COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS for the Master of Science in Special Education (NON-THESIS DEGREE)

Candidates for the Master of Science degree are required to pass comprehensive examinations covering the professional field of Special Education and the courses in your program.

The comprehensive examination is designed to evaluate the candidate’s ability to apply principles, as well as the candidate’s skill in demonstrating sound scholastic and composition capabilities. It is therefore, recommended that candidates remain current with the literature both in special education and the field of major interest.

The candidate will be expected to know about topics that were covered in core courses and concentration courses.

Eligibility for Comprehensive Examination

- A candidate who wishes to write the comprehensive examination must meet the following conditions:
  - The candidate must be enrolled in or have completed the last term of coursework. If completing an internship, the recommendation would be to take comprehensive exams during the internship semester.
  - The candidate must complete the application for comprehensive exams at least a month prior to the exam date. The application can be found on our website: [http://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-education/special-education-communication-disorders/graduate/special-education.php](http://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-education/special-education-communication-disorders/graduate/special-education.php)
  - The candidate must not have an incomplete in any class.

Philosophy and Scope of the Examination

- The examination offers the candidate the opportunity to display factual knowledge and creativity, organizational skills in the fundamental areas of special education. Where relevant, knowledge gained from specialized and advanced courses, or from independent study or experience, should be used to give depth to the answers. Indication of knowledge of the research and literature must be included in each response.
- The candidate will be asked to answer four questions directly related to your program of study.

Administration and Time of Examination

- The candidate will have ten days to complete the comprehensive exam during the second week of October, March, or June. You will be given the exam on a Friday and it will be turned in ten days later on a Monday morning by 9am.
- It will be completed during the final semester of coursework or during the internship semester.
Krishna Jorgensen, Administrative Associate, Special Education and Communication Disorders Department will email the instructions for the comprehensive examination and the questions to the candidate. The candidate will also email Krishna the completed exam by the Monday morning it is due.

Accommodations are provided for students who are registered with UNO Disability Services and make their requests sufficiently in advance. For more information, contact Disability Services (MBSC 111, Phone: 402.554.2872, TTY: 402.554.3799).

**Evaluation of the Examination**

Comprehensive exams are evaluated by two faculty members who are knowledgeable about the content addressed by the questions. Faculty often seek the counsel of colleagues in evaluating responses.

**Evaluation criteria:**
1. Demonstrates ability to fully and accurately address each component of the question.
2. Demonstrates ability to analyze and synthesize current knowledge as it relates to the topic.
3. Demonstrates ability to cite seminal and current research that accurately supports the ideas presented using APA.
4. Demonstrates logical flow of ideas.
5. Demonstrates use of standard written conventions.

**Pass or Fail**

- Candidates who complete the comprehensive examination fall into two groups: 1) those who pass the exam, and 2) those who fail the exam.
- Candidates who fail the exam will be re-tested on the entire examination at the next regularly scheduled comprehensive examination date.
- Candidates who fail the exam are permitted a second attempt. Such re-examination will be administered at the next regularly scheduled comprehensive examination.
- A candidate who fails the examination for a second time may petition the Special Education faculty to be permitted to take the exam a third time.
- Notice of success or failure on the examination will be given to the candidate by letter from the Chair of the Special Education and Communicate Disorders Graduate Program Committee.

**NOTE:** Questions not addressed in these guidelines should be addressed to the candidate's faculty adviser.

June 2016
Master of Special Education  
Comprehensive Examination Rubric

Student: ______________________ Date: ____________  Evaluator: _______________________________

Student must meet the target level in 4 out of the 5 categories for each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>3 – Target</th>
<th>2- Approaching Target</th>
<th>1 – Below Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completeness of Answer</td>
<td>Response demonstrates adequate understanding of the question and all parts of the question are completely answered.</td>
<td>Response demonstrates basic understanding of the question, but is incomplete. Some information is missing and a few parts of the question are not answered completely.</td>
<td>Response demonstrates minimal understanding of the question. Information is missing and substantial parts of the question are not answered completely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity of Facts and Perspectives</td>
<td>Majority of facts, conclusions, and statements are valid. There is adequate support of the topic.</td>
<td>Some of the facts, conclusions, and statements are valid.</td>
<td>Few of the facts, conclusions, and statements are valid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of Background Knowledge and Integration of Theory and Practice</td>
<td>Integration of theory and practice is present, including higher-order thinking skills such as applying, analyzing, evaluating, or creating.</td>
<td>Some integration of theory and practice is present. There is some evidence of higher-order thinking skills such as applying, analyzing, evaluating, or creating.</td>
<td>Minimal integration of theory and practice is present. Minimal evidence of higher-order thinking skills at the comprehension level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Research</td>
<td>Relevant research within the past 15 years is used to support key issues resulting in scholarly writing.</td>
<td>Relevant research within the past 15 years is used to support some issues resulting in scholarly writing.</td>
<td>There is a lack of relevant research from the past 15 years which leads to minimal support of key issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Writing</td>
<td>Response is written with proper grammar, usage, and mechanics so that the reader is minimally distracted from the content. The response is well organized and has limited use of direct quotations. APA format is used throughout the response.</td>
<td>Response contains errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that distract the reader from the content. There is some organization in the response and unnecessary use of direct quotations. The response contains multiple APA format errors.</td>
<td>Response contains an abundance of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics so that meaning is obscured. There is minimal organization in the response and an excessive reliance on direct quotations. APA format is used incorrectly or not at all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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