

Marine Science and Oceanography Non-Thesis Comprehensive Exam Instructions

Written Comprehensive Examination Format:

To ensure that all **M.S./Non-Thesis** students are examined in a thorough and equitable manner within the 3 **specialty areas**, the following are acceptable exam formats and expectations:

- A) Each written exam will be administered on the date agreed to by the student and their committee members.
- B) Each exam must cover one of the 3 chosen specialty areas (i.e., two committee members cannot cover the same specialty area).
- C) Exams will consist of questions unknown to the student prior to administering the exam.
- D) Question types should require written responses; primarily, of essay and definition format. In addition to expecting a broad knowledge base covered within the 3 specialty areas, assessing written communication skills of these students is also very important.
- E) Exams should be of sufficient rigor and coverage thereby typically requiring significant study efforts by Students (which is why students are required to contact committee members the term prior to the actual exams). Committee members should provide students with reading and supplemental study suggestions upon request.
- F) The assumption will be that closed-book format will be used for the exam. If open-book format is used, such exams should be of sufficient rigor to be comparable to a closed-book exam. In either case, a specific timeframe must be established when the student and committee member initially meet (i.e., term before) to schedule the exam (e.g., 3 hours for a closed-book exam; due in 24 hours for an open-book exam).
- G) Previous or current course work (or associated exams therein) cannot substitute for the Comprehensive Exams.
- H) Research papers cannot substitute for the Comprehensive Exams. Such papers, however, may supplement the written exam, if this is required by a committee member (who must articulate this to the MSO office and directors when the student schedules the exam).

Procedures for Scheduling/Completing Comprehensive Exams

1) During the term prior (or earlier) to the term in which the exams will be administered, students should contact committee members “individually” to ask for guidance (e.g., references, books) regarding how best to study for the designated subject area to be covered.

2) Student should also schedule a date(s) “individually” with each committee member. It is advised to schedule exams for different weeks, given the comprehensive nature of each exam.

Following are the deadlines for completing all exams for each term:

Fall term: November 15

Spring term: April 15

Summer term: July 15

3) Once all of the exams are scheduled, and prior to the beginning of the term in which the exams will be given, students are required to send an email to the MSO program (MSO-Admin@fau.edu) with the following information (please copy and paste the form information below into the email message):

Exam 1- Content Area 1: _____; Committee member name: _____;
Exam date: _____; Format: ___ closed-book OR ___ open-book;
time restrictions: _____

Exam 2- Content Area 2: _____; Committee member name: _____;
Exam date: _____; Format: ___ closed-book OR ___ open-book;
time restrictions: _____

Exam 3- Content Area 3: _____; Committee member name: _____;
Exam date: _____; Format: ___ closed-book OR ___ open-book;
time restrictions: _____

Exam dates cannot be changed without written consent from the professor administering the exam.

4) The MSO Program will then review the information for approval. Once approved, students and committee members will be notified. **Students cannot take any comprehensive exam without such prior approval.**

5) **Failure to pass any of the 3 examinations (i.e., each committee member’s exam) will require that the student be re-examined for the failed exam.** A failure to pass the second examination will result in immediate dismissal from the graduate program.

6) Complete Comprehensive Examination Form, in this document or via this link:

<https://www.fau.edu/hboi/documents/msoc-non-thesis-comp-exams.pdf>

7) Faculty will complete the MSO Comprehensive Exam rubric, which is contained in this document.

8) Committee members must forward scanned copies of both the exam questions, the student's answers, and the rubrics to the MSO program (MSO-Admin@fau.edu) for Graduate College and/or Departmental verification. As with other grades, documentation must be retained for a minimum of 5 years.