



## Comprehensive Exams

### Overview

#### Introduction

This brief overview is designed to assist you with preparing for the written and oral comprehensive exams. It should not be considered a definitive guide, however; you should consult with your class notes and required readings from all courses taken. You may also discuss the exam with the Dean of Academics or other faculty members who are participants in the exams.

Each Master of Arts candidate at The Institute of World Politics is required to take and pass written and oral comp exams in order to be eligible for graduation. Normally, this is done in the candidate's last semester. Students may graduate at the conclusion of any semester (fall, spring, or summer), but the written and oral comps must be completed by the following deadlines:

Fall semester:	November 20
Spring semester:	April 15
Summer semester:	August 15

Students must complete the Comp Exam Sign-Up Form and return it to the Office of Student Affairs in advance of their intended test dates (at least three weeks). The student may offer a date and time for the oral comp exam, and two days and times for the written comp exam. The student is notified of the exam dates once a faculty panel is assembled.

#### Written Comprehensive Exam

The written comp exam is taken first (on campus) and is approximately 4 hours in length. It is divided into two parts: Identifications (2 or 3 sentences each) and Essays (answer 3 total). The Identifications section is a list of 25 terms, historical events, and places that are a part of the IWP curriculum. All 25 of the identifications must be answered. The Essays section of the exam consists of three sets of questions: Part A with two questions on political philosophy (606/608/615 courses), Part B with two questions on your degree program in general (SIS/SNSA/SIA/etc.), and Part C on your specialization (for instance, Intelligence in the SNSA degree). After the time limit is up, you will return the exam to the Office of Student Affairs. To prepare for this exam, you are encouraged to review the syllabi of your courses, class notes, required readings, and the glossary of terms handouts.

It normally takes a few days to have the exam reviewed and scored (it is Pass/Fail). You will receive general feedback on your answers, which will help you as you prepare for the oral comp exam. If you pass the written comp, you will be scheduled for the oral comp exam approx. 1-2 weeks later. If you do not pass the written comp exam, it may be retaken once more in the same semester. However, if you fail it a second time, you must wait 6 months to retake it.

### **Oral Comprehensive Exam**

Upon passing the written comp exam, you will then be scheduled for the oral comp exam. It is intended to be a conversation between you and a panel of faculty members (the panel consists of two professors who are from your program) and will largely cover the essays you wrote in the written comp exam. The exam normally lasts about one hour. You should be familiar with the course content and themes of the Core Curriculum and their specializations, as well, and you will be scored according to your mastery of the skills, knowledge, and values and principles outlined in the M.A. Learning Objectives. You should also be familiar with current events and be able to discuss them in the context of what you have learned in your classes. You are strongly encouraged to review the syllabi of your courses, class notes, and required readings. Please feel free to form study groups to help you prepare for this exam.

Please dress appropriately for the exam! At the conclusion of the oral comp exam, you will leave the room/online meeting while the faculty panel discusses your performance. You will then be called back to listen to the results. The oral comp exam is Pass/Fail. If you pass the exam, you will have satisfied the comp exam requirement. If you do not pass the exam, it must be retaken. You will have one more opportunity to re-take the exam in the same semester. If you fail it a second time, you must wait at least six months to re-take the exam.

#### **To be eligible for the degree, each M.A. student will be required to:**

1. Complete the Application for Graduation (available on-line through Empower) and pay the \$250 graduation fee;
2. Have fulfilled all credit and course requirements for the degree. This includes completing all outstanding Incomplete grades;
3. Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress as outlined in the *Catalog and Student Handbook* (min. 3.00 GPA, etc.);
4. Pass the written and oral comprehensive examinations;
5. Pass a language proficiency exam (for the M.A. in Statecraft and International Affairs only; there is a \$100 testing fee);
6. Complete [financial aid exit counseling](#) (if you received student loans or VA benefits at any time during your studies); and
7. Make sure all tuition and fee balances have been paid in full. Contact Melissa McGuire in the Billing Office at [billing@iwp.edu](mailto:billing@iwp.edu) if you have any questions.

Students who complete all the above requirements are invited to participate in the annual commencement ceremony (in mid May), provided they have no outstanding balances or fees. Additionally, students will not be provided with a diploma or a final transcript until all balances are paid in full. Students may be allowed to participate in the Commencement ceremony with an Incomplete grade, or if the student is completing his/her program in the immediate Summer semester. Participation in the Commencement ceremony does not imply graduation. Degrees are conferred three times per year: at the annual Commencement in mid May, August 31, and December 31.