

September 2011
Department of Mathematics, CSULA

Comprehensive Exam Rules

The following discussion elaborates the catalog description of the MS in Mathematics degree program and the university's comprehensive exam policies. See <http://ecatalog.calstatela.edu>.

Number of Exams: Except for students choosing to do a thesis, candidates for the MS degree in Mathematics must take comprehensive examinations. Students in Option 1 (General Mathematics) must pass two of the following three exams:

- Topology, Abstract Algebra, Complex Analysis

Students in Option 2 (Applied Mathematics) must pass two of the following three exams:

- Applied Linear Analysis, Complex Analysis, Numerical Analysis.

Prerequisites: Students taking comprehensive exams must be advanced to candidacy and have a current GPA of at least 3.0 on their program. A student taking comprehensive exams can have at most one course remaining on his/her program, not counting those being taken in the same quarter as the comprehensive exam.

Registration: Students must register in Math 596 in any quarter they intend to take comprehensive examinations. This course is restricted and authorization must be obtained from the graduate advisor prior to registering. Registering in Math 596 is otherwise subject to the same deadlines and rules as for other classes.

Special case: Matriculated students who are not otherwise taking classes must pay the Comprehensive Exam Fee (currently \$10) at the cashier's office before registering for Math 596. These students do not need to pay any other fees since Math 596 is a zero unit class.

Non-matriculated students (for example, students returning to take the comprehensive exams after not taking any classes in the previous 3 quarters) have two choices:

- Apply for readmission to the university through CSUMentor. This will require meeting the application deadline and paying the application fee. After being readmitted, such students are matriculated and register for Math 596 as above.
- Registering in one unit of Math 596 through the Open University system. This has the advantage that it can be done even after the quarter starts, and the disadvantage that the fee will be higher (approximately \$300). Warning: This way of registering for Math 596 is a temporary response to the fact that budget problems have limited the quarters in which students can be readmitted.

Frequency: Comprehensive exams are given in all areas, assuming demand, each Spring and Fall quarter. Spring quarter exams are near the 8th week of the quarter. Fall quarter

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Exam Committees: The exam committee for each exam is set and posted by the graduate advisor. Each exam committee has at least two, and normally three, members.

Content: The graduate advisor and GSC maintain and review comprehensive exam syllabi. Each provides a list of topics for the given area and a list of reference texts. These syllabi, as well as copies of recent exams, are available on the department web site.

Grading: Each exam is graded A, B, C, D or F by the committee which prepared it. Student names do not appear on examination papers; code numbers are used instead. The committees report their grades by code number to the graduate advisor, who then advises the students of the results.

Re-examination: A student may attempt any number of exams in each of, at most, 3 quarters.

No Shows: Any quarter in which a student registers in Math 596 (and does not withdraw within the usual deadline or by the exam date) counts as an attempt at the comprehensive exams - even if the student does not show up for the exams.

Passing: A student has passed the comprehensive exams if he/she achieves a B average in two exams (complying with the subject area restrictions for the option) with at least C in each. The quarter(s), and the order, in which the exams are taken does not matter.

Comprehensive Exams vs. Thesis: Once a student has attempted a comprehensive exam, it is no longer possible to switch to the thesis option.

Records: The graduate advisor maintains copies of all comprehensive exams in accordance with the record retention policy of CSULA.