



PhD Comprehensive Exams Cheat Sheet!

A guide to paperwork, timing, and
involvement of your committee

General Guidelines

- The comprehensive exams must occur within a year of a student finishing their coursework
 - It is recommended that the student begins Steps 1, 2, and 3 in this guide at least two months before starting the written exam.
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STEP 1

Add one committee member
(beyond your core committee
(usually of three) who will serve as
the “Outside”* Committee member
for ***Oral*** Comprehensive Exam ONLY

*Outside means anyone
outside your major professor's
DEPARTMENT

STEP 2

Meet with your committee members either separately or all together to decide dates. Review ***specialization-specific*** guidelines for your comprehensive exams*. Have a dialogue about your personal goals, the scope of literature and specific topics that might be relevant.**

*These can be found in the “Program Details” tab on the website of each BES specialization

**Come prepared to such meetings with your own suggestions (this is a dialogue!)

STEP 3

Set Date of Written and Oral

Comprehensive Exam with Committee by filing the “Request to Schedule the Written and Oral

Doctoral Comprehensive Exam” online*:

1. Written Exam must be at least 8 hours in duration
2. Oral Exam is taken within 4 weeks of successful completion of written exam; usually is 2 hours in duration

STEP 4

Complete Written Exam by Decided Date
and Send to Core Committee

STEP 5

Committee notifies student of results **within two weeks** of receiving exam

STEP 6

REGARDLESS OF OUTCOME:

Major Professor initiates and submits
“Results of Written Doctoral
Comprehensive Examination” online*
(must be unanimous decision by all
Committee members)

*<https://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/forms/>

STEP 7

IF YOU PASSED GO TO STEP 8

IF YOU DIDN'T PASS GO TO STEP 11

STEP 8

CONGRATS!

Now complete Oral Examination within four weeks of written exam (on the date you listed on original “Request to Schedule the Written and Oral Doctoral Comprehensive Examination”)

GO TO STEP 9

STEP 9

REGARDLESS OF OUTCOME:

Committee signs HARD COPY* of “Results of the Oral Doctoral Comprehensive Exam”; student gives signed results form to Graduate School Office **in person during business hours** (Quinn Hall Second Floor)

GO TO STEP 10

*This form is provided to the student by the Graduate School following successful completion of the Written Exam. It is highly encouraged to turn in this form the day committee signs (DO NOT LOSE!).

STEP 10

IF YOU PASS ORAL EXAM: Congrats! You are now a Ph.D. Candidate! If you are on an assistantship, you are now on Pay Level III. Speak to payroll to make sure this is reflected on your paycheck following passing exam.

IF YOU FAIL: If your committee agrees to give you a second chance, you can retake the oral exam between two weeks and a year after failing (date set by committee).

RETURN TO STEP 3 TO REINITIATE “Request to Schedule..” FORM*

*You won't need to re-do the Written exam, you just need to use this form to schedule a new date for the oral exam.

STEP 11

If you fail the Written Comp Exam, the student meets with committee to discuss deficiencies, and to schedule date to retake*.

Written Exam can be retaken from 2 wks to 1 yr after submitting the “Results” form (date set by committee)).

RETURN TO STEP 3 TO RESCHEDULE DATE

*The committee decides whether the student is eligible to retake. The exam can be retaken only once.
