

**OVERVIEW FOR GENERAL COMPS 2025**

**NOTE:** Generally, the structure and procedures of the 2025 General Comps exam will very closely parallel those of recent exams. The General Comps exam will be administered in-person in the ARC Building.

**Date:** April 2025

**From:** Nicole Cain, Jamie Walkup  
(General Comps Coordinators)

**To:** Students Taking General Comps

**Subject:** Procedures for General Comps

**Place:** ARC Building rooms 116

**2024 Dates**

General Comps - Monday, June 16th and Tuesday, June 17th

**I. GENERAL COMPS, QUESTIONS 1-4**

On the days of the General Comps, June 16th and 17th, students will have three hours (9-12; 1-4) for each of the four questions and one hour for lunch. A question may be answered only during the period in which it is given out. Everyone must take the full one-hour lunch break. On the days of the exam, people should arrive between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m. General instructions will begin at 8:45 a.m. for the morning session, and at 12:55 p.m. for the afternoon session.

**Summary**

**Monday June 16**

9:00 am --12:00 noon: Question 1 -- Research

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm: Lunch.

1:00 pm -- 4:00 pm: Question 2 – Foundations (CB & Psychoanalytic)

**Tuesday June 17**

9:00 am – 12:00 noon: Question 3 -- Systems Theory & Analysis

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm: Lunch.

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm: Question 4 -- Legal and Ethical Issues

**1. Communication about the Comps:**

Communications about General Comps will take place via emails that go through the General Comps Canvas web site, which Julie Skorny has developed. If you have questions about your membership on the site, check with Julie. All the responses to emailed questions will be sent to the Canvas list, so everyone will have access to these responses and they will be available in the

Email Archive on the Canvas site. This Overview document will be placed on the Canvas web site in the Resources section and on the GSAPP Website under Current Students.

**2. Faculty Coordinators:** Nicole Cain, Jamie Walkup

The general exam will be coordinated by the aforementioned committee, with the help of the other faculty. The Program Directors will review and approve the questions.

**3. Questions and Courses:**

Question 1 is linked to two courses: "**Statistical Methods and Design Analysis**" and "**Advanced Statistics and Research Design.**"

Question 2 is linked to two of the "**Theoretical Foundations of Intervention**" courses—**Psychoanalytic and Cognitive-Behavioral.**

Question 3 is linked to the **Systems Theory & Analysis** course.

Question 4 is linked to the **Professional Ethics, Standards, and Career Development** course.

**4. Number of Question Options Per Area:** There will only be one question option in each of the four areas.

**5. Past Exams:** Questions from past exams and answers to past exam questions will not be available. Students are encouraged to study relevant material from their past courses in conjunction with the guidelines in item 17 below—not to study for specific questions per se.

**6. "Open Book" exam, cell phones, music devices, and related devices (iPad, tablet, Kindle, etc.):** Students can bring in outside **printed** materials to the exam, including books, articles, written notes and references. **Electronic** copies of textbooks, books, articles, and class notes are also permissible. Access to electronic textbooks, books, and articles is restricted to those materials assigned for class and noted in the course syllabus.

\*\*\* For Question, #1 (Research), you are allowed to bring in printed statistical tables, such as significance tables and power tables, and a calculator.

**7. Cell Phones and Related Devices (iPad, tablet, Kindle, etc.):** Cell phone and related device use is restricted to accessing music stored on the device and electronic copies of textbooks, books, articles, and notes assigned for class and noted in the course syllabus. Any other use of a cell phone or related device during the exam is prohibited. Cell phones and related devices cannot be used as phones or to access email or other messaging services during the exam. Cell phones and related devices may be used as usual before the exam begins and during the lunch break.

**8. Music devices:** Music devices with earphones only are allowed *as long as* they are only used for music. Cell phones can be used for music as long as the music is stored on the device.

**9. Citations in answers:** What is expected is that you provide a few relevant and key references in the text at appropriate points to link your answer to the scholarly and scientific literature. For example, in the Professional Ethics question, you might cite "(Fisher, 2017)" on one of her important explanations and interpretations of a key ethical principle. For each citation, provide the last name of the first author, e.g. "Fisher," (if there are other authors you know of, write, "et al," e.g., "Fisher et al."); and the approximate year of the publication.

**10. Integrity Statement:** Students must commit to and sign an "integrity statement" for exam questions. Copies of the appropriate integrity statement will be distributed with Question 4, the last question of the exam. The integrity statement will say:

**Concerning Questions 1-4 of the General Comprehensive Exam, I have neither given information to nor received information from others concerning these questions, nor discussed these questions with anyone. This includes information exchanged by cell phones and other devices.**

**I understand that the above sentence is clarified by the following: Before I saw Questions 1-4, I was able to consult any written source relating to the topic and discuss it with any others. However, once I picked up (or saw) the actual questions, I was not able to talk to anyone else about them.**

**Also, I understand that I am not to share the questions (including the article) with students who will take the Exam in the future, and I promise not to do so.**

**Finally, if I used electronic materials (e.g., textbooks, books, articles, class notes), I hereby confirm that I did not use my device to access any other material besides those materials assigned for class and noted in the course syllabus, or music stored on the device.**

**11. Page Limits:** The page limits for each question, which will be specified on the question, are as follows: "**Limit your answer to no more than six pages (10-point) double-spaced.**"

**12. Time Keeping.** Please bring your own watch or clock for keeping track of time during comps. If you have a watch that beeps, be sure to turn off the beep for the exam so as not to bother other people. We expect folks to be attentive to time without excessive help from staff.

**13. Faculty Presence:** A faculty member will be available (by phone) at the start of each session of the exam to answer questions about the content of questions.

**14. University Computers Only:** Students may **not** use their own computers for the exam. Only computers supplied by the University can be used.

### **15. Grading:**

1. Faculty graders will be assigned by the General Comps Committee. Criteria for assignment to faculty will be expertise as well as overall workload. To ensure proper grading, be certain to provide the information requested for each answer so that it can be properly used in assigning graders to your exam.

2. The full details of grading procedures are provided in the Student Handbook. Briefly:

- If an answer is graded 1, 2, or 2.5 by the first reader, it is satisfactory.

- If an answer is graded 3 or 4 by the first reader, it is read by a second reader. If the second reader confirms the first and grades a 3 or 4, the answer is unsatisfactory. If the second reader grades a 1, 2, or 2.5, it is read by a third reader. The third reader's grade determines whether the answer is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.
  - a) All four questions graded satisfactory: pass the exam without remediation.
  - b) One question only graded satisfactory, written retake of entire exam at a regularly scheduled comps testing date in the future.
  - c) Two (or three) questions graded satisfactory, two (or one) responses graded unsatisfactory:
    - i) For each unsatisfactory question that is graded 3&3 or 3&4 by the two readers, the question has to be remediated with an individual faculty member.
    - ii) For each unsatisfactory question that is graded 4&4 by the two readers, the question requires a written re-take at a regularly scheduled comps testing date in the future.
3. The faculty will aim to complete the grading by mid October. All students will be notified of their individual results by letter at the same time.
4. Faculty graders have a space for comments in addition to assigning number grades to each answer. These comments, together with the original answers, will be available for review by the student after all the grading is completed. The graders sign their answers.
5. The student answers do not have names on them. Thus, the faculty grading is done without knowledge of who the student is.

### **17. More About the Questions**

1. Research Critique. Question #1 will follow the same format as the parallel question in recent exams. Specifically, this question will present you with a research article and ask you questions about it, as listed below. There will be a different article for each of the two programs or a single article that is relevant for both programs.

Here is the format of the question

1. Introduction, purpose, and rationale: Is a convincing theoretical/empirical rationale for the study provided? Is the purpose clearly and consistently stated, etc.? Is the introduction logical, consistent, clear and adequate, and does it lead succinctly to the expressed purpose and rationale? Is the literature coverage appropriate and put to good use?
2. Method, design, measurement, and procedures: What are the independent and dependent variables? Consider the technical adequacy and appropriateness of assessment procedures, measurement instruments, etc. Does the methodology (design, sample size, sampling procedures, etc.) avoid confounds, adequately control for rival hypotheses and threats to valid inference? What did the researcher(s) do to avoid, minimize, or control for bias in the research?
3. Data analysis, results, conclusions, and implications: Are data analyzed appropriately? Are the results reported appropriately? Do the stated conclusions follow from the data, and are they appropriately expressed? Are limiting factors carefully considered? What

else could have caused the findings? What other explanations are there for the findings?

4. Overall contribution: Did the study answer the original question? Are the results basically sound? Can the findings be believed or is the study seriously compromised? If compromised, what might be some alternative explanations for the findings? If basically sound, what is the major finding?
2. CB & Psychoanalytic Foundations. Question #2 will deal with integrative aspects of the two Foundations courses, Cognitive-Behavioral and Psychoanalytic, which every student is required to take. The question will be organized around a case study that can be viewed from the perspective of each of the two courses.

In answering the Foundations question, students also have the opportunity to employ advanced course work in each of the two areas as they might choose; they are not restricted to what is contained in the Foundations courses. On the other hand, the use of advanced work is not required. Since the question spans two courses, it will require reflective and integrative thinking. Again, the question will give the students a case study to analyze, and they will need to analyze it in terms of cognitive-behavioral theory and psychoanalytic theory. Then students will be required to contrast the theories on a few dimensions.

3. Systems Theory & Analysis. This question will be drawn directly from the Systems Theory & Analysis course. Students will be asked to apply the principles of systems theory in designing an intervention to deal with a systems problem.
4. Legal and Ethical Issues. This question will be drawn from the Professional Ethics, Standards, and Career Development course.  
\*\*\* Clinical and School Students are strongly encouraged to bring with them to the exam APA's (2010) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*, and (at least a summary of) the *New Jersey Psychology Licensing Law*.  
\*\*\* School Students are also encouraged to bring with them materials associated with *IDEIA*, *ADA*, and/or the *NJ Administrative Code*.  
\*\*\* More specifically, this question will address: (a) the nature of the legal and ethical issues with which professional psychologists grapple, (b) the strategies and procedures professional psychologists bring to dealing with these issues, and (c) the larger social, political, cultural, and economic context in which these issues exist and develop. You will be asked to answer this question from the perspective of professional psychology of your particular program: clinical psychology or school psychology.

**18. Comp Boxes:** "Comp Boxes" consist of material that past students have put together to study for the General Comps. Some faculty believe that using comp boxes is not necessary and may even be distracting. In studying, faculty encourage you to focus on the material in the reading lists from relevant courses.

**19. Comps Groups:** "Comps Groups" are self-created groups of students who work together to prepare for Comps. While many students prefer them, other students prefer to study on their own.