UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS | College of Education & Health Professions
Higher Education

Master of Education (M.Ed.) Degree Comprehensive Examination Guidelines

Purpose
For the Higher Education (HIED) Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree, the comprehensive exam serves as the culminating assessment and is a website designed to showcase a student's learning about the field of higher education. It is an intentional and reflective portfolio of work completed across the program that helps a student document and articulate the skills, knowledge, and experiences that are the foundation of professional preparation, including highlighting competencies as defined by the field's two main professional associations, ACPA and NASPA. Passing the comprehensive exam is a program requirement to earn the HIED M.Ed. degree.

Portfolio Elements

1. **Welcome Introduction**: Your name, degree program, semester started, and anything else you would like to share in a professional portfolio. Some examples include: Contact information (e.g., email), links to your LinkedIn page and your social media (if professionally appropriate), a headshot photo, a brief listing of professional goals and interests (you will share those in more detail later in the portfolio). This "welcome" section is like a creative, personalized cover page that also serves as a home page for other portfolio pages to link back into. This will be "home base" for the portfolio navigation.

2. **Table of Contents**: This can be "tabs" on a website, for example, or another online indicator of organization (such as clearly labeled navigational "buttons" on the home page) with easily accessible links directing readers to different parts of the website. Regardless of format and style details you choose, the portfolio must be well organized and easy to navigate for anyone viewing your work. The table of contents will also serve as a self-check that all portfolio elements as listed in the syllabus are included.

3. **Higher Education/Student Affairs Philosophy Statement:** Describe your personal philosophy regarding your work as a HESA professional. The goal of this exercise is to engage in meaningful reflection and to share your professional values, principles, and assumptions that guide your practice. Overall, this statement should be 2-3 pages and reflect both your understanding of the field and your own professional values.

4. **Updated Resume:** Include an embedded documented or a link to an updated resume, that includes information up to ***and*** including this semester with all UA work. In other words, any current UA GA or full-time work should be included, as well as inclusion of your internship (listing *and* providing key bullet points/details that fit the formatting of your resume). We highly recommend having a more senior full-time HIED practitioner review your resume and seeking final editing support from the UA Career Development Center. Resumes should be two full pages and may not exceed three full pages.

5. Professional Development Plan: Describe your professional development plan regarding your short term and long-term career goals. The goal of this assignment is to think carefully about an intentional, actionable professional development plan. Examples of professional development plan ideas are attending conferences, reading books, conducting and presenting research, taking courses, completing microcredentials or certificates, etc. The professional development plan should also include long-term career goals and ideas for entry-, mid-, and upper-level positions you potentially envision yourself holding. Professional development plans should be at least three full pages and may not exceed five full pages.

6. Professional Competency Narrative and Supporting Artifacts: Students will select three of the ten **ACPA/NASPA professional competencies** (document provided in Blackboard Ultra Comps site) and provide a two- to three-page narrative and two supporting artifacts (no page limit on artifacts) for each competency to demonstrate their learning in this area (for a total of six artifacts). Five artifacts will be course artifacts and one will be an experiential artifact. The accompanying narrative must demonstrate graduate level professional writing.

Competency Narrative: Students will provide a narrative for each of their selected competencies that you believe you worked with and have grown in during the program. Each narrative should be at least two full pages and may not exceed three full pages. Clearly list and describe each selected competency, as well as how it is particularly relevant to your experience, including clearly explaining how you have acquired knowledge and skills in each of the selected competencies. These narratives should demonstrate thoughtful understanding of the selected competency areas. The competency reflections should be no longer than two pages double-spaced for each competency. Students are encouraged to review the **ACPA/NASPA rubrics** (document provided in Blackboard Ultra Comps site) for further guidance on the professional competencies and standards. The narrative should thoroughly explain how each corresponding artifact (details below) exemplifies the student's perceived level of competency for each ACPA/NASPA competency and, overall, how the narrative and artifacts connect to demonstrate student learning and development throughout the program.

Supporting Artifacts: Students should also identify two artifacts for each of the three selected competencies and discuss how the artifact demonstrates proficiency in the identified competency. Five artifacts must be from coursework, and one should be experiential. Each artifact must be from different courses and cannot be used to represent multiple competencies. Students may include hyperlinks and/or scanned documents to include artifacts.

- **Course artifacts** are *student created* assignments from Higher Education courses taken toward a student's program of study. This does not include practicums or internships taken for credit. Examples of technical artifacts include academic papers, group projects, poster projects, presentations, class facilitations, and literature reviews. A student's portfolio must include five course artifacts.
- **Experiential artifacts** are *student created* products, attestations, or evidence from a student's graduate assistantship, full-time job, practicum, internship, conference participation, study abroad experience, teaching an undergraduate course such as University Perspectives, or other co-curricular activity. Examples of experiential artifacts include a product completed for a project such as a student created training brochures, facilitation guide, educational programming materials, presentation outlines, etc. A student's portfolio must include one experiential artifact.

7. References: The references page should use APA 7 guidelines properly to cite any outside materials you used throughout the entire portfolio. Please remember to use APA 7 formatting for citations and formatting throughout the portfolio.

Additional Information

Comps Registration: Students should register for comps by the following dates:

- Fall: September 1st
- Spring: February 1st

This form is due at the beginning of the semester (fall or spring) during which you will take comps. *To be eligible for comps, students must be in their last semester of coursework OR within six hours of completing degree requirements.* Students should review the Honor Code before registering. By registering for the exam, students are agreeing they will abide by the Honor Code listed in the registration document.

Formatting Guidelines: Each student will create an online portfolio that contains all the required content. Students should use the free platform **wordpress.com** and can upload their website link in the designated Blackboard comprehensive exam site. The website should be well-organized and professional.

Submission Instructions: Students will submit their portfolio via Blackboard Ultra. Students who do not submit their comprehensive exam on time will receive a "no pass" and will not have completed this required exam for completion of the HIED M.Ed. degree.

Deadlines: The portfolios must be submitted electronically before 5pm CST on the day of the deadline listed below. The portfolio must be submitted during the semester of graduation.

- Fall: October 1st
- Spring: March 1st

Assessment: Each exam will be reviewed by a minimum of two HIED faculty members. You will be graded on a pass/fail basis, with each examination being evaluated on the following (see rubric below):

- Clear inclusion of each portfolio element as listed above
- Portfolio well-organized and professional
- Graduate level writing and thinking (well-organized, clear, logical flow, no typos or spelling and grammar errors)
- APA formatting where appropriate
- Follows all submission guidelines including timeline

Possible Outcomes: Students have one of three outcomes: pass with no revisions, revisions required, or no pass.

1) **Pass with no revisions:** You successfully complete the comprehensive examination, no revisions are required, and you meet the program graduation requirement of passing comps.

2) **Revisions Required:** You are required to make some revisions to your work. The required revisions will be summarized in an email sent to you. Faculty will review the revisions and notify you via email of the outcome (either pass with no further revisions, pass with further revisions, or no pass). Revisions are due on the following dates each semester:
    - Fall: December 1st
    - Spring: May 1st

3) **No pass:** Faculty members will meet with you to discuss your options and next steps. The HIED program only requires a written comprehensive assessment for M.Ed. candidates. The portfolio satisfies the written comprehensive assessment requirement. However, the faculty reserves the right to request an oral examination and/or request revisions to the portfolio to remedy deficiencies. Failure to remedy deficiencies may result in failure of the comprehensive assessment.

Honor Code: *By registering for comps, you agree to abide by the following honor code*: I acknowledge that I have received the exam guidelines and will adhere to them in the preparation of my comprehensive examination. I will return my completed examination by the due date noted in this document. I further agree that I will abide by the UofA Academic Integrity Policy. I pledge that this comprehensive examination will represent my own work in its entirety (with the exception of final editing assistance from the UofA Writing Resource Center and/or Career Development Center).

Links:

Registration
https://forms.cloud.microsoft/r/Q76rNLZnGk

UofA Academic Integrity Policy
https://honesty.uark.edu/policy/index.php

UofA Career Development Center
https://career.uark.edu/

GRADING RUBRIC

Category	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Improvement
Welcome Introduction			
Table of Contents			
Higher Education/Student Affairs Philosophy Statement			
Updated Resume			
Professional Development Plan			
Professional Competency Narrative and Supporting Artifacts • Narrative • Artifacts			
References			
Technical Writing • Portfolio well-organized and professional			
Technical Writing • Graduate level writing and thinking (well-organized, clear, logical flow, no typos or spelling and grammar errors)			
Technical Writing • Followed APA guidelines			

Followed all submission guidelines including timeline			
Portfolio demonstrates critical thinking, meaning-making, and critical reflection			