UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES
COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
DATA-GATHERING FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

Fall 2010

Were the comprehensive exam questions representative of the content included in the learning experiences undertaken during your master’s program (not necessarily in any specific class)?

Yes=4

No. For example, I don’t recall the term “marketplace of ideas” ever being discussed in a class.

Not necessarily. I am finishing the program after nearly four years. The questions were difficult for me to answer simply because the environment is changing so rapidly. Class requirements/information as well as technology are changing at record speeds. This needs to be addressed in the comprehensive exam program.

Was the wording of each of the exam questions easy for you to understand?

Yes=5

No. The questions lacked specificity, so there was too much room for interpretation. I thought I answered one of the questions just fine, but I failed it. I haven’t yet received the comments on my answers from the evaluating team, so I assume that I misinterpreted the questions, didn’t write enough pages, etc. It all seems very subjective to me.

Did you attend a comprehensive orientation session? No=4 Yes=2

If your answer is yes, did the session appropriately represent the faculty expectations of student responses on the comprehensive exam questions?

No, I do not think it is clear what the faculty expect in the answer except for clarity and details.

Yes=1

Do you have suggestions that could help SLIS improve the comprehensive exam process for students?

Be more clear in the beginning of program orientation about the philosophy and reasoning behind comps compared to other end of program assessments and let students know that the kind of synthesis required to prepare for comps can be very rewarding for them and should not be looked on as a joyless task to be completed. This is necessary to make an informed choice early rather than simply defaulting to comps in lieu of other options.

I think there should be more set guidelines on how each question is graded and students should know beforehand.

No.
Yes. Modernize this program and scrap the current comps procedure. A take-home exam research paper would be more in-line with the type of class work that is expected from LIS students in the OU program. Better yet, nix comps and encourage students to choose the portfolio option.

If the current comps procedure is retained, take a page from Research Methods and write very explicit questions with clear expectations – even page length. Do not ask for opinions or original thought from the students, as original thought is not encouraged or fostered in the OU LIS program. Do not force students who failed comps to go through the process again without allowing them an oral defense opportunity or having the evaluating team orally defend why it failed a student’s answers.

Consider thoughtfully the impact of rapidly changing technology and information given and understood by the students when writing and grading the exam.