

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 will answer three (3). 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 453/553 question.

SED 552, The High School Curriculum
Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. How reasonable is it to judge the quality of individual schools based on how well their students do on standardized tests? What are some arguments used to support and oppose this practice?
2. To what extent do you believe that schools in the United States reproduce the existing class and social structure- that curricula tend not to prepare students from the lower socioeconomic classes for upward social mobility. Give three examples and justify your responses?
3. What are the five dimensions of multicultural education that James Banks writes about? Explain each dimension and then identify which one resonates with you most and discuss why?

SED 560, Graduate Research Seminar
Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. How would you describe the purpose(s) of action research? How does action research differ from other, more traditional methods of research in both method and purpose? Why do some researchers assert that they feel more ownership of action research rather than other methods of research?

2. Describe the different steps involved in developing and carrying out action research. Why is the process cyclical in nature?

**SED 561, Trends and Practices in Teaching Language Subjects in the
Secondary Schools**

Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. What is "standard English?" Who sets the standard? How will you deal with the issue of standard English in your classroom?
2. Identify one major innovation that has emerged in the last ten years in your field.
3. Discuss the concept of writing as a process. How will you make provisions for the stages of the writing process in planning your writing program? How will you evaluate writing as a process?

SED 562, Trends and Practices in Teaching Social Studies in Secondary Schools
Master's Comprehensive Questions

4. 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 some ways that you will bring relevance to your teaching?
5. In your opinion, what are the major reasons that skill development has been largely overlooked by many social studies teachers in planning and content and emphasis of their courses? What are necessary skills that need to be incorporated into social studies classrooms? By what means and/or lessons can this lack be overcome?
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?

**SED 563, Trends and Practices in Teaching Mathematics in Secondary Schools
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 564, Trends and Practices in Teaching Science in Secondary Schools
Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. Students need to be well prepared to live in a complex technological society today. What are you doing in your teaching that will help your students to become adults that can make informed decisions about their lives and environment? Cite specific examples of topics/activities you teach in your classroom. Give examples of how students apply these skills.
2. Inquiry is considered to be one of the most important skills students can learn in science. What is inquiry teaching and learning and why is this method of teaching not used more often? Design a lesson that uses the inquiry methods to teach students a science topic.
3. Often the motivation of students is overlooked or considered only after 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. What part does motivation play in science teaching? How can you be sure you systematically integrate motivation into your teaching? Give at least five specific examples of how you make sure you design your teaching to be motivating to students.

ELT Methods and Materials for Teaching ESL Master's Comprehensive Questions

1. Discuss Krashen's Monitor Model and its interrelated hypotheses. What does this model mean for curriculum, methods, and assessment in the ESL classroom? Finally, what relevant factors are not addressed by Krashen?
2. Discuss the process of first and second language acquisition. What are the similarities and differences? Evaluate the relating factors that directly impact successful language development for both L1 and L2 learners. Discuss what you can do to facilitate the acquisition process in your ESL classroom.
3. Discuss why ESL/EFL and mainstream teachers should collaborate. In what ways can both of them contribute to the success of mainstreamed ESL students?
4. Consider Natural approach, Whole language approach, Total Physical Response. How can they be used most appropriately to teach various aspects of language? Discuss the possible implications of an integrated approach in your school setting.
5. Discuss the concepts of grammatical competence, communicative competence, and sociolinguistic competence in relation to Jim Cummins' model of BICS and CALP. What do the concepts and Cummins' model mean for curriculum, methods, and assessment in the ESL classroom?
6. Discuss the impact of some factors such as learners' social and economic background, learning environment, and first language, in the process of first and second language acquisition. Discuss what you can do to facilitate the acquisition process in your ESL classroom.
7. With the increased number of races and ethnicities in schools, an atmosphere of tolerance must be created, established, and maintained in our classrooms. Discuss how this can be accomplished.
8. Discuss five different approaches to address diversity and multiculturalism in the curriculum, and state goals and strategies to promote multiculturalism in a public school or an international school setting.
9. Why must students' cultural backgrounds be taken into consideration when shaping the educational system? Discuss the impact this consideration should have on curriculum, school environment, and teaching style for an ESL program in school setting.
10. What are the reasons for the shift from teaching language alone (self contained ESL classrooms) to content-based approaches? Discuss the advantages

and disadvantages of a content-based approach in the teaching and learning of English as a second language in your school.

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