

MASTER'S OPTION GENERAL GUIDELINES

Option 4: Comprehensive Examination

School of Education
University of Houston-Clear Lake

Description of Options

Candidates wishing to earn a master's degree in the School of Education must complete one of four master's options. Not all options are available in all programs. Candidates should consult their advisors to determine which options are available to them and, when there is a choice, which option will best meet their academic goals.

The four master's options available are:

- OPTION 1: Master's Thesis**
- OPTION 2: Master's Project**
- OPTION 3: Master's Internship**
- OPTION 4: Master's Comprehensive Examination**

Option 1: MASTER'S THESIS. The master's thesis option is designed to allow candidates to conduct a research study related to the field of education. Master's thesis studies must adhere to educational research design principles, and the methodology may be qualitative or quantitative. It is generally expected that thesis studies will contribute to the knowledge base of the discipline and be of a quality that would permit publication in a scholarly journal. At the completion of the master's thesis study, the candidate will present a formal, bound report of the study to the University Library. (See Option 1: Master's Thesis for requirements)

Option 2: MASTER'S PROJECT. Although most master's projects are also research studies, this option is designed to allow candidates more flexibility in the type of research pursued. Master's projects generally involve the development of a product (curriculum, software, etc.). Research on the effectiveness of the product is generally a component of the master's project. (See Option 2: Master's Project for requirements)

Option 3: MASTER'S INTERNSHIP. The master's internship option is designed to provide candidates with hands-on experience in applying their knowledge and skills in an educational setting. Programs that allow the internship option include those leading to special licensure of professional certification. A product, demonstrating activities conducted during the internship, is required. It should be noted that some programs allow a candidate to take a practicum, but the practicum does not count as the Capstone Experience. Candidates should check with their advisors. On the next page is a table listing the options for the Capstone Experience in each program. However, it is recommended that candidates check with their advisors. (See Option 3: Master's Internship for requirements)

Option 4: MASTER'S COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION. The master's comprehensive examination option is designed to allow the candidate to take six additional hours of coursework and have a comprehensive examination replace the capstone course experience. There is a stringent set of rules and procedures governing the comprehensive examination. The candidate should work closely with her/his graduate faculty advisor throughout the process of successfully completing the comprehensive examination.

Table 1: Options for the Capstone Experience

	Thesis	Project	Internship	Practicum	Comprehensive Examination
Counseling			✓	✓ ¹	
Curriculum and Instruction	✓	✓			
Early Childhood Education	✓	✓	✓		
Educational Management			✓		
Instructional Technology	✓	✓	✓		✓
Multicultural Studies in Education	✓	✓			✓
Reading	✓	✓	✓ ²	✓ ²	
School Library and Information Science			✓		

¹ COUN's Capstone Experience consists of BOTH the Master's Internship (COUN 6739) and the Counseling Practicum (COUN 5739).

² LLLS 6639 and LLLS 6732 serve in the capacity of an internship and practicum for Reading.

The following are requirements that go beyond any one of the options:

1. All four options require candidates to have a signed plan of study in their files in the Office of Academic Advising, B1231.
2. All four options require candidates to have a signed Master's Option Course Enrollment form in their files in the Office of Academic Advising, B1231.
3. Registration in any of the three capstone courses (Master's Project, Master's Thesis Research or Graduate Internship) requires the approval of the Associate Dean.
4. Before registering for Master's Project (EDUC 6839) or Master's Thesis Research (EDUC 6939), the candidate must have completed EDUC 6033 plus an additional 21 hours of approved coursework.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Option 4: MASTER'S COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Upon recommendation of the candidate's Faculty Advisor, the examination may be taken at any time after the candidate has successfully completed twenty-seven (27) hours of the candidate's program (including all program and School core courses). The candidate may apply for the comprehensive examination, as long as the candidate is in the semester/summer session in which the twenty-seven (27) hours of the candidate's program will be completed; however, the examination may not be taken until the candidate has successfully completed the required minimum twenty-seven (27) hours of the candidate's program.

A candidate must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.000. Candidates must submit a new application each time they take the comprehensive examination. Applications (see Appendix A) to take the examination and the dates when it will be administered are available in the Office of the Associate Dean. The deadlines for applying, and test dates, are as follows:

Term	Application	Test*
Fall	August 10	Third Saturday in October
Spring	February 10	Third Saturday in April
Summer	May 10	Third Saturday in July

* Test dates may change due to holidays and this information will be made available to the candidate.

An approved degree plan must be on file before the application to take the comprehensive examination can be approved. The Associate Dean will audit applications to verify eligibility to take the comprehensive examination and notify the faculty advisor and the candidate of the candidate's approval status to take the comprehensive examination.

The Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination will consist of questions or prompts prepared by the Comprehensive Examination Committee, which will be comprised of at least three faculty members, with the candidate's Faculty Advisor serving as chair. After reviewing the candidate's degree plan and transcript, the chair will recommend to the Associate Dean at least two other faculty members to serve as members on the committee. The Associate Dean will formally appoint the candidate's Comprehensive Examination Committee and notify the committee chair and members of their appointment.

The examination will consist of three to five questions or prompts. The questions or prompts will require candidates to synthesize and apply knowledge and skills taught in their courses. The chair will ensure that all comprehensive examination questions are submitted to the Associate Dean's Office no later than a week prior to the comprehensive examination administration. The committee members will write the questions; the same committee members will evaluate the questions.

Candidates will have six hours to respond to the questions or prompts. Candidates must bring to the examination a copy of the letter, signed by the Associate Dean, which says their application was approved and an official picture identification card. The examination period will be split into two "self-contained" 3-hour periods; that is, the problems distributed in each 3-hour session must be submitted at the end of the 3-hour session. A 45-minute break for lunch will occur between the two 3-hour examination periods. At least two questions or prompts will be handed to the candidate during the first 3-hour examination period, and the remaining question(s) or prompt(s) will be handed to the candidate at the beginning of the second 3-hour examination period. The candidate will be allowed a five-minute restroom break, when necessary; however, all materials will remain in the room and no new materials will be introduced into the room upon the candidate's return.

The examination will be administered on a computer in a classroom with computer access. Candidates may not use the Internet or their own computers and candidates may not bring any storage device to the examination. Candidates may not access any form of communication device (electronic mail, instant messaging, etc.) nor storage medium (network storage area, removable disk, etc.) throughout the examination period, except for the candidates' work saved during the examination. Failure to comply with these delineations will result in the candidate failing the entire examination. If in the very unlikely event the candidate should lose their responses, the proctors will decide if a) the candidate must still meet the time deadlines or b) the candidate's comprehensive examination should be re-scheduled. At the conclusion of the examination, candidates will save their work to the candidate's designated computer, upon which the candidate is working. The proctor will make a copy of the file before the candidate deletes the file from the computer, upon completion of the comprehensive examination. Candidates must submit a printed copy of their examination to the proctor prior to leaving the examination. Candidates are not allowed to keep a copy of the items or their responses.

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive examination evaluation rubric is as follows:

Score	Interpretation
Pass	The answer addresses all or most of the key points correctly and shows an acceptable level of understanding regarding terminology and concepts. The answer may infrequently be inconsistent with the curriculum covered by the examination. Almost all statements are grammatically correct, and in complete sentences.
Fail	A number of key elements are missing or incorrect. Barely adequate knowledge of terminology and concepts. The answer addresses the questions with some statements inconsistent with the curriculum covered by the examination. Statements may include

There will be at least two readers for each question. Each question will be scored by the author of the question and by the chair of the committee. The chair will select a committee member to be the second scorer of the question(s) the chair writes.

If both readers assign a “Pass” to an item, then the item grade is “Pass”. If both readers assign a “Fail” to an item, then the item grade is “Fail”. If one reader assigns a “Pass” and the other reader assigns a “Fail”, then another committee member reads the item response. The grade assigned by the third reader is the item grade. To pass the comprehensive examination, the candidate must receive a “Pass” on all items. None of the item grades is subject to appeal.

Once the candidate receives a copy of the comprehensive examination, the candidate is considered to have taken the comprehensive examination.

Notification of Results

Faculty Advisors will notify the Associate Dean of the results (Pass or Fail) of the Master's Comprehensive Examination within two weeks of the examination's administration. The committee chair will forward the original examinations, as graded, along with the scores from each reader and each reader's comments substantiating their evaluations. The Associate Dean will notify the candidates of the results in writing within one month of the examination.

Retaking the Examination

If a candidate does not pass one or more questions of the examination the first time, the candidate may re-apply to take those content areas' questions again. The candidate will not receive the same questions as were received during prior comprehensive examination. If the examination is failed a second time, the candidate may petition the Comprehensive Examination Appeals Committee, which is comprised of the candidate's faculty advisor, the program coordinator and the program area chair (in cases where an individual serves multiple roles, the SOE Associate Dean will appoint a third member to the committee) to be administered the examination a third and final time. All committee members must approve the petition. The committee's recommendation is forwarded to the Associate Dean for final determination. Under no circumstances will a candidate be allowed to take the comprehensive examination a fourth time. A candidate will only need to retake those content area questions for which the candidate received a score of Fail. The Associate Dean may grant an exemption to the application deadline in cases where a candidate wishes to retake the examination in the semester following failing the examination or some questions on the examination, provided that sufficient time remains to prepare the examination questions.

Appendix A
**Application to take the
Master's Comprehensive Examination Application**

