

Overview of Mind and Language Comprehensive Examinations

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

1 The exams

The Mind and Language Field offers two comprehensive exams:

1. The Mind Comprehensive Exam

- Reading list & Sample Exam can be found here: http://uwo.ca/philosophy/graduate/phd_program/requirements/comp_exams.html

2. The Language Comprehensive Exam

- Reading list & Sample Exam can be found here: http://uwo.ca/philosophy/graduate/phd_program/requirements/comp_exams.html

Each exam has a distinct reading list. Students are responsible for knowing all the material on the reading list of the exam they wish to take.

2 Exam format

Each Mind and Language Comprehensive Exam contains eight questions. Students must answer any four of these eight questions.

Students may choose between the following two exam formats:

1. A four-hour sit-down exam.
2. A 24 hour take-home exam with an additional 30-45 minute oral component. The oral component will focus on issues arising from the written exam. However, the examiners may ask questions related to any of the material on the exam's reading list. The oral component will normally be completed no more than one week after the take-home exam is written. Students must successfully pass both the written and oral component in order to pass the exam.

3 Assessment

Exams will receive one of the following grades:

- Pass
- Fail
- Pass with Distinction

Normally, each answer in the written portion of an exam must be of satisfactory quality in order for the exam to receive a passing grade. However, in extraordinary circumstances, other answers or exceptional performance in an oral component can make up for an unsatisfactory answer.

Each comprehensive exam is assessed by a subcommittee consisting of active members of the Mind and Language Area Committee. The identity of the author of the exam will be withheld from the committee until a decision has been reached. The Chair of the Mind and Language Area Committee will inform the exam's author of the subcommittee's assessment as soon as possible after a decision has been reached.

The membership of the Mind and Language Area Committee is available at: <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/graduate/areas/mind.html>

4 Exam offerings

The Mind and Language Comprehensive Exams will normally be offered three times a year, in March, May, and August.

5 Tips

- The optional readings include textbooks that will help you orient yourself in the relevant literature and understand the significance of the items on the reading list. Consulting these textbooks is highly recommended.
- Answer questions directly. Do not include irrelevant information. Your exam will be assessed on how well you answer the questions asked, not on how much you appear to know about material on the reading list irrelevant to the question you are answering.
- The exams aim to assess competency in the relevant areas. As a result, questions will tend to be directed at the most important contributions of items on the relevant reading lists. It is more important to understand the core positions and arguments than to achieve a detailed understanding of every part of each reading.
- Exam questions will often ask you to explain and evaluate a position or an argument. Your evaluations need not be original and may be tentative.
- Students who have questions or concerns about the Mind and Language Comprehensive Exam should contact the Chair of the Mind and Language Area Committee.

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