

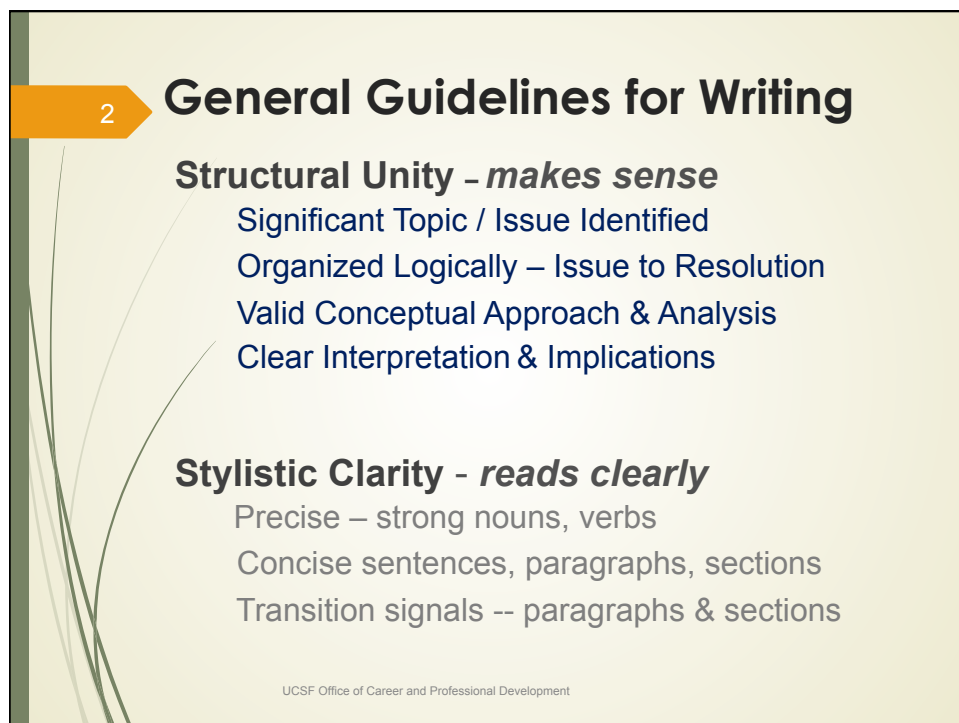
Comprehensive Exam - 2015  
**Critical Literature Review**  
& **Research Proposal**

Guidelines for Writing Well  
Strategies for Approaching these New Exams  
→ **Changes**  
Common Issues & Solutions

1 New Comp. Exam Handbook – Rvd. October 2014  
<http://nursing.ucsf.edu/comp-exams>

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2 **General Guidelines for Writing**

**Structural Unity - makes sense**  
Significant Topic / Issue Identified  
Organized Logically – Issue to Resolution  
Valid Conceptual Approach & Analysis  
Clear Interpretation & Implications

**Stylistic Clarity - reads clearly**  
Precise – strong nouns, verbs  
Concise sentences, paragraphs, sections  
Transition signals -- paragraphs & sections

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## Vital Resources

Vital resource - Dept. Administrative Assistants

- ▶ CHS: Judy Alonzo & Sharon Solorio
- ▶ PN: Mary Margaret
- ▶ FHCN: Maggie Pena
- ▶ SBS: Brandee Wolesslagle

Comp Exam Coordinators

- ▶ CHS: Beth Phoenix & Dana Drew-Nord
- ▶ PN: Roxanne Garbez
- ▶ FHCN: Barbara Hollinger & Mary Lynch
- ▶ SBS: Susan Chapman

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## Additional Resources

- ▶ Advisors - topic & format
- ▶ Specialty faculty
- ▶ Former sample comps on reserve for ideas about issues – not format
- ▶ Scientific Writing Program Coordinator  
[Susana.Leong@ucsf.edu](mailto:Susana.Leong@ucsf.edu)
- ▶ Consider other arrangements
  - Typist
  - Paid tutors & editors
  - Peers as editors & proofreaders
- ▶ Create a timeline

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## Strategies – 2015 Revised Exam

### Graduate Division Language

The Comprehensive Examination should demonstrate student **mastery of the major field** and **ability to think critically**.

**Specific Purpose: evaluation of your abilities to...**

- **Critique** research as it applies to your area of specialization
- **Apply** advanced clinical & theoretical knowledge to practice
- **Utilize** writing skills to disseminate nursing information in a scholarly paper
- **Demonstrate** yourself as a consumer of research

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## Strategies – What's different?

- **Four Exam Options**
  - Critical Literature Review
  - Research Proposal
  - Problem-solving
  - **\*White Paper (new)**
- **Section Scoring weights**
- **Suggested number of articles for exam type**
- **20 pages, NOT 30**
- **Quantitative & Qualitative Research Review Tables** in Appendices – shortens Lit Review with focus on substantive critiques
- **Four Sections - defined & scale-scored (1-5)**
  - **I. Writing Quality (tech fail)**
  - **II Topic/Issue**
  - **III. Literature Review Analysis**
  - **IV. Discussion /Application**

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## Strategies – What's the same?

**Same Pass / Fail Score**

- ▶ Total points available – **330**
- ▶ Points needed to pass -- **231**

**Same Process:**

- ▶ Two readers // possible third reader // one retake possible
- ▶ See Orientation for Revised Exam (11/14) for details on process and options ...

<http://nursing.ucsf.edu/comp-exams>

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## Critical Literature Review Exam

**Identifies gaps in literature, implications for practice, need for further research**

- Unresolved issue in the literature
- Some argue one position. Others disagree

**Synthesize differing arguments. Present your approach, based on exam lit. critiques**

**Choosing a Topic...**

- ▶ Pose a question
- ▶ Do initial searching
- ▶ Look for enough research but **no clear synthesis of findings**
- ▶ Argue a point with **some evidence but not established in practice**

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## Critical Literature Review Exam

Four Sections - defined & scale-scored  
(1-5)

- ▶ I. **\*Writing Quality** (*tech fail*)
- ▶ II. Topic/Issue
- ▶ III. Literature Review Analysis
- ▶ IV. Discussion /Application

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## I \*Writing Quality - Important

(same for all exams)

1. Content & focus
2. Logic & flow
3. Structure & organization
4. Sentence structure
5. APA format (6<sup>th</sup> ed.)
6. Correct grammar, punctuation, word usage, spelling

Each category 1- 5 points = **30 points total**  
**Score of 15 points or lower = technical fail**

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## II. TOPIC / ISSUE Presentation & Exposition

(4 areas – 5 max each X 2.5 = 50 points total)

- 1. Clarity of topic or purpose** – reason, well-defined purpose, concisely stated -- **issue appearing IN the literature**
  - State in 1 sentence
  - The purpose of this paper is to **examine the literature related to** the efficacy of using BNP to diagnose patients with heart failure.
- 2. Problem significance** – for nursing practice, research
- 3. Review Organization** – how organized, conceptualized approach, rationale of article selection
- 4. Quality references** (significant, classic & current articles critiqued - primary sources. Avoid multiple articles from same overall study --different purposes but same sample, methodology, statistics, etc.)
  - Meta-analysis & lit review articles – for background or significance

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## II. TOPIC/ISSUE: Significant /Controversial

**Unresolved issues found in literature**

- Evaluating Cognitive Function after Stroke
- Family Presence during Resuscitation
- BNP Levels in Diagnosis of Heart Failure
- Evaluation of Depression in Adolescence

**Title: Topic / Issue / Approach**

- The **Relationship** Between Atypical Psychotropic Use and Diabetes Mellitus: The **Role of Genetics**
- **Sociocultural Factors** in the **Development** of Diabetes Mellitus in Patients with Severe Mental Illness

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## II. TOPIC / ISSUE

### Showing Significance - The Rationale

**Show significance of the issue in its context – rationale for nursing practice or research**

- 4.8 million in the U.S. have HF
- 50% are rehospitalized in 6 months
- no lab test for diagnosing HF
- BNP might provide better method for evaluation of SOB than symptoms

**Why important as an issue for nursing?**

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## II. TOPIC / ISSUE

### Organization of Review

**Conceptualization of approach**

- ❑ Background, history – citations

**Search & Selection articles critiqued**

- ❑ **Search process**
  - Databases, number of searches, key words
- ❑ **Selection process**
  - **5-7 articles** – how selected...
  - The journal articles were chosen because they include.....and the oldest is reviewed first....

**Quality of References**

- ❑ Select significant literature (classic, current). If appropriate, meta analysis & lit review articles for background but exam references should be primary sources

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**II. TOPIC / ISSUE**

15 **Selection Sample ... Single Paragraph Rationale Language**

Although extensive literature has been published regarding **topic X**, few studies analyze **issue y** related to . . . . Hence, this paper's approach is to fill that **gap with critiques based** on their theoretical and empirical significance to the development of . . . . **The selected articles** also were chosen for their contribution to understanding and contextualizing salient issues impacting . . . . **The first two critiques** were the first to address factors concerning . . . . **The third critique** addresses the impact of . . . . **The fourth critique** explores apparent . . . . **The fifth** examines . . . . While **the sixth** and **seventh critiques** address . . . .

**NOT chronological unless appropriate**

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16 **III. LITERATURE REVIEW** **Critical Analysis**

(4 areas – 5 max each X 7.5 = 150 points total)

- 1. Quality of theoretical discussion**
  - Clear discussion of relevant theory/conceptual framework
- 2. Quality of research tables\*\***
  - Table used for objective information of study methodology & findings
- 3. Addresses elements of critique**
  - Critique relevant study points, findings, conclusions & author's interpretations
- 4. Quality of critique & interpretation**
  - Accurate critiques & potential for knowledge contribution

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### III. Literature Review: Choosing a Theory

- ▶ Applicable to critical literature review issue
- ▶ Should further clarify, support, & explain your topic/issue
- ▶ **Nursing theory not required**
- ▶ Explain theory in text -- not just in an appendix – use it to frame your discussion

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### III. More on Theory

- ▶ **Theoretical Discussion**
  - Must address foundation of issue
  - Theory enables you to explain a phenomenon. No right or wrong theory
  - Focus on how you want to frame the argument you are making
  - Example of possible theories:
    - Possible mechanisms underlying increased risk of Type 2 Diabetes in people on atypical psychotropic medications

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**19** **Theories** - possible mechanisms underlying increased risk of Type 2 diabetes in people on atypical psychotropics

Physiological	HPA axis & sympathetic nervous system hyperactivity resulting in cortisol overproduction
Genetics	Diabetes only occurs in those with a genetic predisposition
Co-morbidity	Diabetes is really due to alcoholism or binge eating
Socio-cultural	Due to socioeconomic, disability, marital status, access to health care
Health care	Providers fail to adequately monitor overall health
Behavioral	Inactivity, diet, smoking due to the psychiatric illness
Medication	Side effects, appetite stimulation and subsequent weight gain

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**20** **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**  
**Critiques Elements & Quality of Interpretation**

- Use well written - perhaps not so well written - research articles. Showing what's there
  - Critique process should identify articles that may have similar study questions yet end with different results – all related to your defined issue/problem
  - Details in Research Tables in appendices
- Synthesis & interpretation of each study
  - Sample size too small to have power to find a difference between those with and without HF
  - Authors were biased; they knew the BNP level and may have changed treatment
  - Only generalizable to men
- **Quality of Critique & Interpretation**

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### \*Elements of single critique: Your Analysis

**Research literature:**

- Synthesize **each study's findings presented in the Research Review Table**
- Discuss relevant study points or findings or conclusion
- Include the study author's interpretation of findings & strengths /limitations (validity & reliability, and **Levels of Evidence – Appendix III**)

**Non-research literature:** main points + credibility of author/content

----- **Most of this in the Tables: Appendix I & II** -----

- **Study Aim & Design** (RCT, longitudinal, survival analysis etc). If randomized, mention how they achieved randomization
- **Sample**, how recruited. Key inclusion & exclusion criteria. If is split into groups, brief mention of groups' demographics
- **Procedure** -- what happened over the time during the study?
- **Measures** used (appropriate?) **Statistical analysis** (appropriate?)
- **Results** (including p values?)
- **Conclusions** - authors' acknowledgments of limitations

**Any overall synthesis -- including referencing other articles (in comparison to one being critiqued) -- saved for Discussion**

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### \*Levels of Evidence: Appendix III

- **Ia** – Evidence from Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT)
- **Ib** – Evidence from at least one RCT
- **IIa** – Evidence from at least one well designed, non RCT
- **IIb** – Evidence from at least well designed experimental trial
- **III** – Evidence from case, correlation, & comparatives studies
- **IV** – Evidence from a panel of experts

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### III. Research Literature Summary Critique Tables

- Organize your articles into a table that compares & contrasts different critique components – see template – & briefly describe it
- Limit to 1 page/article
- Detailed table information **not repeated** in the Comprehensive Exam itself

**The Exam focuses on your critique, your analysis!**

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### III. Definitions: Quantitative vs. Qualitative

[http://nursingplanet.com/research/qualitative\\_research.html](http://nursingplanet.com/research/qualitative_research.html)

	Quantitative	Qualitative
<b>General Framework</b>	Seek to confirm hypotheses Positivist paradigm	Seek to explore phenomena Naturalistic paradigm
<b>Objectives</b>	To predict & control	To understand (what, how, why)
<b>Tools</b>	Highly structured methods: questionnaires, surveys, & structured observation	Use semi-structured methods: in-depth interviews, focus groups, & participant observation
<b>Design</b>	Rigid design Controlled & experimental	Emergent design
<b>Focus</b>	Prediction Outcomes Generalizability	Rich “thick” description Similarities & contrasts Process & context
<b>Data analysis</b>	Statistical	Non-statistical

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### III. Research Tables - Quantitative

**Appendix I: Quantitative Research Literature Review Table**  
*1 page for each article critiqued*

Citation	Conceptual Frame work /Theory	Aims	Design & Methodology	Sample & Setting	Variables	Measurement & Analysis	Findings
Author/s name, article title  Year of publication, journal	Theoretical basis of study	Study purpose  What were hypotheses/ null hypotheses or stated research question?	Design?  Briefly describe procedures used to collect data	n = ?  Sample demographics?  Recruitment procedures used?  Inclusion/ Exclusions criteria?  Setting selected?	Describe variables & definitions  Give function of variables if listed (independent/ dependent control variables)	Scales used to measure variables (scale name, author, reliability info if provided (Cronback alphas)  Statistical tests used to answer the research question?	Key findings from results table with corresponding sig values (for every stat test in measure. column – should provide a correspond. value)

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### III. Research Tables - Qualitative

**Appendix II: Qualitative Research Literature Review Table**  
*1 page for each article critiqued*

Citation	Theoretical Framework	Design & Methodology	Aims	Sample & Sampling	Analysis	Findings
Author/s name, article title  Year of publication, journal	Theoretical basis of study	Study design  Data sources  Data-collection strategies	Study purpose	Number of participants  Sample demographics  Sampling approach  Inclusion/ Exclusions criteria  Setting selection	How data analyzed?  Software used (if any)	Major themes & findings?

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## IV. DISCUSSION & APPLICATION

(2 areas - 5 max each = 10 X 10 = 100 points possible)

- 1. Critical & Original Analysis – of your critiques**
  - Analyzes body of literature & theoretical discussion presented in Area III / your critiques
  - Summarizes theoretical discussion & significant accomplishments in literature
- 2. Integration, Synthesis, Implication of critiques**
  - **Describes** relationship between major findings
  - **Identifies** gaps & future research
  - **Formulates** pertinent researchable questions, propositions, hypothesis
  - **Discusses** implications & significance for nursing practice

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## Review of Exam Scoring

▶ <b>I: Quality of Writing*.....</b>	<i>30 points</i>
▶ <b>II: Topic or Issue.....</b>	<i>50 points</i>
▶ <b>III: Literature Review ....</b>	<i>150 points</i>
▶ <b>IV: Discussion &amp; Application....</b>	<i>100 points</i>

❖ Total points available – **330**  
❖ Points needed to pass -- **231**

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## Former Excellent Lit. Review Comments

***Body Mass Index (BMI) -- Measure, Predictor of Obesity in School-Aged Children***

- Problem clearly articulated
  - Immediately linked to theoretical perspective
- Literature Review clearly structured
  - Divided into topical headings
  - Multiple discipline research summarized
  - Analytical critique
- Conceptual framework appropriate
  - Linked to problem in lit & relevant intervention

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## Former Good Lit. Review Comments

***Relevant Factors for Appropriate Clinical Management of Women with Atypical Pap Smears***

- Topic -- important & well articulated**
  - Good conceptual approach & organization
- Literature Review -- organization!**
  - 5 Biomedical, 3 Psychosocial Factors
  - Full depth of critiques & analysis
- Discussion & Application** **Conclusion too short**  
**Missing theoretical approach, gaps in lit. Still passed!!**

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## Former Weak Lit. Review Comments

***Efficacy of Light Therapy on Institutionalized Dementia Patients***

Topic significant BUT research on issue -- tenuous  
Problem as stated -- NOT a lit. review option UNLESS  
problem restated to reflect more focus & broader  
research base that included controversy

Final focus shifted to significance of nocturnal sleep  
disturbances

Good review of the literature that existed. Good theoretical  
framework

All parts need to work together!

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## Common Weaknesses / Strengths

<b>Unclear Topic / Significance</b>	<b>State what &amp; why</b>
<b>Undefined Organization</b> Selection & order of articles unclear	<b>Show how</b>
<b>Literature Critiques</b> Just listing & describing	<b>Show your assessment</b>
<b>Discussion &amp; Application</b> Unclear what this review means for nursing practice	<b>Critically analyze</b>

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## Checklist

- ✓ Select **significant** topic / issue
- ✓ Research **relevant** Literature

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- ✓ **Outline structure** of 3 sections – **draft**

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- ✓ **Review** content, structure, language
- ✓ Get reader/advisor **reviews**
- ✓ **Revise, edit** for clarity, logic, style
- ✓ **Follow Comp Orientation Process**

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## Common Reasons for Not Passing

- Started too late for necessary time & effort
- Did not meet with advisor to obtain feedback & ensure being on track
- Did not follow advisor's advice
- Changed comp topic at last minute
- Primary editor's English composition skills not adequate for appropriate feedback on writing

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## But You Are Here & Will Pass!!



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## Research Proposal Option

Evaluates ability to **identify a significant research question** relevant to nursing practice & **design a methodology** for addressing the question

- Study does not have to be carried out but must have access to UCSF faculty with research experience to mentor you.
- ❖ Good choice for building on this topic for future research or doctoral work
- ❖ Could be taken back to your workplace for implementation if approval given by institution

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## Research Proposal – now four areas

- I. Writing Quality** (tech fail) 30
- II. Study & Context** 70  
Specific problem, Aims, Significance to nursing & society  
**Clarity / Significance of issue / Comprehensive yet Succinct**
- III. Conceptual / Theoretical Framework & Literature Review**  
(Research Tables: App I & II)  
125  
– Perspective, Preliminary Work, Theoretical, Research Base for Hypothesis  
**Clarity & Quality**
- IV. Methodology** (quantitative & qualitative) 105  
**Criteria** (design, environmental resources/ constraints, sample & selection process/consent forms, materials/tools, with copy of tools in appendix, procedures, data analysis, resources, limitations)  
**Adequate / Consistent / Clear / Appropriate / Feasible/ Integrity / Realistic**

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## Excellent Research Proposal Comments

“Premenstrual Negative Affect Symptoms as Possible Relapse Trigger for Chemically Dependent Women in Recovery ”

- **Significant Problem**  
Excellent Design & Organization
- **Literature Review**  
Sharply focused, specifically supported variables  
Linked to conceptual framework, study **design**
- **Methodology**  
Complex analytical strategy

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## Excellent Research Proposal Comments

*“Premenstrual Negative Affect Symptoms as Possible Relapse Trigger for Chemically Dependent Women in Recovery ”*

- **Significant Problem**  
*Excellent Design & Organization*
- **Literature Review**  
*Sharply focused, specifically supported variables*  
*Linked to conceptual framework, study design*
- **Methodology**  
*Complex analytical strategy*

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## Weak Research Proposal Comments

*“Effect of Blue Cohosh on Active Phase of Labor”*

*Study -- important issue without clear aims*

***Imprecise focus -- NOT clearly stated***

***Lacked ample literature references for major terms***

***Methodology – NOT put together well***

***Hypothesis NOT stated***

***Research design flawed***

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