

# Physics department preliminary exam

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Interim Graduate student advisor: Aug  
2024-Jan 2025

10 minute presentation followed by  
questions

# Useful places:

**Graduate Handbook: Created by the Graduate Council. Overall rules governing graduate programs.**

<https://www.k-state.edu/grad/student-success/graduate-handbook/>

**Graduate Program guidelines - Physics**

<https://www.phys.ksu.edu/student-success/graduate/grad-student-rules-updates7.pdf>

**Graduate School forms**

<https://www.k-state.edu/grad/about/forms/>

- **Program of Study**
- Program and Committee Change
- Approval to Schedule Final Examination
- Request for Preliminary Examination Ballot (many others)

# Physics Department: C. PRELIMINARY EXAM

All graduate students working toward the Ph.D. degree must pass the Preliminary Examination (PE).

A student must be in good academic standing to take the PE, per Graduate school rules.

A full-time doctoral student should normally complete the PE within 3 years of entry into the Ph.D. program.

In the Physics Department the Preliminary Exam consists of two parts:

- A written report
- Oral exam.

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“In the two parts of the Preliminary Exam students will introduce their supervisory committee to the project they will pursue for their dissertation. Both the written report and the oral exam will be prepared with the guidance of the student’s advisor and the supervisory committee must approve both in separate votes. Students who change research areas after passing the Preliminary Exam are not required to retake it.”

# Guidelines for the Written Report

Present the committee with a potential Ph.D. project. Can include:

- Overview of the state of the field
- Review of theories and methods that are commonly used
- Statement of the problem to be studied and justification for why this problem is the logical next step
- Preliminary results (if available)
- Plan to address the chosen problem An adequate presentation of the plan is expected to take 4000-6000 words.

Can include old M.S. work. Clarifications on this guideline can be provided by the student's committee.

The date of the oral exam can be as soon as 10 days after the written report is given to the committee.

# Passing the Written Report

- Candidates should allow at least 10 working days for a vote on the written report by the supervisory committee prior to the oral exam.
- The outcome of the written report part of the Preliminary Exam will be decided by a three-quarters vote of the Supervisory Committee.
- Committee members will each select one of the following four outcomes:
  - 1) Pass
  - 2) Provisional Pass. This outcome is given when the written report requires revisions, but the revisions are sufficiently minor that the thesis advisor can approve the changes without going back to the committee.
  - 3) Major revision. This outcome indicates that the revised document needs to be reviewed by the committee. Subsequent revisions may be deemed a Pass or Fail.
  - 4) Fail. This outcome indicates that the student needs to start over on the written report part of the

## (continued)

- The student is considered to have passed the written part of the Preliminary Exam and may proceed to the Oral Exam if at least three fourths of the supervisory committee votes Pass or Provisional Pass.
- The student is considered to have failed if more than one fourth of the Committee votes Fail.
- If the student does not pass or fail at the first vote, they will be advised of the vote count and provided guidance on the revisions required to get a passing vote.
- The Committee will vote a second time if a revised document is submitted. The voting options will be restricted to Pass and Fail in this vote and the student will be considered to have passed if at least three fourths of the Committee votes to pass.
- Two failed written reports will be deemed a failure of the Preliminary Exam.
- The written report must be passed before the oral exam takes place

# Oral Exam

It is the student's responsibility to schedule the oral exam with the Graduate School at a time and place agreed upon by the student's supervisory committee.

The Graduate School requires the oral exam to be scheduled with the Graduate School at least four weeks before the agreed upon date.

A student will be deemed to have passed the oral exam if at least three quarters of the supervisory committee approve of the student's performance.

When the student passes the oral exam, they have successfully passed their Preliminary Exam.

After the oral exam, the ballot on the Preliminary Exam is sent to the Graduate School

# Advising this semester and early next January

Office: CW 309    E-mail for appointment

Mick will advise you on spring 2025 enrollment later this semester or during the first two weeks of January.

I can also advise you on enrollment for Fall 2025

(required of all students who have not successfully completed the core courses)

# Graduate School guidelines

- A student must be in good academic standing to take a preliminary examination.
- The required written preliminary examination may be supplemented by an oral examination as prescribed by the supervisory committee.
- The examination may be scheduled after the program of study is filed and at a time deemed appropriate by the supervisory committee.
- The preliminary examination must be completed at least 7 months before the final oral examination.
- The student should notify the Graduate School one month before the scheduled date.
- The student is considered to have passed the examination and to be recommended to candidacy if at least three fourths of the supervisory committee voted to approve candidacy.
- In case of failure of the first preliminary examination, the supervisory committee may approve a second examination with no more than one dissenting vote.
- A second examination can be taken no sooner than three months following the initial failure. Once the supervisory committee and the student decide when the second examination is to be taken, the student should notify the Graduate School one month before the scheduled date.
- The composition of the supervisory committee shall not be changed before a final decision is reached on admission to candidacy.