



MASTERS OF ARTS IN EDUCATION: ECE OPTION
ECE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION STUDY GUIDE

Spring 2020

A graduate student who has successfully advanced to candidacy and is in the final semester of the ECE Graduate Program may choose to take the ECE Comprehensive Examination (ECE Exam) (0 units) as an alternative to the ECE Project or Thesis (3 units). The exam is a 10 day written test. You may use any notes, readings, or resources to respond to the exam.

Qualifying for the ECE Exam:

1. Be a currently enrolled student at Fresno State.
2. Make sure that Dr. Heather Horsley, ECE Program Coordinator has cleared you to take the exam this semester.
3. Register for ECE Comprehensive Exam with the ECE Coordinator.
4. Attend ECE Comprehensive Exam Orientation and get organized and prepared to take the exam by the Exam Dates.
5. Receive ECE Comprehensive Exam questions via email. Select 3 of the four questions to respond to in 10 days. You can use your notes, readings, and other resources to complete the exam.
6. Repeat testing on any question that was not passed. There are three exam sittings per semester.

Exam Dates:

Attempt*	Questions Sent via Email	Responses Due via Email	Notification Date via Email
1	February 29, 2020	March 9, 2020	March 17, 2020
2	March 24, 2020	March 30, 2020	April 14, 2020
3	April 18, 2020	April 27, 2020	May 5, 2020

NAEYC Program Assessment:

The ECE Exam is a cumulative program assessment as required by NAEYC. Therefore each question specifically addresses one or more of the required NAEYC standards and are listed with the question. In order to pass the question, your response to the question must specifically address each standard. You may wish to indicate the standard being discussed by using a heading or referring to a specific standard in parenthesis. The NAEYC standards addressed by the ECE Exam are as follows:

STANDARD 1. PROMOTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

1a: Knowing and understanding young children’s characteristics and needs, from birth thru age 8.

1b: Knowing and understanding the multiple influences on development and learning.

STANDARD 2. BUILDING FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

2a: Knowing about and understanding diverse family and community characteristics.

STANDARD 5. USING CONTENT KNOWLEDGE TO BUILD MEANINGFUL CURRICULUM

5b: Knowing and using the central concepts, inquiry tools, and structures of content areas or academic disciplines.

ECE Exam Questions:

The ECE Exam consists of three questions—choice of 3 of 4 essay questions. You must prepare a response for 3 questions. Each essay requires a response that is five double-spaced pages or more. The questions are intended to cover all of the ECE core courses including textbooks, lectures, articles, etc. However you will need to do additional research to respond to each question. In your response, you need to cite the year and author in text when discussing specific theory or research using APA Manual 6th edition to guide your citations. You must also include a references list for all the works your cited for each question. Use OWL at Purdue for guidance <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Scoring the Exam:

In addition to the ECE Exam Questions you will receive the ECE Exam Rubrics that will be used to score each of the exam questions. Use the rubric as a guide for checking your response draft or outline for completeness.

Each exam question is scored by ECE faculty readers who use a scoring rubric with a 3-point scale, with 1 being the lowest score and 3 being the highest score. **Students must receive a rating of at least 2 on each rubric item for each of the ECE Exam Questions in order to pass the ECE Exam.** Students have three attempts to pass the exam. In scoring the questions on the ECE Exam, only an ID number is on the response to ensure objectivity.

How to Prepare for the Essays and Pass Exam:

Comprehensive exams require thorough advanced preparation and study prior to taking the test. No less than 15 hours of study time is recommended.

Review textbooks, class notes, handouts, etc. You will also need to go to the library and find additional research in order to assess your ability to use inquiry methods. Prepare citations, in advance.

While studying, make a simple outline of the key ideas you have explored through the course of the program. You may want to collaborate with colleagues to map the big ideas onto the NAEYC Standards using this [document for guidance](#).

During exam, begin by answering the easiest question. This will lessen frustration and build confidence.

Jot down ideas from your outline that immediately come to mind. Especially noting the specific vocabulary and concepts that you want to include that relate to the courses indicated for the question.

Develop an outline for each response to help bring organization to your written responses.

During the exam, be sure to keep track of time. While you should spend more time on questions that are more demanding, balance the amount of time per question so that you answer all three essay questions.

Before submitting your responses, read your answers a final time in order to check for grammatical errors and misspellings.

Words To Watch For In Essay Questions:

The following components are necessary for responding successfully to exam essay test questions that require an extended, scholarly argument. Understanding the terms below is essential to your essay response. If you want to do well on essay tests, then study these terms. To heighten your awareness of them, organize your study notes for **each question according to this format.**

HELPFUL ESSAY TERMS FOR PASSING THE EXAM

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Define: <u>Define each technical term included in the question.</u></p> | <p>Give the meaning; usually a meaning specific to the course or subject. Determine the precise limits of the term to be defined. Explain the exact meaning. Definitions are usually brief.</p> |
| <p>2. Outline: <u>List the key areas you plan to cover in your essay response.</u></p> | <p>The outline assists both the reader and you the writer in knowing the areas that are going to be covered in the essay. Outlining does not mean a Roman numeral/letter outline, but bullets or numbering may be useful. Refer to your outline as you work to help you stay focused and finish on time by allocating your time appropriately to the most important areas of the response.</p> |
| <p>3. Contextualize: <u>Provide historical background, informative theories that need to be considered for a thoughtful response.</u></p> | <p>At the beginning, provide background and reasons why this is an important question for ECE professionals. Include the order of events or progress in addressing a problem area or event.</p> |

4. Describe: Explain precisely and in *detail*.

Describe main ideas, characteristics, or events. Give a detailed explanation of the importance of concepts, ideas, research, etc. Make a picture with words. List characteristics, qualities, and parts. For a research study, list the authors, year of study. Describe purpose, setting, subjects, methods and measures and findings.

5. Give Examples: Provide examples from your own experience or one you have read or heard about.

Examples are critical to demonstrating your deeper understanding of concepts, ideas and research findings beyond rote knowledge. Examples help the reader to “know that you know” what you are talking about and what you mean to say.

6. Discuss: Review and discuss the relevant literature.

Be sure to present different views and conflicting findings. Consider and debate or argue the pros and cons of an issue. Write about the differences or conflicting views. Compare and contrast.

7. Criticize: Make judgments about theories and research and their applicability to ECE programs and young children

Criticism often involves analyzing the strengths and limitations of research. Support your position on the issue.

8. Relate: Show the connections between ideas, events and previous research.

Provide a larger context and the importance of these ideas to improving ECE practice.

9. Evaluate: Give your opinion or cite the opinion of an expert.

Evaluate comparative worth of research, interventions, programs, approaches, etc. Support your evaluation with information, facts and research evidence.

10. Summarize: Give a brief summary of your response.

Include conclusions. Avoid unnecessary detail.

More Tips for a Successful Exam Period:

1. Avoid cramming. Instead, spread out study sessions days or weeks before the test and work on your responses each day; you will have less stress.
2. Think about your major courses. What were the BIG TAKE-AWAYS? What do you know now, that you didn't know before you took that course? How did taking that course change your perspective?
3. Prepare to relate theory to practice in your responses.
4. Be sure to have real-life good examples ready for each questions. Examples help demonstrate your point and show that you know how to apply information you have learned in courses or from reading the research.
5. Over the study period, organize your study area to reduce interference. Study in the same place, as often as possible.
6. Form a study group before the exam that meets several times during the study period.
7. Teach what you know to someone else in the group. If you can teach the material to someone then you can be sure that you know it well.
8. You have already passed your major courses. You already know a lot! However, you can still make an effort to 'overlearn' your question responses. Then during the exam period, your response will flow, with more automaticity.
9. Relax and have adequate sleep during the exam period. Being rested is very important. You are likely to recall more of what you have learned if you are awake and alert.
10. Eat well. Watch your caffeine and junk food intake. Small, frequent high protein meals will help energize you.
11. Remember, routines are comforting. Do what comforts you during the exam period.

Final Comments

ECE graduate students who have taken the exam all have found it to be a rewarding, although intensive experience. Because it covers the course work, it allows students to organize, synthesize, and analyze ECE research. As ECE leaders, they feel prepared to present research and teach others the major theories and concepts and to recommend best practices for ECE programs.