

**Comprehensive Exams in the Department of Communication and Film  
(Effective Fall 2019)**

Comprehensive exams in the Department of Communication and Film are planned by the student's advisory committee under the direction of the student's advisor. These should be planned and scheduled at or before the start of a student's final semester of coursework.

PhD students are tested with questions on four (4) areas; MA students with questions on three (3) areas.

These categories can involve some combination of broad scholarly areas (e.g., communication theory, media theory, rhetorical theory) with custom areas tailored to the student's research specialty.

Exam are take-home and open-book, with a 21-calendar day time limit for the student to complete each answer to each question posed by the committee.

Each answer for each question on the PhD exam must be between 4,000-5,000 words; for the MA exam, each answer for each question must be between 3,000-4,000 words.

The Department has two (2) exam periods per academic year.

The Fall written exam period starts the first Monday in September after Labor Day; the Spring written exam period starts the first Monday in January after the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

*For example, in 2019, the Fall exam period would be Monday, September 9-Monday, September 30. The Spring exam period would be Monday, January 27-Monday, February 17.*

The major advisor collects exam questions from all committee members prior to the exam period, and sends them via email to the student on the first day of the exam period at a pre-specified hour. The exams are then due 21 calendar days later at that same hour.

The student compiles all answers and sends them via email attachment to the major advisor on the due date for distribution to the full committee.

After the written exams are reviewed by the committee, and no later than 10 calendar days after the written exams have been sent to the committee, the student sits for an oral exam of no more than 120 minutes.

If one or more committee members find the written portion not ready for oral defense, the student will be asked to rewrite the exam to address committee concerns. The student will have two (2) weeks to complete the rewrite. Additional time can be allocated by the committee depending on the number of rewrites, depth of revisions needed, or other extenuating circumstances.

At the oral exam, the student clarifies and defends their written answers upon questioning by the committee.

At the completion of the oral exam, the committee votes on whether the student has passed the exam, and submits the "Comprehensive Exam Results" form to the Graduate School with the results.

Once an exam is scheduled, it cannot be postponed without unanimous approval of the advisory committee, and only under extreme circumstances of personal distress.

See the "Minimum Degree Requirements for Graduate Academic Programs" section of the Graduate Catalog for additional information on exams.