

Special Education Comprehensive Exam Overview

- **Advice from the Special Education Faculty**

By now you should be well on the road for the BIG exam day. Rest assured that if you are feeling anxious at this point, you are not alone. The following suggestions should help alleviate some of the anxiety – but remember a little anxiety is a good thing.

- **Suggestion #1**

Review the study guide that is provided for the general content portion of the exam. Be sure to review the course material for the general questions. The 100 question objective assessment of your general knowledge will be administered on BlackBoard. This portion of the exam will be administered first. (This does not apply to Research Emphasis).

- **Suggestion #2**

Most students perform better when they don't try to memorize the answers verbatim. You may waste valuable time and become anxious when you cannot retrieve a specific word or phrase. Instead we suggest you outline each answer including the key points, examples, and references, then practice filling in the narrative. You may want to record your outline on the inside cover of your bluebook at the time of the exam.

- **Suggestion #3**

Practice your response in a bluebook or on a computer, if possible. Students find it useful to conduct a mock exam (i.e., put your questions in a hat, pull out two and answer, take a break and then pull out two more). The more familiar you are with the process, the more comfortable and less anxious you will become.

- **Suggestion #4**

On exam day, plan to use your time carefully so you can answer the questions fully and completely. Be sure to allow enough time to proofread and edit each answer. Every semester someone runs out of time and fails to complete an answer. Don't let it be you!

- **Suggestion #5**

Be sure to read the question carefully and answer each component of each question.

- **Suggestion #6**

Finally, be sure to get plenty of sleep and have a good breakfast before taking the exam (sound familiar?).

- **Suggestion #7: Work as a Team, Write as an Individual**

You may choose to form a study group, but remember that the idea of teamwork only goes so far. You can brainstorm and research together, but the final analysis and writing must be your own.

- **Requirement Reminders:**

- **Requirement #1**

- a. You must prepare in advance a reference list for each question using APA (5th ed.) format to use during the exam (see enclosed *Reference List Example* sheet). Class lecture notes are not an acceptable source- you must identify the original source of the information. Your textbooks are excellent resources, as well as documents from the course packs/links, handouts, and journal articles, especially those that are refereed. Do not list your references at the end of the question; simply enclose the reference list that you have prepared in advance.
- b. You must provide at least three in-text (parenthetical) citations in APA (5th ed.) format within the text of your answer for each question, following the acceptable source guidelines above. For example, Patterson (2001) studied the effects...;...the effects of negative reinforcement (Patterson, 2001). For additional examples, see enclosed *Parenthetical Citation* sheet.

- **Requirement #2**

The quality of your written response is critical to your successful completion of the exam. Be sure that your answer is well formulated and mechanics are free of errors (e.g., punctuation, spelling, grammar, and syntax). Use transition sentences to bridge paragraphs and shifts in discussion points. Take care to fully justify your responses, including examples (when appropriate). Use in-text (parenthetical) citation where appropriate. Dictionaries and thesauruses will be available; please use them. We urge you to consult the comprehensive general information sheet that you will receive with your set of questions and view the Comprehensive Exam PowerPoint Orientation on the website (www.odu.edu/esse) for additional information.

- **Parting Shots**

Good luck to each of you!

If you have any questions feel free to contact Dr. Baker at (757) 683-4383.