

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION — EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION
Master's Comprehensive Examination – Study Guide

O V E R V I E W

(Revised August, and December, 2011 with final approvals 1.12 by UCF ESE faculty)

Purposes of Master's Comprehensive Exam

The purposes are:

1. For the student in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) to synthesize in writing the knowledge gained through coursework and experiences during his/her graduate program.
2. For the student to demonstrate in writing professional content knowledge of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for All Beginning Special Education Teachers (2009) for Masters of Arts candidates. These Common Core Knowledge and Skills include: Philosophical and Legal Foundations; Student Characteristics; Assessment, Diagnosis and Evaluation; Instructional Content and Practice; Planning and Managing the Teaching and learning Environment; Managing Student Behavior and Social Skills; Communication and Collaboration Partnerships; and Professionalism and Ethical Practices.
3. For continuous program evaluation to assure the program goals and objectives related to student content knowledge mastery is demonstrated through a summative assessment related to standards-based goals, objectives, and specified criteria within the Master's program of study.

Administration and Procedures:

The Master's Comprehensive Examination in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program area is administered each semester (three times per year) as per procedures and guidelines established by the UCF College of Education. Graduate students will apply to take the Comprehensive Exam close to the completion of their graduate Program of Study (coursework) by completing the application available on-line through the CED Student Services. See <http://education.ucf.edu/studentaffairs/forms.cfm#graduate>

The application must be submitted (either scanned to your advisor or faxed to the ESE Department at 407.823.3859) for review, approvals, and signature by the candidate's advisor by the announced due date. Once approved, the candidate will receive confirmation and directions from the CED Student Services-Graduate Program. The Masters Comprehensive Exam is administered on the Orlando campus (Location TBD) from 9:00-noon on the established date. No tardy arrivals will be admitted to the exam. Candidates must bring photo identification for entrance into the examination venue. For students completing the Masters program on-line, please contact your advisor.

This Comprehensive Exam study guide is available on the UCF Advising website at <http://educationbridges.ucf.edu/Adv/Grad/exams.html> or by e-mailing your advisor.

General Guidelines:

The advisor will select six questions for the comprehensive examination from a Test Pool of questions. The student must answer three of the six questions. Answer all parts of the questions. Citations are important. Be certain to include at least three current and accurate embedded citations per question. No references are required, however. Be certain to include at least three citations per question.

Criteria as “Pass” for completed exam include:

- Answers THREE questions, one each per section, accurately and completely;
- Addresses all sections and questions within each question asked;
- Original writing/synthesis of research throughout examination;
- Includes at least THREE accurate and current (within 5 years) within-text citations to support content; and
- Professional writing demonstrated throughout essays.

Criteria as “Conditional Pass” for completed exam include:

- Answers THREE questions, with ONE question written accurately and completely meeting all criteria as listed;
- Addresses all sections and questions within each question asked;
- Original writing/synthesis of research throughout examination;
- Includes at least THREE accurate and current (within 5 years) within-text citations to support content; and
- Professional writing demonstrated in each written answer.

If candidate receives a “Conditional Pass” on the comprehensive Exam, the candidate must meet with ESE Program advisor for feedback to re-write the examination. The rewritten Comprehensive Exam will be submitted via Turnitin.com within the timeframe stipulated by the Program advisor. Failure to meet these criteria and timeframes will result in a “Fail” of this exam for this examination period. Candidates who do not meet criteria to “Pass” the Masters Comprehensive Exam (initially or after revisions to “Provisional Pass”) must apply to retake the exam in a subsequent CED administration in another semester.

Citations and examples may be drawn from your specific area of expertise and study in terms of disability population and focus of coursework. Please be advised that all procedures in the UCF Golden Rule must be followed, especially as related to plagiarism. University protocol will be followed, as needed, to investigate and resolve any infractions against UCF Golden Rule. Please see : <http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/docs/GoldenRule.pdf>

Preparation:

Study Guide Areas of Emphasis and Sample Questions aligned with Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Common Core of Knowledge and Skills Essential for All Beginning Special Education Teachers (2009).

The following resources are provided as standards to guide review for the candidates. The questions for the Masters Comprehensive Exam are based upon the approved standards of the Council for Exceptional Children, initial and advanced.

Please review the standards (Knowledge and Skills) from the Council for Exceptional Children at:

<http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/default.htm>

Review the CEC Publication, “What Every special Educator Must Know” (6th edition). FREE Download.

Initial and Advanced Professional Content Standards (Knowledge and Skill Sets)

(Taken from the standards (Knowledge and Skills) from the Council for Exceptional Children at: <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ProfessionalStandards/default.htm>)

This section includes the Initial Content Standards and the Advanced Content Standards. These two sets of standards broadly describe the knowledge and skill that all special educators bring to initial and advanced roles. Each of the content standards describes in rich narrative the skills and responsibilities of all special education specialists. The bolded phrases are critical elements of the standards identified to provide guidance to preparation program developers.

These broad content standards are informed by the elements delineated in the CEC knowledge and skill sets. They provide both context and content for a variety of special education specialty disciplines. The Knowledge and Skill sets are included for candidates preparing for their first special education position, as well as for special educators preparing to move into advanced classroom-based and other advanced roles. They are the knowledge and skills that professionals entering initial practice or assuming advanced roles should possess to practice safely and effectively. www.cec.sped.org.

Initial Level Content Standards (Masters of Arts)

Initial Content Standard 1: Foundations

Special educators understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence-based **principles and theories**, relevant **laws and policies**, diverse and **historical** points of view, and **human issues** that have historically influenced and continue to influence the field of special education and the education and treatment of individuals with exceptional needs in both school and society. Special educators understand how these **influence professional practice**, including assessment, instructional planning, implementation, and program evaluation. Special educators understand how **issues of human diversity** can impact families, cultures, and schools, and how these complex human issues can interact with issues in the delivery of special education services. They understand the **relationships of organizations of special education** to the organizations and functions of schools, school systems, and other agencies. Special educators use this knowledge as a ground upon which to construct their own personal understandings and philosophies of special education.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Initial Content Standard 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners

Special educators know and **demonstrate respect** for their students first as unique human beings. Special educators understand the **similarities and differences in human development** and the characteristics between and among individuals with and without exceptional learning needs.

Moreover, special educators understand how **exceptional conditions** can **interact** with the domains of human development and they **use this knowledge to respond to the varying abilities and behaviors of individuals** with exceptional learning needs. Special educators understand how the experiences of individuals with exceptional learning needs can impact families, as well as the individual's ability to learn, interact socially, and live as fulfilled contributing members of the community.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Initial Content Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences

Special educators understand the **effects that an exceptional condition** can have **on an individual's learning** in school and throughout life. Special educators understand that the beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures can affect relationships among and between students, their families, and the school community. Moreover, special educators are **active and resourceful in seeking to understand how primary language, culture, and familial backgrounds interact with the individual's exceptional condition** to impact the individual's academic and social abilities, attitudes, values, interests, and career options. The understanding of these learning differences and their possible interactions **provides the foundation** upon which **special educators individualize instruction** to provide meaningful and challenging learning for individuals with exceptional learning needs. Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Initial Content Standard 4: Instructional Strategies

Special educators possess a repertoire of evidence-based **instructional strategies to individualize instruction** for individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators select, adapt, and use these instructional strategies to promote **positive learning results in general and special curricula** and to **modify learning environments** appropriately for individuals with exceptional learning needs. They enhance the **learning of critical thinking, problem-solving, and performance skills** of individuals with exceptional learning needs, and increase their self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem. Moreover, special educators emphasize the **development, maintenance, and generalization** of knowledge and skills across environments, settings, and the life span. Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Initial Content Standard 5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions

Special educators actively **create learning environments** for individuals with exceptional learning needs that foster cultural understanding, safety and emotional well-being, positive social interactions, and **active engagement** of individuals with exceptional learning needs. In addition, special educators **foster environments in which diversity is valued** and individuals are taught to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world. Special educators shape **environments to encourage the independence**, self-motivation, self-direction, personal empowerment, and self-advocacy of individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators **help their general education colleagues integrate individuals** with exceptional learning needs in general education environments and engage them in meaningful learning activities and interactions. Special educators use **direct motivational and instructional interventions** with individuals with exceptional learning needs to teach them to respond

effectively to current expectations. When necessary, special educators can safely **intervene with individuals with exceptional learning needs in crisis**. Special educators coordinate all these efforts and **provide guidance and direction to paraeducators and others**, such as classroom volunteers and tutors.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Initial Content Standard 6: Language

Special educators understand **typical and atypical language development** and the ways in which exceptional conditions can interact with an individual's experience with and use of language. Special educators use individualized strategies to **enhance language development and teach communication skills** to individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators are familiar with **augmentative, alternative, and assistive technologies** to support and enhance communication of individuals with exceptional needs. Special educators match their communication methods to an individual's language proficiency and cultural and linguistic differences. Special educators provide **effective language models** and they use communication strategies and resources to **facilitate understanding of subject matter for individuals with exceptional learning needs whose primary language is not English**.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Initial Content Standard 7: Instructional Planning

Individualized decision-making and instruction is at the center of special education practice. Special educators develop **long-range individualized instructional plans** anchored in both general and special education curricula. In addition, special educators systematically translate these individualized plans into carefully selected **shorter-range goals and objectives** taking into consideration an individual's abilities and needs, the learning environment, and a myriad of cultural and linguistic factors. Individualized instructional plans emphasize **explicit modeling** and **efficient guided practice** to assure acquisition and fluency through maintenance and generalization. Understanding of these factors as well as the implications of an individual's exceptional condition, guides the special educator's selection, adaptation, and creation of materials, and the use of powerful instructional variables. Instructional plans are **modified based on ongoing analysis of the individual's learning progress**. Moreover, special educators facilitate this instructional planning in a **collaborative context** including the individuals with exceptionalities, families, professional colleagues, and personnel from other agencies as appropriate. Special educators also develop a variety of **individualized transition plans**, such as transitions from preschool to elementary school and from secondary settings to a variety of postsecondary work and learning contexts. Special educators are comfortable using **appropriate technologies** to support instructional planning and individualized instruction.

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Initial Content Standard 8: Assessment

Assessment is integral to the decision-making and teaching of special educators and special educators use **multiple types of assessment information** for a variety of educational decisions. Special educators use the results of assessments to help identify exceptional learning needs and to develop and implement individualized instructional programs, as well as to adjust instruction in response to ongoing learning progress. Special educators understand the **legal policies and**

ethical principles of measurement and assessment related to referral, eligibility, program planning, instruction, and placement for individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Special educators understand **measurement theory and practices** for addressing issues of validity, reliability, norms, bias, and interpretation of assessment results. In addition, special educators understand the appropriate **use and limitations** of various types of assessments. Special educators collaborate with families and other colleagues to assure **nonbiased, meaningful assessments and decision-making**. Special educators conduct **formal and informal assessments** of behavior, learning, achievement, and environments to design learning experiences that support the growth and development of individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators use assessment information to **identify supports and adaptations** required for individuals with exceptional learning needs to access the general curriculum and to participate in school, system, and statewide assessment programs. Special educators **regularly monitor the progress** of individuals with exceptional learning needs in general and special curricula. Special educators **use appropriate technologies** to support their assessments.

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Initial Content Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice

Special educators are guided by the profession's ethical and professional practice standards. Special educators practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to **legal matters** along with serious professional and **ethical considerations**. Special educators engage in **professional activities** and participate in learning communities that benefit individuals with exceptional learning needs, their families, colleagues, and their own professional growth. Special educators view themselves as **lifelong learners** and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. Special educators are aware of how their own and others' attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Special educators understand that culture and language can interact with exceptionalities, and are **sensitive to the many aspects of diversity** of individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families. Special educators actively plan and engage in activities that foster their professional growth and keep them **current with evidence-based best practices**. Special educators know their own limits of practice and practice within them.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

Initial Content Standard 10: Collaboration

Special educators routinely and effectively **collaborate with families, other educators, related service providers, and personnel from community agencies in culturally responsive ways**. This collaboration assures that the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs are addressed throughout schooling. Moreover, special educators embrace their special role as advocate for individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators promote and advocate the learning and well-being of individuals with exceptional learning needs across a wide range of settings and a range of different learning experiences. Special educators are viewed as specialists by a myriad of people who actively seek their collaboration to effectively include and teach individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators are a **resource to their colleagues** in understanding the laws and policies relevant to individuals with exceptional learning needs. Special educators use collaboration to **facilitate the successful transitions** of individuals with exceptional learning needs across settings and services.

Beginning special educators demonstrate their mastery of this standard through the mastery of the CEC Common Core Knowledge and Skills, as well as through the appropriate CEC Specialty Area(s) Knowledge and Skills for which the program is preparing candidates.

NOTES “Individual with exceptional learning needs” is used throughout to include individuals with disabilities and individuals with exceptional gifts and talents. “Exceptional condition” is used throughout to include both single and co-existing conditions. These may be two or more disabling conditions or exceptional gifts or talents co-existing with one or more disabling conditions. “Special curricula” is used throughout to denote curricular areas not routinely emphasized or addressed in general curricula; e.g., social, communication, motor, independence, self-advocacy.