

**Department of Sociology
University of Victoria**

Guidelines for PhD Comprehensive Examinations

(June 30, 2010)

1. Comprehensive examinations will be offered in each of the Department's five core areas as well as in the interdisciplinary Cultural, Social and Political Thought (CSPT) area. Students must complete any two of these.
2. Students pursuing the CSPT interdisciplinary option within their Sociology doctoral program will be required to write, as one of their comprehensive exams, a CSPT candidacy exam, to be set by the CSPT program.
3. Each comprehensive examination will include a written essay and an oral examination.
4. Each examination (in both its written and oral components) will be administered by a Committee of three faculty members. Normally, members of the "Examination Committee" are to be chosen from among Department members deemed to have expertise in the designated area. One member of each Examination Committee may be an adjunct professor with suitable expertise. The Examination Committee appoints its own Chair, whose responsibility it is to coordinate the examination process. The time frame for each comprehensive examination should be 3-6 months, from formation of the Examination Committee to oral examination.
5. The student will first be required to produce a bibliography that will build on a list of core works, as identified by Department members with expertise in the designated area (lists of core works available in the main office). Additional references will be added by the Examination Committee in consultation with the student. The final bibliography should comprise the equivalent of 30-40 books (150-200 articles), with at least 60% chosen from the designated core works.
6. The written component of the comprehensive examination will entail a concise review essay of 40-50 pages in length. The student will develop an analytical argument in the essay that critically engages the relevant literature and develops analytical insights. The student may choose to ask the Committee Chair for general comments on the penultimate draft of the essay. The final draft will then be circulated to the Committee members. The essay will be judged according to: a) thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the specific field in which the exam was written; b) critical insight into the central questions/main themes of this field. A majority of Committee members (2 out of 3 members) must agree the review essay is satisfactory and thus ready for defense before an oral examination is scheduled. A student will have only one "second chance" to re-write the essay.
7. The oral examination will be based upon the review essay, including its bibliography, and will normally be held within one month of successful completion of the essay. The student will be asked to present a 15-20 minute summary of his/her essay. The committee will follow with a round of questions and the student will answer them to the best of her/his ability. A second round of questioning may take place. The student will subsequently be asked to leave the room and the Committee will discuss the oral presentation.
8. The oral defense will be judged according to the student's ability to answer the committee's questions in a competent and insightful manner. The oral examination will be considered passed if the majority of the committee (2 out

- of 3 members) judges the oral components to be satisfactory. The oral examination will be considered failed if the majority of the committee (2 out of 3 members) judges the oral component to be unsatisfactory.
9. In the case where a student has failed the oral component, the committee may, at its discretion, recommend to the Graduate Committee that the student be allowed to re-take the oral examination without having to re-write the essay.
 10. A student will have only one "second chance" to re-take the oral examination. A student who has failed a comprehensive examination in a given area twice will be required to withdraw from the program.
 11. Upon successful completion of a comprehensive exam, the committee will complete the departmental essay form and deposit it in the main Sociology office, for possible reference by other doctoral students.