



MISSISSIPPI STATE
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SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

**Guidelines for the
Educational Specialist
Oral Comprehensive Examination
(OCE)**

Guidelines for the Educational Specialist Oral Comprehensive Examination (OCE)

To assure full understanding of the OCE policies and procedures, the student must read this guideline, *Mississippi State University (MSU) Graduate Catalog*, which can be obtained at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>. Also, the student should review the MSU Student Honor Code Operational Procedures Manual, which can be obtained at: [Linked Here](#)

This manual is intended to provide guidance to the educational specialist student regarding the comprehensive examination process that is required prior to the student's internship and as a component of the requirements for the educational specialist degree in Education with a concentration in School Psychology. Coupled with the Master's Comprehensive Examination and the Praxis School Psychologists test (5403), this set of examinations is intended to evaluate the school psychology educational specialist student across the discipline specific knowledge and profession wide competencies in school psychology identified by the School Psychology core faculty and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) *Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists* and those expectations presented in the *MSU School Psychology Programs Graduate Student Handbook*.

The purposes of the educational specialist examinations are for the School Psychology educational specialist student to demonstrate: (a) thorough mastery of the current state of the field of study supported by literature and/or related research; (b) understanding of the relationships among the various areas of the field of study and/or related fields of study; (c) the ability to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate knowledge gained in relation to problems encountered in the field(s) of study; and (d) the ability to present answers in an organized and grammatically acceptable fashion.

As such, with the overarching theme of the MSU School Psychology Educational Specialist Program, the student will be expected to show evidence of professional orientation and integrated knowledge in the field across 10 domains of school psychology education and practice:

1. Data-Based Decision Making and Accountability (2.1).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to using norm-referenced assessment, curriculum-based measurement, and direct behavioral assessment/analysis.

2. Consultation and Collaboration (2.2).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to using behavioral, problem solving, mental health, organizational, instructional consultation and collaborative efforts with teachers, parents and/or administrators.

3. Academic Intervention and Instructional Support (2.3).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to implementing academic interventions and supports such as teacher-directed instruction, literacy instruction, peer tutoring, and interventions for self-regulation/planning/organization.

4. Behavioral Interventions and Supportive Services (2.4).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to implementing social-emotional, behavior supports, and mental health services such as behavioral intervention, compliance training, social skills interventions, and instruction for self-monitoring.

5. School-Wide Practices to Promote Learning (2.5).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to participating in intervention team planning, program planning meetings, staff training, and school improvement activities.

6. Preventive and Responsive Services (2.6).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to improving school climate and safety and providing effective crisis prevention, preparation, and response.

7. Family-School Collaboration Services (2.7).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to implementing strategies to improve collaboration and partnerships among parents, schools, and community agencies, such as parent consultation, parent training, and home-school collaboration.

8. Diversity in Development and Learning (2.8).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to using evidenced-based practices with consideration for diversity and a variety of cultural factors.

9. Research and Program Evaluation (2.9).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to implementing research design and data collection techniques to inform others and evaluate student outcomes.

10. Legal, Ethical, and Professional Practice (2.10).

Objective. Students will evidence knowledge and skills relative to practicing with high regard to ethical, legal and professional standards.

Note: These 10 domains are related to each other in a comprehensive, integrated, and foundational manner and any of these areas may be assessed through the oral comprehensive examination.

Guidelines for the Eligibility and Application

The OCE is scheduled regularly during the early spring semester to facilitate students' application for internship opportunities and are to be scheduled after the student has taken and passed the Master's Comprehensive Exam. The student is to complete the OCE independently and should not seek input from their major professor. Should the student determine that clarification is needed regarding the exam, they should petition the program coordinator who will then seek input from the core school psychology faculty regarding the student's request. Also, the student will be required to sign a statement indicating he/she will adhere to the MSU Student Honor Code (see attached). See below for additional requirements.

AT LEAST 6 WEEKS BEFORE THE OCE IS SCHEDULED, the student must apply through the School Psychology Program Director and Departmental Graduate Coordinator to take the OCE as directed on the School Psychology Calendar. Educational specialist students should read the information regarding the comprehensive examination in the *MSU School Psychology Graduate Student Handbook* and the *MSU Graduate Bulletin*. Also, to be eligible to take the Oral Comprehensive Examination for the Educational Specialist degree in Education with a concentration in School Psychology, students must:

1. be within six-hours of completing all didactic course work* (exclusive of Internship and Directed Individual Study for Professional Portfolio);

2. have passed the Master's Comprehensive Examination. These results will be placed in the student's departmental file;
3. have selected a program committee and develop a program of study with approval by their advisor; and
4. be enrolled for a minimum of one semester hour of credit during the semester in which the Oral Comprehensive Examination is administered; and
5. submit department application to take the exam by set due date (usually the first week of the semester).

*A student enrolled in more than six (6) hours of course work during the term (excluding Internship and Professional Portfolio hours) must seek approval from all core School Psychology faculty.

Guidelines for the Educational Specialist Oral Comprehensive Examination (OCE)

OCE Content

The student's program committee will conduct the OCE. Each committee member will be given an opportunity to question the student. Additionally, the faculty will ask questions relevant to the field of psychology, school psychology, and other course requirements for completion of the Educational Specialist degree in Education with a concentration in School Psychology. The student is expected to demonstrate knowledge in the 10 domains areas listed on pages 2-3 of the handbook. The student will be expected to demonstrate this knowledge across four questions: (a) data-based decision making and accountability at the student and system levels; (b) interventions, instructional support and preventive services for academic, behavioral, social and life skills; (c) consultation and collaboration at the individual and system levels; and (d) basic foundational service delivery to promote diversity, legal, ethical and professional practice. In addition to a thorough understanding of concepts, the student will be expected to demonstrate (a) thorough familiarity with psychology and school psychology literature; (b) understanding of the relationships among the various areas of related fields; (c) general knowledge and training including the ability to apply, synthesize, and evaluate relevant knowledge; and (d) specific professional orientation to the field of psychology. Adequate performance in the OCE requires the ability to think quickly, orally express ideas and thoughts fluently and competently, and express opinions in a well-articulated, logical, and comprehensible manner.

OCE Process

The Oral Comprehensive Examination (OCE) will be scheduled tentatively at the beginning of each semester by the school faculty. The student will receive a notification from the School Psychology program coordinator that he/she is eligible to take the exam (no less than 4 weeks prior to the exam). The OCE will be conducted by the student's educational specialist program committee. To perform well on the OCE, the student will need to be able to think quickly, express ideas and thoughts fluently and competently, and express opinions in a well-articulated, logical, and comprehensive manner.

The student's program committee will meet immediately at the completion of the student's OCE to evaluate the student's performance across all aspects of the examination process. The committee will determine whether the student's performance shows adequate understanding of the required knowledge- and skill-base to be allowed to apply for internship. If the faculty agree that the student has all appropriate knowledge/skills for successful completion of internship, they will provide the student with documentation to show successful completion of the OCE and will give permission for the School Psychology program coordinator to provide a letter of program support for the student to engage in the internship experience.

Withdrawal from OCE

A student may elect to withdraw from the OCE process prior to the scheduled time. If the student elects to withdraw from the OCE process, the student must provide a notification in writing via email or letter to his/her major advisor and the program coordinator prior to the scheduled time. **Any student who elects to withdraw from the OCE process will be required to contact the program coordinator to schedule an alternative time.**

OCE Grading Process

The student's program committee will evaluate the student using the attached scoring rubric. Grading will be obtained in the following manner: The faculty will independently score the student's oral responses to all questions collectively. The Total Score will be averaged across all graders. A mean Total Score of 2 or above is considered passing. ***If there is evidence or suspicion of academic dishonesty, then the student's actions will be reported to MSU Student Honor Code Office.*** Any student who fails to participate in OCE at the scheduled time and fails to submit a notification of withdrawal in writing will receive a score of non-pass.

Evaluation Criteria for the Educational Specialist Oral Comprehensive Examination

The program committee and the School Psychology Program core faculty will evaluate the students across four major areas with regard to the OCE which include the following:

- 1. Provide an Understanding of Conceptual Framework for Oral Defense (20%).** Provide an introduction of the topic, a brief rationale for the importance of the topic, and review of the major components. The conceptual framework identifies the major concepts and shows their relationships to one another. **The goal of this component is to demonstrate the ability to provide an overview of a topic and that the overview will prepare and guide the listener for the elements to follow within the oral defense.**
- 2. Reference Major Theories, Models, Concepts, and Terms in Oral Defense (20%).** The student should provide an expanded discussion of the major theories, theoretical framework, professional models, state/federal regulations, and basic concepts related to the topic. The student should clearly integrate key theories and research models as appropriate to the topic. Finally, the student should discuss any important key terms used in this literature base and may include professional jargon, technical language, or specific words or phrases unique to the topic. **The goal of this component is to succinctly identify and examine key aspects (e.g., theories, models, concepts) as a foundation for the topic.**

3. **Reference Relevant and Important Research Bases and Related Studies in Oral Defense (40%).** The student should discuss relevant key research studies related to the selected topic. When discussing the topic, the student should identify pivotal areas for in-depth coverage and integrate the findings or, perhaps, relevant aspects of the key research in a manner that demonstrates the ability to defend responses with empirical evidence and/or state/federal legislation. **The goal of this component is to exhibit the ability to identify key research, to provide comprehensive coverage of the relevant research on a topic of importance to the student, and integrate this research into an oral response.**
4. **Demonstrate Clarity, Data-based Problem Skills; Well Organized and Integrated Arguments in Oral Defense (20%).** The student should provide an overall summary that integrates all of the important literature into the specific focus on the proposed area. The faculty will also evaluate the student's clarity in presenting oral responses and adherence to adequate use of grammar during oral responses. **The goal of this component is to demonstrate skills relevant to the oral response (e.g., organization and coherence in the oral presentation of information, ability to provide summaries, and adherence to rules of grammar).**

The following scale provides the ratings appropriate to the quality of the required elements:

1 = "Below Expectations": does not meet expectations at the educational specialist level (e.g., the area has not been adequately addressed as outlined within the requirements and goals of the component.

2 = "Meets Expectations": meets expectations at the educational specialist level (e.g., the requirements and goals for the component were adequately addressed.

3 = "Exceeds Expectations": student demonstrates exceptional skill that exceeds expectations for educational specialist students with the G-4 status (e.g., exceptional skill demonstrated with regard to the requirements and goals for the component).

Faculty may choose to use incremental scoring (e.g., 2.5 for areas that meet expectations at a high level). Students will receive the average of the faculty's scores for each component and must attain an overall average threshold of 2.0 "Meets Expectations" or higher to pass the WPE.

Failure to Pass the OCE

If a student fails the OCE, he or she will be required to retake the OCE. Before students take the examination a second time, the student is required to attend a meeting with his or her the advisor to develop, and file with the School Psychology program coordinator, a written remediation plan designed to assist in passing the OCE. This plan may include taking additional course work, auditing courses, scheduling regular meetings with the advisor, completing and summarizing assigned readings, writing position papers, etc. These remediation steps are extremely important and the documented plan with accompanying documentation (as appropriate) will be placed in the student's file. A student who fails the OCE twice will be dismissed from the program.

Appeal Process

If the student fails to pass and wishes to appeal the findings, he or she would have to follow College of Education and MSU guidelines in an attempt to appeal a failed OCE (see the *Graduate Catalog*).

There are a number of policies and rules regarding the OCE. They appear most succinctly in the *Graduate Catalog*. Once again, students are urged to know these rules and policies.



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MSU Student Honor Code

“As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

My signature below indicates that I will adhere to the MSU Student Honor Code and I have carefully and thoroughly read all the requirements outlined in the *MSU School Psychology Program Guidelines for the Educational Specialist Oral Comprehensive Examination*.

Graduate Student's Signature

Date

Major Advisor's Signature

Date

School Psychology
Educational Specialist Oral Examination Evaluation Sheet
 (To be completed by Individual Committee Member)

Student: _____ **Date:** _____

COMPONENT	Rating (1=Below Expectations; 2=Meets Expectations; 3=Exceeds Expectations)				
	Data-Based Decision Making	Interventions and Instructional Supports	Consultation and Collaboration	Diversity & Professional Issues	Ave Rating
Provided an Understanding of Conceptual Framework for Oral Defense (20%).					
Referenced Major Theories, Models, Concepts, and/or Terms in Oral Defense (20%).					
Referenced Relevant and Important Literature Bases, Related Studies, and Key Theorists/Research in Oral Defense (40%).					
Demonstrated Clarity, Data-based Problem Skills; Well Organized and Integrated Arguments in Oral Defense (20%).					
Total Score of Overall Rating					

Comments:

Faculty Reviewer: _____

Educational Specialist
Oral Comprehensive Examination Evaluation Summary Sheet
 (To be completed by Program Examination Coordinator)

Student: _____ **Date:** _____

COMPONENT	RATER					
	1	2	3	4	5	Ave
Provided Conceptual Framework for Oral Defense (20%).						
Referenced Major Theories, Models, Concepts, and Terms in Oral Defense (20%).						
Cited Relevant and Important Literature Bases, Related Studies, and Key Theorists/Research in Oral Defense (40%).						
Demonstrated Clarity, Data-based Problem Skills; Well Organized and Integrated Arguments in Oral Defense (20%).						
Total Score of Overall Rating (Average of the averaged points for each section)						

Comments:

Program Coordinator Signature: _____