Tutorial

Graduate Secondary Education Written Comprehensive Examination

The written comprehensive examination (also referred to as the COMPS) for graduate secondary education majors is the culminating academic experience in a student’s graduate program. Students register for the exam (go to the graduate secondary education homepage) during the last semester of their academic program. Once registered, a Study Guide is sent to the student. The exam is administered one time each semester.

This tutorial is designed to (a) provide you guidance as you initially prepare for the examination, (b) assist you in being better prepared for the COMPS and (c) help you synthesize your learning across courses and over several semesters. Instructions on the COMPS direct you to apply similar synthesis-type questions to classroom practices.

As you prepare for the examination, please be apprised that you should be able to articulate and synthesize in written format a thorough understanding of the basic theories of each course in your graduate program. You also will be expected to effectively convey your knowledge and apply theories of teaching and learning in your written responses.

Preparation for the COMPS is essential so here are some “Do’s and Don’ts” that you may find helpful.

**Do!**

- **Practice** for the COMPS by developing responses to each of the open-ended questions found in this tutorial, but do not limit your preparation to just these questions.
- Develop responses to the questions in this tutorial as you advance through your graduate program.
- **Review** your class notes, textbooks, library resources, supplemental readings, research papers, journals, artifacts, projects, and visit the library and online resources and databases, etc. to adequately prepare for the examination. Do not discard these items just because you have completed a course.
- **Maintain** a comprehensive record of all instructional and student learning resources from your courses.
- Be prepared to **organize** and **communicate** your written responses effectively using the formal conventions of writing as delineated in the APA *Publication Manual* (6th Edition).
- Once you register for the COMPS, thoroughly read the Study Guide including the rubrics.
Don’t

✓ Don’t wait until the last semester of your graduate program to start preparing for the COMPS.
✓ Don’t expect graduate faculty to provide you answers to the questions in this Tutorial.
✓ Don’t expect to pass the COMPS if you fail to demonstrate effective graduate level writing skills including proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Students receive reduced scores when they are unable to demonstrate effective writing skills.

Practice Questions

This tutorial consists of a series of open-ended questions that cut across courses and over several semesters. Practice developing responses to the questions as you complete the appropriate courses in your graduate program.

1. What is meant by developmentally appropriate curriculum?
2. In what ways do middle school students differ from elementary and high school students? What are some ways that instruction differs at these levels?
3. What is the theory and research to support effective teaching strategies?
4. How might you differentiate your instruction for a mixed ability classroom, and for different levels of English language proficiency?
5. What are some ways that you might address and capitalize upon cultural and linguistic diversity in your classroom?
6. Consider the role of a professional teacher. What is meant by professionalism? What is the intellectual work of a teacher as a decision-maker and collaborator and what are the implications of that role?
7. Review various models of teaching and instructional strategies used in your content area. Be able to articulate how each addresses content standards, provides a meaningful learning experience for students, relates to learning theory, and employs the use of digital tools.
8. Assessment plays a critical role in instruction and learning. Assessment not only documents student learning but also guides instruction and influences teacher decision-making. To prepare for this portion of the exam, you will want to carefully review the assessment standards for teachers as well as the purpose, techniques of measurement, interpretation, and classroom examples of assessment before, during, and after instruction. You should be able to articulate the need for teachers to administer, interpret, and use results from standards-based tests to
integrate with instruction to improve student learning. You should also be familiar with contemporary assessment techniques such as performance and portfolio assessments. In addition to being able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a variety of assessments, you will also need to include references to culturally responsive instruction and assessments that are congruent with it. Be able to articulate issues related to assessment of students with special needs and English language learners. Be able to ground your response in learning theory and educational research.

9. Review the following points of interest for content learned in your graduate courses.

   a. Review the theorists/theories about learning, or closely related to learning so that you are able to discuss how students learn.


   c. Review the theorists/theories about motivation, or closely related to motivation so that you are able to discuss how students become motivated.

   d. Maslow - Glasser - McClelland - Ford - Brophy - Weiner - Kohn - Chance - Intrinsic motivation theory

10. Review the following approaches to designing curriculum in your content area:


    b. Constructivist Model of Instruction, Indirect Instruction, the 5E Lesson Plan, or Inquiry-based Lesson Plan.

    c. Interdisciplinary Instruction.

    d. Project-based and Problem-based Instruction.

Provide an overview of each approach by explaining the following:

    a. The theorist and theory associated with the approach;
    b. The key ideas of the approach;
    c. The ways teachers can implement the approach in their classes; and
    d. The advantages and disadvantage of the approach.
11. Review the following points of interest for content learned in your graduate courses.

a. Fostering a framework and teaching culturally and linguistically unique students

b. Differentiated instruction

c. Importance of Varied forms of input and assessment

d. Learner-centered vs. Teacher-centered instruction

e. Active engagement

f. Motivational theories and their influence on student success and self-efficacy

g. Role of emotion in student learning

h. Congruent learning theories, theorists, and their pedagogical implications

12. Review the following points of interest for content learned in your graduate courses.

a. Management approaches and discipline models

b. Management strategies for prevention vs. intervention

c. Managing instruction and discipline

d. Attributes of a well-managed classroom

e. Congruent theories, theorists, and their pedagogical implications

13. As you reflect on content learned in your graduate courses, consider the primary purpose of education in the United States. In what ways does this purpose relate to your own philosophy of education?

14. Choose a current issue in EC-12 public schools. What are some different ways your issue might influence your campus, students, and/or teachers at the grade level you teach or plan to teach. Then, identify and describe how this issue relates to contemporary and historical philosophies on education. Consider the following:

• Identify and describe the differences in terms of metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology or in terms of objective, subjective, and normative validity claims.
• In what ways does your philosophy aligns to and differs from other normative educational philosophies (a) in Texas, (b) on your campus, and (c) at the grade level you teach or plan to teach? Identify some ways that your classroom organization, rules, and procedures support your philosophy of education.

• Who are some key philosophers who would strongly support or strongly be opposed to the current schooling issue you selected as well as indicating the historical/philosophical movements that support this seemingly contemporary issue?

• Establish strong connections between current issues and the undergirding philosophies, emphasizing the continuity and change of educational ideas over time.

15. Graduate students are expected to be able to critically review and analyze scholarly literature in the various graduate courses on their degree plans. Identify one or more research journal articles and see if you can answer the following questions: (a) When analyzing a research journal article, what are the key parts or components of a critical analysis of the article? (b) Threats to internal and external play what significance when analyzing an article? (c) What are the names of the different threats to validity and can you give practical applications of each threat? (d) What is meant by practical and statistical significance in a research study? (e) Can you identify the research design(s) in a study and judge the merits of using the design(s)?

Now that you have completed the tutorial, how comfortable are you with the responses you developed to the open-ended questions? If there are areas that you feel ill-prepared, review your class notes, textbooks, library resources, supplemental readings, research papers, journals, artifacts, projects, and visit the library and online resources and databases. You may wish to make appointments and visit with faculty members to discuss your perceived gaps in knowledge. The faculty is willing to assist you but you must first take the initiative to seek their guidance and counsel.