

## **CLSC Comprehensive Examination Process, approved 3/2008**

Before admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. in Clinical Science, each student must pass a comprehensive examination in his/her selected track or field of concentration. This examination will include 1) a written exam component, 2) a presentation of the proposal that is open to the public, and 3) a closed oral exam on the proposal, related clinical science topics and completed coursework. The format of the written exam requirement can be in the form of an NIH-like grant or the first three chapters of the student's thesis.

### **Requirements Prior to Scheduling the Comprehensive Examination**

- The comprehensive examination is to be completed by the end of the student's third year.
- Successful completion of the *preliminary* examination.
- Completion of at least three semesters of residence.
- Completion of or current registration for all program-required, non-thesis coursework.
- A cumulative 3.00 G.P.A. for completed CLSC program coursework.

### **Comprehensive Examination Committee Membership**

Students select at least five members to serve on the committee for the Comprehensive Examination Committee.

All members must have or be eligible for a Graduate School faculty appointment. A Graduate School faculty appointment listing is posted on-line ([www.uchsc.edu/gs/gs/graduate\\_faculty.htm](http://www.uchsc.edu/gs/gs/graduate_faculty.htm)). For a committee member that does not have a Graduate School appointment, students may request that the CLSC Program submit an appointment nomination to the Graduate School. To begin this process, the student must submit to Lori Stepp ([steppl@njc.org](mailto:steppl@njc.org)) a biosketch of the nominee and a written explanation of what this potential member would contribute to the committee. The nomination/approval process takes 6-8 weeks, so nomination requests must be submitted to the CLSC Program no less than 2 months before the planned examination date.

Membership of the Committee (at least 5 members):

- Chair: Must be a CLSC faculty member with a Regular Graduate School appointment and is typically the Program Director (Dr. James Crapo) or Associate Program Director (Dr. Lisa Cicutto).
- Either the Track Director or Assistant Track Director for your respective track, whichever one of these individuals is not your mentor.
- The majority of the committee members must be CLSC faculty.

- At least 1 member must NOT be from the CLSC faculty.
- Your mentor MUST attend the comprehensive examination but is NOT allowed to vote nor chair the committee AND does not count as one of the 5 required comprehensive committee members.

All members of the committee must be present for the examination. One member, but not the chairperson or the student, may participate by interactive video. The examination form, indicating the pass/conditional pass/fail status of the exam, must be signed by all committee members and returned to the Graduate School Office. *Graduate School policy requires that the student never be in possession of the completed exam form; failure to comply with this requirement nullifies the exam results.* A copy of the completed form should be sent to the CLSC office (Lori Stepp, Mail Stop A004/K701).

Following the above guidelines and with input from his/her track director and mentor, the student should prepare a list of proposed committee members for review and approval by the Clinical Science Program Director. This should be done at least 8 weeks in advance (although it can be done earlier).

All required paperwork must be completed and submitted to the Graduate School NO LESS THAN 14 DAYS before the exam is held.

- Instructions and forms are available on the Graduate School website ([http://www.uchsc.edu/gs/gs/student\\_services.htm](http://www.uchsc.edu/gs/gs/student_services.htm)). Please read all instructions carefully. An “Application for Admission to Candidacy for the PhD” form must be submitted along with the “Request for Scheduling Exam” form.
- The paperwork requires CLSC Program Director review, approval and signature before it will be accepted by the Graduate School.
- Any student who does not meet the Graduate School deadline will be required to re-schedule his/her comprehensive exam. Therefore, we strongly recommend students begin the paperwork process NO LESS than 4 weeks before the planned exam date.

***Important:*** Students must be registered at the time they take the comprehensive examination. Students who schedule their examinations after the last day of a given term must register in the subsequent term.

## **Scheduling**

- Due to limited faculty availability during the Summer semester, comprehensive exams will normally be held only during Fall and Spring semesters.
- The Graduate School requires that students and committee members set aside 4 hours for the comprehensive exam. UCD Educational Support Services ([www.uchsc.edu/ess/](http://www.uchsc.edu/ess/)) is available for reserving a room and providing supporting equipment (e.g., projector).

## **Comprehensive Examination Process/Content**

In addition to the Graduate School requirements outlined above, the Clinical Science Program requires the following before a student may take the Comprehensive Exam:

- The student must have identified a suitable mentor/thesis supervisor for his/her research project.
- The student must have identified a thesis topic and be ready to begin the project.
- The student must have prepared a written research proposal of 20-35 pages that may take the form of an NIH grant submission or the first three chapters of your thesis.
- The student must submit his/her thesis proposal to all committee members and to Lori Stepp at least 4 weeks before the exam.

Thesis Proposal or NIH-like Submission Elements:

1. Cover letter/memo: Provide a list of the names of the Comprehensive Examination Committee members, provide the date, time, location, room number and title of the proposal and oral presentation.
2. Chapter 1- Introduction: Provide a brief overview, conceptual framework, purpose and problem statement of the proposal.
3. Chapter 2- Background/Review of the Literature: Perform a review of the literature that identifies, reviews, and critically appraises existing knowledge in the identified fields and topics. Gaps in evidence, knowledge and/or practice should be identified that the proposed project addresses.
4. Chapter 3- Study Hypotheses, Methods and Analysis Plan: Briefly present the proposed study's hypotheses/research questions, the methods proposed to address the hypotheses/questions and the accompanying analysis plan.

Comprehensive Exam Structure:

The day of the comprehensive examination has two components: 1) a formal, public presentation of the student's thesis (dissertation) proposal, and 2) a closed discussion with the exam committee during which the student is required to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the methodological, clinical and social issues pertinent to the student's project and selected track program.

The public presentation should last approximately 45 minutes, followed by an open question-answer session. This public presentation is followed by a closed meeting with the committee members. During this exam component, content from track specific courses and the student thesis proposal will be covered (related fields of study, methodology, statistics). Listed below are some examples of core content areas according to track.

Health Information Technology: Students will be able to present and discuss the goals and objectives for HIT in clinical, financial and administrative realms; describe the role of HIT in improving patient safety, quality, and operational efficiencies; and explain the major barriers to implementing HIT.

Health Services Research: Students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of research methods, health economics, and the principles of health services research including the major seminal HSR literature.

CLSC students are encouraged to attend the presentations of colleagues to become familiar with the process and to participate in the scholarly dialogue.

### **Examination Grading**

There are three possible outcomes for the comprehensive exam:

Pass- You must receive affirmative (passing) votes from the majority of your committee members to pass.

Pass with conditions- The committee may decide that although you have passed the examination you should complete additional work on the thesis proposal. Areas of additional work or other conditions will be specified on the examination form and must be satisfied within 6 months of the defense. The committee chair is responsible for monitoring the conditions and reporting the outcome to the Graduate School and to the Clinical Science Program office. Failure to satisfy these conditions will result in failure of the examination.

Fail- If you fail the examination, per Graduate School Rules you may be subject to immediate dismissal from the program. At the program's discretion, you may be allowed to re-take the examination once. The retake must be completed within 6 months in a format designated by the committee.

### **Post Comprehensive Exam Requirements**

- After passing the comprehensive examination, students must register for at least 5 dissertation/thesis credits every semester (excluding the summer semester).
- The student must register for a minimum of 5 thesis credits during the semester in which he/she defends (summer is NOT excluded in this instance).
- A maximum of 10 dissertation /thesis credits can be taken in any semester. Only 10 of the dissertation/ thesis credits taken prior to the comprehensive examination may be counted towards the minimum 30 credit hours required.
- In addition to the maximum 10 thesis hours that may be completed *prior* to the comprehensive exam, up to 10 additional thesis hours may be completed *during* the semester in which the comprehensive exam is done.

Important Note: There is some strategy required in taking thesis credits. Because of the continuous registration requirement, taking too many credits early may result in additional expense; however, if you take too few, it may limit how quickly you can graduate.