ACE GUIDELINES

For Doctoral Students in
Applied Anthropology &
Anthropology and Education

Teachers College
Columbia University
2007 - 2008
Passing the advanced certification exams (ACE), among other indicators, suggests to both the doctoral student and faculty that the required expertise in the discipline of anthropology has been fundamentally achieved. This expertise includes but is not limited to a thorough grounding and understanding of a variety of theoretical concepts and perspectives, exposure to and familiarity with various ethnographic literatures and a command of appropriate research methodologies for both academic and applied settings. Ideally, exams are designed around the student's academic and research interests and strengths and the dissertation.

Exam preparations are not activities independent from completing required course work. In fact, preparations for these exams begin with course work and conscious preparations for these exams should begin with the first year colloquium. Having the foresight to begin preparations early and to avoid a wild period of preparation a semester before the exam is the key to preparing and passing the exam with more than a modicum of confidence and with some distance from the border of the hysterical.

Below is information concerning the examinations and some guidelines that offer advice on how to prepare for the exams during your period of course work. You should also learn from your advisor, faculty, and fellow students. Hopefully, this advice well taken will be a vaccine preventing the occurrence of individual hysteria usually found associated with these exams.

**THE EXAMINATIONS**

The advanced certification exams consist of three written exams that test the mastery of basic literature in the field. Ideally, the exams will be divided into a focus on an ethnographic world region, a theoretical subject, and applied anthropology or anthropology and education. A list of acceptable theoretical subjects and ethnographic world regions can be found on page 5.

Each exam is jointly composed and read by a first and second reader. The readers for the exam are usually advisors and faculty who are knowledgeable or specialists in your chosen exam subjects. You should work closely with your advisor in deciding who would be the appropriate readers for your exams.

Typically, an individual exam consists of four to six questions. You are expected to choose and answer three of the questions and are given four hours to complete your answers. Individual questions and each exam may be given a letter grade but the examinations as a whole are rated High Pass, Pass, Low Pass or Fail.

NOTE: Any evidence of academic dishonesty pursuant to the Teachers College policy on Academic Integrity will be taken very seriously and may result in dismissal from the program and Teachers College.

Before scheduling exams you should submit a bibliography of published materials for each exam subject the semester prior to the one you intend to sit for the exams. The format and content of the bibliography should be discussed with your advisor and first readers. To quickly finalize your bibliography, submit your proposed exam questions for each exam along with your bibliography to the first readers so that they can compare the focus of your study and the published materials you use to explore this focus. It is both professionally courteous as well as mutually beneficial that you meet and discuss your bibliography with all of your readers before you take the exam. Once your bibliography has been finalized, submit one copy each to the Anthropology office, your advisor, and your first and second readers. Then with the approval of your advisor and readers to take the exams, schedule your exam dates and times with the anthropology secretary.  

**Exam Period**

The exam periods are during the early months of the semester and never in the final months or during the summer. Exams will be scheduled during a designated period in the fall and spring semesters. Please contact your advisor the semester before you intend to sit the exams to make the appropriate arrangements. Three weeks after the written exams it is strongly suggested to submit and orally defend the dissertation proposal prior to leaving for fieldwork. You may schedule your exams to start between 9:30 AM -12:30 PM only. You arrive at the appointed time armed only with writing implements and you will be guided to the room where you will take the exam.

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1 See “Certification Exam Scheduling Form” for exact specifications for this process.
EXAM PREPARATIONS

The anxiety most students have about these exams is due to intermittent self-doubt simply expressed as, “I may fail these exams and be denied the chance to achieve a Ph.D. degree after giving so much time, money and effort.” However, you can dramatically reduce the imaginings of failure and concomitant anxiety if you are well prepared. These preparations are primarily made by the student with assistance from faculty and fellow students. The outline below defines what every student can do to prepare themselves for the exams.

Quickly Select the Basic Elements of Your Dissertation Project

The anthropology program's first and second year colloquium, required courses in theory, ethnographic areas, and subfields, the summer research proposal and fieldwork and public presentation of your 2nd year research paper are the basic conditions provided to allow you to

- develop the expertise to produce an acceptable dissertation proposal
- do competent fieldwork
- write and defend an original dissertation.

To make the most of these conditions, each student, as early as possible in the doctoral program, should select the following basic elements for use in the formation of a dissertation project:

- an ethnographic world region, country, and locale
- a research problem or set of research interests
- theoretical/analytic perspective(s), research methodologies and applied issues that are useful in exploring your problem or research interests

Create a Course of Study that Builds towards your Dissertation Project

Ideally, in collaboration with your advisor and faculty as well as from the multitude of resources available to you, you should design a course of study that builds towards your envisioned dissertation project.

Early selection of the basic elements allows you to search for and incrementally obtain knowledge that supports your academic and research interests and language needs from:

- university-wide offered courses
- independent study courses
- courses available in other colleges or universities
- faculty and student discourse
- research institutes
- individual library study

It is not unusual for a student to discover that available courses, on and off campus, do not neatly correspond with one's research program. However this is not an obstacle to gathering the information needed to produce materials that fit nicely with ACE preparation and the dissertation project. Theory, seminar, and independent study courses can be used as a means to explore, gather and construct knowledge into a form most useful to the student.

Consciously Produce from Your Course of Study a Collection of Ideas and Materials to be used for Your Dissertation Project

From your planned course of study you can produce:

- a collection of papers, research proposals, literature reviews, and field-notes related to your research problems, interests or future dissertation project
- a working (annotated?) bibliography of materials from your studies that represent the past, present and possibly the future cutting edge of area ethnography, theoretical perspectives, research methodologies and applied issues related to your dissertation project
- a current understanding of the issues, problems, and prospects in your chosen ethnographic area, theoretical perspective, and research methodology.

These materials in turn become the bases for your exam subjects and questions as well as your dissertation proposal. Since you should be fully familiar with these materials it is only a matter of arrangement of the required items for the exams (bibliography, exam subjects, questions, dates and time) and doing a review of the materials. Perhaps there will be some additional materials and study suggested by faculty but you would have basically
ACE Guidelines

In sum, spend time to clarify what your dissertation project is going to be as early as possible in your course work so that in the future taking the ACE exams will not be a hysterical experience. Communicate with your advisor early and often to help clarify problems or ambiguities that may arise. Careful planning and organization will go a long way to decrease the anxiety that students often create for themselves.

TAKING THE EXAMS

On each exam, you are allowed four hours to answer three questions. Five to ten minutes may be spent selecting the questions you will answer and adjusting your heart rate. Some time will be spent to think or outline your answers, perhaps five or ten minutes. And a similar amount of time will be spent reading over your answers, correcting things here and there, etc. Thus, you will spend approximately 15 or 20 minutes per question or about an hour for the whole exam selecting, preparing, and correcting your answers. That leaves you with about an hour, more or less, to answer each question.

It is important to realize that you will not have enough time to write a treatise that will answer the question to the fullest extent of your knowledge nor will you be able to consider in elaborate detail all the various approaches to the question. What is expected are intelligent answers to the questions.

Your answer. Depending on the question you should, in an economy of words, define terms and concepts, describe theory, provide examples, cite sources, and above all else attempt to answer the question as indicated. Be sure to distinguish between questions that ask you to do different things such as discuss, compare and contrast, provide examples, describe, consider, evaluate, etc. In your answer, try to include a beginning, a body and a conclusion.

Considering that you have one hour per question, your review and study of the exam subjects and submitted questions should work towards understanding the essence of concepts, theories, perspectives, and issues so you can explain them using a few sentences. You also should have at your command relevant ethnographic examples for each of your submitted questions. Being prepared in this way lessens the chance of spending time and energy studying irrelevant matters or at least those things that will essentially make little difference in the quality of your answer.

NOTE: There will be NO oral exams/proposal hearings the last two weeks of any semester. Plan accordingly.

SUGGESTED EXAM PROCESS TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Exams</th>
<th>Spring Exams</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>January thru early February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finalize bibliography and proposed questions with advisor and first reader.</td>
<td>Finalize bibliography and proposed questions with advisor and first reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet with second reader to discuss bibliography and questions</td>
<td>Meet with second reader to discuss bibliography and questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-September</td>
<td>Mid-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit finalized bibliography to Anthropology office</td>
<td>Submit finalized bibliography to Anthropology office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule exam dates and times</td>
<td>Schedule exam dates and times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October thru mid-November</td>
<td>Late-February thru late-February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take exams</td>
<td>Complete Oral Proposal Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late-October thru late-November</td>
<td>Late-February through mid-April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Oral Proposal Defense</td>
<td>Take exams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: There will be NO oral exams/proposal hearings the last two weeks of any semester. Plan accordingly.
**Approved Advanced Certification Exam Subjects**

Listed below is the list of acceptable exam subjects for the advanced certification exams in both the Ph.D. and Ed.D programs. The list consists of theoretical and applied exam subjects and ethnographic, regions. If you wish to pursue a theoretical area or ethnographic region not currently listed you should discuss this with your advisor.

**Theoretical and Applied Subjects**

- Anthropology and Education
- Applied Anthropology Art
- Cognitive Studies
- Contemporary Culture and Social Theory
- Cultural Change and Evolution
- Demography (socio-cultural)
- Development
- Cultural Ecology
- Economic Anthropology
- Education and Enculturation
- Historical Anthropology/Ethnohistory
- History of Anthropology
- Kinship and the Family
- Law
- Material Culture
- Medical Anthropology
- Mythology and Folklore
- Peasants
- Political Anthropology
- Psychological Anthropology
- Race and Minority Relations
- Religion
- Sex Roles
- Social Anthropology of Complex Societies
- Symbolism
- Urban Anthropology

**Ethnographic Regions**

- Caribbean
- Central Asia
- Circumpolar
- East Asia: China
- East Asia: Korea and Japan
- Europe
- Islamic Africa
- Latin America: Rural Societies
- Latin America: Urban Societies
- Lowland South American Indians
- Middle East
- Native North America
- North America
- Oceania
- South Asia
- Southeast Asia
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Mesoamerica (historical)
- The Andes (historical and cultural)
CERTIFICATION EXAM SCHEDULING FORM

Please make certain that all information is complete in order to facilitate the exam scheduling process.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Name: __________________________________________________________

Current Address: __________________________________________________

Primary Ph. #: ___________ Secondary Ph. #: ___________ Years in doctoral program: ______

E-Mail: _____________________________ Advisor’s name: ____________________________

REMINDERS FOR THE EXAMINEE:

1. All three exams must be scheduled during a two-week period.

2. Each exam period will be 4 hours. The designated exam area will include computer connections.

3. Dates and times should be discussed with your advisor and the program assistant to ensure that scheduling is convenient for everyone.

EXAM & READER INFORMATION

NOTE: For Teachers College and Columbia University Readers, please provide their full name and program/Dept. For all other readers, you MUST provide all contact information (Name, institution, address, phone, and email address). Failure to do so will delay both the scheduling and evaluation of your exams.

Applied Anthropology or Anthropology & Education Exam

Date of Exam: ___ / ___ / ___ Time of Exam: ___ 9:00 am – 1:00 pm ___ 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Has your bibliography been submitted and is it on file in the Anthropology office? ___ Yes ___ No

1st Reader

Name: __________________________________ University: ____________________________

Address of Reader: __________________________________ Ph. #: __________________________

E-Mail: __________________________

This reader prefers a: ___ hard copy ___ e-mail attachment

2nd Reader

Name: __________________________________ University: ____________________________

Address of Reader: __________________________________ Ph. #: __________________________

E-Mail: __________________________

This reader prefers a: ___ hard copy ___ e-mail attachment
ACE Guidelines

Date of Exam: __/__/___

Time of Exam: ___ 9:00 am – 1:00 pm ___ 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Has your bibliography been submitted and is it on file in the Anthropology office? ___ Yes ___ No

1st Reader
Name: ____________________________ University: ____________________________

Address of Reader: ____________________________ Ph. #: ____________________________

E-Mail: ____________________________

This reader prefers a: ___ hard copy ___ e-mail attachment

2nd Reader
Name: ____________________________ University: ____________________________

Address of Reader: ____________________________ Ph. #: ____________________________

E-Mail: ____________________________

This reader prefers a: ___ hard copy ___ e-mail attachment

Date of Exam: __/__/___

Time of Exam: ___ 9:00 am – 1:00 pm ___ 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Has your bibliography been submitted and is it on file in the Anthropology office? ___ Yes ___ No

1st Reader
Name: ____________________________ University: ____________________________

Address of Reader: ____________________________ Ph. #: ____________________________

E-Mail: ____________________________

This reader prefers a: ___ hard copy ___ e-mail attachment

2nd Reader
Name: ____________________________ University: ____________________________

Address of Reader: ____________________________ Ph. #: ____________________________

E-Mail: ____________________________

This reader prefers a: ___ hard copy ___ e-mail attachment