

The HDFFS Preliminary Examination Handbook

Overview of the Preliminary Examination

This preliminary examination handbook was prepared by the Graduate Committee and revised in Spring 2022. Because substantial changes are being implemented to the preliminary examination at this time, careful monitoring of the new procedures will be exercised by the graduate committee and a continuous update of this handbook is expected as we work through the implementation of the new procedures. The purpose of this handbook is to give a concise statement of the following areas related to the prelim exam: (a) rationale and purpose; (b) procedures for administering the exam; (c) procedures for taking the prelim; (d) grading criteria and procedures; and (e) procedures for administering a second prelim exam. In addition, suggestions for preparing and taking the exam are provided.

Ultimate responsibility for the prelim exam, and all other aspects of graduate education in the Department of Human Development and Family Science rests with the department's Graduate Committee which represents the graduate faculty of the department, often subject to the approval of the Graduate School. The Graduate Committee oversees the process of administering the preliminary examination. In its new format, graduate students and their advisors share responsibility for the organization and implementation of the preliminary exam.

Rationale and Purpose

The Preliminary Exam is intended to be a fair and rigorous test of a student's knowledge of broad areas in Human Development and Family Science in which the student is interested and wants to deepen their knowledge. The exam goes beyond a simple review of the content of courses; it asks the student to develop a list of bibliographical resources on a topic of the student and advisor's choice and answer the questions posed by the student's Preliminary Examination Committee. The questions in the preliminary examination should cover relevant aspects of Human Development and of Family Science. The graduate committee will ensure that this requirement is fulfilled. The student's responses need to integrate, synthesize and interpret materials used in answering the questions.

This examination is designed to stretch students to reasonable intellectual limits. However, the core preliminary exam is not seen by faculty as a chance to "weed out" students. Students are expected to make satisfactory progress. If the preliminary exam receives a "no pass" rating the first time it is taken, the results will be used for diagnostic purposes, and the exam may be retaken. If the preliminary exam receives a "no pass" rating the second time it is taken, the student may be dismissed from the graduate program.

Procedures for Administering the Exam – Committee Responsibilities

1. The Major Advisor for each student serves as the Chair of the preliminary exam committee, handling administrative details of initiating and guiding the examination process including:
 - a. selecting 2 additional faculty members to serve on the prelim committee
 - b. approving the proposed timeline for the prelim exam
 - c. approving exam dates for written and oral components of the prelim exam (Graduate Coordinator will assist with electronic Form 8 to schedule prelim exam).
 - d. reporting the results of the prelim exam to the Graduate School.
2. The prelim committee will review, revise if necessary, and approve the reading list prepared by the student (within 2 weeks after receiving reading list from student). The Chair of the prelim committee will inform the student (and Prelim Exam Committee, see attached Prelim Exam Checklist) in writing when the reading list is approved. The student will complete the written component of the prelim exam six weeks following approval of the reading list.
3. The prelim committee will prepare and approve questions to be administered during the written component of the prelim exam. Relevant aspects of human development and of family science must be addressed in the prelim exam. The Chair of the prelim committee will submit prelim questions to the Graduate Committee Chair(s) for review at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of the written exam. The Graduate Coordinator will assemble the written component of the prelim exam and administer to the student. Prelim exam questions will be compiled in a repository for faculty review.
4. The student will have two weeks to complete the written component of the prelim exam. Student's responses to the prelim questions will be evaluated by the prelim committee members. The Chair of the prelim committee will schedule and lead a meeting of the full prelim committee to discuss and evaluate written responses within two weeks of the submission of the written exam. The prelim committee will determine whether the student has passed, or has not passed, the written component of the prelim exam. To be evaluated as Approved, the majority of prelim committee members must agree that the student has provided satisfactory responses to the written component of the exam. If a majority of prelim committee members agree that the student has NOT provided satisfactory responses to the written component of the exam, the evaluation will be No Pass. (See also Grading Procedures)
5. The Chair of the prelim committee will notify the student in writing whether the written component of the prelim exam is Approved or Not Approved within one week of the committee meeting. A copy of this official letter (acknowledged by each member of the prelim committee) is retained in the student's file. If Approved, the Chair of the prelim committee will schedule the oral component of the prelim exam within two weeks of completing the evaluation of the written component. If Not Approved, the oral component of the exam will not be held and prelim exam may be retaken (see procedures for administering a second prelim exam).
6. The Chair of the prelim committee will lead the oral component of the prelim exam. The prelim committee will have the opportunity to revisit questions from the written component of the prelim exam for extension and/or clarification, and to ask the student additional questions drawing from the approved reading list and from the family science and human development literatures. The student will be dismissed while the prelim committee determines whether the oral component of the prelim

exam is Approved. The Chair of the prelim committee will report the results of the oral preliminary exam in writing within one week after the meeting with the prelim committee. A copy of this official letter (acknowledged by each member of the prelim committee) is retained in the student's file.

7. If the oral component of the preliminary exam is Not Approved, the student may retake the prelim exam (see procedures for administering a second prelim exam). To progress in the program, the both the written and oral components of the prelim exam must be Approved in a single administration of the prelim exam.
8. The Chair of the prelim committee will report the results of the prelim exam to the Graduate School using electronic Form 10.

Procedures for Taking the Exam – Student Responsibilities

1. Students are encouraged to initiate the prelim exam procedures no later than their 6th semester of enrollment.
2. Prerequisite for prelim exam:
 - a. Student must be in good academic standing with at least a 3.0 GPA and no unresolved grades of less than B- in core courses.
 - b. Student should have completed all departmental core courses, with the exception of the two advanced research methods/statistics electives.
 - c. Student must have an approved doctoral plan of study. See Graduate Manual for information and deadlines for submitting plan of study.
 - d. Student must be registered for coursework the semester the prelim exam is taken.
3. The student will indicate his or her intention to take (or retake) the prelim exam to the Major Advisor. The Major Advisor for each student serves as the Chair of the prelim committee, and will guide the student in the selection of 2 additional faculty members to serve on the prelim committee. The student and Major Advisor will prepare the proposed timeline for the written and oral components of the prelim exam (See Checklist and Timeline included in this handbook). The Graduate Coordinator will assist with submitting electronic Form 8 for the prelim exam.
4. Students may schedule written and oral components of the prelim exam during the summer. However, because most faculty have academic year appointments, their participation in summer prelim exams may be difficult to schedule. Students should strive to complete the prelim exam during the academic year and not count on being able to schedule summer meetings.
5. The student will submit a list of readings to the prelim committee that thoroughly covers the areas of study selected for the prelim exam and includes relevant literature from human development and family science. After review and approval by the prelim committee, the student will submit the final reading list to the prelim committee and begin to prepare for the written and oral components of the prelim exam (See strategies for studying).
6. The questions comprising the written component of the prelim exam will be administered to the student by the Graduate Coordinator six weeks after the final reading list is submitted to the prelim

committee. Student should arrange a time with the Graduate Coordinator to pick up the written component of the prelim exam. Once a student has picked up the written component of the prelim exam, the student is considered to have begun the exam.

7. The written component of the prelim exam is given in a take-home format. The student is expected to provide their own computer and printer or make other arrangements.
8. Student should arrange a time with the Graduate Coordinator to return the written component of the prelim exam within two weeks of beginning the prelim exam. Unless other arrangements are made with the Graduate Coordinator, the prelim exam should be returned between 1 and 2 pm on the final day. If the student cannot complete the written component of the prelim exam due to an emergency, the Chair of the prelim committee is to be contacted immediately. If the written responses to the prelim exam are not submitted to the Graduate Coordinator within two weeks of beginning the prelim exam (and no emergency is reported), the student will receive a No Pass and may request to retake the prelim exam.
9. When the student's written component of the prelim exam is Approved, the Chair of the prelim committee will schedule the oral component of the prelim exam (within two weeks of notifying the student in writing). The student will then complete the oral component of the prelim exam. When the student's written component of the prelim exam is Not Approved, the corresponding oral component of the prelim exam will not be held, and the prelim exam may be retaken.
10. If unexpected problems or substantial delays in administering the prelim exam are encountered, the student should report the problems or delay to the Graduate Chair(s) for resolution.

Students with Disabilities

A student who requires accommodations in the preliminary examination procedures due to a disability should contact the Disability Resource Center (www.purdue.edu/drc). A member of that office will meet with the student, review their documentation, and recommend specific accommodations in the examination procedures to the Graduate Committee. To insure that appropriate accommodations are made in preliminary examination procedures, students should contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible, but at least one semester prior to taking the preliminary exam.

Taking the Written Component of the Prelim Exam

The written component of the prelim exam must be typed and double-spaced with 1 inch margins on all sides. The response to each question should be page-numbered separately. Each response is to include a reference list. Students are expected to adhere to the current Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Note that each response must include its own reference list.

Independence and Academic Integrity. The prelim exam is to be completed independently by the student, without assistance from any other person.

Students taking the prelim exam **MAY**:

- Contact the Chair of the prelim committee to ask about exam procedures or to clarify exam questions (by email).
- Use any written resources obtained before the exam begins.
- Use any written resources obtained during the exam, as long as they are found without help from another person.
- Use Internet-based resources, as long as they are found without help from another person.

Students taking the prelim exam **MAY NOT**:

- Consult with any person (except the Chair of the prelim committee) in person, by phone, by email, or by Internet about exam questions, exam answers or resources needed to prepare exam answers.
- Receive assistance on the exam in any form from any person, including interpreting the questions, planning or writing the answers, or editing the text of the answers.
- Make use of prewritten papers from the Internet, in part or in whole.

The above rules do not cover every possible instance of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for knowing about academic integrity contained in the Purdue University Code of Honor (http://www.purdue.edu/studentregulations/student_conduct/codeofhonor.html) and in "Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students" (<https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academic-integrity/index.html>) which states in part:

Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [*University Regulations, Part V, Section III, B, 2, a*] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972]

Students are to contact the Chair of their prelim committee by email if they have a question. The Chair of the prelim committee can advise the student about the exam procedure and general questions of interpretation. The Chair cannot tell the student if an answer is correct, nor can they provide any other help to the student in actually answering the prelim exam questions. Only the student taking the prelim exam is to edit his or her answers. International students will have the same amount of time and follow the same rules as other students.

Grading Criteria

The grading criteria have been designed to be both fair to the student and constructive. The following criteria represent the framework for evaluating responses: accuracy/relevance, completeness, synthesis/integration, support, and writing and speaking style.

Accuracy/Relevance: Accuracy reflects the correctness of a response. It also indicates the degree to which a response is, in fact, a response to the question asked, as opposed to a correct statement having little or nothing to do with the question.

Completeness: Completeness is the degree to which the student considers all aspects of a question (i.e., the depth of the response considering the time frame allotted for the response). In the (frequent) case of a multi-part question, completeness also reflects whether the student addressed all parts of the question in a balanced fashion.

Synthesis/Integration: Prelim exams are structured to encourage synthesis and integration. Rote responses and simple recitation of facts are inappropriate. What is desired is a consideration of a variety

of facts, theories, and research findings in juxtaposition with other facts, theories, and research findings. The use of such skills helps to demonstrate a student's readiness to conceive and write an original dissertation.

Literature Support: Students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of pertinent and current or recent empirical and theoretical literature in answering each question. The placement and format of citations should be consistent with the current Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Each answer should include a reference list.

Writing Style: The manner in which a question is answered is important. Answers should be written clearly and terms should be defined. There also should be clear transitions between thoughts, and arguments should follow a logical progression. Use of organizers (headers) is encouraged.

Speaking Style (oral component): Similar to writing style, the manner in which each question is verbally answered is considered in the oral component of the prelim exam. Verbal answers should be clear and concise, and should be presented in a logical fashion.

Procedures for Administering the Preliminary Exam

When a student's written **and** oral components of the prelim exam are Approved, the student will receive a **Pass** for the prelim exam.

When either a student's written **or** oral component of the prelim exam is Not Approved, the student will receive a **No Pass** for the prelim exam.

Written Component: Using the above grading criteria, each prelim committee member rates the written component of the prelim exam as either Approved or Not Approved. When one or more committee members rate the written responses as Not Approved, the responses are discussed in detail by the entire prelim committee. Following this discussion, a formal vote on the written component of the prelim exam is taken. The judgment of the majority of the prelim committee prevails in making a final decision as to whether the written component of the prelim exam is Approved.

A set of written responses that do not meet the grading criteria described in this handbook will be rated as a Not Approved by the prelim committee. This decision is not subject to debate or appeal once it has been made using procedures outlined in this handbook. The student will not complete an oral component of the prelim exam and may complete a second prelim exam (written and oral components) with new questions prepared by the prelim committee.

Students are notified of the results of the written component of the prelim exam by the Chair of the prelim committee (acknowledged by each member of the prelim committee). A copy of this notification is retained in the student's file.

Oral Component: Using the above grading criteria and also considering speaking style, each prelim committee member rates the student's set of oral responses as either Approved or Not Approved. When one or more committee members rate the oral responses as Not Approved, the responses are discussed in detail by the entire prelim committee. Following this discussion, a formal vote on the oral component of the prelim exam is taken. The judgment of the majority of the prelim committee members prevails in making a final decision as to whether the oral component of the prelim exam is Approved.

A set of oral responses that do not meet the grading criteria described in this handbook will be rated as a Not Approved by the prelim committee. This decision is not subject to debate or appeal once it has been made using procedures outlined in this handbook. The student may complete a second prelim exam (written and oral components) with new questions prepared by the prelim committee.

Students are notified of the results of the oral component of the prelim exam by the Chair of the prelim committee (acknowledged by each member of the prelim committee). A copy of this notification is retained in the student's file.

The Graduate School of Purdue University recognizes only the broad categories of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" of the entire prelim exam. In order for a student to pass the prelim exam, **both** the written **and** oral components must be evaluated as Approved in a single administration of the prelim exam.

Procedures for Administering a Second Preliminary Exam

Procedures for preparing and administering a second prelim exam (written and oral components) are the same as those described in this handbook for the first prelim exam.

At the discretion of the prelim committee, the original reading list may be revised for the second administration of the written component of the prelim exam. **The student should complete the second prelim exam no later than the end of the next academic year semester (Fall or Spring) following the administration of the first prelim exam.**

Written component:

When a student's written component of the prelim exam is Not Approved, the student will receive a **No Pass** for the prelim exam. The student will not complete an oral component of the prelim exam

Oral component:

When a student's oral component of the prelim exam is Not Approved, the student will receive a **No Pass** for the prelim exam.

Procedures Following a Second Preliminary Exam

If a student does not successfully Pass the prelim exam on the second administration, they will be terminated from the graduate program at the end of the semester in which the second exam is completed. The student and/or her or his committee have the option, before the end of that semester, to petition for retention in the program. Specific procedures can be found in Sections IX.A.2.c and VII.F.3 of the Policies and Procedures for Administering Graduate Student Programs of the Graduate School.

Strategies For Studying And Taking The Prelim Exam:

The purpose of this section is to provide suggestions from the Graduate Committee regarding strategies that might prove helpful when studying for and taking the prelim exam. The following should be taken in the spirit that they were given - they are suggestions, no more, no less. Everyone has their own favorite study strategies.

Preparation

- Read the Prelim Handbook carefully before initiating the prelim exam procedures.
- Keep in mind that the prelim exam in part tests your integration and synthesis of accumulated knowledge. It will not be very useful to cram and memorize large amounts of material. Instead, stand back and get the "big picture."
- Never lose the big picture when you study. Ask yourself how one topic or issue relates to another. That is, actively construct your knowledge and new information into an integrated whole.
- Get excited about what you are studying. Think of yourself as becoming a scholar rather than just a reorganizer of facts.
- Study broadly with a focus on the topics identified in the approved reading list. These topics form the basis for each of the questions.
- Review research with an eye toward critiquing theoretical integration, design, interpretation of results, and applicability. Know the important elements of each selected reading.
- It might be useful to take one day off from studying during the week before the written component of the prelim exam. Let the information simmer.
- Have a plan for using your time wisely during each component the prelim exam.

Test Taking Tips

- **Routinely and frequently back up your written work to prevent losing valuable time and information.**
- Answer the questions that are given. Make sure that you consider each sentence and clause within a given question--you must respond to each one.
- It is important that your responses be relevant to Human Development and Family Science, and that they be supported by cited current literature.
- Remember that the major criteria for evaluation include organization, accuracy, depth, synthesis, being "on-target," and current literature support.
- Use citations liberally but not gratuitously. You should demonstrate your command of the literature, but it is counter-productive to cite a slew of studies or conceptual pieces that are only tangentially relevant to your responses. Avoid direct quotations that take up space.
- Organize your time. Proofread your written answers before handing them in. Be sure to check for APA Style in the body of the essay and citations as well as in the reference list.

Prelim Exam Procedures Checklist and Timeline

Date	Student initial	Advisor initial	Prelim Exam Task
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Initiate Prelim Exam
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Select Prelim Committee (Major Advisor and at least two graduate faculty)
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Anticipated date of written exam Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Anticipated date of oral exam Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Reading list submitted to prelim committee
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Reading list approved by prelim committee
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<u>N/A</u>	_____	Prelim Questions submitted to Graduate Chair(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	<u>N/A</u>	Written component administered to student
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	<u>N/A</u>	Written component submitted by student
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<u>N/A</u>	_____	Written component evaluated by prelim committee, results provided to student
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Oral exam scheduled Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	_____	_____	Oral exam completed, results provided to student
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<u>N/A</u>	_____	Prelim Exam results provided to Graduate School

Recommended Timeline

<u>Timeline*</u>	<u>Activity</u>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>2 weeks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Initiate prelim process</p> <p>Assemble prelim committee</p> <p>Schedule prelim exam dates with Grad Coordinator using Form 8 (estimate dates of Written and Oral Exams)</p> <p>Prelim committee members approve proposed timeline</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>6 weeks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Student submits reading list to prelim committee</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>8 weeks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Prelim committee revise/approve reading list</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>14 weeks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Student prepares for prelim exam</p> <p>Prelim committee prepares and approves questions for student prelim exam</p> <p>Chair of prelim committee submits questions to Grad committee chair(s) for review</p> <p>Prelim exam assembled by Graduate Coordinator</p> <p>Questions are added to prelim question repository for faculty review</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>16 weeks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Student receives exam from Graduate Coordinator (at pre-arranged date/time)</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Student is required to submit written responses to Graduate Coordinator within 2 weeks of beginning written component of prelim exam</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>18 weeks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Student submits written responses to Graduate Coordinator (between 1 & 2pm unless other arrangements are made with Grad Coordinator)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>20 weeks</p>	<p>Prelim committee evaluates written responses and prepares for Oral Exam</p> <p>Schedule Oral Exam</p> <p>Decision letter signed by all committee members provided to Student and to Graduate Coordinator</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>20 weeks</p>	<p>Meet for Oral Exam</p> <p>Prelim committee determines outcome of prelim exam</p> <p>Chair of prelim committee reports outcome to Graduate School (Pass/No Pass)</p>

*Unexpected problems or substantial delays should be reported to the Graduate Committee Chair(s) for resolution