

## Comprehensive Examination Policy and Procedures (AKA - “Comps” and/or the Qualifying Exam)

### PURPOSE:

The qualifying exam is structured to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate the thoroughness of your understanding of the knowledge base of leadership and your program area. You will be asked to answer one question related to leadership that all students in the department answer irrespective of program area. You will also answer two additional questions based on content from your program area: School Leaders, Adult and Community Education Leaders, and Higher Education Leaders.

### REQUIREMENTS:

The Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology (EDLRM) requires all doctoral students enrolled in any School Leaders, Higher Education Leaders, or Adult and Community Education Leaders programs to pass the comprehensive exams to be classified as “doctoral candidate.” Students must also meet eligibility requirements by documenting they have completed the necessary coursework which is verified by attaching the signed Program of Study to the Qualifying Exam Application form (see descriptions below).

### OUTCOME:

Passing the comprehensive exam marks a ritual of passage from coursework to initiating the dissertation process. Please note that students must be classified as doctoral candidates BEFORE THEY can begin registering for the 20 credits of dissertation which is the MINIMUM number of dissertation credits required to graduate. In this sense, passing the Comprehensive Exams qualifies the doctoral student to not only enroll in dissertation credits with their Dissertation Chair, but to begin the dissertation process in general.

### EXPECTATIONS:

The Comprehensive Exam is intended to demonstrate to doctoral faculty that doctoral students are able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of leadership theory and research as it relates to its intellectual origins, and the values and beliefs the doctoral student holds about leadership within their field of study or practice.
2. Demonstrate the ability to integrate learning across coursework, assigned and unassigned texts, identify seminal scholars, support responses with published research; cite authorities in their field; note legal cases if relevant, follow the most recent edition of writing guidelines from the American Psychological Association (APA), and connect scholarly literature to personal and professional experiences.
3. Demonstrate the ability to present responses to the Comprehensive Exam questions in a thoughtful, coherent and grammatically correct way.
4. Demonstrate the ability to cite from peer-reviewed studies published in top-tier journals as well books from seminal scholars.

### SCHEDULE:

The Comprehensive Exams is offered during the Spring and Fall terms of every academic year. The exam will be administered during the second and third weeks of February during the Spring semester and the second and third weeks of October during the Fall semester.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURES:**

- **Eligibility-** Students are eligible for comprehensive exams after successfully completing at least 60 percent of their required coursework (not including research methods courses). Doctoral students must obtain the approval of their advisor at least one month prior to the Comprehensive Exams date each semester.
- **Application** - At the point when a student believes they have met the requirements above, they should complete the Qualifying Exam Application Form and submit it to their advisor one month prior to the exam date. [The Qualifying Exam Application form is found on the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology website. Follow the link to “forms” and to the Qualifying Exam Application Form.]
- **Verification-** The advisor must verify course completion by signing the Qualifying Exam Application form. The Qualifying Exam Application form must be: (a) completed by the student; (b) signed by the student’s doctoral advisor; (c) distributed to the Departmental Secretary; and (e) an original copy given to the Office of Academic and Student Services (OASS) by the deadline.
- **Deadlines** - Qualifying Exam Application Forms must be received *by the Departmental Secretary* **NO LATER THAN** October 1<sup>st</sup> for fall exams and **NO LATER THAN** *February 10th* for spring exams.
- **Accommodations** – Students should notify the qualifying exam coordinator if accommodations need to be made due to disabilities.

**QUALIFYING EXAM PROCESSES:**

General guidelines for taking the exam:

1. Students will receive a letter with instructions for taking the exam. Students must follow the instructions provided.
2. Students should be knowledgeable of the ethical code of conduct [below] which is expected to be followed by all doctoral students all of the time, which includes comprehensive exams.
3. In cases where the student is not going to be able to take the Comprehensive Exam because of an emergency, both the departmental secretary and the Comprehensive Exams Faculty Coordinator must be notified. The students must follow up with the Comprehensive Exam Faculty Coordinator and the student must provide a written explanation and supporting documentation to the Coordinator.
4. In case of a natural disaster such as a hurricane, the Comprehensive Exam may be re-scheduled based on the consideration of relevant factors.

**ETHICAL CODE:**

The faculty expects doctoral students in Educational Leadership and Research Methodology to adhere to ethical codes of behavior. Please understand that dishonesty and cheating are grounds for dismissal from the program. Any student who knowingly ignores another student’s dishonesty and fails to report it also faces dismissal from the program. It is assumed doctoral students of EDLRM at FAU will act honestly and with integrity. **Sharing the Comprehensive Exam questions or student responses with anyone other than the designated Comprehensive Exam Faculty Coordinator or staff is strictly prohibited.**

**CONTENT:**

The Comprehensive Exam is divided into two parts: Part One is a *question focused on leadership* theory and values based on a case study. Part Two is focused on two questions related to the program core for each program area. The following performance standards apply to all responses for all questions.

**Performance Standards:** The respondent is expected to demonstrate ability to:

1. Exhibit a deep understanding of leadership and program theoretical content as it relates to the questions posed.
2. Identify, elaborate on, and connect the underlying departmental values to the case in a way that provides an explanation and rationale for actions, behaviors, and events described in the case.
3. Use higher order thinking skills including, critical thinking, synthesis, and interpretation. These skills require that students go far beyond recalling facts, concepts or theories.
4. Connect your explanation and conclusions to the literature and use of major authors to support your explanation, assumptions, opinions, and conclusions is required.
5. Provide 2000 to 2500-word responses for each of the three questions, not including references and abstract, using proper academic vocabulary and APA citations. The word count should be stated at the end of the response. Use of outside help editing or even reviewing student responses prior to submission to the department is strictly prohibited.

**EXAM ASSESSMENT:**

The Qualifying Exam Faculty Coordinator will assign faculty readers for all questions.

- The Leadership Core question will be assessed by three professors across the department.
- The Program Area questions will be assessed by three professors from the specific program area, contingent upon available faculty assessors.

Faculty Assessors will use two Rubrics to assess the questions. Rubric 1 will be used to assess the Leadership Core knowledge, and Rubric 2 will be used to assess the Program Content questions. Rubrics are provided with the instruction letter sent to each student taking the exam.

**SCORING:**

Scores will be recorded by Faculty Assessors and submitted for processing to the Comprehensive Exam Faculty Coordinator. Scores will then be averaged and the following grading system will be applied:

- **Honors** - Candidates scoring 3.6 or higher.
- **Pass** - Candidates scoring 3.0 to 3.5
- **Deferred** – Candidates scoring from 2.4 to 2.9 receive a deferred grade and will be referred to their doctoral committee chair for recommendations concerning how the candidate can remedy their results.
- **Fail** - Candidates scoring 2.3 or below fail the exam but may retake it at the next administration with the approval of their program committee chair. Candidates who score 2.3 or below on the second attempt are removed from candidacy.

**RESULTS:**

- Qualifying exam results will be communicated to students in a letter sent electronically to their FAU email address. Students will be told if they passed, passed with honors, were deferred or failed the exam and directed to their adviser for further advising.

- The faculty will make every effort to provide the results within a six-week timeframe. Please do not call or email the office for our test results.
- Passing the qualifying exam marks the passage from coursework to initiating the dissertation process.