

THE WRITING REQUIREMENT: PURPOSES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Department of Applied Behavioral Science (ABS)

Overview

The writing requirement is designed to assess your knowledge of, and ability to write about behavioral science. Doctoral students in ABS will write three written comprehensive papers. Each paper has a *maximum* length of seven (7) double-spaced pages (not including references). In each written comp you will provide a brief *critical* review of the literature on a topic of relevance to your career goals. The review should be integrative, rather than just a series of abstracts of previously published research. In other words, each study summarized should be thematically related to the last one and should either a) lead the reader to the experimental question(s) that remains to be answered (pre-thesis and pre-dissertation comp papers) or b) demonstrate to the reader that a more comprehensive review paper would be a service to the field (pre-review paper comp).

You are encouraged to complete your first comp before you begin collecting data on your Master's thesis research; the second and third should be completed before your oral comprehensive exam (review paper) and dissertation, respectively. At minimum, you must pass two written comprehensives before you can schedule your oral comprehensive exam and all three before you can defend your dissertation.

Three faculty members will evaluate student's written answers without knowing who wrote the paper. Students will receive a passing grade if two of the three evaluators rate the paper as "acceptable." Like the students, faculty evaluators remain anonymous, although some may elect to sign their feedback. The department values the writing requirement. There are few independent quality checks where the faculty evaluator does not know the identity of the student. Independent checks provide one mechanism by which the quality of the program is maintained.

What Should I Write About?

The topic of your written comps should be discussed with your advisor. Many advisors would like students to tackle topics of direct relevance to their ongoing research, while others will want to broaden the student's knowledge base by assigning a topic outside this research line. Perhaps your advisor will suggest a balance between these two strategies. The topic you select should be a good fit with your interests and those of your advisor. After all, he or she will proof-read your comp several times before it is submitted.

Here are a few frames that may help you to begin to think about topics of interest to you and your advisor:

- Critically evaluate the primary literature on _____; provide direction for future research and/or practice.
- Critically evaluate the primary literature on methodological issues concerning _____. Provide directions for understanding or resolving the issues.
- Critically evaluate the primary literature on the conceptual foundations of, relations between, or status of _____. Provide directions for understanding or resolving the issues.
- Critically evaluate the primary literature on the history or historiography of _____. Provide directions for future advances in understanding this history or its historical methods.

As you can tell by examining these frames, a critical component of any successful written comprehensive is that it provides a *critical review* of the relevant literature. By "critical review" we mean that you will critique those studies, interventions, and/or theories, summarized in your

paper. Your job is to demonstrate your ability to spot the weaknesses in the literature and make suggestions for fixing the problems you identify. For example, you may argue that (a) the extant literature has failed to test an important prediction, (b) a series of intervention studies has failed to rule out an important confound, (c) inadequate blinding procedures call into question a line of otherwise impressive clinical research, etc. Of course, none of these examples may be relevant to the topic you currently have in mind, and there is no problem with that as long as you plan to critique the literature that you will summarize in your paper.

A second critical component of a successful written comprehensive is that it includes a discussion of how to address the critiques you have raised. Are more studies called for? If so, be specific about how they will have to be designed. Has your critique raised doubts about a technical or theoretical term? If so, propose a new term or new definition for the old term. Again, neither of these examples may be consistent with the direction you plan to go with your paper and that is not a problem as long as you talk specifically about how you propose to solve the problems exposed by your critical analysis of the literature.

Format Requirements

With the following exceptions, written comps must comply with the formatting guidelines of the latest version of the *Publication Manual of the APA*:

- Your cover page will not comply with APA formatting guidelines. Instead, it will include a 1-2 sentence statement of the goal of your paper (e.g., Provide a critical analysis of the literature on X. Discuss directions for future research).
- Do not include an abstract
- Each page (including the cover page) must have your ID number in the upper right corner (do not include your name).
- Page numbers should be centered at the bottom of each page

Comps must be submitted electronically in MS Word format to the comps secretary (Rita Trybom; rtrybom@ku.edu)

How Faculty Evaluators Are Assigned

Students, in conjunction with their advisors, may request specific faculty evaluators for each question. This should be done in writing, from the advisor to the Comprehensives Committee Chair. Every effort will be made to use these faculty evaluators. However, certain faculty evaluators are sometimes overused and some requests are modified. The Comprehensives Committee Chair considers several factors in assigning papers to evaluators. The Chair...

- attempts to have the student evaluated by as many different evaluators as possible.
- strives to have evaluators read no more than one answer for each student.
- attempts to assign approximately the same number of questions to each regular faculty member, adjusted for their level of appointment.
- sends answers to adjunct and courtesy members of the graduate faculty on a regular basis.
- allows answers that are re-submitted after having been graded "Not Acceptable" (NA) on a previous occasion to be sent to one of the readers who graded it NA and two new readers. In this way, students can tailor revisions to specific feedback, but it will still be evaluated by two readers who have not seen it before.

Revising Answers that Receive Two or Three "NAs"

Frequently, graders do not agree on why an answer is "Not Acceptable." Furthermore, sometimes it is impossible to re-write the answer to satisfy the concerns expressed by the two or three readers who graded it "NA." In such circumstances, you can revise the answer to address the specific concerns of a single reviewer. When you re-submit the paper, you can request that it go to a particular reader (A, B, C). The Comps Chair will send it back to the requested reader,

together with two new readers. Thus, if you satisfactorily address the original reviewer's concerns, there is an increased chance that the paper will pass.

Fulfilling the Writing Requirement with Publications, Grant Proposals, Etc.

You have the option of using a publication or grant proposal to satisfy one or more of your written comps. To do this, you must meet all of the following criteria:

- The paper must contain a *critical* review of the literature.
- You must be the first author.
- Your advisor must certify in writing that...
 - he/she supervised the project
 - the project was conducted while you were enrolled in the ABSC program
 - you initiated the project (either individually, or in collaboration with the advisor), conducted the research, and wrote the paper.
- You have submitted a copy of the journal's editorial peer-review procedures and copies of all peer reviews OR you have submitted a copy of the reviews obtained from the granting agency.
- If the article is "in-press," you must include documentation from the editor that the article will be published without further revisions.

In nearly all instances, peer-reviewed publications will be approved by the Chair of the Comprehensive Committee without any further faculty review. If the Chair suspects that all requirements of peer-review procedure have not been met, he/she may send the article out to review by three other faculty evaluators.

If you want to use any part of your master's thesis, class project (e.g., term paper), review paper, or dissertation as one of your writing requirements, you and your advisor must submit to the Comp Committee Chair a written "statement of disclosure" in which you describe how the paper will be substantially different in content and form from the previously submitted work.

Plagiarism

One problem with an "open" system is the possibility of academic misconduct, in particular, plagiarism. While most students do their own work, there have been instances of plagiarism in the past. Portions of the university's statement on academic misconduct state:

"By the regulations of the University Senate (2.6.1), academic misconduct by a student shall include giving or receiving unauthorized aid in the preparations of reports, or other assignments, or knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work. Academic misconduct by an instructor shall include grading students' work by criteria other than academic performance, and repeated and willful neglect in the discharge of duly assigned teaching duties."

Sections 2.6.2 – 2.6.5 define the correct modes of treating academic misconduct on the part of the student or the instructor. In particular, Section 2.6.4. states that "every instructor shall make clear, at the beginning of each course, rules for the preparation of classroom assignments, collateral reading, notebooks, or other outside work, in order that students may not, through ignorance, subject themselves to the charge of academic misconduct."

Section 2.6.5 states, "The following sanctions may be imposed upon a student or instructor for academic misconduct: admonition; warning; censure. In addition, a student may be subjected to: reduction of grade, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsions. An instructor may be recommended for suspension or dismissal."

To avoid possible accusations of plagiarism, reference all sources, including documents written by other students and papers you have written (e.g., writing requirement answers, review paper, master's thesis). When materials are repeated exactly as they appear in the source, enclose them in quotes. When they are paraphrased or slightly reorganized, they should be cited. It is impossible to define when a source should not be cited. As a general rule, cite a source whenever there is doubt as to its originality. Finally, you should be cautious about

overusing paraphrases and quotes. As a general rule, put it your own words unless the original authors' words are particularly eloquent, noteworthy, or unbelievable.

To avoid unintentional plagiarism, you may request that the Comps Secretary run your paper through *TurnItIn.com*. The report generated by this service can be used by the student to remove any questionable phrases. This will allow you to sleep easier while the comp is being graded. *TurnItIn.com* is available to faculty readers of your comp. If they suspect that a portion of your paper has been plagiarized, they will request that the comps secretary conduct the online analysis. Instances of plagiarism will result in an automatic Not Acceptable grade and in most cases will result in further disciplinary actions as deemed appropriate by the Comps Committee and your advisor.

Grading and Notification of Grades

The Comps Committee Chair assigns each paper to three readers. The Committee Secretary prepares a package for each reader. The first page prompts readers to grade the answer quickly, or to return it to the Committee if they will be unable to complete it by the due date.

(Unfortunately, many readers respond after the due date—readers are located all over the United States, as well as in the ABSC department.) The second page contains an evaluation form with items relating to the style and content of the answer. The Committee Secretary keeps records and distributes information but cannot be expected to expedite the process for any student. Students should be courteous to the Committee Secretary.

If the answer receives two or three “acceptable” ratings, the student passes. If it receives two or three NAs, the student fails. The outcome (pass or fail) is determined once there is consensus between two readers. You and your advisors will be notified of reviewers' decisions as soon as the outcome (pass or fail) has been determined. You will receive a copy of the paper and all of the evaluation forms. Your advisor will receive a copy of the evaluation forms.

All revised papers are sent back to at least one person who initially graded it NA as well as to two readers who have not yet evaluated it. NA grades are typically accompanied by written feedback that explains why the paper was graded “NA.” If a paper receives two NAs, you may rewrite the answer, revise the question, or answer another question. Remember, revised questions must be approved by your advisor, a second member of the graduate faculty, and the Committee. You and your advisor determine which option to pursue.

If a paper fails twice you may only resubmit it if your advisor writes a letter to the Comps Committee explaining why you should be allowed to resubmit it a third time. If it fails a third time, you must select a different topic.

After passing all three written comps, the Comps Committee Chair sends you and your advisor a formal completion notice. A copy of the notice is also placed in your folder in the ABS office, and a copy is retained by the Comprehensives Secretary.

Confidentiality

Comprehensives files can be accessed by the Committee Secretary, the Chair, and other members of the faculty authorized by the Comprehensives Committee. Members of the Committee do not have access to the files, nor do individual members of the faculty unless authorized by the Committee. Names of reviewers are never released to you or your advisor. Advisors have the right to present the student's record to the Oral Comprehensive Committee and to the Dissertation Defense Committee.

Appeal Procedures

If you, your advisor, or a reader believes an answer has been graded unfairly, he/she may file a written appeal with the Comprehensives Committee. The Committee will commission an investigation.

Procedures for Students to Follow

1. Provide an electronic version (saved in MS Word) of your paper to the Comprehensives Secretary (rtrybom@ku.edu).
2. If you would like to have the Comprehensives Secretary run your paper through TurnItIn.com before it is formally submitted, please request that before submitting it for grading.
3. It typically takes 3-4 weeks before all grades are returned. Grades are sent out only after the outcome of the answer (pass or fail) has been determined. If you have not heard from the Comp Secretary 30 days after your paper was submitted, you may *politely* inquire about its status. The Secretary will prompt the readers to complete their reviews.
4. If any of the critiques provided about your paper are unclear, you may request clarification through the Comprehensives Secretary. Some professors may choose to break the blind and simply meet with the student to provide this clarification. This decision is the professor's, not the student's.