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To:       Deans, Department Chairs/Program Heads, and Graduate Coordinators  
From:   James Beck, Graduate Policy Program Coordinator

Re:       Preliminary Exam Policy Update

Date:   February 9, 2021

\*Please give careful attention to this memorandum. I am providing this information now so that units can incorporate the changes into their Graduate Student Handbooks. Please read the information below and be as explicit as possible in your handbooks and bulletin sections about any program specific standards. The revised policy will take effect Summer 2021 and thus, it is important that all faculty and staff understand this change in order to provide appropriate guidance to doctoral students, as need be.

A copy of this memo will be posted on the [Graduate School’s Faculty/Staff Website](https://faculty-staff.gradschool.fsu.edu/caslogin) as well as uploaded to the [Graduate Policy Database](https://policy.gradschool.fsu.edu/). \*Two attachments are provided: 1.) the full revised policy with comments, and 2.) guidance to some common questions.

**Preliminary Exam Policy Update:**

(Approved by the GPC on 1/11/21 and Faculty Senate on 1/20/21. This language will be inserted into the 2021-2022 Graduate Bulletin under the ‘Graduate Degree and Certificate Requirements’ Section, replacing the last paragraph of the current language. The remaining paragraphs stay the same.)

**“If a student fails the preliminary examination before being admitted to candidacy, a re-examination may be offered by the student’s supervisory committee or other relevant decision making body within each department or unit, per that department or unit’s doctoral student handbook. The Academic Dean’s office should be notified of the outcome of any preliminary exam attempt.**

**Students can take the preliminary examination for admission to candidacy only two times. A second failure on the preliminary exam makes the student ineligible to continue in the degree program. The second attempt at the preliminary exam shall occur no sooner than six full class weeks after the results of the first attempt are shared with the student. For the purpose of this policy, a “full class week” is defined as a week with five days during which classes are held at FSU. Students must be registered separately for their first and second attempt, if necessary within the same semester, and must receive either a “pass” or a “fail” grade for each attempt.**

**An exception request regarding the timing of the re-examination can be submitted for consideration to the Academic Dean’s Office by either the student or the supervisory committee. Students who allege that academic regulations and/or procedures were improperly applied for the re-examination of their preliminary exam may have their grievances addressed through the general academic appeals process. The full preliminary exam policy as listed here must be added to all doctoral student handbooks.”**

The Graduate School recommends that each unit review their program’s preliminary exam process during Spring 2021 to be sure the revised policy is followed by the start of Summer 2021. If programs need to adjust the repeatable credit limit of their preliminary exam course and/or make their preliminary defense course repeatable in the same semester, they are asked to contact Sunny Houston ([smhouston@fsu.edu](mailto:smhouston@fsu.edu)) at the Registrar’s Office.

As a reminder, satisfactory completion of a preliminary examination shall be required for admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree. No student may register for dissertation or doctoral treatise hours prior to the point in the semester in which the preliminary examination was passed. An admission-to-candidacy form must be completed and filed in the Office of the University Registrar prior to registration for dissertation/treatise hours. After completion of the admission to candidacy process, the student may retroactively add dissertation hours for that semester in which the preliminary examination was completed. Retroactive changes are only permitted if the preliminary examination is passed by the end of the seventh week of the semester. For term specific deadline dates, please refer to the “Academic Calendar” on the Registrar’s Office website.

If you have any questions or concerns pertaining to this policy, please feel free to reach out to me. Thanks.

All the best,

James Beck

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