University of Miami School of Education & Human Development
HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION M.S.ED.
Comprehensive Exam Overview

At the conclusion of your coursework in the Higher Education Administration program, you must take the Master's Comprehensive Written Exam, which is administered in two sessions (morning and afternoon) held on a single day each year.

The sessions are tailored to your chosen major (track): <u>Enrollment Management, Student Life & Development, or Institutional Research & Policy Analysis</u>.

The sessions are designed to assess:

- **Mastery of program content**
    - The EM track encompasses 1) EM theory, best practices, and research; and 2) the foundations of higher education – its history, organization & administration, and college student diversity
    - The SL&D track encompasses 1) College student development theory and research, and the administration of student affairs; and 2) the foundations of higher education – its history, organization & administration, and enrollment management
    - The IR&PA track encompasses 1) higher education foundations – institutional research, policy, enrollment management, organization & administration, and college student diversity; and 2) research, measurement & evaluation – statistics, the general linear model, and applied multivariate statistics
- **Written communication skill**
- **Critical thinking**
- **Ability to connect theory and research to practical approaches**

Sample Question

You have been appointed Editor of the *Journal of the History of American Higher Education*. You are preparing a special issue directed toward professors of higher education. The theme of the issue is **"Two Important Milestones that Shaped <u>Access</u> to American Higher Education."** Select **two** milestones that you believe **improved access** to American higher education. Discuss the contributions, significance, and current relevance of these events. In your essay:

- Describe (briefly) the milestones and their *major contributions* to access at that time;
- Discuss the *reasons for their importance,* and;
- Relate the milestones in access to *current issues, tensions, policies and/or practices* and discuss *critically* whether we have arrived at the end point.

Expectations & Evaluation

A faculty committee uses a Likert-style rubric to assess each essay response; members also take notes and provide comments.

The following is an example overview of the areas evaluated and faculty expectations.

	Rating Scale & Explanations					Rating 1-5 from scale
	1 = Unacceptable	2 = Poor	3 = Average/ Acceptable	4 = Very Good	5 = Exceptional	
Knowledge of discipline	Error(s) in exposition of the field and/or omission of key source(s)	Minor errors, omissions, and/or lack of synthesis	Adequate and accurate exposition of key sources	Good coverage and synthesis of key sources plus additional relevant material	Thorough review and excellent synthesis of sources, including some obscure but relevant ones	
Developed content	Error(s) in the use of content; consistently inaccurate use of resources	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work	Uses appropriate and relevant content to develop and explore ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to explore ideas within the context of the discipline and shape the whole work	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the work	
Genre & APA rules	Significant lack of organization and presentation; lacks correct use of APA conventions	Attempts to use a consistent system for basic organization and presentation	Follows expectations appropriate to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s) for basic organization, content, and presentation	Demonstrates consistent use of important conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, and stylistic choices	Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or writing task(s), including organization, content, presentation, formatting, and stylistic choices	
Sources & evidence	Little to no use of sources and evidence to support the ideas in the writing	Demonstrates an attempt to use sources to support ideas in the writing	Demonstrates an attempt to use credible and/or relevant sources to support ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates consistent use of credible, relevant sources to support ideas that are situated within the discipline and genre of the writing	Demonstrates skillful use of high-quality, credible, relevant sources to develop ideas that are appropriate for the discipline and genre of writing	

Control of syntax & mechanics	Significant lack of control and use of language, many errors are evident throughout	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing includes some errors	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language in the portfolio has few errors	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free	
Overall quality (average of above ratings)	Unacceptable	Poor	Average/acceptable	Very Good	Exceptional	

After the Exam

The faculty committee translates your scores on the rubric to final judgments on each question; they include comments, and guidance if needed. Below are the categories of final exam assessment the faculty committee uses:

- *Pass with Honors*: Student's response is exemplary, goes above and beyond basic knowledge and understanding, and has no major errors.
- *Pass*: Student's response is complete and sufficient, but does not go above and beyond basic knowledge and understanding. The response has no major errors.
- *Pass with Conditions*: Student's response does not completely answer the question and/or has one or two major errors in logic, content, or understanding.
- *Fail:* Student's response fails to answer the question, and has many major errors in logic, content, or understanding.

If your final exam assessment is either of the last two categories, you will be required to meet with your advisor to discuss options for retaking the exam so you can graduate in a timely manner.