

MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY

CULMINATING EXPERIENCE: COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Students are required to successfully pass a Comprehensive Exam before completion of the degree. Students are eligible to take the exam once their core coursework and electives are completed by, or are expected to be completed during, the quarter the student intends to take the exam.

The intent of the comprehensive exam is to ensure that all students graduating from the MPP program have a fundamental understanding of the field that they are about to enter. The exam is designed as an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mastery of the concepts and techniques developed in the core courses, as well as their ability to critically analyze public policy in an applied setting. Students are encouraged to form small study groups to review course material and prepare for the exam; however the exam itself must be an individual effort.

The exam contains four questions covering the broad areas of the core courses (POLS 515, POLS 518, POLS 550, and POLS 560). Students must be able to integrate all pertinent course work into their responses to the questions. Answers must have citations to relevant literature and all exams must only rely on materials with full citations that appear in their final reading list for the answers. Students must also demonstrate their ability to analyze and discuss quantitative data. In each question, students must relate the written answer to their identified field of substantive expertise where appropriate.

READING LIST

The **purpose** of the MPP Comprehensive Examination Reading List is to prepare students to take the examination by familiarizing them with the relevant body of literature necessary to respond to examination questions. Accordingly, the detailed MPP Comprehensive Examination Reading List **must provide** all of the references necessary to respond to questions on the examination, including those questions that require examples from your **declared area of policy expertise**. Citations on the reading list should cover all of the required and recommended readings in core and elective courses. In addition, your reading list should include important and relevant readings that you used in order to complete research projects and papers in those courses, and any other readings you deem **important to your area of expertise**. Only those readings **included** in your MPP Comprehensive Examination reading list may be **used to respond** to examination questions. Examination essays must be **fully cited** with **detailed references** to these readings. Students are required to submit their completed **Reading List** that includes **all of the literature** from their core courses, an identified area of policy expertise, and relevant literature pertaining to this policy area, **by the date specified by the Director**. Incomplete reading lists will not be reviewed. Students will receive approval or requests for revision of their reading lists within two weeks of submission. Reading lists must be **fully approved** at least five weeks prior to the examination date.

REQUIRED EXAM PREPARATION MEETING

Students must attend the **Exam Preparation Meeting** during the quarter in which they plan to take the exam. If the student is taking the exam during a Spring quarter, this meeting will take place as part of the POLS 595 course.

EXAM SCHEDULE

The exam will be offered twice a year during the fall and spring quarters. The comprehensive examinations may not be taken prior to the last quarter of course work. Students must **give notice to the graduate director by the end of the second week** of classes during the quarter that the student plans to take the exam. The graduate director will notify students as to the date of the examination by the fifth week of classes. Students will pick up the exam on a Friday (anytime after 9:00 am) from the Political Science Office or via email and must return a hard copy to the Political Science Office on the following Monday (by noon). Students have the weekend to complete the exams and late exams will not be accepted. If a student is either working or completing an international internship or an out of state/area internship the exam will either be faxed or emailed to the student. The student will have the same time restrictions and must either fax or email the exam back by the specified time.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The department of Political Science does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Students are expected to complete their exams individually. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty (which includes but is not limited to plagiarism or receiving outside assistance from another person) will immediately be dealt with according to university policy. For more information pertaining to academic dishonesty please consult and review Section 41301, Title V, California Code of Regulations, which can be accessed through the Cal Poly web page.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

Graduate students must have a 3.0 GPA in the courses taken in their formal study plan in order to earn the Master's degree. Therefore, students on academic probation will not be allowed to take the comprehensive exam until they have met the GPA requirements for the degree and are no longer on academic probation. If a student is put on academic probation at the end of the quarter in which the exam was taken, the degree will not be awarded until the GPA deficit is resolved. Note: Repeating a course does *not* remove a lower grade in the same course from the overall GPA calculation.

EXAM GRADING

Exams will be graded anonymously (students will be identified by their student ID numbers). A committee of three professors will grade each exam, and the student's answers will be assigned one of three grades: pass with distinction, pass, or fail. Students must receive passing grades on all four questions to successfully complete the exam. In cases of grading conflicts, the determination of pass or fail will be arrived at by majority rule from the committee. To pass with distinction, the student must receive a grade of pass with distinction on every question. A student will have one additional test opportunity to attempt to pass any question topics/content areas that received a failing grade. Second exams must be taken during a regularly scheduled examination period. The second exam must be taken within one year of the original exam.