretary a minimum of three weeks prior to the oral exam, for the purposes of 1) reserving the conference room for the oral exam meeting and 2) satisfying the requirement of the Office of Graduate Studies that a pre-approval **progress to degree form (PtD) be filed two weeks in advance of the exam.**

The student must choose a committee for the comprehensive oral examination, which must consist of at least five members, all of whom must be members of the graduate faculty. For more detailed information, please reference the Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Examinations Policy.

At the oral exam, students will present and defend their dissertation proposal, which should normally be approximately ten pages, single-spaced and consist of the following minimum requirements. This list may be modified with the approval of the student’s dissertation chair:

- Statement of the research problem, specific aims and expectation (2 pages)
- Review of the literature and significance (1 page)
- Preliminary studies by the student, if any (1 page)
- Research Plan (5 pages) to include:
 - Research design
 - Research site or data source(s)
 - Propositions or hypotheses
 - Operationalization of key concepts
 - Methods and data analysis plans
- Research schedule (1 page)

Completion of the Progress to Degree (PtD) Form following the exam

Upon successful completion of the oral exam, the committee chair must provide an exam grade, and the committee chair and outside committee member must sign a departmental form certifying the exam grade. This form is prepared by the graduate secretary; either the student or the chair should obtain this form (from the graduate secretary) prior to the oral examination

meeting. Please return the completed form to the graduate secretary immediately following the oral exam meeting.

Links to KU Policy Library:

Candidacy for Doctoral Degree

https://documents.ku.edu/policies/Graduate_Studies/doctoralcandidacy.htm

Graduate Student Oral Exam Committee Composition:

https://documents.ku.edu/policies/Graduate_Studies/Graduate_Student_Oral_Exam_Committee_Composition.htm

Doctoral Comprehensive Oral Examinations:

https://documents.ku.edu/policies/Graduate_Studies/doccomprehensiveorals.htm