

Comprehensive Exam Instructions and Preparation

Overview

All candidates for the master's degree in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health (CABH) must successfully pass the written comprehensive exam. The purpose of this exam is to assess students understanding of core program competencies as well as their ability to apply these core competencies in their area of child and adolescent behavioral health. Passing the Comprehensive Exam shows a student is making satisfactory progress in the program. Students are eligible to sit for the comprehensive exam during the semester after they have successfully completed the required four CABH program core courses. Students should work with their advisors to determine which semester they should take the exam. ***It is important to note that USF requires students to be enrolled in at least two (2) credit hours in the semester in which they take the comprehensive exam.*** This university requirement applies to both first attempts and re-takes. *Please note: Students will need to pass the comprehensive exam prior to starting their field experience or beginning their thesis research.*

Eligibility and Approval

To be eligible to take the comprehensive exam, students must have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA and have earned no lower than a letter grade of B (to include B-, B, B+) on the four core courses covered on the comprehensive exam. Students who have earned a letter grade below a B (C+ grade or below) in any of the four core courses covered on the exam will be required to retake those core course(s) and achieve a letter grade of B (to include B-, B, B+) or better in order to qualify to take the comprehensive exam.

Students are required to obtain approval prior to taking the CABH Comprehensive Exam. This applies to first time takers as well as those re-taking the exam. The application forms for first time exams and re-takes are available on the CABH program website, from the student's advisor, or from the program's Academic Services Administrator. Students should ***complete and sign*** the appropriate form and ***submit*** it to their faculty advisor ***no later than the last day of the first week of the semester during which the student is applying to take the exam.*** Note that incomplete forms will be returned to the student and may result in the student not being able to take the comprehensive exam in the semester for which they are applying. Once the form has been fully processed, students will receive an email confirmation from the program's Academic Services Administrator.

Format

The comprehensive exam is comprised of **4 questions**. These questions are from each of the four (4) CABH core courses:

- MHS 6027: Creating Cultural Competence in Behavioral Health Organizations
- MHS 6069: Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health
- MHS 6706: Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Policy
- MHS 6732: Evaluation and Research Methods in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health

The comprehensive exam questions will ask students to synthesize and integrate information learned in all four (4) core courses. Students will reflect upon what they have learned, and then apply the learned information to real world issues in the area of child and adolescent behavioral health.

The comprehensive exam is administered through Canvas. Students will receive specific instructions for accessing the comprehensive exam from the Comprehensive Exam Coordinator approximately one week before the comprehensive exam is to start.

Schedule

The comprehensive exam is administered beginning on Friday of the 5th week of the Fall and Spring semesters. For the summer semester, the exam is administered beginning on Friday of the 3rd week of the Summer C semester. Students taking the exam for the *first time* and students *re-taking the entire exam* will have 10 days, spanning two weekends, to complete the exam. Students re-taking the exam (i.e., 1 or 2 questions) will have 5 days, including one weekend, to complete the exam. Students may complete the exam questions in any order and at any time of day/night they would like. While there are no specific time limits for individual questions, the entire exam must be completed within the 10-day (or 5-day) period.

Expectations of Students

Students are expected to work independently in completing all of the questions on the comprehensive exam. Students will submit their responses to each of the four comprehensive exam questions through Canvas Turnitin (a plagiarism detection software package). Students should avoid plagiarism or other forms of misconduct as outlined in the USF policy on Academic Integrity of Students at <http://www.grad.usf.edu/plagiarism.php>. Students are encouraged to be well-versed on referencing style requirements (APA and JBHSR), including the need to reference their own prior works. Students should also be familiar with writing skills and style, spelling, and grammar usage that is appropriate for graduate level academics.

Preparation

This exam is comprehensive because students are expected to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of core program competencies. Accomplishing this will require a thorough review of course materials for each exam question **in advance of the exam**. Solid exam preparation requires investing ample time in course review. The following are recommended course review strategies:

- Gather and thoroughly review all course materials, including required readings, course lectures, and lecture notes. If there are missing materials, contact classmates to see if they are willing to share copies of their materials. Course materials are also available in Canvas.
- Review the assignments submitted to the course as well as instructor feedback. To access old courses, click on the courses tab in canvas, select all courses, a list with all previous courses will appear.
- Review any supplemental materials and resources instructors or classmates may have provided during the semester.
- It is highly recommended to access available writing resources as necessary to aid in exam preparation.

Since students prepare for the CABH Comprehensive Exam by conducting a thorough review of the materials covered in each of the courses taken, it is important to keep the syllabi and other materials from these courses. Should a student have an issue accessing their course materials or have other questions regarding items that might be included in the exam, it is the student's responsibility to contact the professor who taught that particular course. If a student needs assistance in contacting a professor, the student should work with their advisor to facilitate contact.

Exam Success Strategies

- Arrange for uninterrupted time to complete each exam section
- Arrange a designated exam space that allows easy access to course materials
- Assemble and organize relevant course materials before opening an exam section
- Prepare thoroughly for each exam section
- Students should work to their advantage by taking the exam during the time of day they do their best work
- If students work full-time, it may be helpful to arrange time off during exam week

Grading

The comprehensive exam questions are developed by the faculty members who teach the respective courses. These faculty also design the grading rubric for the question and will grade all answers to this question. It is important to note that each question may have a different rubric; therefore, students will need to review each question carefully to determine requirements for successful completion as outlined in the instructions for that particular question. Exams are graded on a Pass/Fail basis. In order to pass the CABH Comprehensive Exam, students must earn a passing score on all four exam questions. Students who do not pass all four questions are afforded **one opportunity** to re-take the exam.

Re-Takes

Students who do not pass all four questions are afforded **one opportunity** to re-take the exam. If a passing score was not earned, the student must apply to re-take the exam. A student may not re-take the exam without requesting a petition for special consideration due to extenuating circumstances.

Students who do not pass all four questions are afforded **one opportunity** to re-take the exam.

- If a passing score was not earned on one or two of the exam questions, the student must apply to re-take only the failed question(s).
- If a passing score was not earned on three or four of the questions, the student must apply to re-take the entire exam.
- A student may not re-take the exam or any failed question more than once. Students who cannot pass the comp exam will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

Keys to Success

- Responses to the exam questions must demonstrate subject matter knowledge and depth of understanding.
- Support analyses by citing relevant course materials (including required readings, course lectures, and discussion).
- Essays must be well organized and communicate an understanding of major and minor concepts relevant to the exam subject in a clear and logical way.
- Word choice should precisely express the intended meaning and answers should be free of grammatical and spelling errors.
- Pay careful attention to writing style (clear, succinct, and organized writing; no conversational language) while completing the comprehensive exam.
- Be sure to review the individual question instructions carefully; be aware of any minimum word requirements.
- All sources should be appropriately cited (e.g., APA, JBHSR style), except where otherwise noted.
- Remember to proofread each essay carefully before submitting!

The format of the exam is designed to ensure that students have a sufficient length of time to develop thoughtful and in-depth responses. As a result, there is a high expectation for the quality of the responses. Make sure to attend to all components of a good exam response including: demonstration of subject knowledge, use of supporting material, application of ideas to child and adolescent behavioral health, and the composition quality of essays.

Inability to Complete the Exam

If for some reason, a student will not be able to take the exam in the semester for which they have already confirmed, the student should notify their advisor and the Comprehensive Exam Coordinator ***before the start of the exam***. In the case of an emergency or extenuating circumstance when a student is unable to complete the exam once it has already started, they should notify their advisor and the Comprehensive Exam Coordinator ASAP. In such cases, it is up to the discretion of the CABH Program Director to make a decision on whether an incomplete exam would count as a failed first attempt.

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