

**Department of Child Development
MA – Child Development Option
Examination Option
Student Manual
Spring, 2009**

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Department of Child Development
MA – Child Development
Examination Option

The exam option for the MA degree in CHDV was created to provide students with another option for completing their culminating experience. This option may be suitable for a variety of students, but not for all. The option is designed to be as rigorous an experience as other culminating experience options. It is also designed to be consistent with our mission for the graduate program and for students to feel proud of their accomplishment in passing the exam and the knowledge base that comes with such a distinction.

This student handbook describes procedures and policies related to the comprehensive exam option. These procedures are effective Fall, 2009 and may be adjusted in subsequent years. Please consult the most recent manual for updated information on the exam option.

Overview of Exam Option

The exam option consists of the following components.

- The exam will consist of 4 essay questions based on readings selected by the faculty to test knowledge in each of the following areas: (a) *Theories and Social or Cognitive development*, (b) *Research Methods in Child Development across a range of ages*, (c) *Cross-Cultural Issues in Cognitive or Social development*, and (d) faculty approved *Individual Focal Area*. Questions will be based on a faculty-approved reading list.
- The exam will be created, administered and scored by an examination committee made up of four faculty including graduate coordinator, the 292 instructor and other tenured or tenure-track faculty as needed.
- Students will take a 2-semester long culminating experience sequence (CHDV 292 and CHDV 505) similar in structure to the department's current thesis/project option. During the 292 semester, students will receive the reading list for the exam and work on exam preparation and practice questions. Each student will submit an exam petition (similar to thesis/project petition) to be reviewed and approved by the departmental exam committee. Students will enroll in CHDV 505 the following (spring) semester. The exam will be administered in the 5th week of the 505 semester with an opportunity to re-take failed question(s) at an administration later in the semester.
- The exam will be administered on campus in a computer lab over two (4-hour) days, two questions per day. No other resources will be provided except for a clean copy of the reading list.
- Grading will be based on both writing and content, and a passing score will require successful integration of the material required for that question. Each response will be read by at least two graders from the exam committee, using a 5-point rubric. All questions must receive a passing score for the student to pass the exam.

Exam Format and Content

The exam will consist of 4 essay questions testing knowledge in each of the target areas:

- (a) *Theories and Social or Cognitive Development*,
- (b) *Research Methods in Child Development*
- (c) *Cross-Cultural Issues in Cognitive or Social development*, and
- (d) *Individual Focal Area* chosen from existing core or elective coursework, e.g., motivation, language, curriculum, etc.

The first three exam questions will be based on a reading list reflecting material covered in foundation courses and other seminal readings in Child Development. Readings for the individual focal area will be proposed by each individual student in an exam petition and approved by the faculty.

Potential exam questions will be compiled by the exam committee, with questions for the focal area drawn from each student's exam petition. Students will be provided with sample questions for each area prior to the exam with exam questions for a given administration selected by the exam committee.

Students will be provided with a reading list composed of core readings from Foundation courses with possible additions of seminal readings. Readings will be solicited by faculty teaching graduate coursework and compiled by the graduate committee and/or examination committee. The final reading list for a given administration will be approved by the faculty as a whole, and be available to the student at the beginning of the 292 semester.

Student Preparation

Unlike the thesis/project option, Exam option students will not have an individual sponsor to supervise the exam process. Instead, the exam will be conducted by an examination committee made up of four faculty, including the graduate coordinator, CHDV 292 instructor and additional faculty as needed. To prepare for the exam, students will take a 2-semester long culminating experience (CHDV 292 and CHDV 505) similar in structure to the department's current thesis/project option

CHDV 292 is a CR/CR course that includes test preparation and tips, writing instruction, practice exam questions, community building with other students, and development of an individual focal topic.

During the 292 semester, each student will submit an exam petition to be reviewed and approved by the exam committee. The petition includes the following: (a) a short justification for the significance of the topic, (b) an annotated bibliography for the focal topic including at least 20 scholarly references, (c) five specific references for which the student will be responsible on the exam, and (d) four questions for consideration by the exam committee to use as the focal question on the exam. The petition is to be turned in for review by the exam committee during or before November 1st and must be approved by the exam committee, much like a petition for the thesis/project is approved.

During the 14th week of the 292 semester, students will be given 8 questions (2 per topic area) from which their exam will be created. Passing CHDV 292 requires completion of assignments to the instructor's satisfaction.

Students will enroll in **CHDV 505** the following (spring) semester. Students are not provided with explicit instruction during this time. Although they may write practice answers, they may not ask faculty for specific feedback on sample responses. This time is simply for them to think and practice and write. Entrance into the exam semester (CHDV 505) requires an approved exam petition and a passing grade in CHDV 292.

The exam will be offered in two parts during the semester. During Part One, offered during the 5th week of the semester, students will take the exam. If all questions do not receive a passing grade, students will participate in Part Two, a second administration that will include only the questions they failed with 2 hours allotted per question. This second administration will occur during the 12th week of the semester. Passing CHDV 505 requires successful completion of the examination (see below for specific criteria for "pass").

In order to ensure students take the exam at the end of their program, CHDV 505 will have as prerequisite completion of all foundation course work and advancement to candidacy. In rare cases, students who have finished **all** of their required coursework in the program may be able to enroll in CHDV 505 together with CHDV 292 in the fall semester, then take the exam in the following semester while enrolled in Continuing Education Credits. Such an exception will be permitted on a case-by case basis by the graduate committee.

Exam Administration and Evaluation

The exam is offered once each year in the Spring semester. The exam will be administered on campus in a computer lab over two days. On the first day, students will be given the Theory and Cross-Cultural questions and will have 4 hours to prepare, write, and edit their responses on a computer terminal. On day two, students will be given the Method and Focal questions and will have 4 hours to prepare, write, and edit their responses. At the conclusion of each day, students will provide the proctor (graduate coordinator or designate) with a printed copy of their 2 responses (stapled separately) and save them separately on a disk submitted to the proctor. No further editing will be permitted. Students will be given a clean copy of the full reading list prior to administration of the exam to use as needed during the exam. No other written materials may be used, and internet access to the computer terminals will be blocked during the exam.

The Graduate Coordinator will collect all responses and distribute them amongst the examination committee for blind review. Grading will be based on both writing and content, and a passing score will require successful integration of the material required for that question. Grading criteria will include citing evidence from the reading list. Specifically, students need to cite empirical sources by author and year according to APA Style.

Each response will be read by at least two graders from the exam committee, using a 5-point rubric (see appendix). Graders will complete a grading sheet with comments. Grading sheets will be kept in students' departmental files.

Each question will be scored separately. Scores on the 5-point scale from the two graders will be averaged with a mean score of 3.5 considered passing. If the scores for the two graders differ by more than 1 point (e.g., 4.5 and 2.50) or if there is a discrepancy that results in a failing grade (e.g., 2.5 and 3.50), a third member of the committee will be asked to read the response to resolve the discrepancy. To pass the exam, ALL questions from all four areas must receive a passing score. Scores on all four questions will be summed and students passing the exam and receiving a total score of 17 or above on the first administration will be awarded a "Pass with Distinction."

Questions that are failed can be retaken during part two of the administration of the exam, given later in the same semester. If at least 3 questions are passed at the second administration the student has the option of retaking 505 during the following year. If fewer than 3 questions are passed after the first 505 semester, the student will not be permitted to retake the exam. After failing the exam twice (taking 505 two times and not passing all questions), students will not be permitted to take the exam as their culminating experience (per university policy).

Students will be notified of their scores and status within 4 weeks of taking the exam. The Graduate Coordinator will send letters to all students informing them of their status.

APPENDIX

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**MASTERS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
EXAM OPTION (CHDV 505) RESERVATION FORM**

Brighton Hall 137
Phone: (916) 278-7192

Complete this form to reserve a space in CHDV 505 (Culminating Exam). This form is due in the department office (BRH 135) by **October 15th** for Spring registration.

NOTE: Advancement to Candidacy is required prior to acceptance of the reservation form.

Name _____

Advancement to Candidacy date _____

Student ID _____

Address _____ Phone W _____

City/State/Zip _____ H _____

Email: _____

CHDV 292 Semester registered _____ Completed? Yes No

Semester of desired enrollment: Spring 20____

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Graduate Coordinator Signature _____ Date _____

**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**MASTERS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
CULMINATING EXAM PETITION COVER PAGE**

Brighton Hall 137
Phone: (916) 278-7192

Note: This form is due by **November 1st** for consideration for Spring exam administration exam.

Name _____

Student ID _____

Address _____ Phone W _____

City/State/Zip _____ H _____

Email: _____

Requested semester of registration in CHDV 505: Spring _____

Date of Advancement to Candidacy _____

The following signatures are required. See dept. web page for detailed information about petition guidelines. Submit 1 (hard) copy of your petition to the department by the deadline, along with an electronic copy, via email to graduate coordinator.

Student _____

CHDV 292 Instructor _____

For Department use Only

Date form received in Dept. _____

Date approved by committee _____ Graduate Coordinator _____

SCORING RUBRIC

SCORE	Ideas	Organization	Support	Style/Mechanics
5 - Excels in responding to question	Central idea(s) clearly communicated and terms clearly defined. Demonstrates sophistication of thought.	Uses a logical structure appropriate to audience and discipline. Effective and sophisticated transitional sentences often develop one idea from the previous one or identify their logical relations. Guides the reader through the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas.	Uses research evidence appropriately and effectively, providing sufficient evidence and explanation to convince.	Word choice is precise and at an appropriate level of specificity. Sentences are clearly structured and carefully focused, not long and rambling. Almost entirely free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. Adheres well to APA style conventions.
4 - Solid essay, responding appropriately to question.	Clearly states central idea(s), but may have minor lapses in development. Some acknowledgement of the complexity of idea(s) and other points of view. Shows careful reading of sources, but may be somewhat limited in its evaluation. Is usually successful defining terms.	Shows a logical progression of ideas and uses fairly sophisticated transitional devices; some logical links may be faulty, but each paragraph clearly relates to essay's central idea(s).	Offers some research and logical support for points, using multiple sources. Makes some attempt to interpret the evidence and explain connections between evidence and main ideas.	Generally uses terms accurately and effectively, but may sometimes be too general. Sentences generally clear, well structured, and focused, though some may be awkward or ineffective. May contain a few grammatical or APA style errors, which do not impede understanding.
3 - Adequate essay.	Presents central idea(s) in general terms, and is somewhat weak in development of ideas. Shows basic comprehension of sources, perhaps with lapses in understanding, and/or insufficient or overly general definition of terms.	May list ideas or arrange them in random order rather than using a logical structure; transitions are likely to be sequential (first, second, third) rather than logic-based. While each paragraph may relate to central idea, connections between paragraphs are not always clear and arrangement of sentences within paragraphs may sometimes lack coherence.	Some dependence on unsupported opinion or personal experience; fails to cite research and theory in support of ideas, or cites ineffectively. Often uses generalizations or irrelevant examples to support points. Some lapses in logic.	Uses relatively vague and general language. Sentence structure is generally correct, but some sentences may be wordy, unfocused, repetitive, or confusing. Usually contains several mechanical or APA errors, which may temporarily confuse the reader but do not impede overall understanding.

SCORE	Ideas	Organization	Support	Style/Mechanics
2 - Weaker, less effective essay.	Does not have a clear central idea or does not respond appropriately to the question. Thesis may be too vague to be developed effectively. May misunderstand sources.	Shows random organization, lacking internal paragraph coherence and using few or inappropriate transitions. Paragraphs may lack statement of main ideas, or may be too general or too specific to be effective.	Often uses overgeneralizations to support points, or offers little evidence. May rely on personal narrative, or rely solely on summary, rather than analysis.	Usually contains several awkward or ungrammatical sentences; sentence structure is simple or monotonous. Usually contains either many mechanical errors or a few important errors that block the reader's understanding and ability to see connections between thoughts. Often fails to adhere to APA style conventions.
1 - Inadequate essay.	Does not respond to the question, lacks a thesis or central idea, and may neglect to use sources where necessary	No appreciable organization; lacks transitions and coherence.	Uses irrelevant details or lacks supporting evidence entirely. May be unduly brief.	Usually contains many awkward sentences, misuses words, employs inappropriate language. Usually contains so many mechanical errors that it is impossible for the reader to follow the thinking from sentence to sentence. Typically fails to adhere to APA style conventions.

Adapted from: <http://www.winona.edu/AIR/documents/termpaper.pdf>