

GUIDELINES FOR THE GENERAL EXAMINATION IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

A. Definition: The General Exam is a comprehensive assessment of the student's knowledge, practice and applied skills in Clinical Psychology. The written portion of the exam consists of a clinical case report and a review of relevant literature. Examinees should be prepared to present the case orally and be able to answer case relevant questions, as well as questions about other general areas of psychology. Students should also be prepared to answer a broad range of questions related to child and/or adult psychopathology, assessment and treatment of child and adult disorders, research methodology, experimental design and ethics.

B. Purpose: To assess a student's ability to present, discuss and defend, both written and orally, his/her understanding of Clinical Psychology. The exam fulfills part of the Graduate School's requirement for the **General Examination**.

C. Time Frame:

- 1) Students must pass the General Exam before presenting a dissertation research prospectus.
- 2) Students must pass the General Exam before starting an internship.
- 3) Students must successfully complete the General Examination by November 1 to be eligible for internship for the following Summer or Fall semester.
- 4) Students must schedule the General Exam during the Fall or Spring semester while classes are in session. Students may schedule the exam during the Summer only after receiving permission from their committee.
- 5) Students should avoid scheduling the examination at a time that conflicts with CTC, research, clinical case or faculty meetings (generally on Tuesday afternoons).

D. The Committee:

- 1) The examining committee consists of three clinical professors and one non-clinical professor. The minor professor, if applicable, is the one non-clinical member. If a minor is not completed, the major professor will choose a non-clinical faculty member.
- 2) The student's major professor will serve as the committee chair and select the other committee members.
- 3) The major professor is responsible for determining the suitability of the case before it is submitted to the examining committee and the appropriateness of the examination procedure after the oral examination has been completed. The major professor will sign the departmental Clinical General Exam Approval Form prior to assigning the committee.

- 4) The fifth examiner listed on the committee will be the representative of the Dean of the Graduate School. This person will also be assigned to your dissertation proposal and defense meetings.

E. Failure

- 1) A student who fails the examination is allowed one re-examination.
- 2) The student must wait at least one month and no longer than twelve months before re-examination.
- 3) A re-examination failure results in termination from the Clinical Psychology Training Program.

F. Case Presentation

- 1) The written case report should include:
 - a) A review of the relevant psychopathology, assessment and treatment literature (approximately 8-10 pages) focusing on the patient's primary psychological disorder(s).
 - b) A detailed description of the patient's developmental history and his/her deficits and strengths prior to treatment (e.g., a problem list).
 - c) Assessment protocols and results (e.g., observational data, test data) should be included as appendices to the report and are not included in the total page count.
 - d) A case formulation that integrates the history and assessment data, and presenting problem(s).
 - e) A detailed treatment plan that specifies each treatment procedure that the student would recommend for the client. The recommended treatment procedures should address the client's deficits and excesses, and should follow logically from the case formulation.
 - f) A detailed description of the procedures the student would use to evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment over time.
 - g) The written report has a 25 page limit excluding references.
- 2) The examinee will give a brief oral case presentation. The format of the case presentation is similar to practicum presentation or staffing and modeled on the American Board of Behavioral Psychology. Committee members may ask questions during and after the case presentation. The presentation and case-related questions will be restricted to a period of 20 minutes. The remainder of the presentation will consist of questions from the committee on the other five content areas detailed below. At least two questions will be asked from each of the remaining areas.
- 3) Steps in completing the case presentation:
 - a) Select an appropriate case. The case should be of sufficient representativeness to provide an opportunity for relevant questioning. The case should represent the examinee's independent work.

- b) The student should inform the major professor of his/her intent to take the examination and arrange for the major professor to review the case for suitability.
- c) If the case is approved, the major professor will select the examination committee.
- d) After the committee is chosen, the student should complete the necessary Graduate School paperwork for requesting the examination. The paperwork is due three weeks prior to the examination. The student should see his/her advisor and the Graduate Secretary for details.
- e) The student should independently complete all the work for the case report including history, assessment, evaluation (formulation) and treatment plan.
- f) The student should submit a copy of his/her written presentation (literature review and case report) to each member, two weeks prior to the specialty examination date.
- g) On the scheduled date, the student will report for the oral exam.

G. Evaluation of the Specialty Examination

- 1) The student's exam will be evaluated on eight dimensions:
 - a) Case presentation (written and oral)
 - b) Psychopathology
 - c) Assessment
 - d) Research design and methodology
 - e) Treatment
 - f) Ethics
 - g) Social & Multi-Cultural Issues
 - h) General Systems, Issues, & History
- 2) Performance in each of these areas will be rated on a 6-point Likert scale where:
 - 1 = low fail (totally inadequate knowledge)
 - 2 = fail (numerous errors indicating inadequate knowledge)
 - 3 = marginal fail (consistent pattern of errors indicting lack of mastery)
 - 4 = marginal pass (occasional errors but demonstrating satisfactory knowledge)
 - 5 = pass (clear demonstration of mastery; few if any errors)
 - 6 = superior pass (no errors and obvious command of the clinical literature)
- 3) Although faculty will rate student performance in each area, only the overall or global rating will be used to determine the student's final pass/fail status.
- 4) The student will pass the exam if three or more of the examining committee members give the student at least a "marginal pass" on the global rating.
- 5) Students will be given oral feedback about their performance immediately following the exam.

H. Description of Each Rating Dimension

- 1) Case presentation: Evaluation of performance will focus on the quality, comprehensiveness, and professionalism of both the written and oral case presentation.

- 2) Psychopathology: Evaluation of performance is based on the student's knowledge of psychopathology literature (e.g., DSM IV-TR criteria, associated features, prevalence, differential diagnosis, empirical literature) relevant to the case. In addition, the student should be prepared to answer questions about general adult and child psychopathology.
- 3) Assessment: Evaluation of performance will focus on the student's knowledge of assessment literature relevant to the case. The student also should be prepared for questions concerning clinical assessment techniques in general and issues associated with psychological assessment.
- 4) Research methodology: Evaluation of performance will focus on the student's proposed treatment evaluation procedure for the case as well as the treatment efficacy literature relevant to the case. The student also should have general knowledge about both group and single-case design and instrument development.
- 5) Treatment: Evaluation of performance will focus on the student's proposed actions for modifying the patient's problems. The student's awareness of the ecological context of the problem, the development of an intervention plan with respect to behavior change and consumer satisfaction will be of primary interest. In addition, the student should be familiar with common treatment techniques used in clinical practice.
- 6) Law and ethics: Evaluation of performance will focus on the student's knowledge of laws and professional ethics pertinent to the case, as well as the student's reported behavior during the delivery of services to the referred client. The student also should be prepared to answer questions about common ethical dilemmas, legal issues and professional standards associated with psychologists.
- 7) Social & Multi-Cultural Issues: Issues of gender, age, race, cultural background and other factors of minority status can affect the assessment and treatment process. The student should be prepared to discuss how these issues may effect their particular case and how they have broader applicability for clinical psychology.
- 8) General Systems, Issues, & History: Will involve the students' understanding of the overall history of psychology, primarily in the context of their case. Therefore, someone presenting a case of CBT with an adult with depression should be aware of how this procedure was developed and current proponents of the method. Similarly, a case with a child diagnosed with intellectual disability, might be asked about the development of diagnostic methods and theories of I.Q.