

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
& HIGHER EDUCATION
STUDENT PROCEDURES MEMORANDUM**

Ph.D. Preliminary Examination

Introduction

Each student in the Ph.D. in Education program, with a concentration in Educational Administration, must write preliminary examinations. The Department administers preliminary exams on an individualized, take home basis, in consultation with the student's advisor, during the fifth week of each semester (fall and spring only). The student will have four weeks to complete the exams. In addition to the requirements outlined in this Student Procedures Memorandum, all policies regarding preliminary examinations as outlined in the document, Ph.D. Policies and Procedures for Administering the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education (available in the EAHE Department office), are applicable as well.

Eligibility

To be eligible for preliminary exams, students must have accomplished the following:

- Have an approved Student Ph.D. Program form on file.
- Be at or near the completion of all coursework for their Ph.D. program.
- Completed all professional core, research tool, and college-wide seminar courses in their Ph.D. program.
- Removed all grades of "Incomplete."
- Completed a departmental preliminary exam application form and obtained the advisor's approval on same.
- Receive clearance from the Director of Graduate Studies after a check of records.

Purpose of the Preliminary Examinations

The preliminary examinations are used to fulfill two broad purposes:

1. To determine the breadth and depth of a student's scholarship; and
2. To demonstrate command of the knowledge base in the chosen discipline.

The examinations are preliminary to admittance to candidacy for the Ph.D. The preliminary exams offer the doctoral student an opportunity to demonstrate that s/he has become an independent and original thinker in the discipline as a consequence of the study and research engaged in during formal graduate coursework.

Examination Procedures

The preliminary examination in EAHE consists of three questions negotiated by the student and their advisor in each of the following broad areas: theory, research, and specialty area. The questions negotiated for each of these three areas of the preliminary exam are meant to be overarching and integrative, and designed to test the student's understanding of concepts, theories, and methodologies relevant to his or her program of study. Typically, each question will include several parts.

Presuming the student has met the eligibility requirement, the examination process is as follows:

1. The student must apply to take preliminary exams no later than the midterm of the semester preceding the semester in which they plan to take the exams (mid-March or mid-October).
2. The student and the advisor work together to plan the exam questions no later than the midterm of the semester preceding the administration of the exam.
3. A draft of the preliminary exam questions is shared with the two other departmental faculty members on the students' doctoral committee and negotiated until all three faculty members of the doctoral committee approve the questions. Students must secure this approval by the end of the semester preceding the administration of the exams.
4. The student picks up or receives an email containing the exam questions from the departmental office on the Monday of the fifth week of the semester.
5. The student writes the responses to each question according to the criteria described below. All students must author their responses independently (using an honor system).
6. The student returns their responses to the department in the required electronic format by the Monday of the ninth week of the semester. The department reserves the right to assess responses using plagiarism software (e.g., turnitin.com). If responses are not turned in by this date, the student will receive a grade of Fail and must sit out until the next semester to retake the exams.

Response Criteria

Responses to preliminary exam questions should be carefully written, thorough, and coherent. They should reflect a command of the relevant research and professional literature in the student's field. They should also indicate the student's ability to contribute to original scholarship in the field and to undertake dissertation research. Each response must be between 20-25 pages (12-point font, double-spaced, 1" margins) excluding references. Responses should comply with the style guidelines used in the student's discipline (e.g., APA, Chicago) and include at least 15 references.

Evaluation of Responses

The evaluation of the preliminary examinations constitutes the final assessment before the student may advance to candidacy and move fully into writing the dissertation. As such, the evaluation has the purpose of answering two major questions:

1. Does the student have the ability to write intelligently about issues of substance in the chosen discipline; and
2. Does the student have the ability to contribute to scholarship in the discipline?

Faculty members will evaluate each examination area (i.e., theory, research, and specialty area) using the rating system of "Pass/Rewrite/Fail." The evaluation ratings apply to each examination area as a whole, as opposed to one final overall rating covering all examinations or to ratings for individual questions (in the event of a multi-question exam area).

Each examination area will receive an evaluation by at least two faculty readers, one of whom will be the student's advisor. In the case of incompatible evaluations between the two assigned readers, a third faculty reader with expertise in the area of the examination will help to determine the evaluation rating. Faculty readers other than the advisor will remain anonymous to the student.

If an examination area results in a "Rewrite," the student must rewrite the response(s) on a take-home basis according to the faculty readers' comments and instructions for improvement. The Department permits one rewrite for each question. If the student fails this rewrite, they will have one opportunity to take the exam in that area again, with a new question, no sooner than the next semester. The student must pass the new question on their first attempt with no option to rewrite. If the student fails this rewrite question, that student will not advance to candidacy and be dismissed from the degree program.

When a student achieves a "Pass" for all preliminary examination areas, the student advances to doctoral candidacy. In accordance with College of Education and Human Services policy, students will receive information regarding the evaluation results of their preliminary within four weeks of completion.

Effective Fall 2013