

## Graduate Student Guide to Studying For Comprehensive Exams

Welcome to Comps. As stated in the graduate handbook, the purpose of this comprehensive exam is “to provide you with the opportunity to demonstrate the *depth* and *breadth* of knowledge that you have acquired during your course of studying in areas that are germane to the function of a clinical health psychologist.”

You should conceptualize the comprehensive exam as having both a process and an outcome. The purpose of this document is to guide you through the preparation process, so as to increase the likelihood of a positive examination outcome. Below, you will find suggestions to help you prepare.

1. Decide what information from your courses needs to be reviewed and what new material needs to be integrated. Begin by re-reading *important* course documents and texts. If you are unsure what is important, discuss this with your faculty mentor, students who have previously passed the exam, and the Director of Clinical Training. For example, it would behoove you to study the following:
  - a. Core Clinical course readings and notes, especially those pertinent to assessment, diagnosis, psychopathology, health psychology, psychotherapy/interventions, ethics, research design, psychometrics, and statistics; briefer review of notes/readings from other areas of psychology (e.g., social, developmental, cognitive, biopsychology) is also suggested
  - b. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-TR
  - c. Research Design in Clinical Psychology by Alan Kazdin
  - d. Current APA Code of Ethics
  - e. Research articles published in the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* and *Health Psychology* during the past 5 years.
2. Plan a study schedule. Begin organizing your study materials during the spring semester preceding the scheduled exam. You should prepare a week-to-week schedule of the topics that you will review and the practice questions that you will tackle. Begin a focused program of study 10-12 weeks before the scheduled exam.
3. Discuss in advance with your mentor if he/she is willing to review your practice questions. If your mentor is unable to do so, ask another faculty member. The DCT will provide you with sample questions that will be similar in nature to those that will appear on the exam. You should apply these questions to research found in the suggested journals and to fictitious case examples. As you progress with your studies, you should practice the examination under similar time and environment conditions.
4. Study both individually and with your peers. Weekly group study sessions are an excellent way to demonstrate your knowledge and to clarify areas in which you need more review.

Good luck!