M.S. Comprehensive Exam – Student Instructions
Effective: Fall 2012
Updated: September 11, 2012

The final checkpoint in a Master's Non-thesis degree is the Comprehensive Exam. The Comprehensive Exam tests a student’s mastery of technical knowledge in focus courses, including both theory and application. The exam will be administered near the end of the Fall and Spring semesters and is typically taken during the student’s last semester.

MS NON-THESIS COMPREHENSIVE EXAM INSTRUCTIONS

I. Purpose of the Comprehensive Exam
Test the student’s competency in the chosen area of focus. Students will be examined on 3 out of 5 of their core classes that make up their Program of Study focus. Students can choose three focus courses on which they will be tested.

II. Format Overview
1. Exam format: The exam is a three hour written test based on the student’s 3 selected focus courses. The exam is open-book and open-notes.
2. Examining Committee: The student will set up an examining committee, which must include the three instructors of the focus courses on which he/she elects to be tested. One of these committee members needs to be selected as a chair of the supervisory committee. In addition, 2 of the 3 course instructors must be tenured/tenure-track faculty (check faculty status using the faculty search at http://www.obia.utah.edu/dm/fir/). The examining committee will be indicated on the Program of Study Form, which is due to the Graduate Advising Office during the first week of the semester.
3. When to take the exam: Students typically take the comprehensive exam during their last semester of their graduate studies. A student may petition the graduate committee to take the exam earlier in their program of study. The student must be enrolled during this semester in which they are appearing for the comprehensive exam. Comprehensive exams are not administered during Summer.
4. Retakes: Students will have one chance to retake the exam the next semester. Students must register for the retake during the first week of the next semester. If a student does not pass the exam at the second attempt, then that student will be dismissed from the Department of Mechanical Engineering’s Master’s program.

III. Prior to the Exam: Detailed Procedures
1. Program of Study Requirement: Students must obtain a B+ grade or greater in all focus courses and complete at least one 7000 level focus course. The Program of Study is due into the Graduate Advising Office no later than the first week of the student’s graduation semester.
2. Exam Registration: Students are required to submit a Master's Non-thesis Program of Study to the Graduate Advising Office by the first week of the student’s graduation semester. The Program of Study Form will indicate the focus courses the student will be examined on.
3. **Subject Areas:** Students must communicate with committee members with regard to the 3 focus courses they will be examined on. Supervisory Committee signatures are required for each of the 3 courses selected. Graduate Committee approval of subject areas and examiner is required.

4. **Exam Date:** The exam will typically take place from 9 am – 12 noon on the Saturday of the 14th or 15th week of the semester (Fall or Spring only). The exact date, time and location will be announced during the third week of the semester.

IV. **Exam Preparation**

Once the student’s exam areas are approved by the Supervisory Committee and Graduate Committee, it is highly recommended that students meet with their examining committee to discuss study methods and topics.

VI. **During the Written Exam: General Rules and Procedures**

1. The written exam will take 3 hours to complete with each subject area being allotted 1 hour each
2. It is expected that the exam will test the comprehensive as well as integrative knowledge of the student.
3. The exam is open book and open notes. Laptops are not permitted during the exam. In case a student needs access to data on Canvas, they will have to arrange to take the exam in the testing center.

V. **After the Exam: Scoring**

1. Each subject area of the exam will be graded on a 100 point scale.
2. A score of 75 or higher in each subject area indicates a passing grade in the exam.
3. Students will have to pass all three subject area portions in order to pass the comprehensive exam. In case the student does not pass a subject area, they will be deemed a partial pass and will still have to pass any failed subject areas during their one retake opportunity.
4. The supervisory committee may require a follow-up oral exam (the following week) in case they need additional clarification on the performance in the written exam.
5. Scores will be made available by the end of Week 16.
6. Due to graduation deadline requirements, examiners are requested to grade and score the exam within 5 days from the exam date.