**Written Core Comprehensive Examination Study Guide**  
**Higher Education Ph.D. Program**  
**Educational Psych & Higher Education**

**General Information:**  
This examination should be viewed as a process by which students, individually and/or in study groups, reflect upon the knowledge, abilities and dispositions gained through the program’s core courses and subsequently provide written evidence of their learned competencies. It is intended to evaluate your ability to: (a) synthesize knowledge acquired within the program core, (b) ground that knowledge in the relevant scholarly literature, (c) apply that knowledge to issues of current practice, and (d) communicate that knowledge in professional writing that is appropriate for a specific audience (e.g., academicians, colleagues, administrators, policy-makers, or business and industry personnel). While each examination question may not address all of these areas, the examination in its entirety will address them.

**Suggestions for Writing the Exam:**  
- Organize your thoughts and responses to each question before you begin writing (take time to make notes or an outline). Jumbled, disorganized answers do not read well and are scored accordingly.
- Answer each question thoroughly without rambling. Though completeness of your response is important, conciseness is indeed appreciated by the readers.
- A good format for your responses is similar to a short research or term paper (e.g., introduction to the topic, discussion of the topic, conclusion to the topic).
- Personal application of a question’s concept(s) is highly desirable, in many instances, as it demonstrates your personal, related experience.
- Educational jargon or other terminology should generally be defined or explained, as each reader may not be familiar with certain terms or the context in which you may be using them.
- Generally speaking, declarative statements or claims of fact, taken specifically from your coursework, should be supported by a brief reference to its origin (who said it where).

**Exam Scoring:**  
Each examination question will be evaluated by a faculty reading committee using the following criteria on a rating scale from 1 (Unsatisfactory) - 6 (Outstanding): An average rating of 4 or higher by your faculty raters is required to pass each question. These criteria should be kept in mind as you prepare for and write your exam.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>General Summation of Response or Evaluative Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Response integrates major research or relevant studies into an analytical perspective. A well-organized, high-level response that illustrates synthesis and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Response is logically constructed and integrates some research into statement. Knowledge of field is demonstrated by high-level of response. Analysis and synthesis are evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Well-organized response, covering all portions of the question and showing knowledge of the field. More integration of research or relevant studies is needed, although evidence of the latter is observable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>Response tended to be over generalized. More specifics are needed. Few citations were integrated into the response. Respondent seems to be writing about the comprehension level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Adequate organization, but with little, if any, current research or relevant literature integrated into the response. Responses tended to be at knowledge level, showing little, if any, high-level analysis or synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Responses tended to be vague and superficial. The writer used few, if any citations, showed little or no integration of relevant research or literature in response. Evidence of analysis, synthesis, or evaluation is not observable in the written response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>No response by rater.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Scoring Outcomes:**
The following scoring outcomes are possible for your Core Comprehensive Examination:
**Outcome #1:** Pass – Student has met minimal requirements (Average 4 points or higher on all questions) of the examination.

**Outcome #2:** Deferred Decision – An average score of 3 or less was determined by the reading committee on a particular question. Remedy – See Rewrite Policy I below.

**Outcome #3:** Fail – Student failed (3 points or less) a majority of the examination questions. Remedy - See Rewrite Policy II below.

### Rewrite Policy

**Higher Education Comprehensive Exam**

I. Should a student fail to pass one portion of the comprehensive exam during the first sitting:
   a. The student will be required to retake that part the next time comprehensive exams are scheduled;
   b. The student will be required to prepare for the question/s that will be given during the new sitting;
   c. Failure to retake the exam during the next round will result in dismissal from the program;
   d. Failure to pass the reexamination will result in dismissal from the program as it will constitute a fail on the comprehensive exam.

II. Should a student fail both portions of the comprehensive exam during the first sitting:
   a. The student must sit for the comprehensive exam the next time they are scheduled or within 6 months of notification of failure of the first exam;
   b. Failure to do either will result in dismissal from the program.