PhD and DrPH EPIDEMIOLOGY PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

The Preliminary Examination in Epidemiology, for PhD and DrPH students, is designed to meet the academic standards and needs of faculty and students in the Department of Epidemiology, Human Genetics and Environmental Sciences (EHGES), and to be in accordance with The University of Texas School of Public Health (UTSPH) requirements for doctoral-level examinations. The Epidemiology Preliminary Exam Committee (PEC) develops, administers, and grades the exam.

**Purpose:** The Preliminary Exam is designed to evaluate whether students pursuing their PhD or DrPH in Epidemiology have the substantive knowledge and methodological skills required to proceed further in the program. Therefore, the purpose of the examination is to evaluate the student’s command of key competencies specific to the design, conduct, analysis and interpretation of epidemiologic studies.

Doctoral students must pass the written preliminary exam as part of the process of becoming a doctoral candidate. Students may take the exam a maximum of two times.

**Exam Administration Dates and Details:** The exam date for Spring 2015 is June 11, 2015 from 9am to 2pm CST. **Students take the exam at their home campus.** The exam is five hours in length including one hour for breaks/lunch. Students are expected to remain in the exam room for breaks/lunch. Use of cell phones, iPads and other electronic devices is not allowed during the exam.

**Eligibility:** Students must be registered in the semester prior to the Preliminary Exam date. For example, a student registering to take the exam in June 2015 must be registered for courses in the Spring 2015 semester. In addition, students must have completed and received a grade of B or higher, or a “P” in the following five courses:

1. PH 2710: Epidemiology III- 3 credit hours
2. PH 2711: Epidemiology IV- 3 credit hours
3. PH 1830: Categorical Data Analysis OR PH 1831: Analysis of Survival Time Data
5. One elective course in Epidemiology (2 to 4 credit hours)

Students who have a grade lower than a B (or an F in a P/F course) in any required course are advised to re-take the class, for credit, before taking the exam. However, the student and his/her advisor may develop an alternate remediation plan. In such cases, a description of the alternate plan and evidence that the plan has been completed will be required when the student submits The Epidemiology Preliminary Examination Intent Form.

Doctoral students may take the exam once they have completed at least 18 credit hours of coursework (equivalent to one full-time year) and must take the exam at the next scheduled test date after they have reached 27 credit hours of course work. For example, if 27 hours of coursework is reached at the completion of the Fall Semester, the student must take the January exam. Consequently, students should plan their course work to ensure that they complete the five required courses by the time they reach 27 credit hours. The SPH credit hour requirements for the Preliminary Exam are outlined in the SPH Preliminary Exam Policy.

If a student wishes to delay taking the Preliminary Exam beyond the completion of 27 credit hours, the student’s advisor must request a delay of exam from the Office of Academic Affairs.

**Matriculation Prior to Fall Semester 2011:** Students who matriculated into the PhD or DrPH program prior to Fall 2011 and failed their first attempt of the Preliminary Exam, do not have the option of switching to the Qualifying Exam for their second attempt. Such students must follow the Preliminary Exam option for their second exam. Similarly, students who matriculated prior to Fall 2011 and failed

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their first attempt at the Qualifying Exam must take the Qualifying Exam for their second attempt. They do not have the option of switching to the Preliminary Exam.

Students who matriculated into the PhD or DrPH program during or after Fall 2011, who do not pass their first attempt of the Preliminary Exam must take the Preliminary Exam for their second attempt. They do not have the option of switching to the Preliminary Exam.

**The Epidemiology Preliminary Examination Intent Form:** In preparation for the preliminary exam, students must submit their latest UTSPH transcript (unofficial copy from myUTH) and *The Epidemiology Preliminary Examination Intent Form*, signed by their academic advisor, to the PEC Chair at least one month prior to the exam date (no later than May 11 2015 for the June 2015 exam). Students who are taking required courses during the semester in which they submit their intent form must also provide an updated copy of their transcript prior to the exam. Students will be notified of the exam location, date and time by an e-mail sent to their UTSPH email address.

If a student who has signed up to take the exam needs to delay the exam date (e.g. for family or health issues), the student must obtain approval from his/her academic advisor and, in some cases from the Office of Academic Affairs (see Eligibility section above). Once approval has been obtained, the student and/or advisor must notify the Chair of the Preliminary Exam Committee.

**Exam Content and Format:** Questions for the Preliminary Examination in Epidemiology are based on three peer-reviewed manuscripts from the epidemiologic literature. The exam questions are developed to assess the student’s ability to apply fundamental concepts and methods in epidemiology and biostatistics. The Preliminary Exam questions are constructed based on the content of the coursework specified in the eligibility section, as well as the pre-requisites for these courses. Questions may call for short answers, computations based on data provided in the selected manuscripts, and the interpretation of data presented in the manuscripts.

The Preliminary Examination is administered on paper as a closed book exam that is proctored. The manuscripts used for the exam are provided to the students via their SPH email 24 hours in advance of the exam. “Clean” copies of the manuscripts are provided to the students at the time of the exam. Students must bring a pocket calculator and pencils/pens. No other materials are allowed.

**Exam Evaluation:** The exams are graded by members of the PEC. The graders are blinded to the identity of the student. The student is notified in writing of the outcome of the examination by their academic advisor and/or PEC Chair. A copy of the letter is sent to the student’s Academic Advisor, the Department Chair, the Regional Dean (if applicable), and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

The exam is graded as Pass/Fail:

- **Pass**
  - Student achieves an overall grade of at least 80% or
  - Student achieves an overall grade of ≥75% to <80%, and achieves at least a 70% on all three exam sections

- **Fail**
  - Student achieves an overall grade less than 75% or
  - Student achieves an overall grade of ≥75% to <80%, and achieves less than a 70% on one or more exam section

Students that receive a failing grade must re-take the exam at the next Preliminary Exam offering. Students who are retaking the exam must re-submit their paper work for the second exam; otherwise, they will not be considered registered for the exam. Students may take the exam a maximum of two times.