

Written Comprehensive Examinations in School Psychology

Format 1

Format for Written Comprehensive Examination: You can anticipate being asked to write for 4 hours on each of 2 days. You will write in 8 broad topic areas, 4 on each day. This will give you approximately one hour to respond to each area. The 8 topical areas that you can anticipate are:

- Psychology foundations and cultural/theoretical foundations
- Research & statistical methods
- Problem-solving assessment
- Counseling, consultation, and systems component
- The psychologist's professional role
- Problem-solving interventions
- Ethical principles and professional conduct
- School psychology specialization (as you have identified with your advisor)

Question Format: You will have a choice of questions; there are typically 3 to 4 options within each of the 8 topical areas. Each question may have multiple parts, so read the question carefully and be certain that you are responding completely. For example, you may be asked to *Identify, Compare, and Discuss Implications* all for a single question. If you answer a question that was not asked -- however interesting your alternative essay -- then you cannot get credit. Thus, answer the question that was asked rather than the question that you wish had been asked!

Preparing Your Response: Prepare your answers to these questions with concise, logically-argued, content-full information. You should consider using headings and subheads where they will provide support and organization to your answer. Typically, subheads serve as a roadmap that guides readers to the development of your points. Use of lists and bullets is fine. Your written comprehensive exams are intended to demonstrate your knowledge with the content, not your writing proficiency.

Citations: Your written comps are designed to demonstrate your integration of the literature in your field. As such, it is expected that you will base your response on published literature, and incorporate frequent citations. Include only as much information as you need to show that you have a data-base/citation in mind. After

the examination, in preparation for your oral comprehensive exams, you can provide a full list of 'References' to match these citations (e.g., write Sattler, 2000 - and fill in the details later).

Computer Use: If you plan to use a computer to answer questions we urge you plan a dry-run simulation so as to de-bug the process & confusions that result from any lack of familiarity with the configuration of the computer & keyboard you'll use in White Hall.

Readings: You should develop a reading/review list around the broad topic areas as necessary to *supplement* readings from your doctoral coursework. It is suggested that you arrange for a series of meetings with your major advisor 6 to 8 months prior to taking your comprehensive exams in order to identify appropriate sources and to ensure that your preparation is on track. We do not <not> suggest extensive review of journals and "how-to" books for this preparation (e.g., *JPA* or BP IV) -- unless, of course, you know of a good journal summary of "all one needs to know" about a topic, such as "ethical practice," for example. Don't fail to access the most recent NASP professional standards/conduct manual (see www.nasponline.org) and the most current APA Ethical Code. Depending when you joined each professional organization there may have been an update(s) since you received your initial complimentary copy from each organization.

Recurring Themes: There are some 'old standards' -- topics that often get addressed in comprehensive examinations because they bind together perspectives and 'class content domains.' These are topics that link elements *across* the dual domains of school & psychology. Some examples follow:

- Progression of the profession of school psychology ... e.g., identify major events/individuals that have shaped the profession ... with prognostications into the future ... major characteristics of public education that will exist in the next decade based on an analysis of contemporary education.
- Concept of cultural pluralism & relationship to multicultural educational programs.
- Design a study to evaluate the effectiveness of a program using several different research designs to illustrate your understanding... suggest a means for studying different treatment procedures. Illustrate various types of validity and reliability and how each pertains to practice.

- Functional assessment approaches; discuss the research ... design a study to evaluate functional analysis, etc.
- Curriculum-based assessment/Curriculum-based measurement... what is the <evidence> for using CBA?
- Intelligence tests, e.g., the value of making interpretations/analyses of subtest scatter, strengths, & weaknesses. Discuss the research--pros & cons.
- Assessment of emotional/behavior disorders using projective assessment measures. Does the evidence justify projective measures?
- Alternative consultative models in service delivery <versus> direct models. What is the evidence?
- Design a consultative system ... with roles & functions, how would services be provided to regular and SPED, role of data?
- History and contemporary status of the arguments for & against the use of IQ tests for assessing racial minority students? Include legal cases and ethical issues...
- Grade retention and high-stakes testing, what is the evidence? Best-practice use is...? Relevance of Ohio's Fourth Grade Guarantee.
- Mental health vs. psycho-educational practice. Compare and contrast these two manifestations of school psychology practice. Where are the data to support the two approaches?
- What does the research say about the use of 'punishment procedures' to reduce undesirable behavior? What are the professional organization's advocacy stands on punishment... what to do in the face of strong data to suggest that punishment 'works'?
- Cognitive-behavioral interventions including self-instruction & self-monitoring. What has the research shown? Effects on cognition are...?
- Developing class-wide intervention strategies using group contingencies. Discuss the research ... What would you recommend to teachers on the use of group contingencies?
- Social skill training. School psychologist's role, recommendations, & implementation. What are the data to support or refute its use as an intervention?
- Interventions using peers as direct-intervention-agents for remediating academic problems. The research says...

- <Ethical Principles>: OSPA, OPA, NASP, APA & Ohio State Board of Psychology regulations & standards, and their application in practice ... with scenarios for your reaction and commentary.

Sample "Written Comprehensive Examination" Questions (Format 1)

Psychology Foundations

- What has been the impact of *historic figures in learning theory*, such as Thorndike, Hull, Skinner, etc., on the practice school psychology?

Research and Statistical Methods

- Describe the sources of invalidity in traditional group research methodology. How does each of these sources of invalidity apply to single-case research methodology?

Cultural/Theoretical Foundations

- The impact of social stratification on educational policies and practices is significant. It influences both the nature of the formal curriculum and hidden curriculum. The distribution of cultural capital plays an important part in defining educational reality. Discuss some of the ways in which social stratification and cultural capital impact on educational policies and practices. Discuss the role of stratification in the sorting and selecting process in education. What should be the role of an educator in dealing with some of the direct and indirect consequences of social stratification upon education?

Problem-Solving Assessment & Intervention

- School psychologists are often called upon to develop classwide intervention strategies. One type of procedure uses group contingencies. Compare and contrast the different types of group contingencies with reference to the research that allows for comparison between them. What recommendations could one make to teachers who wish to employ group contingencies based on this evidence?

Counseling, Consultation & Systems Component

- Design a consultative system for providing data-based services to a K-12 school system. Show who would function as consultants, how services would be provided to regular and special education personnel, and the role of data obtained from standardized norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and direct observation.

The Psychologist's Professional Role

- The role of the school psychologist has been debated since the genesis of the profession. In particular, there has been a longstanding position that school psychologists should employ a more indirect, consultative model in service delivery. Compare and contrast direct versus indirect models of service delivery. Is there any evidence that school psychologists are delivering services any differently now than they did 20 years ago?

Following Your Written Comprehensive Examination

Your written comprehensive exams will be reviewed by the School Psychology members of your Advisory Phase Committee, usually within a month of administration. Performance on the written exam may be determined sufficient to proceed to the oral examination or re-writing of some or all of the written exam may be determined to be necessary. Although other members of your Advisory Phase Committee do not evaluate the written exams, they do receive a copy of the questions and your responses for the Oral Candidacy Exam.