

For the “essay” style comprehensive exam in the School of Information, Ph.D. students will write a literature review article and defend that review in an oral exam. The research area reviewed must bridge multiple areas of Information studies, must systematically organize and review published research in the area, and must identify the key challenges and future directions for the area. The process is as follows:

1. Students prepare a comprehensive exam proposal, which, in 3 pages or less, includes the following sections.

- Introduction: introduces the research area they plan to review,
- Breadth of the review: explains why the area is of importance in Information studies, and how the review will cover the foci required for a comprehensive exam:
 - a. Theories relevant to their fields.
 - b. at least two of the primary areas covered in the core curriculum (ethics and policy, diversity, culture, and society, information/data organization and access/use, management, communication, team dynamics, and leadership, human- computer interaction [including game design and development, VR, robotics], data science [machine learning, visualization], and informatics and information systems)
 - c. Quantitative and qualitative research method(s), and comprehensive study design (both empirical and other study design)
- Method: describes their methodology for selecting articles for the survey,
- Example articles: lists several example articles to be reviewed, including any specified by student's committee, and
- Proposed timeline: provides an estimate of how long it will take to complete the survey, typically 4-6 weeks, and no longer than a semester. Students may find summer a suitable time for completing the review.

2. Students identify their comprehensive exam committee, each of which must approve the comprehensive exam proposal before the student may register their committee on GradPath.

3. Students select 15-45 articles/books and write the literature review, typically 8,000 - 12,000 words. The literature review is expected to critique the methods (e.g., data collection, research methods, experiment design, result analysis, analytic reasoning etc.) used in the articles being reviewed. When completed, the student sends the article to all members of the comprehensive exam committee. The committee will review the article and provide comments, just like journal reviewers would. The outcome may be “accepted”, “minor revision”, or “major revision”. If the outcome is “accepted” or “minor revision”, the student proceeds to step 4. If the outcome is major revision, the student must revise the article according to the committee's comments and achieve an outcome of “accepted” or “minor revision”; otherwise, the student has failed the comprehensive exam.

4. After passing the written part, students schedule an oral exam on GradPath, typically 2-4 weeks from the date at which the final article was sent to the committee. The oral exam is closed to the public. The outcome is either “pass” or “fail”. If the outcome is “pass”, the student proceeds to step 5. If the outcome is “fail”, the student must re-take the oral exam and achieve an outcome of “pass”; otherwise, the student has failed the comprehensive exam. [The Graduate College allows no more than one re-take of the oral exam.](#)

5. After passing the oral exam, the student is encouraged to give a brown bag/work in progress presentation of their literature review in the iSchool. The student may voluntarily deposit their literature review into the iSchool Ph.D Comp Exam bank, which will be used to help future students prepare for their comprehensive exams.

Note: The minor portion of the comprehensive exam may require a different process, depending on the minor department's requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to understand and alert their major adviser of minor exam requirements and also about minor department expectations for a combined or separate exam.