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## **PhD Comprehensive Examination Policy**

**Approved by the Department of Botany 19 November 2013**

Doctoral students will take the comprehensive exam before the end of his or her second year in the Botany graduate program. Incoming PhD students who have been prescribed English Language Institute coursework (ELI courses) by the University of Hawaii may defer the comprehensive exam by the period of time that they are taking ELI courses (typically 1-2 semesters). If the student does not take the comprehensive exam by the end of his or her fifth semester, the student will be placed on notice within the department. Any student who is on notice will be asked to meet with the Department Chair, the Graduate Chair, and his or her advisor. This meeting will be used to discuss the student's progress and to establish specific goals with a timeline. Subsequently, if a student does not meet his or her goals within the agreed upon timeline, the Graduate Chair will recommend to the Dean of the Office of Graduate Education that the student be dismissed from the graduate program.

### **Comprehensive Exam Procedures**

The comprehensive exam is administered by the student's permanent advisory committee and is chaired by the Graduate Chair or his or her representative (e.g. another Botany graduate faculty member who is not on the student's advisory committee). The exam consists of two parts: the first written and the second oral. No later than the semester preceding the formal comprehensive exam, the student's committee, in conjunction with the student, selects three disciplinary areas related to the research goals of the student. The student will be assigned a reading list by members of the committee, which will serve as a starting point for his or her reading, and students should meet separately with his or her committee members to communicate about expectations of breadth and depth for the exam. At this time the committee and the student will set the dates of the comprehensive exam and inform the Graduate Chair of the timing of the exam and the proposed dates. The Graduate Chair will review the three disciplinary areas and communicate with the committee and student should any concerns arise. In the event that the Graduate Chair is the advisor of the student or a member of the permanent advisory committee, a representative from the Botany graduate faculty will be selected to serve as chair of the comprehensive examination.

For the written part of the exam, the student will be given three questions formulated by the committee, for which the student will be expected to formulate substantive and synthetic written responses (maximum 10 pages each, double-spaced, excluding references) over a two-week period. A one-week period will separate the written and oral

components of the comprehensive exam, during which time the committee will review the written responses.

The oral component of the comprehensive exam will be typically for a 2-3 hour time period, one week after the written exam ends. All Department of Botany graduate faculty will be informed of the time and place of the oral exam, as well as the student's committee composition and the three chosen disciplinary areas, and will be invited to attend. All Department of Botany graduate faculty will be able to ask questions at the oral exam, but only the members of the student's permanent graduate committee will have voting privileges to determine the outcome of the exam. The oral exam will be chaired by the Graduate Chair or his or her representative. The student will be asked questions from his or her three disciplinary areas, including any follow-up questions from the written exam. Upon conclusion of the oral exam, the student and non-committee faculty (excepting the Graduate Chair or his or her representative) will be asked to leave the room while the committee deliberates and concludes whether the student passes or fails the comprehensive exam, by majority vote. The student will be invited back into the room and result will be communicated to the student by the Graduate Chair or his or her representative.

The University of Hawai'i Office of Graduate Education rules allow for two attempts to pass the comprehensive exam. Failure in a first attempt must be followed by a second attempt the subsequent semester. If a student fails the second attempt, the Graduate Chair will recommend to the Dean of the Office of Graduate Education that the student be dismissed from the graduate program.

### **Procedures for appealing results**

Students disagreeing with the outcomes of the Comprehensive Exam may file a grievance with the Office of Graduate Education according to the policy developed by that office; see: <http://www.hawaii.edu/graduate/policies/html/grievance.htm>.