

WMU's Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology
Educational Leadership's Ph.D. "Core" Comprehensive Examination
(rev. 2020)

All Educational Leadership Ph.D. students must pass the core comprehensive (i.e., "comps") examination as part of their doctoral program before they are allowed to enroll in EDLD 6950/7300 (depending on admissions date) Dissertation Seminar and in EDLD 7300 Doctoral Dissertation hours. An Educational Leadership (EDLD) Comprehensive Examination Committee is charged with the design, administration, and evaluation of the department core comprehensive examination. The following provides information regarding that examination.

Purpose of the EDLD Core Comprehensive Exams

The primary purpose of the core comprehensive exams is to provide an opportunity for doctoral students to demonstrate their knowledge of core leadership and research design principles, and their ability to apply such ideas to a case situation. Leaders must often quickly assess a situation, review relevant sources for theories and ideas, and then apply such knowledge to the situation at hand. These comps are designed to emulate that process. They are also designed to ascertain whether students are ready to focus on the next step of their doctoral journey -- the completion of their dissertation proposal and the implementation of their dissertation research.

Overall, the core comprehensive exams are intended to evaluate the doctoral student's ability to demonstrate:

- a. Clarity in written communication.
- b. Skills in analysis and evaluation of facts and ideas.
- c. Mastery of knowledge related to theories and constructs that define a field of study.
- d. An ability to offer recommendations, as supported by theory and research sources.
- e. An ability to design plans to implement recommendations made or to conduct research or evaluation about actions taken or proposed.

Dates, Registration & Prerequisites

- The EDLD "comps" are generally offered two times per year; once during the fall semester and once during spring semester. Occasionally additional testing dates may be offered for special cohorts, or under exceptional circumstances.
- Students must "register" to take the comps **three weeks** prior to the testing date. This involves the submission of the EDLD Comps Registration Form (Ph.D.) to the professional staff member identified on the departmental web site as handling the comps paperwork (<https://wmich.edu/leadership/academics/ed-leadership/doctor/core-exam>).

- Prior to taking the EDLD comps, students must:
 - (for students admitted PRIOR to 2018) have successfully completed five core courses (with the grade of "C" or better): EDLD 6020 (or EDLD 6710 for HE students), 6060, and 6090; and EMR 6450 and 6480. In addition, students must be enrolled in EMR 6550 or EMR 6650 (if they have not already completed it).
 - (for students admitted AFTER 2018) have successfully completed (with the grade of "C" or better): EDLD 6861, 6060, 6090, and EMR 6450, 6480, as well as a minimum of two subject content courses as approved by your advisor. Additionally, student must have successfully completed or are concurrently enrolled in EDLD 6862, and EMR 6650 and 6580.
 - ensure that they have a "signed" program of studies on file (signed both by their adviser and the department chair).
 - must be in good academic standing, as demonstrated by having a minimum grade point average of at least 3.0 for all courses completed at WMU as part of their doctoral program.

The EDLD Comps Examination Logistics

- Students will complete the comprehensive examination off campus (e.g., at home, or at some other location of their choosing) during a designated **"comps weekend" (running from 8:15 am on Friday to 11:59 pm on Sunday)**. See website for dates and details.
- Students will receive an "ID number" that will be used on the exam; this number is the only identifier that reviewers see on the exam, masking the identity of the student.
- Eligible students who have registered for the exam, will receive by email the comps case and questions by 8:15 am Friday on the designated comps "weekend." They will have until 11:59 pm on Sunday of this comps weekend to return their completed responses by email.
- Currently, comps responses include two components:
 - One component/paper covering the leadership portion, and a separate component/paper covering the research portion, both with all editing complete.
 - Both papers must include reference pages, and must use correct APA formatting (for the cover page, page numbering, heading levels, intext citations, and reference page).
- Students are allowed to use an unlimited number of print or electronic source materials. They must ensure that all sources used are cited in the text correctly, and references listed in the reference page.
- Students will be held to the standards noted within the Graduate Catalog regarding "Student Academic Conduct" including academic honesty, cheating, fabrication, falsification, and forgery, plagiarism, and complicity.

- Most importantly, the student must ensure that their comps responses are indeed their own original work, and that NO ONE other than the student will have assisted with any portion of the paper. This means that the student has not discussed the comps case with anyone during the comps weekend, and that no one other than the student will have written any portion of the response, nor read any portion of the papers as part of the editing process. Any student found in violation of this policy will be dismissed from the doctoral program.
- The Department reserves the right to use any means to review the submitted documents for plagiarism.

Evaluation of EDLD Core Comprehensive Examinations

Throughout the examination process, the student's identification is protected. An ID number is assigned to each student who registers for the comps, and this number is maintained with strict confidentiality by office personnel. No one evaluating the responses knows the respondent's identity. When examinations are ready for evaluation, the following steps occur:

1. Each member of the core comprehensive examination committee evaluates each answer, using a scoring rubric (available to the student on the departmental website).
2. After all answers have been read and rated, the core comprehensive examination committee meets as a jury to consider the performance of each student. The decision of the core comprehensive examination committee is made as a single decision -- PASS or FAIL -- for each section of the responses. If students fail one section of the exam, they only need to re-take the portion that they failed. However, students must ultimately pass both portions in order to have passed the core comprehensive exam.
3. If a student is judged to have failed one or both sections of the examination, written summary comments describing the major reasons the jury judged the examination to be unsatisfactory will be forwarded to the student when notification of performance is given. Written notification of the committee decision is also provided the student's advisor, the student's departmental permanent file, and the academic records department.

Procedures for Students Who Fail the EDLD Core Comprehensive Examinations and Wish to Appeal the Judgment of the Core Comprehensive Examinations Committee

If a student has failed the core comprehensive examination and wishes to appeal, the following procedures apply.

1. The student should meet with his or her advisor to review (a) the questions that were asked, (b) the answers that were prepared, and (c) the comments that were given by the jury when a decision was made.
2. If the student wishes to seek further review of the evaluation of his or her performance, the student may appeal. The appeal must provide an explanation of why the committee's decision is being appealed. The appeal must be made within 15 business days of the department having mailed the letter notifying the student of a failure.
3. The student may send an appeal letter or e-mail to the professional staff member identified on the departmental web site as handling the comps paperwork. To ensure the student's confidentiality, this person will ensure that all identifying information is removed, and will forward the appeal to the chairperson of the core comprehensive examination committee, with only the identifying number of the student's examination.
4. The chairperson of the core comprehensives committee must respond to the appeal within 14 days of receipt.
5. After reconsidering the appealed exam, the core comprehensive examination committee's decision is final. If a student wishes to appeal the decision further, s/he must take the appeal to the department chairperson and the WMU Ombudsperson.

Procedures for Students Who Wish to Have Their Attempt at Taking the Comprehensive Expunged from the Record

If a student has an emergency or other problem which adversely affects the ability to complete the comprehensives during the weekend, the student may ask to have the comprehensives determined to be null and void. This means this attempt will not be included in the number of times the student has attempted to complete the comprehensive.

1. The student must email the professional staff member identified on the departmental web site as handling the comps paperwork by 11:59 pm on the Sunday that comprehensives are due and explain the nature of the emergency.
2. To the extent possible, the student will provide documentation verifying the emergency. This documentation may include proof of a computer malfunction, a doctor's note, or other evidence.

EDLD Core Comprehensive Examinations Limits (Number of Times Taken & Length of Time)

A student may take each section of the core comprehensive a maximum of **three times**. A student who has taken each section of the core comprehensive examinations on three occasions, and who has failed on all three occasions will be discontinued from the doctoral program.

Students desiring to retake their comps must sit for such exams the next semester the comps are offered, and each semester thereafter (up to one year from the original comps exam). An exception is made if the student is taking classes as recommended by their advisor for additional comps preparation, or if a university approved Graduate Leave of Absence has been requested and approved. Such students will have up to one additional year to retake their comps following the completion of such required courses, or following the completion of their approved leave. Any student not successfully completing their comps within such a one year time period will be dismissed from the program.

Specific Writing Suggestions to the Student

The respondent is expected to demonstrate higher order thinking that goes beyond mechanically recalling or reporting facts, concepts or theories regarding leadership. The response should demonstrate deep understanding of leadership concepts and theories and how they relate to the case presented. This requires the respondent to describe, interpret, and synthesize patterns of behavior indicative of various perspectives on leadership. Underlying theories should be identified, elaborated upon, and connected to the case in a way that provides an explanation and rationale for actions, behaviors, and events described in the case. Citations from the literature and the use of paraphrasing or quotations from major authors to support your explanations are required.

Specific writing recommendations include:

- Take a direct approach to the question. Identify the fundamental issues or central concerns and address your response to that.
- Use precise terminology, simple direct sentence structure, a logical order of thought and avoid redundancies and run-on sentences.
- Present a well organized response to order logically your thoughts and enable the reader to follow the continuity of your argument. It would be wise to spend at least as much time in organizing responses as in writing.
- Support arguments or positions with references to specific authoritative sources, indicating whether they are from professional theory or research.
- Sweeping general observations should be avoided and the emphasis placed on specifics. Such meaningless phrases as "other sources," "some studies show," "other measures," "several authorities," etc. should be avoided unless followed by examples.

(revised 11-2020 by DMT; revisions approved by EDLD Doctoral Unit)