

PhD and DrPH EPIDEMIOLOGY PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

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

Doctoral students who matriculated in the Fall of 2011 or later must take the Preliminary Exam. Doctoral students who matriculated prior to the Fall of 2011 may elect to take either the Preliminary or the Qualifying Exam.

Purpose: The Preliminary Exam is designed to evaluate whether doctoral students in Epidemiology have the substantive knowledge and methodological skills required to proceed in the program. Therefore, the intent of the examination is to evaluate the student's command of key competencies related to the design, conduct, analysis and interpretation of epidemiologic studies. Students must pass the Preliminary Exam as part of the process of becoming doctoral candidates. Students may take the exam a maximum of two times.

Exam Administration Dates and Details: The Preliminary Exam is offered twice each academic year. Exam dates are generally set in the Fall semester, and are listed on [The Epidemiology Preliminary Exam Intent Form](#). Exam materials are distributed, by email, the day before the exam. The exams are taken in-class, from 9am to 2pm CST. Students take the exam at their home campus.

Eligibility: Students who intend to take the preliminary exam must submit an [Epidemiology Preliminary Exam Intent Form](#). To be eligible to take the exam, students must be registered, or on an official leave of absence, in the semester prior to the Preliminary Exam date. In addition, they must have completed and received a grade of B or higher, or a "P" in the following five courses:

1. PH 2710: Epidemiology III
2. PH 2711: Epidemiology IV
3. PH 1830: Categorical Data Analysis **OR** PH 1831: Analysis of Survival Time Data
4. PH 2712: Experimental Methods in Epidemiology **OR** PH 1835: Stat. Methods in Clinical Trials
5. One elective course in Epidemiology

Additional details related to submission of the Intent Form and course requirements are provided in [The Epidemiology Preliminary Examination Intent Form](#).

Doctoral students generally take the exam after they have completed 18-27 credit hours in the doctoral program. Students should plan their course work so they complete the required courses within their first 27 credits. Students who would like to delay taking the Preliminary Exam beyond the completion of 27 credit hours must request a delay of exam from the Office of Academic Affairs. Additional details related to the requirements for the Preliminary Exam are outlined in the [SPH Preliminary Exam Policy](#).

Students who have submitted an Intent Form and subsequently need to reschedule their exam date (e.g. due to family or health issues), must obtain approval from their academic advisors, the Chair of the Preliminary Exam Committee and the Office of Academic Affairs.

Exam Content and Format: Questions for the Preliminary Exam 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 Exam is administered on paper as a closed-book, proctored exam at the students' home campus. 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.

The five hour exam period includes 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.

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 $\geq 75\%$ 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 $\geq 75\%$ to $< 80\%$, and achieves less than a 70% on one or more exam section

Students who receive a failing grade must re-take the exam at the next Preliminary Exam offering. Students who are retaking the exam must submit an Intent Form for the second exam date. Students may take the exam a maximum of two times.