PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE CLINICAL ORAL EXAM

1. The oral exam requires the student to demonstrate, both in a high level written document and in an oral presentation, the ability to assess, formulate, treat and evaluate his or her work on a clinical case.

2. The exam is patterned after the Oral Examination for Licensure given by the New Jersey Board of Psychological Examiners as the final step in the licensing process, requiring the candidate to discuss successfully before two examiners a submitted "typical work sample." It thus provides the student with an opportunity to first experience this process in a more benign and educational atmosphere.

3. Because it is a formal process, it differs in significant ways from the more informal and collaborative style of many class presentations. It asks that the student take on the role of a professional presenting to other professionals, prepared to succinctly present the essentials of a case and to defend a point of view.

PREPARING FOR THE CLINICAL ORAL EXAM

1. The student will choose a theoretical orientation and the department secretary, with the department chair's oversight, will assign two clinical psychology faculty members for the orals who did not supervise the case and who are not on the student's dissertation committee. The student will contact them, find a convenient time for the orals, and reserve a room and equipment (if needed). It is advisable to have your committee assigned well in advance to make it easier to find mutually convenient times.

2. At least one week before the orals, the student will give faculty members a well-organized and cohesive write-up of the case that reflects his or her own thinking and that the student can defend. Include citations to the psychological literature that contributed to conceptualizing the case (including cultural factors). Remove all identifying material. The write-up must be in APA format and should include the following information in 12-20 double-spaced typed pages, not including references. Do not exceed the page limit.

   a. Identifying demographic characteristics
   b. Presenting problem and its history
   c. Personal history and pertinent medical history
   d. Family history
   e. Mental Status, e.g., appearance, general attitude, and any peculiarities
in thought or perception seen during the interview
f. Results of any formal assessment procedures
g. Theoretical formulation of the case
h. DSM diagnosis, on all axes
i. Treatment plan
j. Treatment progress, including significant theoretical and clinical concepts underlying this process
k. Treatment outcome to date
l. Difficulties encountered working with this case
m. Diversity issues raised by the case and differences between you and the client, including race/ethnicity, religious or spiritual orientation, gender-related issues, cognitive or physical challenges, and soci-economic class (Include relevant content from DSM IV diagnostic formulations and the Appendix.)
n. Ethical issues raised by this case
o. What this case taught you about yourself and about areas for possible future growth.

3. It is recommended that the student bring to the orals one 50-minute audio or video tape of a complete session (video preferred), but this is not required, particularly when the taping requirement might force a student to choose a work sample that is less current and representative. Examiners differ in their preferred methods of using the taped material, so you may want to check with them about this when you arrange the orals date and time. Think through in advance which segment of the tape you want to present.

4. The student should be prepared to offer a brief (5-10 minute) case summation. Brevity is important here because one of the skills the examiners will be assessing is the ability to present succinctly the essentials of a case. Examiners may waive this presentation.

5. Orals will take from 90 to 120 minutes.

6. Although students should write up their case within a particular theoretical framework, they also should be prepared to discuss the case in such a way that a faculty member with a different orientation can engage with them in a dialogue. The student may need to demonstrate an understanding of alternative perspectives to a faculty member of a differing perspective.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE CLINICAL ORALS CASE

The purpose of this case is to assure the faculty that you are able to intelligently conceptualize and competently treat a clinical case. You may write from any theoretical orientation, but be aware that you may be asked to demonstrate an understanding of alternative perspectives.
When the reader has finished your report, he or she should have a sense of the assessment procedures you used, the conclusions you drew from the assessment, and how these led to treatment, the course of treatment and the outcome. Remember that this should not simply be a listing of various techniques of treatment, but rather should reflect your knowledge of the person and how the relationship between the two of you influenced the course of therapy. We want to be sure that you are aware of yourself as a participant in the clinical process. We also wish to know how you use the psychological literature when you treat clients.

The case report should contain sufficient detail that another person who reads the report would feel ready to assume responsibility for the client. On the other hand, a book length paper is not in order since you will spend at least an hour of the examination talking about the case.

It is not necessary that the case be one where the outcome was brilliant. The Committee will accept a case that falls short of perfection. However, you should be prepared to discuss the reasons for problems that arose, and how you might deal with them in the future. Also be sensitive to any ethical and diversity issues that came up in treatment.
The policy established at the October 4, 1982 Clinical Department meeting was that students be given a choice in the theoretical composition of the Orals Committee. In line with this, the following procedures are to be employed to arrange Oral Committees:

1. All core and Visiting Faculty, together with selected Contributing and Joint Faculty will be placed in a faculty resource pool. Based upon their stated theoretical preference, each faculty member will be placed in the behavioral, psychodynamic or family systems group.

2. The faculty in each theoretical group will be placed on an ordered list. The order in the list will be determined randomly.

3. When planning for Orals, the student will first select a theoretical framework in which to present his/her case. The first member of the Orals Committee will be selected from this theoretical orientation. The student will then indicate one of two choices for the theoretical orientation of the second committee member: (a) same theoretical orientation as first member: or (b) different theoretical orientation from first member.

4. Faculty will be assigned to Orals Committees in the order in which their name is on the list mentioned in Step 2. The only exceptions of this are that a faculty member cannot participate in an Orals Committee if she/he has been involved in supervising the case being presented or is on the student’s dissertation committee.

5. If, for the reasons given in Step 4, a faculty member is not chosen according to his/her order on the list (cf. Step 2) that faculty person is selected at the next possible time.

6. The procedure for selecting an Orals Committee will involve the student completing the form below and returning it to the department administrative assistant. The Chair will select the appropriate names from the faculty list. The student will be given the two names and will be responsible for arranging a time and place for the Oral Exam. If scheduling problems make it impossible to arrange the exam, the student should request new names from department administrative assistant, with an explanation of the scheduling problems encountered.

7. Students may take the exam anytime after they pass their comprehensive exams. (4/03)

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**STUDENT REQUEST FOR ORAL COMPREHENSIVE COMMITTEE**

Student’s Name __________________________________________ Date ________________________

Theoretical Orientation of Case:

_________________ Cog. Behavioral __________________ Psychodynamic _______________ Family Systems

I prefer (check one):

___________________________________________ Second Committee member of the same orientation

___________________________________________ Second Committee member of a different orientation

Dissertation Committee:________________________________________________________________

Supervisor/s for case:________________________________________________________________

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CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY
ORAL SPECIALITY EXAMINATION

STUDENT’S NAME _______________________________________________

ORAL SPECIALTY COMMITTEE _____________________________________

(Committee consists of two faculty who did not supervise the student on the presented case and who are not on the student’s dissertation committee)

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EXAMINATION WAS COMPLETED VERY SATISFACTORILY.

______________________    DATE _______________
(Signature)

______________________    DATE _______________
(Signature)

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