

Master of Science – Student Affairs in Higher Education
Missouri State University

Portfolio Guidelines

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Purpose

This guide provides information about completing your portfolio and presentation of your portfolio as part of the requirements for graduation.

Comprehensive Examination

A. Overview of the Comprehensive Exam Process

The Comprehensive Examination consists of two components:

1. A written component. Review and assessment of your portfolio constitutes this portion of the comprehensive examination.
2. An oral presentation. An oral presentation of your portfolio constitutes this portion of the examination. The oral presentation is a professional event which should be reflected in your choice of dress.

You will sit for the oral presentation of your portfolio after completing the following tasks:

1. Successful completion of 27 hours of course work or the end of your third semester.
2. Completion of written comprehensive examination portion of the portfolio that meets criteria identified below.

For the written portion of the comprehensive examination process, each student must prepare materials. This comprehensive examination material will include three papers referred to as *Thematic Statements* that reference and discuss supporting documents referred to as *Appendixes*. The purpose of the thematic statements is for you to present your knowledge and understanding of the themes of the master's program, as well as your ability to apply this knowledge in the student affairs profession. You will address the major themes of the program as described later in these guidelines.

At least two readers will review your written portfolio and administer the oral presentation. If these two readers disagree in their assessment of the portfolio, then a third faculty member will assess your portfolio. Faculty will evaluate your work and provide a summative judgment about each of your written connection statements as well as an overall assessment of the connection statements – Fail, Conditional Pass, or Pass. The conditional pass assessment means that the student satisfied part but not all of the portfolio requirements (see Written Comprehensive Scoring Guide on p. 7).

B. Structure of Comprehensive Exam Portion of Portfolio

The comprehensive exam portfolio will be composed of the following sections:

1. Professional Resume

The resume includes the following elements: name/address; education degrees; work/professional experience including teaching, publications, professional consultation, and presentations; and memberships in professional organizations. The resume will be placed in the “Resume” section of the portfolio.

2. Philosophy of Student Affairs

Each student will write his/her philosophy of student affairs. This section should be one-three pages in length. The Philosophy of Student Affairs statement should give your personal justification for the necessity of higher education within our culture and the specific role of student affairs within higher education. The philosophy statement should cover your personal beliefs regarding the importance of our profession and how you intend to apply your philosophy to practice.

Use Astin’s I-E-O Model as the framework for your philosophy. Inputs would include the professional statement you submitted for the program. You should examine your pre-program views. The experience section should provide a framework to examine how the sum-total of your coursework, GA/full-time work, and practicum experiences shaped your revised perspective. Outcomes – you should describe who you are today and how you would like to be in the future.

3. Abstract

The abstract is a summary written to explain the contents of your thematic paper. One will be written for each paper. Please refer to pages 25-27 of the APA manual for more details on writing an abstract.

4. Thematic Papers

Each student will write **three** thematic papers. One of the papers must address Organization and Administration of Student Affairs, and one paper will focus on Foundational Studies. The topic of the third paper will be based on one of the following program themes depending on the student’s choice:

- a. Student Development Theory
- b. Student Characteristics and Effects of College on Students
- c. Individual and Group Interventions
- d. Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

Details of each program theme are listed on pages 10-11.

Things to remember as you create your portfolio:

1. You must select your own thesis(es) for each thematic paper to frame your writing. Papers must demonstrate knowledge, synthesis, application, and reflection. All connection statements should have the following four sections: introduction, synthesis, application and reflection, and conclusion.
2. Students are expected to integrate other theme content when appropriate. Integration should be natural and not contrived.
3. A total of six (6) appendixes are required for the entire portfolio. An appendix may be used for multiple connection statements. Since leadership draws upon integrated, multifaceted knowledge, we expect, even encourage, your use of an appendix for more than one program theme.

An appendix is some document that you, in your student affairs duties, have created in the course of your daily work (e.g., memo to faculty, professional development outline, short report, meeting agenda, goal-setting exercise, program brochure, a strategic plan). You may also include something that you created in your coursework. PowerPoint presentations are inappropriate for use as appendixes. Instead, please summarize the presentation and discuss how it is relevant to your thematic statement or include only one or two slides from a presentation and explain their significance to your use of program knowledge in practice.

Appendixes are to be selected to demonstrate growth, application of knowledge, and/or mistakes/errors in your work in student affairs (e.g., full-time employment, assistantship, practicum, etc.). You must reflect on the appendixes in light of the theories covered in the program in order to demonstrate how they illustrate your use of knowledge in student affairs. Choose the appendixes that you believe are of highest quality and that reflect most effectively your application of the skills gained, transformed, and demonstrated during the program.

Each appendix will need to be included in the portfolio (as a separate document) and explicitly referenced in the thematic statement(s) where the appendix was used to demonstrate application of knowledge. It is insufficient to simply include or list appendixes without a rationale for inclusion and an explicit explanation of/reflection about how the appendix demonstrates application of knowledge. In short, together, thematic statements and appendixes must demonstrate knowledge and how this knowledge has been employed in practice.

If you have not already begun to do so, you are encouraged to begin collecting appendixes as soon as possible.

4. Each thematic statement must be 10-12 pages in length excluding title page, abstract, references, and appendixes.

5. In the synthesis section of each paper is where you will pull together what you learned related to that subject. The definition of synthesis is as follows: “the combining of separate elements of substances to form a coherent whole” (American Heritage Dictionary, 1982). Therefore, you will pull together the various elements (knowledge from specific classes, ideas or events covered in classes, etc.) that when combined, make up the “coherent whole” that is your paper.
6. The application section of the paper is where you demonstrate how you applied, or used, the knowledge about which you wrote in the synthesis section. You can highlight work you completed in your graduate assistantship, practicum experiences, coursework, committees, etc.
7. You must cite the materials you use to support points made in your papers or if you reference information from someone else. It is paramount that you demonstrate your knowledge and your ability to apply said knowledge to your work experience(s). This part is often missed in portfolio writing – please make sure you cite the material you use. Please refer to p. 169-173 of the APA Manual to cover the details of when to cite, how to cite, and use of direct quotations. See pages 174-179 of the APA Manual for examples.

4. References

5. Appendixes

C. General Writing Requirements for the Thematic Statements

The thematic papers should be well organized and show a thorough synthesis of the knowledge base related to the relevant theme. In addition, all papers (except appendixes) should follow APA style (6th edition), including citations, spacing, references, headings within each connection statement, and other APA stylistic considerations.

Papers should be written in third person with the exception of the application and reflection section of each thematic paper. Appendixes should be noted in your paper but are not on reference list unless you actually cited something from the appendix.

D. Portfolio Preparation

Prepare the portfolio following these general steps:

1. Organize content and materials to address each Program Theme.
2. Compose a paper for each program theme.
3. Polish and improve the materials until they are ready to submit for review.
4. Create a reference list for the papers and reference pertinent artifacts.

Your portfolio should be put together in a manner that reflects graduate work. The binder which holds your writing should be in good shape, your dividers should clearly indicate the various sections noted on p. 4-6. Three-hole punching on the pages should be uniform.

E. Evaluation of the Portfolio-Based Comprehensive Examination

The evaluation of the portfolio-based written comprehensive examination is not conducted on an item-by-item basis. Rather, this evaluation focuses on your overall progress as represented by the thematic papers and appendixes. These papers and appendixes should demonstrate your mastery of program themes as viewed through the lenses of mastery and synthesis of knowledge, reflection, and demonstrated application of knowledge in student affairs. Assessment criteria and the “Written Comprehensive Examination Evaluation” form that contains these criteria are found on page 7 of this document.

F. Written Comprehensive Examination Evaluation

Missouri State University Statewide Master of Science in Student Affairs Department of Counseling, Leadership, and Special Education

Student Name: _____

Connection Statement: _____

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Mechanics and Style			
The thematic paper contains the necessary components			
The material is free of spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors			
The material is well organized, well written, and easy to read and interpret			
Substance and Insight			
The topic or problem is approached comprehensively (within established limits) and thoughtfully			
The thesis presented in the paper is developed in a logical fashion, key concepts are clearly delineated and logically related, and important points are elaborated as necessary			
Inferences and conclusions are logically developed and well supported			
The presentation of information is accurate			
The analysis of information is adequate			
Support and Documentation			
The related literature is adequately reviewed			
The author accurately and appropriately cites ideas and/or direct quotations from the literature			
The in-text citations and reference list correspond to APA guidelines			
Application of Knowledge			
The artifacts selected and commented/reflected upon clearly illustrate and demonstrate application of knowledge to professional leadership duties			
Comments and reflection contained in the paper adequately and clearly demonstrate learning and application of program theories to leadership practice			

Result for this Connection Statement: Fail _____ Conditional Pass _____ Pass _____

Comments:

G. The Oral Presentation

The oral presentation will be administered in an individual format. If in the judgment of the faculty members who administer the oral presentation an individual student performs poorly, then that student will be asked to sit for another oral presentation at some later time to be arranged by the student's advisor.

H. Tentative Deadlines for the Comprehensive Examination

By February 1, 2012	Student develops and submits portfolio.
February and March 2012	Readers review and evaluate the portfolio. If a third reader is required, program coordinator will select person.
By April 1, 2012	Results communicated to student.
March and April 2012	If the student fails the written portion of the comps, revisions are made.
By May 1, 2012	Revisions evaluated and results communicated to the student.
March and April 2012	Oral defense takes place.

In an effort to complete all oral defenses before the graduation deadline, some oral defenses will take place while readers are evaluating other portfolios.

Details of Program Themes

Foundational Studies

This component of the curriculum must include study in the historical, philosophical, ethical, cultural, and research foundations of higher education that inform student affairs practice. The study of the history and philosophy of student affairs are essential components of this standard.

Graduate must be able to reference historical and current documents that state the philosophical foundations of the profession and to communicate their relevance to current student affairs practice. Graduates must be able to articulate the inherent values of the profession that are stipulated in these documents in a manner that indicates how these values guide practice.

Graduates must be knowledgeable and be able to apply a code of ethics or ethical principles sanctioned by a recognized professional organization that provides ethical guidelines for their work.

Professional Studies

The component of the curriculum must include studies of basic knowledge for at least five related areas of study including (a) student development theory, (b) student characteristics and effects of college on students, (c) individual and group interventions, (d) organization and administration of student affairs, and (e) assessment, evaluation, and research.

Student Development Theory

This component of the curriculum must include studies of student development theories and research relevant to student learning and personal development. There must be extensive examination of theoretical perspectives that describe students' growth in the areas of intellectual, moral, ego, psychosocial, career, and spiritual development; racial, cultural, ethnic, gender, and sexual identity; the intersection of multiple identities; and learning styles throughout the late adolescent and adult lifespan. Study of collegiate environments and how person-environment interactions affect student development is also required.

Graduates must be able to demonstrate the ability to use appropriate development theory to understand, support, and advocate for student learning and development by assessing learning and developmental needs and creating learning and developmental opportunities.

Student Characteristics and Effects of College on Students

This component of the curriculum must include studies of student characteristics, how such attributes influence student educational and developmental needs, and effects of the college experience on student learning and development.

Graduates must be able to demonstrate knowledge of how student learning and learning opportunities are influenced by student characteristics and by collegiate environments so that graduates can design and evaluate learning experiences for students.

Individual and Group Interventions

This component of the curriculum must include studies of techniques and methods of interviewing; helping skills; and assessing, designing, and implementing developmentally appropriate interventions with individuals and organizations.

Graduates must be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills necessary to design and evaluate effective educational interventions for individuals and groups. Graduates must be able to identify and appropriately refer persons who need additional resources.

Organization and Administration of Student Affairs

This component of the curriculum must include studies of organizational, management, and leadership theory and practice; student affairs functions, legal issues in higher education; and professional issues, ethics, and standards of practice.

Graduates must be able to identify and apply leadership, organizational, and management practices that assist institutions in accomplishing their mission.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Research

This component of the curriculum must include the study of assessment, evaluation, and research. Studies must include both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, measuring learning processes and outcomes, assessing environments and organizations, measuring program and environment effectiveness, and critiques of published studies.

Graduates must be able to critique a sound study or evaluation, and be able to design, conduct, and report on a sound research study, assessment study, or program evaluation, grounded in the appropriate literature.

Graduates must be aware of research ethics and legal implications of research including the necessity of adhering to a human subjects review.

CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education, 6th Edition, Laura A. Dean, Editor, Washington D.C.; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006.