

Language, Literacy, and Culture Program Comprehensive Exams: Components and Procedures

The LLC comprehensive exam includes the following three components.

(Note: It is possible that you and your advisor will **together** decide that a particular component could be more effectively directed by another faculty member. In this case, you may ask another faculty member to direct any of the components of the comprehensive exam. The take-home exam questions should be directed by LLC faculty members.)

1) An academic paper.

We envision this paper as a way for you to demonstrate your ability to produce scholarly writing in an academic register. We intend this paper to be a representation of scholarly inquiry, one that demonstrates your ability to analyze and synthesize knowledge in a selected domain. We consider your work a primarily independent scholarly endeavor. The final draft should be ready to submit for scholarly publication, which means the paper will need to be more polished than a slightly revised course paper. This is an opportunity for you to represent yourself as a literacy scholar. For example, the academic paper might be an issues-oriented literature review, a reflective essay concerning a substantive issue in literacy education, or an article-length empirical piece. **You will submit paper copies of the academic paper for each committee member at 8:30 a.m. on the first scheduled day of Ph.D. comprehensive examinations in the College. Please submit your copies to Peggy Shannon.**

2) Take Home exam.

Any area of scholarship includes a range of movements, positions, or opinions concerning fundamental issues. In this section of the comps, we expect that you will demonstrate your comprehensive knowledge of two areas of literacy study. In consultation with your advisor, select from the following traditional core. Two areas of study **must** be selected.

- 1) Reading (teaching, learning, development, curriculum)
- 2) Writing (teaching, learning, development, curriculum)
- 3) Literature and/or media (teaching, learning, response, curriculum)
- 4) First/second language issues (teaching, learning, development, curriculum)

For the take-home exam, you should fit any special perspectives you might have related to teacher education, classroom discourse, community/family literacy, cultural studies, technology, literacy assessment, etc. within the four categories above that are foundational to literacy studies. Another option would be to make your area of special interest the focus of an Academic Paper.

Your purpose with the Take Home exam should be to explore the historical foundations of each argument, and identify key moments or positions in its progression up to the present. You will also be expected to identify key theorists/researchers who represent differing perspectives, and explain where you stand on issues you have described.

You should avoid casting these movements or positions in polarized terms—it's rarely that simple. Additionally, you may want to question or critique the terms used since they, too, reflect particular biases and agendas.

Beginning the process: Choose your areas no later than the semester before you plan to take comprehensive exams. After choosing two areas, you will arrive at a more specific focus within each area in consultation with your advisor. Within these two specific areas, you will work to develop a comprehensive understanding of the range of perspectives represented historically and up to the present. You will develop preliminary bibliographies appropriate for your studies in each area, and then consult with your advisor or designated faculty member to make necessary revisions and finalize the bibliographies. Next, you will immerse yourself in reading, setting up appointments with your advisor as needed.

On the day of the exam: On the first day that PhD comprehensive exams begin in the College, you will pick up **two more specific** questions/question sets (**one in each area**) written by your advisor (or designated faculty member) based on prior conversations about your specific areas of focus and on your studies during the previous semester. You will have 5 consecutive days to write 10-15 pages (double spaced, 12-point font, excluding references in APA/MLA style) in response to **each** question and will be able to refer to any written material during the five writing days. Completed responses should be sent as an email attachment no later than **midnight** of the fifth day so both you and your committee members have a record of the time of submission. Students whose first language is other than English will receive two additional consecutive writing days.

3) Course Syllabus

Develop a course syllabus for a future literacy course (graduate or undergraduate) you would like to teach. The syllabus is to be accompanied by a commentary (10-15 pp, double-spaced, 12-point font, excluding references in APA/MLA style). The commentary reflects on the framework of the syllabus and the theoretical underpinnings of the course. Here, we envision that you will make connections between theory and practice. You can draw on courses you have taught or taken; however the course syllabus must have its own unique stamp. The reflective commentary must draw on theoretical and empirical literature. **Paper copies of the course syllabus/commentary for your committee members should be submitted at 8:30 a.m. to Peggy Shannon on the first day of Ph.D. comprehensive exams in the College.**

Memo of Intent

Students submit a memo of intent the semester before taking comprehensive exams. This brief memo includes a description of the student's comprehensive exam areas and verifies that the student has no outstanding grades of "Incomplete." Students submit this memo **to their advisors** who must approve the plan before distributing the memo to all other LLC faculty members.

Deadlines for submitting the comprehensive exam memo:

- * Fall exams: Mid-June
- * Spring exams: Mid-November
- * Summer exams: Mid-April