

University of South Alabama
College of Education
Department of Leadership and Teacher Education

Comprehensive Examination Information

General Information

- Graduate students enrolled in the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education at the University of South Alabama are required to take a comprehensive examination prior to graduation. The examination is offered once each semester, usually near mid-term. Students who plan to “sit” for the exam must apply in the Office of Student Services **OR** the Department of Leadership and Teacher Education two weeks before the conclusion of the semester preceding the one in which they want to take the test. Students may also apply for the exam during the first week of the semester in which the test is administered. Students must attach a copy of the **Graduation Check Sheet** to the application for advisor approval.
- Students taking either the Master’s or Alternative Master’s Comprehensive Examination have three hours for completion. With the exception of Educational Leadership, students need to arrive by 8:45 am. The exam begins at 9:00 am and ends promptly at 12:00 pm. Educational Leadership times to be assigned. Students should bring a picture ID to the exam. The examination takes place in a computer lab so that responses to questions are typed and printed in the lab. The room number will be posted on exam day.
- Students may receive an identification number the morning of the exam. This identification number should be included on all pages of the exam and reference list. If unforeseen events arise during the examination, the student should notify the exam proctor immediately.
- Students are allowed to bring a list of references for the exam. The reference list must be turned in with the exam. **Nothing else is permitted in the exam room.**
- Three questions must be answered on the exam (Special Education and Gifted/ Talented answer two questions). Each question should be retyped at the top of the page(s). Begin each new question on a separate page. Print each question as it is completed and double-space all work.
- Student responses to their examination questions must be satisfactory to their evaluation committees. The Director of Graduate Studies will notify the student of results through written correspondence before the end of the semester. **Do not call for results.**
- The exam may be taken only once during a term. Students who fail in their first attempt may take the exam two additional times. Anyone who fails three times will be dismissed from the program.

Program Specifics for Secondary

Alternative Master’s: Social Science, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science

Four (4) essay questions will be included on the examination, one from each of the core Leadership and Teacher Education courses (SED 555, SED 559, SED 55X, and RED 541). Students must respond to the questions from SED 55X and RED 541 (the content methods course). Students may choose between the questions from SED 555 and SED 559.

Masters: Social Science, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science

There will be three (3) essay questions included on the examination, one from each of the core Leadership and Teacher Education courses (SED 552, SED 56X, and SED 560). All three questions must be answered.

Foreign Language students must contact the Department of Foreign Language to schedule oral exams in lieu of answering the SED 553 question.

SED 553, Teaching Language Subjects in Secondary Schools
Alternative Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. Writing well has become increasingly important in the 21st century. Discuss components of the writing process and how you plan to incorporate writing into the curriculum. Discuss three different writing strategies that you would use before a lesson, during a lesson, and following a lesson.
2. Discuss the latest research concerning vocabulary and grammar instruction. Why are most teachers still stuck in the past when it comes to these two curricular areas? How do teachers win the battle between best-practice and standardized test preparation?
3. In terms of classroom composition and instruction, we will have students from diverse language, cultural, and racial backgrounds, as well as students who have special learning needs such as giftedness and mental, physical, and emotional challenges. How will you address the diverse needs of your students so that student achievement is maximized? How will you create an environment conducive to learning and community building where all students feel safe and welcome? Who will you rely on for more information and guidance when you have a student with special needs that you may not be familiar with?

SED 554, Teaching Mathematics in Secondary Schools
Alternative Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. The debate in mathematics education includes two basic perspectives: the traditional viewpoint, which supports procedural approaches including memorization, drill, and practice of rules and definitions, and the non-traditional approaches, such as the constructivist point of view, supporting the belief that students should utilize their innate abilities to formulate their own algorithms. As a secondary mathematics teacher, describe your teaching approaches and include justification.

2. Manipulatives have moved from the elementary school to the middle school and are now frequently employed at the high school level. Discuss the main issues teachers should consider in using manipulatives to foster discovery learning in the mathematics classroom. Include in your discussion specific manipulatives that are appropriate in the secondary classroom and the concepts they illuminate.

3. Describe three critical issues facing mathematics teachers today.

SED 556, Teaching Science in the Secondary Schools

1. According to David Ausubel (1968), “the most important thing to do in teaching is to ascertain the prior knowledge of learners and then teach them accordingly.” Explain and describe what instruction, curriculum, and assessment would be like in a science class taught by a teacher who believes and implements this idea.
3. What is the purpose of using different teaching strategies in a science classroom? Identify a topic or concept of interest and identify three different teaching strategies you could use during a ninety-minute block period. Explain each strategy and why you selected it?
4. Often the motivation of students is overlooked or considered only after the science content has been developed to teach students. If your students are not motivated from the beginning it will be difficult to interest them in science (or any subject). What part does motivation play in science teaching? How can you be sure you systematically integrate motivation into your teaching?

Explain and describe what instruction and assessment would be like in a science class taught by a teacher who believes and implements this idea of systematically integrating motivation. Give at least five specific examples of how you will make sure you design your teaching to be motivating to students.

SED 557, Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Schools
Alternative Master's Comprehensive Questions

5. Martarolla refers to the teaching of social studies as a matter of “hand, heart, and head.” Give specific explanations of what is meant by each term and an example of an assignment for each.

6. Effective citizenship is the major goal of the social studies. What are the major components of citizenship that need to be taught and how can these be done through the social studies curriculum?

3. Social studies is a subject that students often dislike. Part of this may stem from the fact that students do not see its relevance. What are at least three ways you will bring relevance to your teaching?

SED 555, Curriculum and Teaching in the Secondary School
Alternative Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. Explain three reasons why a beginning teacher needs to prepare detailed lesson plans even when the textbook program you are using provides them.

2. It has been said that students are more likely to learn when they feel that the learning is important or worth the time. Explain how a teacher in your subject field can make that happen, that is, students feeling that the learning is important and worth their time. Give at least three specific examples along with corresponding explanations.

3. Explain why it is important to prevent behavior problems before they occur. Describe at least three preventive steps you will take to minimize your classroom management problems.

Secondary Comprehensive Exam Questions for Alternative Masters

SED 559

1. Contrast the characteristics of a Middle School and its predecessor, the Junior High School. Include an explanation for at least six (6) characteristics.
2. Explain two changes taking place in young adolescents in each of the following areas: Physical Changes, Emotional Changes, Social Changes, and Intellectual Changes. For each of the changes, describe what middle school educators can do to meet the needs of the young adolescents in these four areas.
3. Young adolescents need experiences in the related curriculum domains of: Art, Music, physical Education, Career Education, and Information Literacy. Describe two (2) rationales for each of the related domains to be part of the middle school curriculum.

RED 541, Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas
Alternative Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. As a teacher, you will often be asked by parents, “How do I get my teen to read more?” Discuss three, concrete strategies parents and teachers can implement to encourage reluctant readers.
2. As are most things in life, television and technology are double-edged swords. They have the dual capacity to positively and negatively influence children and adults. What are three ways television fails to positively educate children? Discuss the recommended number of hours of television and technology use per week and the implications of going over this number? What should a teacher remember when using videos or other technology for instructional purposes?
3. Please explain the following quote and discuss its implications for literacy-based instruction in the content area classroom in terms of how and what we teach: “What we teach children to love and desire will always outweigh what we teach them to do,” (Trelease, 2001).