

Preliminary Exam Requirements

Purdue University
Department of Agricultural & Biological Engineering

Admission to candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy takes place only after the student has passed the **preliminary examinations**. To become eligible to take the examination, the student must have filed a plan of study and satisfactorily completed most of the formal study.

The preliminary examination process includes **written and oral examinations**. Both the written and oral examinations are administered by the student's major professor and preliminary examining or thesis advisory committee. These examinations are to determine if the student has an adequate understanding of his/her research program, has a reasonable plan for completing the research, and has the necessary academic background and capability to successfully conduct the research. The preliminary examinations consist of three parts: 1) written examination, 2) research proposal, 3) oral examination.

Timeline for Ph.D. Preliminary exams

<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm that your Plan of Study has been approved at the Graduate School.	beginning of semester of your prelim
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the schedule and format for you preliminary exams and research proposal with your major professor	beginning of semester of your prelim
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete your Written Preliminary Exam	at least 3 weeks before Oral Exam is scheduled
<input type="checkbox"/> Submit GS Form 8 to Graduate School	at least two weeks before Oral exam
<input type="checkbox"/> Submit your Research Proposal to all committee members.	two weeks before Oral Exam
<input type="checkbox"/> Print Rubric forms from ABE grad website, complete top portion--one <i>for each Committee member</i>	day of Oral Exam
<input type="checkbox"/> Complete Oral Exam and make sure Form 10 e-signed by committee.	day of Oral Exam

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The **written examination** should be comprehensive and should include subject matter other than material directly related to the student's specific Ph.D. research topic. The format and content is developed by the student's major professor and preliminary examining/thesis advisory committee. The written examination will be given to the student with clear instructions for completion, allowable resources to be used, etc. The written examination will be submitted to the entire examining committee upon completion. The graded exam will be returned to the student in a timely manner by the examining committee. The written exam must be passed before proceeding to the oral examination.

The **written examination** may be taken at any time after the following conditions are met:

- The student has filed an approved Plan of Study.

The student has completed at least 15 credits of graduate coursework beyond the master's degree.

The **research proposal** should follow a format as determined by the student's major professor and preliminary examination/thesis advisory committee. Specific expectations for the format, length, and content of the research proposal should be set by the major professor and communicated to the student. The research proposal should be submitted to the examining/thesis advisory committee prior to the oral examination.

Example Research Proposal Outline

1. Justification of Research Question(s)
2. Research Goals and Objectives
3. Summary of Preliminary Results
4. Proposed Methodology
5. Anticipated Results
6. Timeline

The **oral examination** can only be taken once the written portion has been completed and passed. The **oral examination** should include a presentation by the student that summarizes their research proposal. As students should be meeting with their advisory committee on an annual basis to discuss their research progress, the presentation normally provides an update on prior results or a summary of work to date. The bulk of the oral presentation should focus on the proposed methodology, data collection plans, data analysis, anticipated results, and timeline. The exact format, length, and content of the presentation should be as directed by the major professor. During the exam, the preliminary examination/thesis advisory committee is expected to ask the student questions about their research and any other relevant topic, including material from their written exam.

The student should determine an agreeable date for the oral examination and File Form 8 can be found online in MyPurdue---Graduate Students (tab); Graduate School Plan of Study (tab); "Request for Appointment of Examining Committee" (this is the Form 8). Complete form; it will route electronically for signature.

If the report of the examining committee is unfavorable, the student may repeat, if the examining committee so recommends--the examination after the lapse of at least one semester. Should the preliminary examination be failed twice, the student may **not** be given a third examination, except on the recommendation of the examining committee and with *special approval* of the Graduate Council.

Progressing to the FINAL Ph.D. Defense

Graduate School Rule After admission to candidacy, the candidate must be enrolled for two full semesters (summer is counted as a semester) between successful completion of the preliminary exams and the defense of the dissertation (e.g. prelim completed Fall 2018; final defense Fall 2019 or later).