Guide
to the MPA
Comprehensive Oral Exam
Effective Summer 2012

Introduction

This guide to the comprehensive examination for the MPA degree is intended to address issues and answer questions that commonly arise in connection with the exam and the process leading up to it. It includes a checklist to help students keep track of the steps leading up to the exam. After that, there is a bullet point list of things to expect during the exam itself.

We hope that this guide will be useful to students as they prepare for the comprehensive oral exam. It may alleviate some of the anxiety that we know accompanies the exam process.

You may also expect your oral exam chair to help you through this process. Rest assured that the MPA program faculty and staff are here to support your professional development. We do not see the exam as a final test, but as a chance for you to demonstrate and discuss what you have learned in the MPA program.

Please let us know if you have suggestions for improvements of this guide and/or other ways that we can assist our students in their preparations for this final step in completing the MPA degree.

Finally, we also want to wish you well on the exam. We look forward to seeing your work and hearing your reflections on your MPA experience.
Checklist of steps required prior to the MPA comprehensive exam

- File for candidacy

  **prior to completing half of your MPA credits**
  (i.e. 30 credits for most MPA students)
  The number of credits for dual degree students will vary depending on which dual degree they are completing.

- Place in their proper boxes on the form:
  - courses already taken, in progress, and remaining
  - “special requirements” courses
    - American domestic political institutions
    - Statistics
  - any substitutions approved by the MPA director

- Select from the PA faculty the chair and second member.
  - The chair should be the person you want to work with on your “revised and enhanced” term paper and portfolio.
  - The second member can be any other member of the PA faculty.
  - You need to contact these people and ask them to serve on the committee.

- Submit the paper you plan for PADM 601 to the faculty member you selected as your chair by the 4th week of the quarter **prior to the quarter** you plan to sit for the oral exam

- File for graduation with the Graduate Program Office in Cheney.
  
  **The deadline is the 1st Friday of the quarter prior to the one in which you plan to graduate.**

- Make sure all coursework will be completed by the end of the quarter you plan to take your comprehensive oral exam.

- Meet with your oral exam chair about
  1) your PADM601 revised and enhance term paper
  2) your PADM602 MPA portfolio
  
  **No later than the second week of the quarter prior to the quarter you plan to take your comprehensive final oral exam.**

- With your oral exam chair, set a schedule for completing your PADM601 paper.
With your oral exam chair, set a schedule for completing your PADM602 portfolio.

Establish a tentative time for the final comprehensive oral exam that is agreed upon by all 3 committee members.

**Do this early in the quarter you plan to take the exam.**

Working with Rose, reserve a room for the oral exam.

Submit a “final” version of the 601 paper and 602 portfolio to the 2nd member no later than 20 days *prior* to the oral exam date.

Make sure the “Terminal Research Approval” form is submitted by your oral exam chair at least 10 working days prior to oral exam date.

Submit final copies of the PADM601 paper and the PADM602 MPA portfolio to all three members of the oral exam committee at least 10 days prior to the oral exam date.

Working with Rose, reserve PowerPoint equipment for the oral exam.

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**What to expect in the oral examination**

- The oral exam will last about 90 minutes.

- The chair of the exam will begin the proceedings.

- The student will first present his/her “revised and enhanced term paper”
  - Members of the oral exam committee will engage with the student in discussion of various aspects of the paper.

- The chair will take the lead in making a transition to the student’s presentation of her/his portfolio.

- The student will use PowerPoint to present and discuss his/her portfolio.
  - Members of the oral exam committee will engage with the student in discussion of various aspects of the portfolio.

- The chair will ask the student to leave the room while the committee considers her/his performance.

- The chair will invite the student back into the room to report the results.

  *An appropriate amount of celebration is expected to follow.*