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History of Comprehensive Exam and why changes for 2014

Each major at Hanover College is required to give a comprehensive exam. The format is up to the department. The EPP decided to use a two week take home exam format. Two department members grade the exams separately, and then collaborate before determining the final score. For the first few years, the exam contained two questions, with one reflecting on the conceptual framework and how it impacted their teaching. In recent years, a case study format was used. Students were given five classroom scenarios and asked to respond to each scenario. As the EPP started seeking SPA accreditation, it was decided that the comprehensive exam would be a good source to document content knowledge along with pedagogical content knowledge. The five-question format remained, but a content piece was added to each question. Many parts have remained the same throughout the process, like critical thinking, use of resources and quality of writing. For the 2014 comprehensive exam, the rubric was revised. The basic information was retained, just reformatted for clarity and reduced duplication of aspects. For instance, it was difficult to determine the amount of critical thinking for each individual scenario, so this was revised to look at critical thinking throughout the entire exam. Also each scorer interpreted the expectations for that section differently, so it was apparent that students also felt confusion over expectations. Both department members talked about trouble spots within the rubric, then brainstormed changes that would make the rubric more transparent for the students to use and to score. Changes include clearer titles above each question section, point values for each ranking to easily determine a quantitative score, holistic grading throughout the exam for critical thinking and the number of resources required and clearer questions so students were not sidetracked by certain parts of the question (e.g. more attention was paid to the IREAD test and guidelines than the acquisition of reading skills). The 2014 comprehensive exam results and analysis will be available in mid-March 2014.