

MSLS Comprehensive Examination Procedures

Purpose

The MSLS Comprehensive Examination serves as the culminating assessment of student learning in the program. The examination evaluates students' ability to synthesize and apply knowledge from the core curriculum (Foundations, Organization, Research, Management). The student learning outcomes for the core curriculum are based on and aligned with the [American Library Association \(ALA\) Core Competences of Librarianship](#), ensuring that the examination assesses mastery of the profession's foundational knowledge and skills.

Eligibility

Students are eligible to take the Comprehensive Examination during their final semester if they:

- Have successfully completed 30 credit hours in the program, including all four required core courses.
 - Students may take the examination while enrolled in the course(s) that will bring them to the 30-credit-hour requirement during their final semester.
- Have met with their academic advisor at the beginning of their final semester to review their readiness for graduation.
- [Have applied for graduation.](#)

Application Process

After applying for graduation, students must complete the [Comprehensive Examination Application Form](#).

Students must verify that they have:

- Met with their academic advisor.
- Submitted an application for graduation.

Once the application is received and eligibility is verified, the Program Director will appoint the Comprehensive Assessment Committee. Students may consult the [Marshall University School of Library Science website](#) for current information about the Program Director and other program personnel.

Timeline	Activity
Beginning of the final semester	Student applies for graduation and submits the Comprehensive Examination Application Form .
Mid-semester	The Program Director appoints the Comprehensive Assessment Committee, and examination materials are prepared.

Final weeks of the semester

Student completes and submits the comprehensive examination.

End of the semester

The Comprehensive Assessment Committee evaluates the examination and reports the outcome.

Comprehensive Assessment Committee

A Comprehensive Assessment Committee must evaluate each student's performance on the comprehensive assessment. The student's graduate program director selects the chair and other member(s) of the Comprehensive Assessment Committee. The committee members must have the appropriate qualifications as stipulated in Board of Governors Policy UPAA-13 ([Graduate Faculty Membership](#)).

There must be a minimum of two voting members on every master's Comprehensive Assessment Committee, including the committee chair, except in the case where a national standardized exam is used as the only assessment, in which case only the person serving as chair is needed. A majority (more than half) of the student's Comprehensive Assessment Committee voting members must have appointments within the college of the student's major.

Each student will be assigned a committee consisting of:

- Committee Chair: Katy Zane
- Voting Member: Nate Floyd
- Optional Non-Voting Member: Library practitioner, mentor, library administrator, or advisory board member, as appropriate
- Other eligible in LIB: Monica Brooks, Eryn Roles

Committee membership will comply with Marshall University requirements regarding graduate faculty status and committee composition.

Examination Format

The comprehensive assessment will consist of a take-home written examination covering the four MSLS core courses. The exam will be untimed, and students will have one week from its scheduled release in Blackboard to complete and submit their responses. Students must answer four essay questions, selecting one question from each core course area. Each course area may offer multiple question options, and all questions will be aligned with the student learning outcomes (SLOs) of the corresponding course. Each essay response should be approximately 1,000 words, resulting in a total exam length of at least 4,000 words.

- LSC 500 – Library Foundations: basics of library careers including topics on library types, information organization, collection development, reference services, library management, and library history.

- LSC 505 – Library Organization: introduction to the theories, practices, standards, and tools used in the organization across a variety of information environments; includes information structures and their retrieval systems, cataloging, the MARC record, and other metadata standards and description, subject analysis, vocabularies, and systems for categorization.
- LSC 510 – Library Research Skills: techniques to design and implement effective information literacy programs, use discovery tools, perform research, reference interviews, resource evaluation, and deploy innovative teaching techniques.
- LSC 515 – Library Management: prepares students to lead and evaluate library services; includes topics on organizational structure, basics of personnel management, strategic planning, policy development, external reporting, and metrics for closing the assessment loop.

Exam Questions and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Examination questions will be mapped directly to the SLOs for each of the four core courses to ensure the assessment measures student achievement of the program's primary educational objectives.

- LSC 500 – Library Foundations SLOs
 - Students will be able to apply foundational ethics, values, and principles of the library profession to practice scenarios. (1A)
 - Students will be able to describe the role of libraries in promoting intellectual freedom and democratic access to information. (1B)
 - Students will be able to analyze the history of libraries and librarianship and explain their role within society. (1C)
 - Recognize the history, preservation, and dissemination of information in all its forms, and its impact on libraries. (1D)
 - Students will be able to differentiate among types of libraries and related information organizations and their functions. (1E)
 - Students will be able to describe how social, economic, and cultural trends influence library services and roles. (1F)
 - Students will be able to explain the legal and policy frameworks that shape library services, including intellectual property and access. (1G)
 - Use techniques to identify, codify, and analyze complex problems and create appropriate and collaborative solutions within library environments. (1I)
- LSC 505 – Library Organization SLOs
 - Students will identify the principles, systems, trends, and goals involved in the organization and representation of recorded knowledge and information. (5A)
 - Students will implement the developmental, descriptive, analytical, and evaluative skills needed to organize recorded knowledge and information. (5B)
 - Students will maintain the systems of cataloging, collection, metadata, indexing, and classification standards and structures, and implement methods used to

apply, create, and discover recorded knowledge and information, and the weaknesses and strengths of these systems. (5C)

- Students will recognize the ways that cultural biases impact and influence the collection and description of recorded knowledge and information. (5D)
- LSC 510 – Library Research Skills SLOs
 - Students will be able to apply methods for teaching information literacy that support lifelong learning. (3B)
 - Students will be able to use strategies to accommodate diverse learning preferences in instructional settings. (3C)
 - Students will be able to design instructional activities using learning theories and inclusive pedagogical practices. (3D)
 - Students will be able to employ techniques used to discover, retrieve, evaluate, and synthesize information from diverse sources for use by varying user populations and information environments. (6A)
 - Students will understand and apply methods and practices necessary to provide consultation, mediation, instruction, and guidance in using recorded knowledge and information for all user populations and information environments. Emphasize problem-solving skills to determine informational needs during the reference interview process. (6B)
 - Students will apply the RUSA Behavioral Competencies in the ethical practice of reference and user services. (6C)
 - Students will discover, engage with, and synthesize existing research from the field using multidisciplinary approaches to various information issues to align relevant findings to one's own professional development and/or institutional needs. (7A)
 - Students will be able to recognize the ethical and appropriate application of key research methods, techniques, and designs in the field, including the generation, analysis, evaluation, and presentation of data, and the utilization of research tools. (7B)
 - Understand principles and issues evolving with research, including an awareness of how professional and cultural values may influence each stage of the research lifecycle, the barriers related to access to research, and the tension between research and its application to professional practice. (7C)
 - Students will understand the importance of engaging in the research foundations and scholarly communications that will enable continued professional growth, knowledge, and sharing. (7D)
- LSC 515 – Library Management (SLOs)
 - Students will be able to apply principles of financial planning and resource allocation in library settings. (4A)
 - Students will be able to implement effective supervisory and human resource management practices. (4B)

- Students will be able to design and evaluate library services using assessment and outcome-based methods. (4C)
- Students will be able to develop collaborative partnerships and community-based organizational strategies. (4D)
- Students will be able to apply leadership theories to support organizational change and innovation. (4E)
- Students will be able to plan and manage projects from development through completion. (4F)
- Students will be able to communicate strategically with internal and external stakeholders. (4G)

Assessment Rubric

Each of the four comprehensive examination questions will be evaluated using the common scoring rubric below. The Comprehensive Assessment Committee will assign one of four performance ratings to each question answered based on the extent to which the student demonstrates mastery of the applicable course learning outcomes.

Examination results will be reported using Marshall University's approved comprehensive assessment designations:

Performance Rating	Description
E – Pass with Distinction	Demonstrates comprehensive mastery of the applicable course learning outcomes through accurate, insightful, and well-supported analysis that exceeds expectations for graduate-level work.
P – Pass	Demonstrates satisfactory achievement of the applicable course learning outcomes through accurate analysis and appropriate application of course concepts at the graduate level.
PC – Pass with Contingency	Demonstrates partial achievement of the applicable course learning outcomes but contains notable gaps or weaknesses that require additional work to demonstrate competency.
U – Unsatisfactory	Does not demonstrate achievement of the applicable course learning outcomes. The response contains substantial deficiencies or inaccuracies and does not meet graduate-level expectations.

Comprehensive Examination Ratings Summary

Core Course Question Area	E	P	PC	U
LSC 500 – Library Foundations	☐	☐	☐	☐
LSC 505 – Library Organization	☐	☐	☐	☐
LSC 510 – Library Research Skills	☐	☐	☐	☐
LSC 515 – Library Management	☐	☐	☐	☐

Evaluation Process

Committee members will:

1. Review examination responses independently.
2. Complete the scoring rubric.
3. Meet to discuss performance and rubric ratings.
4. Vote on the final outcome.
5. Students must receive a passing rating on all four questions.

Final results will be determined by majority vote of the committee.

Appeals Process

No more than two reassessments are permitted. In the event students fail to pass an assessment, they will be placed on probation and, prior to reassessment, must meet with their examining committee to discuss deficiencies and steps to correct them. Students may be assessed only one time a term or semester. When students fail the second reassessment, the department will recommend their dismissal.

Generative AI Use Policy

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools may not be used in any part of the comprehensive examination. Students must independently develop, write, revise, and complete their examination responses without the use of generative AI tools, including tools used to generate, rewrite, summarize, edit, or otherwise produce examination content.

When submitting the comprehensive examination, students will be required to sign an attestation confirming that they have complied with the Generative AI Use Policy. The attestation will state:

I attest that I did not use generative AI to complete any part of this comprehensive examination. I understand that violating this policy may result in failure of the examination and additional consequences under Marshall University policy, including removal of the degree when permitted by university policy.

