

Adopted Spring 2008
Effective beginning Fall 2008

Department of Communication Comprehensive Examination Policy for the Non-Thesis Option

Graduate students seeking to complete the non-thesis option will be required to take comprehensive examinations during their final semester. Eligible students for the examinations must be registered during the semester/session the exams are taken, have filed a degree plan with the University, and have an overall 3.0 minimum GPA or higher in the accumulative coursework completed toward the Master's degree at SFA.

Scheduling the Exams

Comprehensive exams *must be scheduled during the first 12 class days* of the expected final semester. Both written and oral comprehensive exams should be scheduled for completion no later than 3 weeks prior to the deadline for reporting results, as set by the Graduate School. Students completing a degree during the summer should complete the exams during the Spring. Every student is responsible for supplying the departmental Graduate Coordinator with an official degree plan signifying a 3.0 minimum GPA and current status when scheduling exams. Exams will not be scheduled for students who do not meet these requirements. It is the responsibility of each student to inform the student's advisory committee of the examination dates. Accommodations will be made in accordance to special needs determined by the advisory committee in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and, when applicable, the Office of Disability Services.

Written Comprehensive Exam

All non-thesis track graduate students in the Department of Communication must demonstrate competency in the field through written comprehensive examinations. After scheduling the exams, students should contact their advisory committee to determine which courses will be tested *in addition* to the established core 18 hours. All graduate students must be tested on a minimum of 24 hours of completed communication coursework. Students with no outside of the department coursework must be tested on all coursework completed prior to the semester of the exam. It is the expectation of the department that graduate students will have completed all 18 hours of the core classes prior to the semester of the comprehensive examination. When students have a minor of 12 or more hours outside of the department, the major department must offer the minor department the option to participate in the examinations.

Written comprehensive exams must be conducted in the department using a computer supplied by the department. Students will be provided a username and password to access the word processing program on the computer. Spelling and grammar checking capabilities will be disabled. Exams are expected to be closed book and monitored.

Comprehensive exams will total 8 hours of writing. Each student's primary advisor will determine the time requirements of each question. For each core course, 1 hour should be allotted. Other courses may be slotted into 30 minute, 1 hour and 1.5 hour time

requirements to complete the remaining time of the 8 hours. Generally, students are expected to complete 4 to 6 double-spaced pages per hour of testing. Students with less than the expected pages will be examined more closely during the oral defense. Students may take the exams in 1 day or over 2 days. For students completing the examination in 1 day, 4 hours will be scheduled in the morning and 4 hours will be scheduled in the afternoon. Exams divided over 2 days will be divided into 4-hour segments for each day. Exams must be completed during open office hours.

Review of Written Examination

Each graduate faculty member submitting a question for examination will review the student's written responses to the questions and judge them as either high-pass, pass, or fail. High-pass marks are given to students displaying outstanding competency of core concepts from the course under examination and a superior writing sample. Pass marks indicate an acceptable presentation of the core concepts of the course and writing. Students will receive failing marks if adequate knowledge of the concepts is not demonstrated and/or the student's work displays less than acceptable writing skills. At the advisory committee's recommendation, a student may be reexamined on sections of the exam in which the student's performance received a failing mark; however, a period of at least 4 weeks must occur before the 2nd examination is allowed. In the event a student fails the 2nd exam, the advisory committee and Graduate Coordinator will determine if additional course work is necessary before a 3rd examination is conducted. The 3rd exam is the final opportunity for the student to fulfill comprehensive requirements for the program. To pass written exams, students must receive all high-pass or pass marks.

Oral Comprehensive Exam

Oral exams allow for further elaboration on written questions and issues arising from their responses (i.e. writing style, use of sources, etc.). Coupled with the oral examination will be an exit interview where graduate students will be asked about the program. Students should bring copies of their responses to the written exam questions to the oral exam. Each student's advisory committee will conduct oral exams. If a member is unavailable at the time of the oral exam, a substitute graduate faculty member will be chosen. At the time of the oral examination, 3 graduate faculty members must be present. Upon completion of the oral examination, the advisory committee will determine whether the student passes considering the graduate faculty responses to the written exams and the student's responses to the oral exams. When students have achieved a 4.0 GPA and all high-pass marks on the written portion of the exam, oral exams may be waived at the co-determined discretion of the Graduate Coordinator and the advisory committee. If the oral examination is waived, the student must complete an exit interview with the Graduate Coordinator before the results of the exam have been submitted to the Graduate School.