Geog 850 – Comprehensive Examination

Revision History
March 19, 2012  Original Version

Purpose
The purpose of the comprehensive examination ("comps") is to assess the student's:
- breadth and depth of knowledge in their discipline;
- academic background for the research to follow; and
- ability to conduct original and independent research.

Preparation for the comps begins shortly after the student begins their doctoral studies at the University of Regina and culminates with the successful defense of their answers to the examination questions.

Calendar Description
The purpose of the comprehensive examination is to assess the doctoral student's breadth and depth of knowledge in their discipline, academic background for the research to follow and ability to conduct original and independent research.

Procedure
The process described here is set out as a guideline only. It may be modified on a case-by-case basis to meet the needs of an individual student. However, all adjustments to the procedure described here must be approved by the Geography Graduate Committee.

1. In the student's first semester of their Ph.D. program, the student should begin to meet with their Supervisory Committee members to discuss research themes pertinent to their proposed thesis statement.

2. The student will then begin to read the literature pertinent to their research and develop an annotated bibliography. Over the course of the student's first 12-16 months in the doctoral program, it is anticipated that this bibliography will become substantial. During this period it is expected that the student will have frequent consultations with their Supervisory Committee to ensure that their review remains focused.

3. When the student feels that they have exhausted the literature, they will present their un-annotated bibliographies (i.e. reading lists) to their Supervisory Committee for approval. The Committee will review the reading lists for completeness and comprehensiveness and may recommend additional material that the student may have missed. The reading list should be presented before the end of the student's fifth semester in the program.

4. Once the reading lists are is judged satisfactory by the Supervisory Committee, this committee will develop 3 questions that will allow the student to sufficiently demonstrate his/her knowledge of the subject matter. Typical examination questions will cover the theory, methods, and applications of the proposed research.

5. The questions will be given to the student and he/she will be allowed 2 weeks to submit written answers to all 3 questions. The answer to each question must not exceed 12 pages (letter size, double line spacing, 12 pt. font, 1" margins), excluding references.
6. At the end of the writing period, the student will submit his/her written responses to the Supervisory Committee. The Committee will review the answers and will schedule an oral defense within 2 weeks of receipt of the answers.

7. The student must orally defend his/her answers before the Supervisory Committee. The oral defense normally starts with a 15-20 minute presentation of the answers by the student, followed by questions from the Supervisory Committee and discussion. The oral defense will be held as a public forum or in camera, at the student’s discretion.

8. The Supervisory Committee members will determine, by consensus or majority vote, whether the written answers to the comprehensive exam questions and their oral defense are:
   a. Acceptable: the student receives a passing grade for the course; or
   b. Unacceptable. If either or both of the written answers or the oral defense are unacceptable, the Committee may recommend that:
      i. The student be given the opportunity to revise their answers and/or re-defend them. If revisions to the written answers are required, the student must submit these revisions within 1 week of the oral defense. The student must pass the examination on the second attempt or the student will be required to withdraw; or
      ii. The student be required to withdraw from the program. This recommendation is made to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and he/she will make the final decision.

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1 The supervisory committee may have many points of suggestion for the student, but if the answers are generally acceptable the student should be awarded a Pass. This is the expected outcome for most students.