INTRODUCTION

Students pursuing a Doctorate of Education degree must successfully pass a written comprehensive examination (including research design/methods; historical, social, cultural foundations; curriculum and instruction specialization). This comprehensive examination will provide students with the opportunity to synthesize coursework, relate their program of studies to professional interests and experience, and to demonstrate competencies necessary to conduct independent dissertation research.

• The research/statistics courses must be completed before taking this exam.
• Students may work on their dissertation proposals prior to the comprehensive examinations; however, the doctoral supervisory committee cannot consider the proposal for approval until after the examination is passed.
• Students must be enrolled during the semester they are taking the comprehensive exam.

There are two options for taking the exam:

Option A is an eight-hour closed-book, proctored exam. Students must be on time for the examinations. Starting time is 8:00 a.m. on a designated Friday, each semester. Dictionaries are permitted. No other books will be allowed. If using a computer, all data will be saved on the hard drive. Students should budget their time to allow a thorough response to each question. Reference key authors within the text, parenthetically, but a fully formatted final reference list is not required. If, at the end of the exam period you wish to copy your exam onto an empty flash drive you may do so.

Option B is a 72 hour open-book exam. This option follows all guidelines established for the standard comprehensive examinations with the exception of test taking conditions and the added requirement of a full reference list. Students complete the exam at a place of his or her choosing, with reference materials available. Option B exams are scheduled for two specific Friday to Monday test periods, each semester. These weekend dates coincide with the Fridays when the standard comprehensive examinations are scheduled. Responses for each question should be limited to a maximum of ten pages including references.

Both Option A and Option B: Double space all text. Use 12 point font, Times New Roman, throughout the text, ragged right margin.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

1. Students must take the examination during the scheduled times and not before the last semester of full-time coursework is completed, excluding credit for dissertation, internship, and fieldwork in the specialty area.

2. The exam should be scheduled with Krista Terrell (krista.terrell@usu.edu) in the office of the School of Teacher Education and Leadership Office (Education Building 385).
3. Two dates for comprehensive examinations are scheduled each semester. Schedules are publicized a year in advance. The supervisory committee, in consultation with the Program Director, addresses accommodations that a student may require.

4. Students meet with their chairperson to discuss courses taken and the integration of their knowledge and skills into the area of specialization examination content. Chairs of committees, in consultation with the other committee members, construct questions for the comprehensive exam. Students talk with their committee chair about their research interests so that the exam questions can both focus on their developing research and scholarship interest and provide evidence of their facility with core information and views they have studied within the specialization of Curriculum and Instruction. Students’ responses should both confirm their readiness to conduct research and contribute to their progress toward that goal.

5. Three to four questions are constructed. Sometimes two questions are chosen for one of the areas to be covered (research design/methods; historical, social, cultural foundations; curriculum and instruction specialization) and students have a choice for one of their questions. Sometimes the questions are integrated to allow students to pose or respond to a problem that aligns with their research/scholarly interests. Students then discuss the way foundational dynamics inform that problem, the way they might approach it, and design a research plan for developing deeper understanding of or a response to the problem.

6. Taken together, the questions should sample the student’s knowledge resources and integrative skills in all the following areas:

   a. **Research design/methods (or critique) of research that provides data to inform a policy decision in curriculum and/or instruction.** One or more questions should provide evidence of the student’s ability to develop or evaluate a research problem, research questions, and an appropriate research design and method.

   b. **Foundational perspective that shapes an analysis of a problem or concern in the area of curriculum and instruction.** One or more questions should elicit evidence of the student’s ability to relate a specific issue or trend to its historical/philosophical underpinnings, to analyze social/political forces currently at work.

   c. **Curriculum and instruction specialization informed by student’s current research interest.** One or more questions should elicit evidence of the student’s ability to conceptualize the scope of a problem and a plan for addressing that problem, within the area of curriculum and instruction specialization.

Student responses will be critiqued on the following criteria:

- Did the student respond to all the issues and problems presented and implied by the question?
• Are the responses accurate, concise, clear, well organized and conceptualized?
• Does the response reflect an in-depth understanding of the issues and problems presented in the questions?
• Are the responses based on well-established research and theory, and did the student reference appropriate research and theory in the response?

Once the exam is completed and returned to the chair of the committee, the following procedure should be followed:

1. Chairperson sends a copy to each committee member for judgment along with an Exam Result Form.
2. Committee members read the entire exam in order to make a pass or fail judgment on each answer.
3. The student must receive a pass judgment on each answer by majority (three or more) in order to pass the exam.
4. Failure to answer any question satisfactorily will constitute failure of the entire exam.
5. If necessary, when committee members vary greatly in their assessments, the committee chairperson will need to schedule a meeting for committee members to decide on Pass/Fail for the entire exam by a majority vote based on all answers combined.
6. Committee members return the Comprehensive Examination Results Forms to the committee chair within 10 working days of receiving the examination.
7. If the student passes the exam, the committee chair notifies the committee members and the student of the results and returns the committee results form to Krista Terrell in EDUC 385 or UMC 2805.

When a student receives a Provisional Pass or Fails the Exam:

• Students who fail the examination may request a retake from the supervisory committee. Retakes of the examination are developed by the entire Committee and should address the general areas as well as all areas of weakness of the previous effort. Upon completion of this additional study, the student may retake the examination during the next examination period.
• If all or any part of the first retake examination is failed following established polices, the chair of the committee may work with the student to prepare for and schedule a second retake (no more than two retakes are allowed).

When a student has successfully completed the Comprehensive Examination, work on their proposal can be completed and a proposal defense can be scheduled. Once the committee chair agrees that the proposal is ready to be sent to committee members for review, the committee should be given a minimum of 10 working days to review the proposal, prior to the defense.

Following the student’s successful proposal defense, the Proposal Cover Sheet and the Application for Candidacy for Doctoral Degree form should be filed with the School of Graduate Studies. At this time, the signature of the student’s committee chair and the signature of the department head verify the successful completion of the Comprehensive Exam.