

# 103 CLINICAL QUALIFYING EXAMS

## 103.1 – Overview

Scheduled at the end of the 1st year (except in the case of Clinical Advanced Standing), a written clinical exam is given to assess the student's mastery of 1st year learning objectives and readiness for advanced clinical learning. Exam requirements are conveyed to students by their Practicum Faculty Advisers (PFA's). The oral clinical exam is offered at the end of the 1st year of internship or in December of the 2nd year clinical internship. The 1st year clinical internship and 2nd year internships are graded separately with Pass (P), Marginal Pass (MP) or Fail (F) based on the evaluation of learning objectives in the internship and assessed by the clinical supervisor(s) and practicum faculty adviser. All students typically need to receive a PASS in their 1st year clinical internship before proceeding on to further academic coursework.

The Written and Oral clinical exams are graded separately with Pass (P), Marginal Pass (MP) or Fail (F). A student receiving a grade of F in either or both exams would not be permitted to continue on to further academic coursework, and will be given one opportunity to repeat the 1st year clinical internship session and, at the end of the session, to re-take the failed exam(s). A second grade of F, either in Clinical Internship or in the exam(s), would be grounds for dismissal from the Program.

A student receiving a grade of MP in either or both of these exams would be given one opportunity to re-write the part(s) of the exam(s) found to be unsatisfactory. The re-write is evaluated by the student's Practicum Faculty Adviser and the program director, and must be completed and successfully passed before the student would be permitted to continue on to further coursework or clinical internship. The grade for the clinical internship would be I (Incomplete) until the re-write of the written clinical exam. If an MP is given in the oral clinical exam, a student may also need to re-take the entire clinical oral exam at a later date and submit a different case summary. The grade for the clinical internship would be I (Incomplete) until the re-take of the oral clinical exam. A grade of PASS on this exam would be required to proceed with further academic coursework.

## 103.2 – Written Clinical Exam: Procedures & Criteria

The Written Exam consists of a published article and a set of questions related to the article that centers the clinical learning objectives of the 1st year. The exam is taken in early April of the 1st year of the student's clinical internship. It is 4 hours in length.

On the day before the exam the article will be emailed to the student. The next day the exam questions are emailed to the student. The test is completed using the honor system; students are required to exercise academic honesty, without supervision or surveillance, and students are expected to adhere to professional ethics. No books, notes or online material are allowed to be used during the exam. Students will compose their answers on a computer in a Word document. At the end of 4 hours, they will email their exam paper as a Word attachment back to the Administrative and Systems Manager, PhD Program (sswphd@smith.edu). The exam is read by the student's PFA and the Program's Clinical Coordinator, and is evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Read a published article that combines clinical psychodynamic theory and practice.
- Explain the phenomena described in the article from an alternative theoretical position drawn from the four psychologies. Based on evidence in the article, compare and contrast both theoretical positions, discussing the gains and losses inherent in each.
- Examine the practice interventions in light of the theory the author uses. Be able to think critically about how a different theory might lead to a different intervention.
- Critique the theoretical position taken in the article in terms of its social and historical contexts.
- Demonstrate Ph.D. level writing within the constraints of a timed examination.

## 103.3 – Oral Clinical Exam: Procedures & Criteria

This exam, based on the student's case study, consists of a face-to-face discussion between the student and a committee made up of three members of the School's Ph.D. Program faculty and associates. The Program Clinical Director serves as the ex officio member of every exam committee.

The exam takes place on Smith Campus (or conducted via video-conferencing) in late April of the 1st year internship or in early December of the 2nd year internship. It lasts approximately 2 and 1/2 hours. First, the committee meets in private to discuss the paper, and then the student is invited into the room to join the discussion.

Afterwards, the student is asked to leave the room while the committee comes to a decision about the exam, and then the practicum faculty adviser (PFA) meets privately with the student to convey the committee's decision on the exam. At times, the PFA and Clinical Director, or the entire committee meets with the student to share feedback. Finally, the Clinical Director sends formal notification to the student. The oral exam is evaluated on the following criteria:

- Present a coherent biopsychosocial-spiritual assessment using those psychodynamic, developmental and social theories that best serve the client, with particular attention given to relevant issues of diversity.
- Articulate a treatment plan with specific goals and interventions, in both Agency-based and theoretical languages, demonstrating how they serve the client.
- Select one theory drawn from the four psychologies, apply it to the case, and based on the assessment, defend the rationale for the theoretical position in the treatment of the client.
- Compare and contrast the chosen theory with another theory drawn from the four psychologies, noting the gains and losses obtained with each theoretical perspective.
- Address both long- and short-term goals in terms of the assessment formulation and as demonstrated by evidence in the process recordings.
- Evaluate progress in treatment based on a review of treatment goals and measures to assess outcome.
- Demonstrate understanding of the working alliance, transference, resistance, and countertransference in the therapeutic relationship.
- Entertain an alternate point of view and discuss it in a clear and coherent manner.
- Address any ethical dilemmas raised by the case.