

2017 2nd Year Comprehensive Exam Executive Summary

Introduction

The 2nd Year Comprehensive Exam is a program capstone that serves as a key midpoint assessment of the program learning outcomes. Students work independently on the take-home exam, producing an eight to ten page paper (3000 -4000 words).

Exam

The written exam is comprised of a case study with three questions. Students are asked to compare and contrast how two psychodynamic theorists conceptualize and approach the case and specific material related in it, as well as to discuss the interpersonal dynamics that might arise in their own treatment of the case.

The paper is graded based on a rubric that covers the three learning outcomes and the style of the paper. Based on feedback from faculty, staff, and students, the rubric for the exercise was changed significantly from the previous administration of the exercise. With feedback from the faculty, two sections were added, one for PLO 3 and the other regarding topic development and APA style. The rubric has three levels of competence, Exemplary, Competent, and Needs Improvement. Exemplary and Competent are passing scores, and needs improvement is a non-passing score. Program learning outcomes are below.

Methodology

The mean scores in the report are calculated by assigning numerical values to the levels of competence. A rating of Exemplary earns the students 3 points, Competent 2 points, and Needs Improvement 1 point. Means and standard deviations are calculated from these values.

Three faculty examiners separately graded each paper using the Comprehensive Exam Rubric. They were not given any information that identified the exam taker. Before the exams were scored, the faculty examiners participated in a calibration session moderated by the Director of Evaluation and Planning and the Academic Dean. The purpose of the calibration was for the faculty to come to consensus on how to grade the exams based on the revised rubric.

The determination of whether the student passed was based on criteria rather than the total score. All students passed the exam.

Results

While all three students passed, the students had very different scores. However, the standard deviations were smaller than the standard deviations from the 2016 exam, meaning that the scores given by the readers for each student were more consistent than those of the 2016 exam.