

Guidelines for Comprehensive Examinations

Department of Community and Family Health

Updated: January 7, 2009

The Comprehensive Examination

The goals of the Comprehensive Examinations are to demonstrate not only a student's mastery of his/her chosen subject area, but also the ability to integrate material acquired in the student's program of study and to apply this understanding to issues that may confront public health professionals. As such, the exams should reflect the student's ability to integrate across his/her coursework rather than just be a retesting of individual courses. The Comprehensive Examination will focus on the core public health courses. The content of the examination will include the breadth of the field of public health as represented in the student's course work. Students retaking the exam must formally reapply and submit an application. Comprehensive exams will typically be given on the last Friday in October and March. In the summer semester, it is typically given in late June. See important deadlines & dates for the current dates. Students in the Community and Family Health Department are only required to take the core exam.

Core Exam

This tests mastery related to all of the five core courses –Biostatistics I, Epidemiology, Health Policy and Management, Environmental and Occupational Health and Social and Behavioral Sciences as Applied to Public Health. This section is developed by a committee comprised of faculty who consistently teach the core courses and is administered to all students taking the exam regardless of their home department. The Educational Outcomes Committee is responsible for assessing and monitoring the quality and outcomes.

Students can take the core section of the comprehensive exams when all five of the core courses have been completed. All exams are graded on a pass/fail basis. Failure to obtain a score of 70% or more on either exam will require the student to retake the failed sections. It is our policy that students who fail the core portion of the comprehensive exam will be allowed to retake the exam for the failed subject(s). A student who retakes one or more subject(s) and fails the subject(s) a second time will be required to retake the core course(s) pertaining to the failed subject(s) and pass the course(s) with a minimum of a B (80-89%). The student may then retake the failed subject(s) of the core portion of the comprehensive exam a third and final time. The student must complete the exam retake on the NEXT administration of the comprehensive exam following completion of the course(s) and must PASS the subject(s) on that administration. If the student fails the section(s) a third time, the College has the authority to dismiss the student from the program.

Alternative to the Comprehensive Examination

The Department of Community and Family Health offers students the option of substituting a capstone course for the exam requirement.

Role of the Faculty Advisor

The faculty advisor is responsible for approving the application for comprehensive exams, including determining if a student is prepared to take the exam(s). The student should make an appointment with his/her advisor the semester prior to the proposed exam date. The advisor will review the student's coursework and explain how to best prepare for the exam. Review sessions are available for the CFH core class (sessions for other core classes are handled through the respective departments). The faculty advisor will only sign the Application for Comprehensive Examination form after meeting with the student.

Eligibility Requirements

The Department of Community and Family Health does not have additional guidelines regarding eligibility to take the comprehensive examination. The following guidelines are required by the College. PLEASE NOTE: Students must take the exam on the regularly scheduled exam dates listed. Alternate exam dates will not be approved.

Eligibility for the Core Exam:

To be eligible to sit for the core exam, a student must have:

- Either completed all Core courses, or completed 4 out of 5 Core courses and be currently enrolled in the last Core course (*some MSPH programs: completed 2 out of 3 Core courses and currently enrolled in the third course).
- Attained at least a 3.0 GPA and be in good academic standing. No grade below "C" will be accepted. This means that any class in which a student receives a grade of "C-" or lower must be retaken before the student takes the Comprehensive Exam.
- Only grades of "B" (3.0) or higher earned as a non-degree seeking student are eligible for transfer after acceptance into the College of Public Health. "B-" (2.67) grades will not be transferred.
- No course work (excluding field experience, special project, and thesis) with a grade of incomplete.
- Written approval of advisor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
- Registered for at least two credits in the semester the exam is taken (not required to be registered in order to retake the exam the following semester).
- All outstanding issues related to taking the exam resolved prior to the application deadline.

Registration Procedures

Exams are regularly scheduled at COPH each semester (on a Friday). Students needing special arrangements due to a disability should confer with the academic advisor and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

All students seeking to sit for the comprehensive exam (including retakes) must submit an *Application for Comprehensive Examination* form six weeks prior to the exam date. Specific deadline dates are available on the COPH website and in the Office of Academics. Upon receipt of the application, the Office of Academics shall:

1. Review the student's transcript and certify the student to take the exam.

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2. Notify each student, department chair and advisor of the student's eligibility to take the exam.
3. Arrange for space, proctor, collection and distribution of exams to departments for grading.
4. Take responsibility for grading the core exam.
5. Send letters to students informing them of their grade within 11 working days of exam.

Oral and take home exams are not offered in the Department of Community and Family Health.

Grading Policies

Students will be notified of the exam score by the Office of Academics. If a student fails a section of the exam, they should immediately consult with their faculty advisor about retake procedures.

If a student fails any section of the core exam (achieves less than 70%), (s)he will be required to take the specific section(s) of the exam again. Retakes shall be taken on the scheduled exam date during the following semester and students must reapply to sit for the exam. See the College Guidelines for more information on the core exam.

Availability of Guidelines

These department guidelines are made available to students in several ways. Students have direct access to the guidelines through the department's website and may request a printed copy from the CFH Administrator of Academic Programs or their faculty advisor.

Capstone Course

Description: The course is designed to enable students to integrate concepts and skills from the core public health disciplines in the context of applied public health. Competencies to be reinforced in the course include leadership, systems thinking, communication, the basic public health sciences, analytical skills applied to public health problems, public health policy development and program planning, ethical issues in public health, professionalism, financial planning and management, and the skills to work in the setting of diverse cultures. This course will serve to integrate what students have learned throughout their degree programs and prepare them for their professional careers in public health.

Course Structure: The core comprehensive exam is part of this course; however the grade obtained on the exam will be averaged in with the other assignment grades students receive in the course. Students will complete a team project and writing assignments plus the core exam. Students must make a C or higher in the class to pass the course.

Eligibility: This course is offered for MPH and MSPH students. Prerequisites for this course include satisfactory completion of all core courses and 75% of required concentration courses. This course should be the last or near to the last course students take in their academic programs. Students who meet these requirements and who need to retake sections of the core comprehensive examination will retake the failed sections of the exam during the regular administration of the core exam; however, the grade from this retake will be averaged in along with the other grades from the capstone course.

Points to Note:

- This course is also open to students who have successfully passed the core comprehensive examination.
- If students have already satisfactorily completed the core comprehensive exam, they are not required to take this course in order to graduate.

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- The core comprehensive exam given as it is now will still be offered in addition to the capstone course.
- EOH students should consult their department about information pertaining to the concentration comprehensive exams.
- The capstone course will be offered in the fall and spring semesters. Please confirm course availability with the COPH Schedule of Classes.

For more information, please contact COPH Academic and Student Affairs Office.

Exam Information & Deadlines

The Core Comprehensive Examination is a requirement for all students seeking an MPH or MSPH degree in the College of Public Health. MHA degree students are required to take the HPM Capstone course. Students are encouraged to take the core exam early in their program - as soon as they have taken all their core courses (or are enrolled in their last core course). See below for more information about eligibility requirements and application.

PLEASE NOTE: Students must take the exam on the regularly scheduled exam dates listed. Alternate exam dates will **not** be approved.

APPLICATION FOR MPH / MSPH COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Semester	Deadline to Apply	Exam Date
Spring 2009	Feb. 13, 2009	March 27, 2009

Additional dates are forthcoming. Please check

<http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/academicaffairs/compexam.html> for the most current information.

Typically exams are scheduled on Fridays at the end of March, June and October.