

**Missouri State University**  
**Dept. of Counseling, Leadership, & Special Education**  
**Program in Blindness and Low Vision**

**Research Requirements – Blindness & Low Vision and Orientation & Mobility Programs**

All master's degree candidates graduating from Missouri State University (MSU) must complete a *research requirement* that includes a comprehensive body of work reflective of the area of study. In the areas of Special Education, Blindness and Low Vision (BLV Program, or the Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Program), students may elect to complete a *seminar* or *thesis* requirement, or the equivalent. To prepare for the completion of the research project, students complete a "research sequence" in this order:

1. **SPE 780 Contemporary Issues in Special Education** - Students will complete a comprehensive literature review to facilitate understanding of the research within the field. This paper will support requirements to follow.
2. **SFR 780 Introduction to Educational Research** - The content of the course will support acquisition of psychometric principles and research methodologies. Students will develop a three-chapter research proposal. Chapter Two will include a literature review (facilitated by completion of SPE 780 literature review) that responds to research questions posed in Chapter One. Chapter Three will include research methods specific to conducting the project.
3. **SPE 788 Seminar, or SPE 799 Thesis** – See options below.

In addition, all master's degree candidates must complete a comprehensive examination to assess global knowledge of program competencies. Further explanation of both the research and the exam requirements follow. Please refer to the Missouri State University Graduate Catalog for additional information on these graduate degree requirements.

**What are the options for meeting the MSU Area of Special Education, research requirements?**

- **Option 1 - Thesis:** Students who complete **SPE 799 Thesis**, will enroll in a minimum of 6 hours to be completed across 2 or more semesters. Students may enroll in additional hours based on individual needs specific to completion of the requirements for this comprehensive study. The student will work with a thesis advisor and a committee comprised of three faculty members to develop a thesis proposal prior to the beginning of their study. An oral defense will be conducted at the conclusion of the thesis project with the student's thesis committee. Successful completion of the thesis requires committee approval of both the project and oral defense.
- **Option 2 - Seminar:** Students completing **SPE 788 Seminar**, will enroll in 3 credit hours. A comprehensive, research-based body of work is required. This in-depth literature review of a chosen topic will not involve IRB or data collection. Students will work with their Seminar advisor/course instructor to complete their written project and may also be asked to participate in an oral examination with their professor to further discuss their written work.

## **What are the options for meeting the Missouri State University, Area of Special Education comprehensive examination requirements?**

Each special education master's degree student is required to complete either an oral or written comprehensive examination. Options for meeting the examination requirements follow.

- **Option 1 - Examination Requirements for Thesis Students:** Students who complete **SPE 799 Thesis**, will be required to complete an **oral defense**. This oral defense will be conducted with the student's thesis committee. Successful completion will meet the comprehensive examination requirement.
- **Option 2 - Examination Requirements for Seminar Students:** Students completing **SPE 788 Seminar**, will be required to complete a written examination and may also be asked to participate in an oral examination based on their written responses.

### **Scheduling and Preparing for the Comprehensive Examination**

#### **When may I take the examination?**

Examinations are typically offered on the last Monday in September, and on the last Monday in January. Exceptions to the exam date may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Students may take the examination when courses in the program have been completed. In some cases, students may take the examination even if they have a course or two left to complete with the permission of the academic advisor.

#### **How do I know when I am ready to take the examination?**

A student should discuss with their academic advisor when he or she is planning to complete the comprehensive examination. Planning with the advisor should take place at least one semester prior to the anticipated examination date. The student and the advisor set a date to complete the necessary application form. If during the preparation process the student does not feel ready to complete the examination, they should contact their advisor. You may elect to drop out of the examination and take the exam the next semester, but always check with your advisor to ensure you are completing the examination well within the allotted time to complete your program of study (i.e., 8-year time period).

#### **What paperwork is involved in scheduling the examination?**

It is important that all online students follow the steps outlined below in scheduling the comprehensive examination:

1. Once you email the academic advisor regarding your intent to take the Comps Exam, and approximately one semester before the Comprehensive Exam date, the academic advisor will email you the approved Comps Policy, together with the scheduled date for the exam.
2. Online students within 50 miles of Springfield, MO, will take the MSED Comps Exam in the Dept. of Counseling, Leadership, & Special Education. The MSU professor will email you the exact building and room number for the exam. Therefore, as soon as you are ready to take the Comps exam, email your intent directly to Dr. Shari Scott at: [sscott@missouristate.edu](mailto:sscott@missouristate.edu).
3. For all other distance education students, as soon as you are ready to take the comprehensive exam, locate the nearest college or university testing center to you. Then, clearly and fully complete all the

information below and email it immediately to Professor Shari Scott at: [sscott@missouristate.edu](mailto:sscott@missouristate.edu). The information should contain:

Name of Exam Proctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Testing Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing/Physical address of Testing Center: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number of the Testing Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number of the Testing Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address of the Proctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Scheduled day/time of Exam: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Upon completion, all students must fully complete and sign Section One of the official Comprehensive/Results Form (see the Appendix at the end of this document). Also, ensure the director of your chosen testing center fully completes and signs Section 2 of the Appendix. The form should be completed and signed on the day of the exam. The proctor should include the signed form with hard copies of articles and exam materials to be sent to MSU.
5. For students in their last semester of study who have passed the COMPS, ensure you also complete the Application for Graduation Form which can be submitted online.

### **How do I prepare for the examination?**

The academic advisor will guide the student in preparation and will provide information specific to the following areas:

1. Identify with your advisor specific course content that will be reflected on the examination.
2. Identify with your advisor the instructors who can support your study and provide you with guidelines. Typically, the instructors you had for courses should be contacted at least one semester prior to the exam to guide you in the preparation for the examination.
3. MSU students with a disability who have an official medical proof of disability will be accommodated during the examination. However, such students must notify the testing center proctor of their unique testing requirements.

### **General Guidelines for Comprehensive Examination**

#### ***What are the formats of the comprehensive examination?***

#### **Blindness and Low Vision Program:**

The written component of the comprehensive examination consists of:

- a) Two essay questions;
- b) A literary passage transcription into Braille; and
- c) Transcription into braille of math and science items generally found in P-12 textbooks.

NOTE: Beginning in the spring semester of 2017, the literary braille transcription MUST reflect the new Unified English Braille (UEB) code. If you are unfamiliar with UEB, please enroll in the relevant Hadley Institute course.

Total time allowed for the Blindness and Low Vision Exam is four (4) hours. It is suggested you take a 45-minute lunch break, after completing the essays, as arranged with the proctor.

NOTE: Sections of the exam can be completed in the student's preferred order.

The following criteria will be used in grading your responses to the Blindness and Low Vision Program exam questions:

- A. Thoroughness and comprehensiveness of each essay-based answer (there is no specified length for each answer);
- B. Clarity, depth and organization of each essay-based answer;
- C. Professional writing style, grammar, and spelling;
- D. Appropriate APA format for essay-based responses; and,
- E. Use of correct contractions and symbols, and accuracy and neatness of materials transcribed with the Perkins braille.

#### **Orientation & Mobility Program (not offered at this time):**

The written component of the comprehensive examination in the O&M Program consists of four (4) essay questions. Total time allowed for the O&M component of the exam is four hours. It is suggested you take a 45-minute lunch break at about mid-way in the exam, as arranged with the proctor.

The following criteria will be used in grading your responses to the O&M exam questions:

- A. Thoroughness and comprehensiveness of each essay-based answer (no specified length for each essay question);
- B. Clarity, depth and organization of each essay-based answer;
- C. Professional writing style, grammar, and spelling;
- D. Appropriate APA format for essay-based responses.

### **Preparing for the Essay Questions**

Each student in the two programs will receive the essay questions about one semester prior to the exam for research and preparation. It is each student's responsibility to share with the proctor both the Comprehensive Examination Guidelines and the essay questions. In addition, on the day of the exam, print and bring along with you to the testing center a copy of the essay questions.

Also, prior to the exam date, make hard copies of all peer-reviewed journal articles and professional resources you will use in each response.

NOTE: A minimum of five (5) peer reviewed journal articles and/or chapters should be used for each essay response. Remember to clearly write on each article or professional resource the specific essay question number that is associated with each professional resource or journal article.

On arriving at the test center, leave your essay questions, pagers, cell phones, etc. with the proctor. Also, all copies of articles and/or resources should be in the custody of the proctor during the exam. When you are ready, the proctor should disconnect internet access and hand over the printed essay questions to officially begin the exam. The student is not allowed to refer to notes or resources or utilize internet sites when answering the essay questions.

All answers to the essay questions should be word-processed. Type your name and date on each page of your response, and begin each answer on a new page. Make sure you write the appropriate number of each essay question you are answering. Email all essay responses as attachments to the MSU professor.

In each response, ensure you include the appropriate number of pertinent, research-based citations from your articles or professional resources. It is unacceptable to use an entire textbook as a single citation or resource.

NOTE: You do not need to write a list of references after each essay response.

On completing the entire exam, the proctor will package all hard copies of journal articles and professional resources and over-night mail them to the MSU professor at the student's expense. The professor and readers will use these articles and resources to cross reference your response citations.

NOTE: If you need the hard copies of articles or resources to be returned to you, ensure you include in the package a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

### **Literary and Nemeth code transcriptions**

The MSU professor will directly fax or email to each testing center the ink print materials to be transcribed into Braille. These will then be administered to you only on the day of the exam. For the transcription component of the exam, you should use a standard manual Perkins braille to transcribe the Literary and Nemeth materials.

Materials to be transcribed will include:

- a. A short, 1-page ink print literary story, and
- b. Math and science items.

For this transcription, please bring any internet-based reference sheet of no more than one double-sided page. Students taking the transcription exam should bring with them the following items: a functioning standard manual Perkins braillewriter, and 11-by-11-1/2-inch braille paper, or 8 by 11-1/2-inch braille paper. If using the latter paper, insert the 11 ½ inch side into the braille. Due to the noise of the Perkins braillewriter, remember to notify the testing center of the need for a separate room for the exam. Also, note that the student may take the sections of the exam in her/his preferred order. The following procedures for grading the transcribed materials have been adopted. The first list below shows how points will be deducted for mistakes in Braille reading and writing in Literary or Nemeth codes. If the same mistake in the use or omission of contractions or in word division occurs consistently with regard to the same word, it will be counted only once. Format errors may sometimes be counted together as a single error.

Categories of errors will include:

- Contractions/symbols omitted or misused
- Characters misformed (including added or omitted dots)
- Incorrect division of words
- Letters inserted or omitted
- Text omitted or repeated
- Spacing errors
- Format irregularities
- Omitted or inserted punctuation or composition signs
- Erasures detectable by touch

In grading each of the transcribed materials, you will start with a score of 100%. One (1) point will be deducted for each error. One (1) point will be deducted each time a correct concept is identified as being incorrect. A minimum of 76% is required to pass each transcribed section.

**Note:** On completion of the transcribed exam, the proctor should overnight mail completed materials together with all hard copies of research articles and/or resources directly to the MSU professor at:

Dr. Shari Scott  
 Dept. of Counseling, Leadership, and Special Education  
 Missouri State University  
 PCOB 123, 901 S. National Ave.  
 Springfield, MO 65897  
 Office phone: 417-836-3142

**Note:** Again, the student is responsible for costs associated with the exam, including postage of hard copies of journal articles and/or professional resources.



## Evaluation of Master's Comprehensive Examination Responses, and Policy Related to Re-takes

### *How will my examination be evaluated?*

Typically, there are two to three faculty readers, including your instructors, who will review your examination responses. You will not receive a grade for the examination, but your responses will be ranked as a "pass" or "fail" rating with comments made by each instructor regarding the quality of the response and the alignment to the criteria in the question.

### *How and when will I know if I pass my examination?*

You will be notified in writing, but it will take between three to four weeks. As stated, readers must review your examination responses, and the results must be forwarded to the Graduate College.

### *What happens if I do not pass the examination?*

If a student has failed one or more comprehensive exam questions, he/she should contact the professor(s) responsible for writing and evaluating the specific comprehensive exam question(s) to discuss with the faculty member why the specific responses did not meet the criteria for a "pass".

#### *Common reasons for failing a question:*

The common reasons for failing a written comprehensive examination question, and the braille transcription, include:

- a) failing to address each part required within the question;
- b) failing to thoroughly address each part of the question, including in-depth discussion of the topic;
- c) failing to write in a logical, coherent, and professional fashion within the response (i.e., not using correct grammar, spelling, etc.);
- d) failing to provide appropriate citations of references (including the minimum number of specified resources) within the written response; and
- e) failing to use proper contractions or symbols, and produce accurate and neat materials in literary, and Nemeth/UEB code(s).

Again, it is recommended that when preparing for the comprehensive examination, students contact their faculty for assistance.

## Comprehensive Examination Retakes

If a student fails one or more of the comprehensive questions, the faculty who was responsible for the original question(s) **will provide a new question for the student to prepare for the comprehensive examination re-take for that specific question(s) only.** The student will not be given a re-take of the failed question(s). **The faculty responsible for the re-take of the exam** will forward to the student the new question(s). If the student has a question about the new comprehensive question(s), he/she should contact the faculty responsible for that specific question(s).

### **Re-scheduling the re-take examination:**

Next, the student will need to thoroughly prepare to respond to the new comprehensive examination question(s) to ensure that the student will pass the re-take. Note that **re-takes are planned to be completed in the second**

**week of November in the fall semester, and in the first week of April in the spring semester.** Please note that comprehensive examinations are generally held ONLY in Fall and Spring semesters.

**Evaluation of the re-take examination and forwarding of passed comprehensive examination results:**

Once the student completes a comprehensive examination re-take, the professor(s) who provided the question(s) for the re-take will evaluate the response(s), and may also ask other instructors to serve as readers. If the student's response(s) meet criteria for a "pass", the faculty will indicate that the student has successfully passed the question. Then the appropriate documentation of the pass for the master's comprehensive exam will be forwarded to the Graduate College. NOTE: For each retake of the COMPS exam, the student MUST fully complete the COMPS Results Form (see the Appendix).

**Failing one or more comprehensive examination questions twice:**

If the student still does not correctly respond to the new re-take question and the professor consequently fails the student on the re-take response, the Dean of the Graduate College will then be contacted. The Dean of the Graduate College will be informed that the student failed the re-take exam and must then give permission for a student to re-take the comprehensive examination again using a different format. After the Dean of the Graduate College approves the student to again re-take the examination in a different format, the student will receive notification from the professor(s) who wrote the question he or she failed twice.

For the essay component, the professor will request that the student write a research paper on the assigned topic of the failed comprehensive exam question. The faculty member will also provide the student with the requirements of the research paper (i.e., length of paper, use of current APA format, and use of a minimum number of empirically validated resources). Once this paper is completed and approved by the professor, the appropriate documentation of the student's pass of the comprehensive examination will be forwarded to the Graduate College.

If the student has two failed attempts at taking the written comprehensives *and* failed to complete the research paper to the professor's specifications, an arranged meeting with the student's advisor and the coordinator of the special education graduate program will be scheduled. In this meeting, it will be determined if there are additional courses in which the student will need to enroll to further assist the student with the completion of his or her graduate program and all related graduate school requirements.

If the student does not pass the retake of one or both of the braille transcriptions, the professor will advise them to enroll in Hadley Institute for the Blind correspondence course (Toll free 1-800-526-9909). The student must pay for all Hadley Institute costs. Furthermore, the student must earn a grade of "c" or higher in the relevant course(s), and present the official certificate of course completion to the professor, for record purposes.



MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY -GRADUATE COLLEGE  
**Appendix: COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION  
 APPLICATION/RESULTS FORM**

**Section 1: To be completed and signed by online student on day of exam.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ M-number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Degree & Area: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: To be completed and signed by Exam Proctor.**

**NOTIFICATION OF TIME AND PLACE**

Please report on (month/date/year): \_\_\_\_\_ at: \_\_\_\_\_

Building and room number: \_\_\_\_\_

Exam Proctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number of Testing Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number of Testing Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Exam Proctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 3: To be completed by the department upon the completion of the comprehensive exam and then submitted to the Graduate College for approval. Graduate College will approve and document status in the Banner System. The Program Coordinator will officially notify the candidate of his/her status.**

**RESULTS**

Pass  
•

Not Pass  
•

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Signature of Advisor)

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Signature of Department Head/Program Coordinator)

Accepted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Signature of Graduate College)