



LDL Doctoral Preliminary Examination

The preliminary exam includes two key elements.

1. Research Proposal/Preliminary Exam Manuscript: Full Draft of Chapters 1 through 3
2. Preliminary Exam Oral Exam

Note: In most cases, your advisor will arrange for your committee

Timing

- Refer to the [EDS Milestone Deadlines PDF](#) for a list of available preliminary exam dates
- Submit the preliminary exam manuscript for advisor review at least four weeks prior to the desired Oral Exam date to enable sufficient time for feedback and revision.
- Contact the Dissertation Advisor to arrange scheduling the preliminary exam at least four weeks prior to the desired Oral Exam date.
 - Provide the title of your dissertation in the request
 - Provide a list of times that you are available on the designated date (see [Milestone Deadlines](#))
 - Sessions may be scheduled immediately before or after another session for committee convenience
- Once the committee and date are confirmed and your manuscript has been approved, submit the necessary forms. Forms can be found here: <https://education.illinois.edu/current-students/graduate/forms>
 - EPOL 591 registration form for the term in which you plan to complete the Oral Exam
 - Preliminary Exam and committee request form
- Submit the final preliminary exam manuscript to the dissertation advisor at least two weeks prior to the Oral Exam date, who will then distribute it to your committee.

[Refer to the College of Education's Web site for additional administrative details.](#)

1. Preliminary Exam Manuscript

- Finalize all data collection instruments and make any necessary revisions to Chapter 3
- Duplicate your Theory and Methodology manuscript (duplicate feature within Scholar) as a starting point
- Write Chapter 1 to introduce your research study
 - 1.1 Study Rationale
 - 1.2 Purpose, Research Questions, Hypothesis, and Theoretical Foundation
 - 1.3 Significance
 - 1.4 Methodology Summary and Research Plan
- Streamline Chapter 2, if that has not been done already
- Finalize Chapters 1 through 3 in a Word document in the Graduate College approved format
 - Title page, abstract, etc. (see Abstract example at the end of this document)
 - Chapter 1: Introduction
 - Chapter 2: Literature Review
 - Chapter 3: Theory and Methodology
 - Placeholders for the remaining chapters
 - References
 - Appendix, including IRB materials and approvals and data collection instruments
- Re-Submit any IRB materials as necessary



LDL Doctoral Preliminary Examination

2. Preliminary Exam Session

- 30-minute Peer Presentation in preparation for your committee presentation (approximately a week before)
 - 15-minute Oral Presentation
 - 15-minute Peer Feedback
- 1-hour Oral Exam session with four committee members
 - 15-minute Oral Presentation
 - 45-minute Discussion

Exam Session Agenda

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Welcome | 5 minutes |
| 2. Candidates and observers are moved to a breakout room | 1-2 minutes |
| a. Committee discusses briefly | |
| 3. Candidate presentation | 15 minutes |
| 4. Questions by committee | 15-30 minutes |
| 5. Candidate moved to a breakout room while committee deliberates | 5 minutes |
| a. Observers asked to leave the meeting | |
| 6. Result and next steps discussed with Candidate | 5-10 minutes |

Presentation Guidelines

- Purpose is to briefly convey your dissertation topic (plus key research question) and your action plan and methodology for moving forward
- Convey your journey that enabled you to arrive at this point
- Reminder: Your evaluators have read your manuscript so be brief and to the point – particular focus should be about advice you might still desire for particular issue
- Avoid re-stating what is in your manuscript, but include a few slides and key talking points to provide context
- Describe your own research plan/goals and the next steps in your dissertation, including
 - Outline of site/object of inquiry
 - Data collection tools
 - Timeline
- Prepare a simple presentation with 6-10 slides

Oral Exam Observation and Peer Review

- Observers are invited to attend, but must not ask any questions or participate in the discussion
- Observers may be asked to exit the meeting prior to the final decision



LDL Doctoral Preliminary Examination

Abstract

Without repeating the words of the title, begin the abstract with a sentence on the topic of this conference presentation or journal article. Then, in the next sentence, state the objectives of the work and the reasons why it was undertaken. In the following sentence, explain the relevance and significance of such work. Next, identify the disciplinary framework, academic field, or thematic domain to which the work aims to contribute. The qualitative, quantitative or interpretive methods used can then be described in a sentence. This is followed in the next sentence by a description of the knowledge work undertaken, such as data collection, artifact analysis or theoretical reconceptualization. Now, in one sentence or at the most two, outline the main results. End the abstract with a sentence that states the conclusions drawn from this work, such as possible explanations of phenomena, arguments that might validly be made, or interpretations that can be applied.

- *The abstract should be a single paragraph of no less than 130 but no more than 170 words.*
- *Do not include citations in the abstract. Avoid mentioning other works, but if you do, mention so the abstract can be read without need to consult the reference list. E.g. “Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ‘Philosophical Investigations’”.*
- *Avoid acronyms, but if you must use them, spell out in full. E.g. “UIUC (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)”*

Topic
Objective
Relevance
Field
Methods
Knowledge Activities
Results
Conclusions