

Study Guide
For
Masters of Arts in Special Education
Part I and Part II
Comprehensive Examination

A. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Exam:

1. is conducted on computers.
2. consists solely of essay questions.

Examinees:

1. have up to 4 hours to complete the exam.
2. must select and answer a total of 5 questions (3 for Part I and 2 for Part II).
3. may not use reference materials (e.g., notes, books, dictionaries) during the exam.
4. must include at least 1 citation in each responses.
5. must provide specific examples for each response.

B. WRITING THE EXAMINATION

Thorough preparation will make little difference unless the examinee clearly and concisely communicates his/her thoughts. It is assumed and expected that each examinee has the knowledge and skills to appropriately use standard English. The following suggestions are additionally offered.

1. *Read and follow directions carefully and completely.* A major factor in creating poor responses is an examinee's failure to follow the provided directions. For example, if a question reads "Provide four reasons why...", be sure to include all four reasons rather than 3 or less. If a question call for "Compare and contrast...", do not end with only comparisons.
2. Spend a few minutes thinking about the main points to be included in the answer. Plan the response using an introduction – body – summary – format.
3. Carefully plan and outline each answer, devoting perhaps one-third of the time to planning and outlining.
4. Write complete sentences. Make sure each is clear and concise. Paragraphs should contain several unified sentences and should develop one complete thought.
5. Responses should be factual (supported by known facts on a subject), well-stated (organized and presented in a reasonable manner), and logical (sequencing of items follow a logical pattern). Points will be deducted for unwarranted conclusions, unstated hypotheses, and other omissions or commissions.

6) As stated in the MAE Study Guide, answers must be:

- A. Factual** - when making a statement, the student must support the statement by known facts and appropriate citing of sources.
 - B. Well – stated** - Answers must be well organized, containing all of the elements of a properly written graduate essay.
 - C. Logical** - Essays must be logical in presentation. Points will be deducted for unwarranted conclusions, for unstated hypotheses, and for other omissions or commissions.
 - D. Apt-** essay must clearly, appropriately and suitably respond to the essay prompt.
6. Cite references where appropriate to support responses. Use APA style. Do not confuse references to research, key thinkers in the field, or conceptual frameworks with personal opinion. Do not provide personal opinions unless a question requires it. It is important to develop an explanation that is supported by research.
 7. Emphasize quality rather than quantity.
 8. Read over the entire group of questions before selecting those which will be answered. Be sure to answer the required number of questions. Be aware of time limits and do not spend disproportionate amounts of time on only one response. Usually an individual response will be longer than one page, but rarely longer than two.
 9. Questions will initially be graded by one professor. If the exam is graded as not passing in either the first Part I and/or second Part II section then the exam is read by a second professor. If the second professor also grades the exam as not passing then the student does not pass. If the second professor grades the exam as passing, the exam is read by a third professor who makes the final decision regarding pass or no pass for the exam.
 10. Samples of comprehensive examination questions are listed below.

C. GENERAL TOPICS TO BE COVERED

Questions will be generated in the following areas. Students are required to select the questions that will receive a response. Each student must answer a total of 5 questions (3 for Part I and 2 for Part II) within 4 hours.

Questions may cover more than one of the following areas:

1. Unique learning characteristics of students with specific exceptionalities (mild-moderate and moderate-severe)
2. Emotional, physical, social, and intellectual development of students with specific exceptionalities
3. Implications of legislation such as IDEA and ADA
4. Implication of legal cases such as Brown vs. the Board of Education
5. Positive Behavior Supports for individual and school-wide needs

6. The role and relevance of transitions to adult life for students with exceptionalities
7. Diagnoses and assessment approaches common in the identification of various exceptionalities
8. Remedial reading strategies
9. Assessment, evaluation, and intervention/strategies relevant to language disorders
10. Qualitative and quantitative research designs, compare and contrast the approaches
11. Threats to internal and external validity
12. Interpreting and using assessment results to drive instruction
13. Curricular adaptations and instructional modifications for students with exceptionalities
14. Relationships between identification for special education services and cultural diversity
15. Inclusion philosophies and strategies, and likely barriers to implementation
16. Consultation with general education teachers and administrators
17. Working effectively with parents
18. Practices that facilitate collaboration with peers

D. STUDY MATERIALS

The specific courses required for degree completion are described in the Chapman University College Catalog. Consult the syllabi for recommended texts and materials, and use course notes.

Be sure to stay current regarding recent developments in the field of special education. Journals and recent books are typically the best resources.

If you have additional questions, contact your academic advisor.

E. SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Identify one category of exceptionality found in school populations. Describe three typical learning characteristics of such a learner. Select just one of the learning characteristics and describe methods for teaching a specific task keeping in mind the needs of the individual learner.
2. List the basic assumptions underlying psychological and educational testing.
3. Discuss the pros and cons of using standardized tests to identify culturally diverse students for special education services.

4. Name an individually administered achievement or intelligence test. Explain the conditions regarding how it would be properly administered, scored, and interpreted.
5. Discuss the pros and cons of using punishment as an intervention in the classroom.
6. Name and describe two methods of conducting research. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? Under what conditions would each be appropriate?
7. Discuss the ethical issues related to the use of positive behavior supports in the classroom.
8. Identify three aspects of IDEA. How is each expected to improve student learning?
9. Select a language disorder. Outline a strategy for identifying the disorder, developing and implementing strategies, and evaluating effectiveness.
10. Define the term “learning disability”. Compare and contrast it with a significant cognitive delay.
11. Outline a procedure for assessing the receptive language skills of a nonverbal learner. Based upon the assessment, describe methods for teaching using an alternative mode of communication.
12. Outline the steps you would use in consulting with a general education teacher who has referred a student for an undiagnosed “severe reading problem”.
13. What issues should be discussed with the parents/guardians of children with exceptionalities? What are effective methods for establishing and maintaining contact with parents/guardians?
14. Describe curriculum appropriate for a secondary education learner with moderate/severe cognitive delays.
15. Describe how to create a positive learning environment by structuring the classroom setting.