

**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