

Procedures for Grading Departmental Comprehensive Examinations

The following procedures have been formally adopted by the department to guide the faculty in grading departmental comprehensive examinations.

I. The University's official 4.0 scale applies in these examination (0.0 - 4.0).

PASSING:	Excellent	4.0	FAILING:	Inadequate 2.5 - 2.9
	Superior	3.7 - 3.9		Unacceptable 2.4 & below
	Very good	3.4 - 3.6		
	Good	3.1 - 3.3		
	Passing	3.0		

If a student's examination answers are "inadequate" (i.e. between 2.5 - 2.9) the examiners may require that the whole examination, or a part of it, be retaken; or they may decide (taking other facts into account) to fail the student outright. If the answer is graded less than 2.5, however, the student must either fail that exam question or be required to retake it.

II. Examiners should keep the questions listed below in mind when grading department exams. Common reference to an agreed set of criteria provides at least some assurance of consistency in grading and facilitates discussion of answers. The section headings are intended as suggestive and overlapping categories, not definitive and mutually exclusive ones. Standards should be kept high and the criterion of the "benefit of the doubt" should not be used.

(a) Content

Does the answer address the question directly enough?

Does it cover the topic of the question from a sufficiently informed standpoint given the level of the examination?

Does it put the question in perspective with respect to the appropriate field of knowledge? (Or does it try to deal with the question in a vacuum?)

Does it contain inexcusable substantive errors?

Is the answer appropriately integrated and consistent?

Is it appropriately comprehensive?

(b) Originality

Where appropriate, does the answer present or suggest new assumptions?

In answers where it is an appropriate strategy to be critical of the question, is the criticism handled effectively or merely defensively?

Are the student's personal insights presented effectively?

Is it an interesting, engaging, bold answer?

(c) Style

Is the answer well organized? Does it have a distinguishable introduction, discussion, and conclusion?

Is the main part of the answer in the form of an argument or presentation of a particular viewpoint? Or does it just ramble from point to point in no discernible order?

If the answer is in outline, is it a coherent, clear and logically organized one?

Is the exposition clear, simple, direct, and in accordance with standard usage? (Or does it put up a smoke screen of verbiage that leaves the reader in serious doubt about the sense of the answer?)