

# **MATESL Comprehensive Examination Requirement**

## **Policy and Procedures**

### **Purpose**

The comprehensive examination requirement has been instituted to help MATESL candidates reach three goals valued by the faculty. First, the process of preparing for and answering examination questions is intended to provide the candidate with a learning experience. Second, a comprehensive review of course material is intended to deepen the candidate's understanding of each area. Third, a comprehensive review of course materials and the process of answering examination questions are intended to bring each candidate to a high state of readiness to handle in a professional manner the challenges of contemporary teaching and research in our field.

### **Requirement**

As stipulated in the curriculum for the Master's Degree in the Teaching of English as a Second Language, each MATESL student not completing a Master's Thesis must pass a comprehensive examination over the required courses of the curriculum.

### **Eligibility**

- A. The standard time to take the comprehensive exam for any course is after that course has been fully completed. It is highly recommended that the comp exam for a course be completed no later than the semester after course completion. The actual 'no earlier than' date when an exam may be taken shall be determined by the professor giving that exam.
- B. In the case of graduating students, exams must be finished no later than 3 weeks before the last day of classes in their final term in order to give the professor sufficient time to grade the exam and put the results in the student record.
- C. A faculty member who is the writer/reader of a comprehensive examination question for a course area may permit students to take that course exam during the same semester in which students are enrolled in the course. Instructors should state in their course syllabi whether or not such permission is granted.

### **Format of the Examination**

The Comprehensive Exam required for graduation consists of 7 take-home sub-exams (one for each of the courses mentioned below) with each consisting of questions that examinees will answer in the form of a Word document using whatever resources the examinees wish. The exam response should follow any specifications described by the professor responsible for the exam.

### **Content of the Examination**

- A. The 7 sub-exam will cover the following seven areas of required course work in the MATESL curriculum:
  - Theoretical Foundations of Second Language Acquisition
  - Language Learning and Technology
  - Phonology and Morphology for ESL Teachers
  - Pedagogical Grammar

- Language and Social Interaction/Sociolinguistics
  - Principles of Language Testing
  - Second Language Reading and Writing
- B. All exams require a knowledge of the substantive content found in current MATESL courses, but should be limited to the reading list and materials covered in each course.

**Administration**

A. Duties of the Examination Coordinator

1. The Director of the MATESL Graduate Program shall serve as the Examination Coordinator.
2. The Examination Coordinator shall have the following responsibilities:
  - a. to maintain the accuracy of information about the comprehensive examination on the Departmental website;
  - b. to remind professors teaching the required courses that they should announce in class and document in their syllabus their policy for their Comprehensive sub-exam. This should include when students should take the exam, and the latest date by which it should be turned in; and
  - c. to maintain a tracking system where faculty record examination results.

B. Examination Dates

1. Examinations are normally offered only during the Fall and Spring semesters, with Summer exams being offered at the discretion of individual professors.
2. Exam responses shall be due no later than **three weeks** before the last day of classes. An earlier deadline may be set by the writer/reader of a question.

| Week 12                                                            | Week 13                                                                                            | Week 14                                                             | Week 15                                                                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| On Friday: Sub-exam results due 3 weeks before last day of classes | On Friday: Deadline for sub-exams to be graded and submitted to students' Box folders by examiners | Monday: Deadline for examiners to notify examinees of Comp results. | On Monday: Deadline for examiners to grade exams given REVISE or FAIL grades |

Table 1: Important Deadlines for Comprehensive Exams

### C. Exam Writers and Graders

1. Exams for a course should be written and evaluated by the professor with whom the student took the course in question.
2. If the professor is on leave during a particular semester and does not wish to grade Comps during that time (students should check with the professor first) that professor should leave a copy of their sub-exam with the Director of the MATESL program and designate another professor to grade the exam.

### D. Examination Procedures

1. The amount of time given to students to answer an individual comprehensive exam shall be a *minimum* of 1 week, with longer exam periods being at the discretion of the professor.
2. Exams should be returned by the student via an attached document in an email to the professor who gave it unless another arrangement is required by the professor.

## Test Results

### A. Grade Options

1. Each sub-exam writer is responsible to grade the answers to her or his sub-exam questions promptly upon receipt.
2. The grades that can be assigned to an answer of a regular sub-exam are the following:

|           |                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| HIGH PASS | The student has demonstrated outstanding competence.                                                                                          |
| PASS      | The student has demonstrated adequate competence.                                                                                             |
| REVISE    | The student has demonstrated some weakness and should be expected to receive a grade of PASS on reexamination after a modicum of preparation. |
| FAIL      | The student has demonstrated inadequate competence or student has left a question unanswered.                                                 |
3. Graders giving a grade of REVISE or FAIL must explain in writing why an answer received the grade of REVISE or FAIL. Their comments shall be in a single, composite statement.
4. In the case of a REVISE grade, examinees are expected to revise their existing exam answer in order to address the weaknesses identified by the examiner.
5. In the case of a FAIL grade, examinees will be given an entirely new set of exam questions and will only have one opportunity to receive a new grade of PASS.

6. Once the grade is awarded, any attempt on the part of a candidate to influence a grader to change a grade is regarded as inappropriate.
7. Students given a grade of REVISE or FAIL on an individual exam may do so in consultation with the professor giving the exam. This may be done at any time before the five-year limit of degree coursework expires, but should always be done as soon as possible.
8. A student is not obliged to be registered at UIUC in order to take a sub-exam or complete a retake based on a REVISE or FAIL result.

## B. Reporting Grade Results

### 1. Deadlines

- a. Sub-exams must be graded and grades recorded on students' Tracking Sheets in SLCL Box folders no later than Friday of Week 13.
- b. Professors shall submit exam results (and any overall feedback in the case of a grade of REVISE or FAIL) directly to students. The deadline for this distribution shall be no later than Monday of Week 14.
- c. For a REVISE examination, the exam results should be submitted to students and to the Graduate Services office no later than Monday of Week 15. REVISE answers must also be returned to the Graduate Service office at this time.

### 2. Tracking

- a. Tracking Sheets for all members of the student body who have not elected the thesis option will be in a secure online storage file for easy access by faculty members. These sheets are not available to the students
- b. It is the responsibility of each writer/grader to record promptly on the examinee's Tracking Sheet each grade given and to certify the grade with a signature. This also applies to grades awarded for immediate retake examinations and for reexaminations to remedy a grade of FAIL.

## D. Grading the Examination as a Whole

1. In order to reach an overall evaluation of the Comprehensive Examination, each sub-examination will be evaluated. The overall evaluation results include the following:

2. **HIGH PASS:** When at least 5 of the 7 individual exams receive a grade of high pass and the remaining questions receive a grade of pass. Any reexaminations (for a grade of fail) renders the student ineligible for an overall evaluation of high pass on the Comps.
3. **PASS:** When a student receives a grade of either high pass or pass for all questions, with less than 5 high pass grades. This may include individual exams that were retaken to raise a grade from REVISE or FAIL.
4. **INCOMPLETE:** When any individual exam receives a grade of REVISE or FAIL but reexamination options still remain or when some exams have not yet been taken.
5. **FAIL:** When any individual exam has a grade of FAIL and all reexamination options have been exhausted.