

Philosophy Department Comprehensive Exam Procedures

1. A student must pass the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination to be eligible for the Ph.D. degree. The examination may be taken only after the student has satisfied all course requirements. The expectation is that the student will take the examination in the second semester of the third year or in the first semester of the fourth year of (full-time) graduate study in Philosophy at the University of Iowa. A student who has not passed the examination by the end of the fourth year is not making satisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. This fact may be taken into account in decisions involving financial aid.
2. The Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination Committee will consist of at least five members. At least four must be members of the department. The Committee will be chaired by the student's dissertation advisor.
3. The comprehensive examination will consist of a written and oral component:(I) A written prospectus that includes (a) a title, (b) table of contents of proposed chapters, (c) discussion of the contents of each of the proposed chapters, and (d) a bibliography. The prospectus should be at least 8,000 words (approximately 30 pages, double-spaced), not counting the bibliography. (II) An oral examination, which will test the student's knowledge and ability to undertake the project proposed in the prospectus.
4. Shortly after the formation of the Committee, the student will have a preliminary "abstract meeting" to discuss the proposed dissertation project with the Committee. At least one week ahead of the meeting, the student must provide an abstract (at least 3 pages) describing the dissertation project, along with an initial bibliography of relevant literature. The primary aim of the meeting is to offer the student some guidance in thinking about the prospectus and the dissertation project, and the challenges, problems, objections, etc., that are likely to arise, and recommend some further literature to consider.
5. The date by which the written prospectus must be submitted must be approved of unanimously by the Committee no later than the date of its preliminary meeting. The prospectus submission date must be no sooner than two months, and no later than six months, after the meeting. Ordinarily, examinations will be taken while classes are in session.
6. The submission date may not be changed more than once, and may be changed only in exceptional circumstances; a student who wishes to change the submission date must apply at least three weeks before the scheduled date, and needs the permission of the Committee in order to proceed.
7. The Comprehensive Examination Committee will, in consultation with the student, set a date and time for the oral examination, which will take place at least two weeks after the submission of the prospectus. The oral examination will cover the student's prospectus, and test the student's knowledge and ability to undertake the project proposed in the prospectus. The committee will meet immediately following the oral examination in order to evaluate the entire examination.
8. The student will be informed that he or she has either (a) passed, or (b) passed with reservations (such reservations may require the student to do additional satisfactory work), or (c) failed, the examination. If the student fails the examination, she or he may petition the committee to be allowed to retake the examination and the petition will normally be granted. The second examination must take place no sooner than four months after the first examination. The exam may be repeated only once.
9. If the student fails the comprehensive exam, and does not petition to retake the exam or the Committee declines to give the student permission to retake the examination, the student may

not proceed toward the Ph.D. degree in Philosophy at the University of Iowa. If the student repeats and fails the second exam, the student may not proceed towards the Ph.D. degree at the University of Iowa. A student who passes the examination with reservations may have to meet additional requirements before proceeding formally to the dissertation.