

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The comprehensive exam is a one-week, take-home exam over the competencies associated with your area as well as Family and Consumer Sciences. You will be given **six essay questions** which may require you to expound on theories, cite and review a body of research, design a research project, and/or solve a clinical problem. You will be given one calendar week to complete your exams.

Program of Study

If you select the comprehensive exam as your culminating experience, you will need to take 33 units of coursework on your program. This means you will probably be taking two more courses than students who select the thesis/project option since they receive 3-6 units for their thesis/project.

You must sign up for FCS 697C for 3 units, but these 3 units do not count in the 30 units required for you Masters Degree.

You **must** be Classified and have a Completed Program of Study signed by your major advisor and two other advisors (see signature line on program of study). The program of study will be placed in your department academic file. You must complete all the other requirements for the M.S. Degree before or during the semester in which you take the exam.

The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate the ability to assimilate the theories, concepts, and knowledge gained during your graduate experience, including coursework, internships, seminars, and other academic experience. Successful completion of coursework and other requirements does not guarantee automatic passing of the exam.

FCS697C: Directed Comprehensive Studies

During the semester you are taking the exam, you must enroll in FCS 697C by the last day to add a class as specified in the University Calendar. The University Calendar can be found in the CSUN *Schedule of Classes* each semester. You will need to contact the Graduate Coordinator to get a permission number to enroll in FCS 697C through Solar.

Comprehensive Exam Intent Form

During the first two weeks of the semester, you must also complete the "Comprehensive Exam Intent Form" (in the appendices). This form will be given to your Major Advisor to let him/her know that you are taking the exam that semester.

Student Portfolio

Next, you will need to arrange a meeting (by the 6th week of the semester) with your committee to discuss the comprehensive exam and to turn in your Student Portfolio. The information in the Portfolio will be used by the committee to write the exam questions. The Student Portfolio should include the following components:

- Program of study (i.e., courses you have taken as part of your Master's Degree)
- Resume
- One-page statement of career goals (which should include your primary interest area within your area of concentration)
- Title, one-page abstract, date, and place of publications, presentations, and class projects/papers. Some committees may require actual copies of the papers or projects – check with your Major Advisor.
- You should bring 3 copies of your portfolio to your interview. (Note: only 1 copy is required for Nutrition & Food Science students)
- In order to schedule your portfolio interview it is suggested that you email all three of your committee members at the same time and narrow down possible dates to meet.

Types of Questions on the Comprehensive Exams

You will be given **six essay questions** based on the core competencies of your area of concentration, the Family and Consumer Sciences discipline, research methods, and your student portfolio.

- One question will ask you to integrate your area of specialization into Family and Consumer Sciences.
- One question will ask you to integrate your area of specialization into a research design.
- Four questions will ask you to integrate your area of specialization into the core competencies of the area of specialization.

At anytime during your program of study you may acquire a list of the Core Competencies in your area of specialization from the FCS Department website (<http://hhd.csun.edu/FCS>) or from your Major Advisor.

Time of the Comprehensive Exam

Beginning at 8:00 am, you will pick up your comprehensive exam questions in the FCS Department Office on a Friday as determined by the FCS Graduate Coordinator. You will be required to turn in your answers by 12:00 p.m. on the following Friday after your exam is made available.

Your word-processed answers must be turned into the FCS Department Office and time-stamped. **If you do not turn in your questions by the deadline, you will fail the exam (no exceptions).** You will then have to retake the exam the following semester. The FCS Department faculty encourages you to turn in your answers at least one day ahead of time to ensure that you get them turned in on time.

The date of the comprehensive exam may vary slightly each semester based on university holidays. You will be notified by letter of the date you can pick up your examination. This letter will be mailed to you shortly after you have filed your "Comprehensive Exam Intent Form" and have enrolled in FCS 697C.

The comprehensive exam is not given during the summer or intersession.

Oral Defense and Grading

After you turn in your examination answers, the written portion of the comprehensive exam will be graded by the committee. Every committee member will grade every question. The committee will denote areas that need further elaboration and assign an initial grade for each question (explained below).

During final exams week, you will meet with your committee to defend your written answers orally. Your committee will designate a time, day, and place for the oral defense. You will need to arrange your schedule to fit the time that your committee sets. The purpose of the oral defense is for the committee to ask for clarification or elaboration of statements in the written portion of the exam. You should be very familiar with your written answers, and you should be able to elaborate on your answers if asked.

After you have responded to the inquiries the committee has asked, then you will be asked to leave the room. At that point, the committee will assign a grade to each comprehensive exam question of 1 (unsatisfactory) to 4 (exemplary) for each question. You must attain a score of 18 points (3 points per question) out of a total of 24 points (4 points possible per question) for a passing grade on the examination. If you score fewer than 18 points, the entire exam must be taken again at the next scheduled date. If you score fewer than 3 points on any individual question, you must retake that part of the exam at the next scheduled date. This is true regardless of the overall point score.

After assigning the grades, the committee will reconvene with you. Your results will then be announced to you. You will be informed whether you (1) passed the comprehensive exam as a whole or (2) whether you did not pass specific questions. If you do not pass the exam or any of the individual questions, then you may ask for an explanation of why you did not pass to provide guidance for your second attempt.

In the event of a disagreement among your committee on the grade, you will be notified that the examination will be graded by the FCS Department Graduate Committee and/or its designees. You will be notified of their decision by mail.

Retaking the Comprehensive Exam

If you fail any questions, then you may take the question(s) on the same competency (ies) the following semester (when the exams are normally scheduled). You can retake questions only once. You will have to enroll in FCS697C (3 units) again with a permission number from the instructor.

Once the comprehensive exam is attempted, you may not change to another form of culminating experience.

Expectations for Students

You should be sure to answer all parts of each question.

All written answers should have correct spelling, be grammatically correct, and have a logical structure. After completing the written part of the exam, you should proofread your writing. A poorly proofed written exam will not receive a passing grade.

It is expected that you will cite scholarly literature when answering your questions. A complete reference list of full citations should be included at the end of each question. Remember, a reference list only includes those references that were cited in the text. The APA style should be used.

You should make three copies of your written answers (one for each committee member), bind them, and turn them in before the deadline.

You should be able to orally defend and/or elaborate on any of the written answers during the oral defense.

Quoting should be used sparingly. Quotes should only be used when (1) someone says something very eloquently, (2) there is no other way to say something, or (3) you want to emphasize a particular point with a quote. When quoting in APA, you must include the page number so that a reader can find the quote. For example, Smith (1990) stated, "Don't cry because it is over, smile because it happened" (p. 30).

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating and/or plagiarism will result in an automatic fail on the comprehensive exam.

Examples of **cheating** on the comprehensive exam could include the following:

- Allowing another person to assist you in developing or writing your answers
- Referring to another student's past answers on the comprehensive exams

The *CSUN 2008-2010 Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog* defines **plagiarism** as "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one's own in any academic exercise." Guidelines for quoting, paraphrasing, and borrowing facts and figures are established in the CSUN Catalog in the appendices as well as in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

Before the week of the comprehensive exam, you may work with other students to prepare for the exams. Appropriate activities include collecting resources and/or making outlines of the core competencies. Once the exam is picked up, you cannot work with other students on the exam. However, you can use the information that you possess. If you are unsure whether your action constitutes academic dishonesty, ask your Major Advisor before you engage in the activity.

Important Dates for the Comprehensive Examination

First two weeks of the Fall or Spring Semester

Notify your advisor if you plan to take the comprehensive examination this semester. You must enroll in FCS 697C by this time.

Third week of the Fall or Spring Semester

Your Major Advisor must notify the Department Graduate Coordinator that you will take the exam.

Fourth week of the Fall or Spring Semester

The Graduate Coordinator will notify you of the date and place to pick up your exam questions.

By the sixth week of the Fall or Spring Semester

You must arrange your meeting with your committee by the sixth week to turn in your student portfolio.

11th-14th week of the semester (according to University holidays)

Take comprehensive examination.

Week 15th-finals week

Oral defense of your written exams and notification of whether you passed the exams. The results will be sent to the Office of Graduate Studies, Research & International Programs.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM INTENT FORM

To be completed during the first two weeks of the semester you are taking the comprehensive exam.

I will take the comprehensive exam during the _____ semester.

Check each box to indicate you understand each of your responsibilities during the comprehensive exam

- I understand that the purpose of the comprehensive exam is to demonstrate the ability to assimilate the theories, concepts, and knowledge gained during my graduate experience, including coursework, internships, seminars, and other academic experience. **Successful completion of coursework does not guarantee automatic passing of the exam.**
- I must enroll in FCS 697C by the last day to register late or to add a class as specified in the University Calendar.
- I must arrange a committee meeting by the sixth week of the semester to turn in my student portfolio (the earlier in the semester, the better).
- It is my responsibility to pick up my exam on the designated date.
- If I turn in my exam late, I will fail the exam.
- I understand I will not pass the comprehensive exam if I engage in any form of academic dishonesty such as:
- Consulting with other people about my answers to my exam questions
 - Using other student's answers to past exams to help me with my answers, or
 - Plagiarizing

Student's Signature

Date

Student's Name (please print)

Major Advisor's Name

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

What must I bring in order to pick up my exam?

Bring with you photo identification such as your student ID, driver's license, or California ID in order to pick up your exam.

Is it ok for someone else to pick up my exam?

No, please make arrangements for you to pick up your exam. The office is open 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

When is the latest I can pick up my exam?

24 hours after the scheduled pick up time.

Is it ok for someone else to drop off my exam?

No, please make arrangements to drop off your exam.

Can I drop it off early before the due date?

Yes.

Must I provide 3 copies of the exam?

Yes.