

Language, Literacy, and Culture Program Comprehensive Examination Information for Readers

Who Are the Readers?

The LLC Program relies on its core and affiliate faculty to evaluate Comprehensive Exams (Comps). For each Comps committee, two faculty readers work with each other and the student to plan the focus of the two comps areas and associated bibliographies.

As an interdisciplinary program, the Language, Literacy, and Culture Program is indebted to the efforts and expertise of faculty from other departments at UMBC. LLC students register for LLC 898 (pre-candidacy research), a three-credit course, with each Reader. This work is then reflected on each faculty member's departmental Faculty Workload Report.

Comps Readers will likely be asked to also serve as the student's dissertation chair(s) or committee member(s). Our Program's comprehensive exam process uniquely positions students for the proposal stage, as their Comps will yield two exams of chapter-length that directly relate to their research topic and methodologies.

What Are the Readers Evaluating?

The culmination of the Comps process must yield *two scholarly answers that are each 30 to 40 pages in length (in text only), plus extra pages of notes and bibliographies*. These answers are a comprehensive survey of the relevant field(s) of scholarship and are intended to serve as the foundation for two separate chapters in a dissertation.

What Are the Readers' Responsibilities?

Before the Exams Begin

The Readers (reviewers/evaluators) have the following responsibilities:

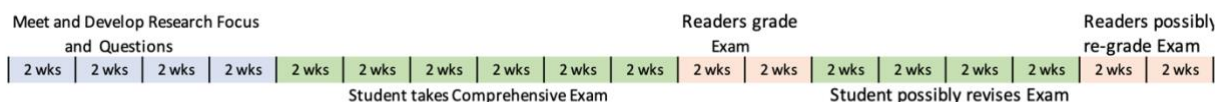
- 1) to work with each other and the student to determine the focus of each exam question, designed in relation to the student's ultimate dissertation focus,
- 2) to craft the two specific exam questions in conjunction with the other Reader (often, each Reader will take the lead on one question),
- 3) to review and provide feedback on the student's proposed bibliography/reading list, to be provided in advance of the exam and used for completion of the exam.
- 4) At least one month (and typically several months) *before* the exams begin, the student must meet with their confirmed Readers and share enough about their research interests that essay areas can be defined, questions can be crafted and feedback and suggestions for each question's bibliography can be offered. (The finalized bibliography will include all the external sources students should use in preparing their Comps responses.)
- 5) Although negotiated with the student during the months before the exams begin, the final questions are approved by the Readers and emailed to the LLC Program Coordinator (esteenrod@umbc.edu) a few days before the student's Comps Exams start date.

After the Student Turns in the Exams

The Readers (reviewers/evaluators) have the following responsibilities:

- 6) the Readers have up to four weeks to read, grade, and prepare written comments (or track changes) on the student's Comps responses. This includes time needed to discuss the responses with the other Reader.
- 7) If the student receives a Revise and Resubmit grade (possible outcomes are Pass, Revise and Resubmit, or Fail), the Readers meet with the student immediately after the initial grading to explain what needs to be re-worked. The student has 60 days to complete revisions. After the revised Comps responses are submitted, Readers have up to four weeks to review, comment upon, and grade the revised responses.

Comprehensive Exam Timeline



How Are Comprehensive Exam Questions Formed and Focused?

Areas of inquiry

- 1) 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. This essay should be a comprehensive survey of the scholarship in the fields agreed upon.
- 2) 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 envisioned dissertation project. The methodological essay should focus on the methodological approach the student expects to utilize for the dissertation research.
- 3) Above all, the two areas of inquiry will be selected based on their direct relevance to the envisioned dissertation topic.

Reading lists

Students usually generate annotated bibliographies or bibliographic entries broken out by conceptual themes or keywords for each of their areas of inquiry. A typical bibliography or reading list is usually comprised of approximately thirty to fifty sources (depending on the ratio of books to articles and the preferences of the Readers); sometimes readers ask for the student to organize the bibliography thematically.

LLC Resources and Recognition for Readers

Each LLC student has an LLC core faculty Program Advisor who will assist their student's Readers with the Comprehensive Exam process. In addition, the LLC Program Coordinator will administer the Exam and provide administrative guidance, as needed.

For examples of previously used exam questions, go to:

<https://umbc.box.com/s/4pu22n6bhfc48nd4moijkgiqxb45fh3j>

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