

Format and Process for Comprehensive Exams in the School of Information

In general, comprehensive exams in the School of Information will be 'take home' experiences, with students writing 10,000 - 12,000 words (roughly), not including references, for the written exam. Students will receive all exam questions or prompts at once, and beyond initial professor contact and planning stages, the students will not be given hints or previews about exam questions beforehand. Comprehensive exams will cover students' coursework generally, though students are expected to display a depth and breadth of understanding that will likely require the use of literature beyond that found on course syllabi. The comprehensive exam will also assess students' readiness to carry out their research moving forward and, therefore, should align with their scholarly areas of interest for dissertation work. Students will be given one to two weeks (7-14 calendar days) to complete a set of responses (some students may want to work on their responses every day, others with jobs or other responsibilities may need to spread the task across two weeks). At least 1 question or prompt (usually 1-3, sometimes allowing student choice) will come from each of the committee members/areas represented. The committee has 7-14 days to review the responses and then hold an oral exam with the student that should not exceed 3 hours. At the end of the oral exam, the committee will inform the student the outcome of the exam, which may be pass, revision, or fail. In case of revision, a deadline will be set by the committee for the student to submit the final revision within 14 days. The minor portion of the exam covering a student's minor coursework may or may not happen as a different exam process, depending on the minor department's requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to understand and alert their major adviser of minor exam requirements.

In preparation for their comprehensive exams, students will meet with each committee member to devise a reading list addressing each area covered on the exam. Comprehensive exams in the School of Information will always cover fundamental ideas and processes tied to both qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, methods, and empirical study designs. To cover breadth of topic areas for a PhD in Information, all exams will in some way address students' particular areas of research interest while covering the following four foci: 1., information theories; 2., at least two of the primary topics covered in the core curriculum (ethics, society, diversity, organization and access/use, management, policy); 3., Comprehensive study design (both empirical and other study design) ; 4., Quantitative and qualitative research method(s). Depth will be assessed through these four primary foci and/or with separate targeted questions on the exam. The faculty chair of any comprehensive exam committee will ensure these foci are covered across the final question set before questions are given to the student.