

**The University of Alabama
Higher Education Administration Program
Comprehensive Examination Policy**

Notification of comprehensive examinations:

At the beginning of each semester, students are notified by the HEA Student Listserv (which all HEA students are required to join at the point of admission to the program) of the deadline to apply to sit for comprehensive examinations. They are provided with information about requirements to qualify for exams, the application process, the timing of the exams, an estimated timeframe for notification of whether they passed or failed, sample examination questions, and information about workshops to help them prepare.

Qualifying to sit for comprehensive examinations:

In order to qualify to sit for comprehensive examinations, students must meet all of the following conditions:

1. Have an official Program of Study (POS) on file.
2. Have completed or are currently enrolled in the last course in your HEA coursework.
3. Are registered for a course in the semester in which they will take the exam.

Applying to sit for comprehensive examinations:

To sign up to sit for comprehensives, students must complete the HEA Comprehensive Exam Application, have it approved and signed by an academic advisor, and return it to the program administrative assistant by the deadline indicated.

Failure to submit the completed application to the administrative assistant by the due date will result in having to wait until the next semester in which the exam is given to take it.

Examination Questions:

Students receive a case-based comprehensive examination question developed by program faculty. Masters students receive three questions and must respond to two of three questions. Doctoral students receive one question to which they must respond.

Assessment and Grading:

Students are expected to draw from knowledge and skills gain through all core courses in order to respond to the questions. They are expected to develop a sound response to the query, to identify the critical issues embedded in the case, and to draw from the scholarly literature to support their responses.

Each student's response is submitted for blind review by two faculty readers. If there is disagreement in the scores of the two readers, the exam is submitted to a third reader for resolution.

Responses are assessed, as all scholarly writing in the program, for quality and character, format, and depth and breadth of work. A response needs a clearly defined, adequately supported purpose and sense of direction. It should evidence care in the development of ideas and in organization. It should be work that reflects a thorough understanding of the educational topic under discussion. It also should be written at a level appropriate to graduate study.

Comprehensive examinations grades are assigned on a pass, fail, or remediate basis. Pass means that the student has successfully completed the examination and may move to doctoral candidate status. Fail means the student did not successfully complete the exam and must retake the exam in the next semester that it is offered and complete it successfully prior to moving forward. Remediate means that the student may have a technically correct response but needs to provide more information for faculty to adequately assess the knowledge level and make a final pass or fail recommendation; remediation requires an oral or written defense of the exam response, depending on the nature of the deficiency, and may occur during the same semester in which the comprehensive was taken.