

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

**ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE  
GRADUATE PROGRAM**

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**TITLE OF POLICY:** PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION - DOCTORAL PROGRAM

**DATE EFFECTIVE:** September 1, 1995

**POLICY:** The preliminary examination assesses the breadth of the student's knowledge of the discipline, achievement during foundational doctoral study, and potential to apply research methods independently. Students must sit for the preliminary examination in order to progress through the doctoral program.

The preliminary examination is taken the term immediately following the completion of 18 credits of work that have been accepted as credits required for the degree, and must include Nursing Theory Development (3 cr.) Nursing Research (3 cr.), Philosophy of Medicine (3 cr.), and Structure of Nursing Knowledge (3 cr.).

The preliminary examination is a one-day proctored examination composed of one question which tests knowledge of theory and research methodology as applied to the area of research emphasis

Criteria used to review the Preliminary Examination are identified by the Ph.D. Progression and Graduation Committee and by faculty who are members of the University Council of Graduate Faculty, as requested by the Committee.

The examination is reviewed by faculty in the School of Nursing who are members of the University Council of Graduate Faculty.

The examination is used to identify those students who may be expected to complete a doctoral program successfully and also to reveal areas of weakness in the student's preparation. Students with specific areas of weakness will be required to engage in remedial activities (e.g. coursework, paper, additional laboratory or clinical experiences, etc.) as determined by faculty reviewers.

Results of the examination are reported to the student's academic advisor, the Doctoral Program Coordinator, and Student Services no later than the last day of the term in which the examination occurs.

Students must complete any remedial activities targeted to their weaknesses before applying for the comprehensive examination. When

extenuating circumstances exist, the student may request in writing a review by the Dean. This request must be accompanied by a letter of support from the academic advisor and the Doctoral Program Coordinator.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Preliminary Examinations are offered in May, October and February.
2. A schedule listing dates for the examination is posted on the bulletin board in the Graduate Student Communications Room.
3. The student will contact the academic advisor regarding plans to take the examination and determine the appropriate time to take the examination.
4. To schedule the examination, the student sends the completed application form to the Chair, Ph.D. Progression and Graduation Committee. The form must be received one month prior to the date of the examination. A preliminary examination information packet will be provided to the student by the Chair, Ph.D. Progression and Graduation Committee at that time.
5. On the scheduled date, the student will meet with a member of the Ph.D. Progression and Graduation Committee to receive the examination questions.
6. After completion of the examination, the Chair of the Ph.D. Progression and Graduation Committee will forward the examination for review. Graduate Faculty reading the examination will include a member of the Ph.D. Progression and Graduation Committee, the student's academic advisor and one randomly selected faculty who is a member of the University Council of Graduate Faculty.
7. Each faculty reviewer will determine whether the student has demonstrated breadth of knowledge of the discipline and understanding of research methodologies expected at the time of completion of 18 credits of doctoral study.
8. If weaknesses are identified, the three faculty reviewers will meet to discuss their individual assessments. A consensus recommendation will be made by the three reviewers.
9. The evaluations will be forwarded to the Chair, Progression and Graduation Committee and then distributed to the student's academic advisor.

10. The student's academic advisor will discuss results of the examination with the student.
11. The Chair, Ph.D. Progression and Graduation Committee, will forward names of students who do not require remediation to Student Services so that this information can be entered on the student's academic record.
12. In the case of remediation, it is the student's responsibility to provide evidence of completion of required activities to the Chair of the PhD Progression and Graduation Committee. The Chair will, in turn, forward the information to Student Services for entry on the student's academic record.

Approved by Graduate Faculty Organization 2/86  
Revised 97-98, 00-01  
Revisions Approved by Total Faculty 3/98

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*Revision Approved by Graduate Council: 3/89; 6/92*  
*Approved by PhD Council: 10/94; 3/95; 1/98*