**LLC Comprehensive Field Examinations Summary**

**FACULTY INSTRUCTIONS**

Students will take LLC comprehensive examinations after completing all coursework, and they must receive a grade of “pass” on their comps before enrolling in LLC 890, the Dissertation Research Proposal Seminar. The comps allow students to integrate knowledge learned throughout their time in the LLC Program into two substantive papers that extend the scope of inquiry in ways that directly connect to their envisioned dissertation project. In other words, the culmination of the comps process should yield two solid scholarly papers that are designed to directly inform the student’s prospective dissertation. Students will write 30 to 40 pages for each question (written in 12 point font, double spaced, with 1 inch margins; the page limit does not include bibliography). It generally takes students one or two semesters to plan and complete the comprehensives. Deadlines are firm, especially with regard to the timelines and page limits.

The comps process is detailed below.

1. A student may begin the comps process after s/he has finished coursework, is ready to take comps, and has met with their LLC Program Advisor to ensure that they have completed all other requirements. A student will first request that two faculty members become first and second readers/advisors for her/his comps. The first reader is generally the student’s Research Advisor, who will likely become the student’s dissertation chair. The second reader may be a student’s Co-Research Advisor, a faculty member who will likely be on the student’s dissertation committee, and/or the student’s LLC Program Advisor. The student will then schedule a joint meeting (preferably face-to-face) with the two readers/advisors, after they have both agreed. During this meeting, the student and the advisors will work together to identify the broad areas of inquiry for the two comps questions. One area of inquiry is intended to relate to the theoretical frameworks in the disciplines and fields in which the student is working and may synthesize different strands of literature. The other area of inquiry may also be theoretical or may relate to a review of methodological issues that other scholars have addressed and approaches they have used in the fields and disciplines of the student’s envisioned dissertation project. In some cases, the student and the two advisors may decide to use both questions to review important fields for the student’s work. Above all, the two areas of inquiry will be selected based on their direct relevance to the student’s envisioned dissertation topic/project.

2. Once the two areas of inquiry have been finalized, the advisors will formulate two comps questions. Both advisors should have input into the formulation of the questions, though one advisor may take the lead in this process. Some advisors may ask students to provide input into the design of the questions; others may take input at their discretion. The advisors will send a draft of each question to the student, who will have the opportunity to seek clarification, ask questions, or negotiate revisions, at the joint discretion of the advisors. Advisors may decide to ask students to complete an initial outline for each question as well as gather existing annotated bibliographies or extend previously drafted annotated bibliographies. Advisors may slightly adapt this process to suit students’ needs and advisors’ recommendations.

3. Once there is agreement on the fields and the questions, there should also be discussion and agreement upon the bibliography for each question. It is helpful to ask students to create a reading list for each questions, often with subheadings for subfields within the bibliographies, especially in cases where additional outside faculty advice on appropriate sources is needed.

4. Once there is agreement on the bibliographies, the first advisor will email the official questions to the student, who will submit the application for comprehensive exams *(available at LLC website at llc.umbc.edu)* to the LLC office. The students will have exactly **three months** from this date to complete her/his comps. At this point, students should not have further discussions with advisors or ask advisors for feedback, unless there is a serious problem.  Students are expected to work alone on these comps and to follow the UMBC honor code as they prepare and write them.

5. After students submit their completed comps to the two advisors, the advisors will read and provide feedback on both comps in a timely fashion (generally around two or three weeks and generally no longer than one month). Both readers will give feedback on both questions. The feedback may be given verbally or in writing, at the discretion of the advisors. The feedback may also be given to the student jointly by both advisors or separately by each advisor, at the advisors’ joint discretion. In addition to their feedback, the advisors will grade the student’s comps as: Pass, Revise & Resubmit, or Fail. They will communicate this grade to the Director of the LLC Program, and the student will receive this grade in a timely fashion in a letter from the Director of the LLC Program.

Students who receive a grade of Revise and Resubmit will have two months maximum from the date of notification to complete the revisions required by readers. Students will turn in their revisions to advisors, who will provide timely feedback and a new grade. If revisions are completed by 60 days and are deemed satisfactory by advisors, the grade of Revise and Resubmit will convert to a Pass. If revisions are not completed by 60 days or if both advisors do not believe that the revision is satisfactory, the Revise and Resubmit will convert to a Fail. If a student is late in submitting the comps, s/he will receive an automatic Revise and Resubmit.

Students who fail their comprehensive exams must wait three months (during which time they should consult with their Research Advisor(s) and their LLC Advisor) before they can begin a new comprehensive exam process. No student may take comprehensives more than twice. Any student who fails twice will be referred to the Director of the LLC Program.

6. Upon satisfactory completion of comps, students will be asked to complete the “Application for Admission to Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy” form. All program requirements for the degree, including the dissertation and final oral examination, must be completed within four years after admission to candidacy.