

Comprehensive Exam Rules

The comprehensive exam for students in CEE MS programs will be administered once per semester (spring, fall), typically in the first week of October and February. The exam is a three hour written exam that will be taken by the graduate student after completing at least 15 credit hours of coursework, at least one semester before the student graduates.

The exam is compiled by the program coordinator (for the MS WES program) or by the committee chair (for MS CE program) and consist of questions from courses taken by the respective student, which may include courses offered by other departments. The student taking the exam will provide a list of classes taken and respective instructors to the faculty member compiling the exam, who will then contact the instructors of those courses to obtain exam questions. The exam will be closed book (unless specified otherwise by the instructor submitting the respective question).

The student will choose four of the subject areas provided and answer the questions pertaining to these four topics. The majority of questions will relate to the focus area of the student (e.g. geotechnical, structural, transportation...).

Each question is graded (+/- letter grades) by the instructors that provided the respective question, and the graded answers are passed on to the exam coordinator, who then calculates the overall grade. The student passes with an average of B or better. If a student does not pass the exam, he/she will have the option to take an oral exam. If an oral exam is given, a 3rd party will be present to assure that the test is fair. To ensure fairness, any special considerations will be addressed by the CEE faculty as a whole, not just the students committee. The tests will not be returned, but will be kept on file in the CEE department office. The student advances to candidacy once the comprehensive exam is passed.

Procedure and timeline for comprehensive exams of MS students in CEE

- 1) Nov. & April: committee chairs identify all students to take comprehensive exam in next semester. Note: students should take the comprehensive exam at least one semester before graduating, after having taken at least 15 credit hours of classes.
- 2) Dec. & May: students submit list of classes taken and respective instructors to the exam coordinator compiling the exam. The exam coordinator is typically the committee chair, except for “environmental” students, where it is the environmental coordinator.
- 3) Jan. & Sept. The exam coordinator contacts the instructors of classes the student has taken and obtains question(s) that can be solved in 45 minutes (plus clarification about materials allowed)
- 4) Jan. & Sept. The exam coordinator compiles all questions into an exam, whereby the student has to choose four topics (i.e. 5-7 topics are provided) to answer in 3 hours
- 5) Jan. & Sept. Students are notified about the materials allowed and the exam date is set.
- 6) Feb. & Oct. (first week of that month) the 3 h exam takes place on the same day for all students
- 7) Feb. & Oct. The exam coordinator distributes answers to the respective instructors, the instructors grade each topic (+/- letter grades) and submit that grade to the exam coordinator
- 8) Feb. & Oct. the exam coordinator calculates the overall grade and notifies the student whether he/she passed (average B grade required to pass)
- 9) Feb. & Oct. Students who pass fill out the report on *Report on comprehensive exam* and *Advancement to candidacy forms* and collect signatures. Forms are due at the graduate school Jul 15th for Fall graduation, Oct 15th for Spring graduation and Feb. 15th for Summer graduation.
- 10) Students who do not pass can take an additional oral exam
- 11) All exams are filed in the CEE department office