

Religion and Philosophy Division Comprehensive Exam Procedures

As you wrap up your program for the MS or Divinity degree you are required to complete comprehensive exams (written and oral). Please follow this document for procedures and deadlines related to this requirement.

The Divisional Dean and the Office Manager for the Religion and Philosophy Division should be notified of your intent to take your comprehensive exams the *semester prior* to which you wish to complete your exams.

Additionally, please note that all Seaver College graduate students must complete all degree program requirements, including passing the comprehensive exams, prior to the Spring commencement ceremony if they wish to walk in graduation. Students completing comprehensive examinations in Summer or Fall terms are eligible to walk in the ceremony for the following spring semester.

Students who are not registered in a course the semester they plan to graduate must register for GRRE 699 by contacting the division office.

“A student must also be enrolled in a course during the semester in which a degree is granted.”Seaver Academic Catalog 2019-2020 page 83

What are Comps?

“Comps” refers to the written and oral examinations required for completing the M.S. or M.Div graduate programs. These are cumulative exams based on an individual student’s coursework. The comprehensive exam should demonstrate that they have mastered the program learning outcomes (PLOs) for their degree program. The PLO’s are listed below as well as on the Religion and Philosophy Division webpage.

A student who graduates with an MS in Ministry should be able to:

- Interpret biblical texts critically and competently, explaining the meaning of a given text within applicable contexts.
- Explore interactions between significant historical developments in Christianity and discussions concerning the major and distinctive teachings of the Christian faith, discerning various factors that have shaped them.
- Apply and evaluate current methods for incorporating the teachings of a faith – especially the Christian faith – into the lives of individuals in a faith community, beginning with oneself.
- Communicate coherently in professionally competent written form (following a standard style guide) and in effective oral form on matters of religion, illuminating historical, theological, and pastoral implications for contemporary societies.

A student who graduates with a Master of Divinity should be able to:

- Interpret biblical texts critically and competently, explaining the meaning of a given text within applicable contexts and its significance in pertinent streams of current research.
- Analyze major and distinctive teachings of the Christian faith, critiquing leading perspectives through the centuries regarding core beliefs and practices and how these compare with other religions, philosophies, or competing worldviews.

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- Explore major historical developments of Christianity, especially – but not solely – in the West, discerning internal and external factors that have shaped it in various cultures.
- Apply and evaluate current methods for incorporating the teachings of a faith – especially the Christian faith – into the lives of individuals in a faith community, beginning with oneself.
- Communicate coherently in professionally competent written form (following a standard style guide) and in effective oral form on matters of religion, illuminating historical, theological, and pastoral implications for contemporary societies.

For the M.S. program, the written exam is made up of three individual sections focusing on your Scripture, Christian Thought & Church History and Practical Theology coursework. The exam will take place over a one day period. You will have 2 hours per exam section for a total of 6 hours plus a 1 hour break. Upon completing a section you are not permitted to go back to a previous section. Your oral defense will be scheduled 1-2 weeks after your faculty committee has reviewed your written responses and deemed them satisfactory*.

For the Divinity program, the written exams are made up of three individual sections focusing on your Scripture, Christian Thought & Church History and Practical Theology coursework. Your exams will take place over a three day period (can be non-consecutive, but must be within the same week). You will have 6 hours each day per exam section plus a 1 hour break each day. You will answer one section per day and cannot go back to a previous section. Your oral defense will be scheduled 1-2 weeks after your faculty committee has reviewed your written responses and deemed them satisfactory*.

**Students must pass the written exams before going onto to the oral examination. If a student does not pass 1 or more sections of the written exam(s) they may be permitted to retake the exam up to one time at the recommendation/discretion of their faculty committee and the Divisional Dean. "The committee has the authority to require the student to repeat the examination in whole or in part." Seaver Academic Catalog 2019-2020 page 81.*

Preparing for Exams

"As students near the comprehensive exam and / or thesis stage of their programs, a committee will be appointed to facilitate either the exam or thesis defense or both in applicable programs. "
Seaver Academic Catalog 2019-2020 page 81.

The next step in preparing for the exams is to select your faculty committee. The faculty committee for M.S. or M.Div comprehensives will consist of three faculty members from the Religion and Philosophy Division. These faculty members will write and grade the exam questions. Ideally, these should be faculty members that the student has had for at least one course during their graduate program. The student should nominate a faculty member for each exam portion, (1) Scripture (OT & NT), (2) Christian Thought & Church History, (3) Practical Theology/Ministry. The student's preference will be considered by the Divisional Dean who will have final approval of faculty committee selections.

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Once your faculty committee members are selected you may begin meeting with them for instructions on how to best study for the exam. This exam is cumulative and will be based on your graduate degree coursework.

Scheduling the Exams

Students writing in the Spring semester should plan to write their exams no later than the third week of March. Spring Break is recommended time to write exams as campus is very quiet. Students should sign up for writing dates, with the Office Manager, by Jan. 31st. Students taking exams in the fall or summer terms should coordinate with the Office Manager and their faculty committee.

Taking the Exams

On the day of the exam, students will be expected to handwrite or type their responses. If using a computer the student will sign a computer usage agreement and will not be permitted to access notes or the internet during the exam. No notes or Bible will be permitted unless explicitly stated in the exam instructions from the professor. If a student needs to borrow a laptop for the exam one will be provided by the division. Students are permitted one 1-hour break or two 30 minute breaks for rest/ lunch. Students are welcome to bring snacks, coffee and water with them to the exam. All exams will take place on the Malibu Campus, administered by the Religion and Philosophy Division Office Manager. Completed exams are submitted to the Office Manager.

Applying to Graduate

Graduate students must apply to graduate. After successfully completing the written and oral examinations for the M.S. or M.Div program they need to submit an "Intent to Graduate" form to the Office Manager.

"Clearance for the graduate degree requires:

- *The completion of all course work with a GPA of 3.00 or better*
- *Good academic standing*
- *Successful completion of comprehensive examinations*

In order to participate in the commencement ceremony, a student must meet all the above criteria. The academic division offering the master's degree will process the academic clearance for each potential graduate. Students must also apply to graduate."

-Seaver Academic Catalog 2019-2020 page 84