UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
DATA-GATHERING FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

Spring 2008

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)?

Somewhat, the required answers to the questions seemed not to be covered adequately in the courses/

Yes.

Somewhat. I think there should have been another broad question. Several of the questions were centered on a specific class, and without having very specific knowledge of that class the questions were difficult to answer.

Yes, you should know these things if you’re a graduate of this program.

Not all of them. The last question, in particular, which had to do with the definitions of an information society, a knowledge society, and a network society. I studies for three months before the comprehensive exam and thoroughly reviewed notes from every class I took. I cannot remember learning about a network society in any of my classes.

Yes, some of the exam questions were representative of the content covered in the classes taken during my master’s program. A couple of the questions I did not feel that I could answer from the content that I remember covering in my classes, but I thought maybe that content would have been covered in classes I did not take.

Yes.

Yes.

Not entirely. One concept in particular – the network society – was never discussed or mentioned in courses. The rest of the topics on the exam were mostly representative of things learned during the program.

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

No, but the content needed in the questions was not specified such as with the open access question needing a discussion of publishers.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.
The question regarding planning for a professional development program was a little unclear as to whether the correct answer should include the collection development program you would create or a discussion of the process used in creating it.

Yes.

**Did you attend a comprehensive orientation session?** Yes = 5; No = 3

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

Somewhat, the faculty expectations seemed peripheral, without an concrete disclosure.

Yes.

I did attend a session in the past, but not the one during the same semester. I did feel prepared for the exam as far as what to expect.

Yes.

I attended an orientation session. No, the session did not appropriately represent faculty expectations for the exam. Since there are not examples of passing essays, students have no idea how best to approach questions, and must take advice from previous graduates. The majority of this advice (as well as the advice from the orientation and handbook) urges the student to go into as much detail as possible, and to draw in concepts from at least two core classes, as well as on–the–job experiences and real-life implications of concepts in the questions. The questions on this exam were very specific to one course or another, especially the information behavior question. Students who attempted to eave in materials from other areas were graded poorly because of it. This is a huge contradiction, and feels sneaky and dishonest on the part of the faculty.

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

One suggestion would be a graded course for students taking the comprehensive exam, in which the students practice questions and receive more information on the exam. Secondly, the questions could be tried out on incoming students to discover the direction students might take on the question.

No.

Perhaps giving examples of passing answers would be helpful. I found the example questions to be helpful, but without knowledge of what an appropriate answer is it is difficult to formulate an appropriate answer.

More comfortable chairs in the computer lab! And I would suggest taking comps closer around the time that the core classes are taken and maybe different exams for different types of librarians. E.g., school, public, academic.

All five questions should be distinctly different. Questions 1 and 3 on the test I took were too similar and I worried that I was repeating myself as I answered the third question. There were many important issues we learned about over the course of the program that were totally left out of the exam. The questions on the last test were far different than any of the previous exam questions I studied. As I studied questions from tests from the past four years in preparation for the exam, I noticed many similar types of questions. I even categorized the questions as I studied. The questions on the exam I took were not similar to any of the previous questions. I also noted that the questions on the last test were much more specific than the questions on past exams.
A thirty-minute break in the middle might help reduce the stress. It would mean more time to think about the questions and the slight chance of someone looking something up, or talking about the questions—but maybe if you had an initial set of questions for before the break and a second set for afterwards.

No.

With graduates’ permission, make previous graded answers available to future test takers, so students will have a better idea what to do and what not to do on their exams. Students who take a core class with one instructor have no way of knowledge what changes are made by another instructor, and are out of luck if the comp questions reflect materials learned in another version of the course. If several professors teach a core class, and there are variations among each professor’s course content and assigned readings, make copies of each version of the syllabus available to students. If the instructors cannot be bothered to make this small concession to the students, then students should be advised during the orientation session of these differences, and should be provided a way to request all versions of core class syllabi. A great effort should be made to create high-quality questions that students may answer using a variety of core class knowledge and real-world experience. The questions on this exam were far too course-specific and narrow for many students to answer successfully. Since the LIS field changes so rapidly, and these changes are reflected in new comp question each semester, the lists of previously-asked questions are far less helpful than most students realize. Either stop providing this list, or include a caveat as to its ineffectiveness.