Comprehensive Examination

Master’s Degree Program
Rehabilitation Counseling/Rehabilitation Psychology
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Successful completion of a comprehensive examination, covering content areas included in the master’s degree curriculum, is a requirement for the master’s degree in rehabilitation psychology. The examination is typically completed in the final semester or summer session of study toward the master’s degree. There are two options.

Option 1 – Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Examination (CRCE)

Students who take the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Examination (CRCE) may use a passing score on the exam to satisfy the comprehensive examination requirement for the master’s degree. Most master’s degree students in rehabilitation psychology pursue the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential and, for those students, successful completion of the CRCE will also satisfy the comprehensive examination requirement. Successful completion of the CRCE can also serve as a step toward the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential in Wisconsin and in several other states that currently use the CRCE as a part of the counselor licensing process.

The CRCE is offered three times per year, typically in early October, early March, and mid-July. In order to take the CRCE, students must complete the CRC application and submit it to the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), and the application must be approved by CRCC. Application deadlines are set by CRCC about five months before the date of the examination, and an application fee is paid directly to CRCC as a part of the application process. In addition, students must agree to the release of examination results directly to the faculty by CRCC in order to document a passing score for purposes of the comprehensive examination requirement.

**Accommodation requests due to disability can be made to CRCC as a part of the application, and the faculty will accept any decisions made by CRCC regarding the accommodations that they deem to be justified.**

Information about the exam, application deadlines, testing dates, and application fees, may be found at the CRCC website:


Students electing Option 1, but not achieving a passing score on the CRCE, will then need to document mastery of content through successful completion of a take-home version of the traditional comprehensive examination, described below under Option 2, with the same anonymous grading procedures. If the follow-up examination is required, it is important to note that graduation could be delayed to the next semester or summer session. In addition, registration for a minimum of 2 credits may be required in the semester or summer session when graduation occurs, as specified by the university. To summarize, any student electing this option should consider the early application deadline (much earlier than for Option 2), the examination fee that
must be paid to CRCC (not required for Option 2), and the possible delay in graduation for those who do not achieve a passing score. However, this may be the preferred option for those students who will pursue CRC certification and/or counselor licensure in Wisconsin or several other states.

**Option 2 – Traditional Comprehensive Examination**

The traditional comprehensive examination is a four-hour essay examination that is typically offered during in late October or early November, late March or early April, and late June or early July. Most candidates complete the examination on computer. However, exceptions can be made for students who need accommodations or would prefer to write the response with pen and paper.

**Accommodations required because of disability or English-as-a-second-language considerations should be requested through the chair of the Rehabilitation Psychology Program Area at least one month in advance of the scheduled time of the examination in order to allow sufficient time for faculty approval and arrangements.**

At least two faculty read each candidate’s response to the examination without knowledge of the candidate’s identity, including the candidate’s major professor/advisor. Each reader rates the response as “pass,” “marginal,” or “fail” and, if both readers do not assign a rating of “pass,” the response is also read by a third faculty member. Two ratings of “pass” are required to pass the examination and, in instances where the response is not rated as passing, the readers will decide on an appropriate procedure to resolve their questions regarding the candidate’s mastery of content and/or relevant literature sources. The procedures will most often involve a take-home written follow-up response or an oral follow-up to the examination where the readers would ask follow-up questions. In instances of two ratings of “fail,” a candidate may be asked to complete the examination again at the scheduled time in the next semester or summer session.

Examination responses will be evaluated in terms of mastery of content demonstrated and knowledge of relevant literature sources. The response should provide sufficient depth and breadth of coverage to demonstrate knowledge of content. Judgments will be made by the readers regarding the degree of depth, substance, and detail that should be expected in a four-hour response, so you should plan to use all four hours of the time available to you, allowing some time at the end to proofread your response. Consideration will be given to originality, comprehensiveness, documentation (literature citations), clarity, and overall quality of expression. The response should demonstrate knowledge of literature through a substantial use of literature citations, following APA style for citing references in text (e.g., Jones & Smith, 2002; complete citations as would appear in the References sections of journal articles and books are not required). Finally, your response should be presented in narrative and not outline form.

**All questions for the examination will be taken from the following list, with the examination comprised of either one question from the first group of four-hour questions, or two questions from the second group of two-hour questions.**
**Four-Hour Questions**

An examination may be comprised entirely of any one of the following nine questions.

1. Choose two contrasting theoretical approaches to counseling and provide an in-depth review of each. Then compare and contrast the theories in terms of their consistency with different approaches to assessment and intervention, including job placement, commonly used in rehabilitation counseling practice. You might find it helpful to select a particular type of agency setting and/or disability group to illustrate your points.

2. Select one theory of occupational choice or career development, one theory of counseling, and one general approach to assessment (psychometric, work sample, or situational). Select theories and approaches that you see as compatible with one another and useful in rehabilitation counseling practice. Provide an overview of the theories and approaches and evaluate their appropriateness in meeting the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities.

3. You have been asked to prepare a document about the rehabilitation counseling profession for a career day for undergraduate social sciences majors who are considering graduate school in rehabilitation counseling. Provide a description of rehabilitation counseling and service delivery. You should include the underlying history of rehabilitation services, a philosophy toward people with disabilities and their needs, and the general approaches to rehabilitation service delivery that are currently in use. Your response should include a broad overview of assessment approaches, counseling and career development theories and interventions, services provided and case management procedures, and job placement approaches.

4. Traditionally, rehabilitation counselors have found employment in diverse settings including: state VR agencies, independent living centers, insurance rehabilitation programs, psychosocial rehabilitation and community support programs for people with long-term mental illness, supported employment programs, and brain injury rehabilitation programs. Current trends toward managed care and outcome accountability have provided further demand for rehabilitation consultation, case management, and disability management services. Rehabilitation counseling knowledge and skills are recognized as effective in assisting people with chronic illnesses and disabilities to address psychosocial, vocational, and independent living adjustment issues in a variety of settings. Rehabilitation counselors must therefore possess a common core of knowledge and skills that are acquired through didactic coursework and clinical training. (1) Please provide a scholarly discussion of the core knowledge and skill areas underlying generic rehabilitation counseling practice. (2) Please select two examples of RC practice settings and discuss the unique knowledge and skill areas that are more specific to each of them.

5. At some time in your professional career you may develop a new program for an existing rehabilitation agency or you may even create a new agency or program of your own. Suppose that you wish to propose a new rehabilitation program to be developed for a particular target group of people with disabilities in a particular type of community or general geographical location. First, describe the target group to be served (people with one
or more types of disabilities) and their characteristics, problems, and needs as they relate to the proposed program. Then describe the program to be developed, including guiding philosophies and theoretical rationale, general approaches and methods to be used in providing services, and any special considerations that might be important to discuss.

6. Select a type of disabling condition and discuss the following: (a) the medical, psychosocial, and vocational aspects of this type of disability, (b) the general types of agencies and programs comprising the rehabilitation services system for meeting the needs of individuals with this type of disability, and (c) the specific types of rehabilitation counseling procedures (e.g., assessment, counseling, and job placement) that are commonly used in rehabilitation counseling practice with those individuals.

7. Assessment provides a basis for counseling and service planning in rehabilitation counseling. Assessment practices include more than traditional paper-and-pencil tests, and the assessment methods used must be tailored to the needs of individual clients. First, discuss the role of assessment in the rehabilitation process, including counseling, case management, and job placement. Then, select two client groups that exemplify different client needs and discuss the similarities and differences in assessment practices that would typically be suitable for these different groups. Consider both the general approaches to assessment and the more specific instruments and techniques.

8. Assume that you work as a rehabilitation counselor for an agency that is considering hiring a job placement specialist. Your supervisor has asked you to write a position statement, with appropriate documentation, indicating why a person with training in rehabilitation counseling should be hired for that position. Following a brief introduction describing your overall view of job placement, explain how each of the following topics of rehabilitation counselor education is used in job placement of persons with disabilities: (a) psychosocial aspects of disabilities, (b) medical aspects of disabilities, (c) career development theory, (d) assessment, and (e) counseling theory and technique. Your elaboration on each topic should explain why the topic is important to effective practice in job placement, provide a brief review of literature and/or other information related to that topic, and draw implications for practice.

9. Select two of the following types of programs where rehabilitation counselors may practice: (a) state vocational rehabilitation agencies, (b) proprietary rehabilitation organizations providing services primarily to worker's compensation beneficiaries, (c) independent living centers and/or programs providing special living arrangements for individuals with disabilities, (d) supported employment programs, (e) community support programs for individuals with long-term mental illness, and (f) post-acute rehabilitation programs for individuals with acquired brain injuries. Provide brief descriptions of each of the two types of general service programs selected. Then discuss the similarities and differences between the two types of programs in terms of each of the following characteristics: (a) medical, psychosocial, and vocational needs of clients served, (b) service approaches and intervention strategies used to meet client needs.
Two-Hour Questions

An examination may be comprised entirely of any two of the following four questions.

10. Discuss changes that you might anticipate in rehabilitation counseling service settings and professional practice over the next five to ten years and discuss modifications in the rehabilitation counselor education curriculum that may be needed to prepare rehabilitation counselors for these changes.

11. Select a type of disabling condition and briefly describe the functional limitations and other important medical and psychosocial features, focusing on those that have relevance to rehabilitation planning. In the context of this description, discuss theory and technique in assessment and counseling that you see as most relevant in meeting the comprehensive rehabilitation needs of individuals with this disabling condition.

12. Various models of adjustment to an adventitiously occurring disabling condition have been offered by a number of different writers, including several describing a sequence of stages of adjustment. On the basis of your knowledge of the various models proposed, describe the process of adjustment to disability and review some of the factors influencing the adjustment process.

13. Describe a practical, step-by-step approach to assisting clients in choosing appropriate careers or vocations. Draw upon relevant theory and literature in such areas as career development, assessment, and counseling to support your proposed clinical approach.