

Comprehensive Exam Policy MA Program in Folk Studies, WKU

All graduate students in Folk Studies must pass a written comprehensive exam in order to obtain their degree. The exam can be taken either the third or fourth semester; thesis option students should take it the third semester. The student must have a 3.0 GPA. The student must complete an Intent to Take the Comprehensive Exam form at least three weeks prior to the day the exam is scheduled.

Reading list. A reading list will be provided to each student during their first semester of study, and that will be the list she or he is responsible for in the event that the list is revised prior to the exam. However, this list is good for two years only. If a student takes the comprehensive after more than two years, she or he will be responsible for the most recent list.

Format. The exams consists of two questions—one addressing theory and history of the discipline of folklore, the other a bibliography question testing knowledge of the graduate reading list. Students are given three hours to complete the exam. All students must use a department-issued computer to write the exam. During the exam, students will be provided with a clean copy of the reading list, scratch paper, and a thumb drive on which to save their exam. No other materials, except writing implements, may be taken into the exam room. The exam will be proctored by the Director of Folk Studies or another member of the Folk Studies faculty.

Minimum Registration

Per Graduate School policy, a student must be registered for a minimum of one (1) credit during the term in which the comprehensive exam is completed as well as the semester that the student graduates.

Scheduling. The comprehensive exam is given the second Wednesday of November and the first Wednesday of April every year.

Grading. All exams are graded “blind.” Each student will be assigned a number by the department Office Associate, who is responsible for distributing the answers, identified by number, to faculty and tabulating the results. Faculty members are prohibited from discussing the exam answers with each other or with the students before all final results are tabulated.

Notification. Students will be notified in person by the Folk Studies program director the week following the exam (usually Tuesday or Wednesday). Students may request a breakdown of the individual grades for each question or more specific feedback on their performance. This feedback will be in the form of anonymous feedback from the faculty members, gathered and provided by the Folk Studies director. The individual grades given by faculty members will not be revealed to the student. Students may review their answers in the presence of the program director, but copies will not be made available for the student to keep.

Retakes. Students who fail once must retake the exam at the next scheduled exam date. If a student fails in the spring and has completed all other requirements for the degree he or she may petition the faculty for a summer retake date. Students who fail the exam more than twice may retake only with the consent of the full faculty. An alternative capstone assignment may be given in place of the exam only in cases of family or health crisis, or other extenuating circumstances, with the full approval of the faculty. Per the Graduate School policy, students who are dismissed from the program due to a failed comprehensive examination are ineligible to reapply for the same graduate degree program at any time in the future.

Portfolios/thesis proposals. All public folklore and historic preservation track students must submit links to their portfolios no later than 4 pm the day prior to sitting for their comps. Students who pass their exam will be asked to defend their portfolios to the full faculty within three weeks of the exam. Thesis students are expected to submit and defend their thesis proposals prior to the exam; if they do not do so, they must submit their proposals no later than 4 pm the day prior to sitting for their comps and defend their thesis proposals within three weeks of the exam. (See separate policies for portfolios and thesis proposals.)

Students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodations for documented disabilities in taking the exam must make arrangements through the Student Accessibility Resource Center (SARC) prior to taking the exam.

Grading policy.

1. Each question will be graded from 0 to 4, with 4 being the highest (no partial numbers are given).
2. A student must have a total 2.75 average to pass, with a minimum of 2.0 on either question. A 2.75-3.00 is considered a low pass.
3. Students must earn a 3.75 to graduate with distinction.

Academic integrity. Plagiarizing or otherwise cheating on degree requirements such as theses and comprehensive exams will result in termination of progress toward the degree.