

ME Preliminary Examination Format

(Effective Fall 2021)

Course Requirement

Only after attainment of a minimum GPA of 3.20/4.0 in at least five graduate-level courses, a minimum of 1 Math (EML 5060/5061, MAP 5345/5346), 2 Core (major area), and 2 ME Grad courses, is a student allowed to proceed with the Preliminary Examination. Students can choose the 5 best-graded courses to satisfy the minimum GPA requirement.

Doctoral Committee

During 2nd Year, the student (in consultation with the major professor) forms the Doctoral Committee to initiate the Preliminary Exam process. The committee composition:

1. Major professor (Chair, Prospectus & Dissertation)
2. ME Faculty member in your major area (1) (Chair, Prelim Exam)
3. ME Faculty member outside major area (1)
4. A tenured faculty member from outside the Department of Mechanical Engineering (Univ. Rep.)
5. Optional (at the discretion of Major Professor): Additional member in the major area

The 4 primary members must be tenure-track faculty, holding the rank of Professor, Associate Professor, or Assistant Professor. Assistant professors may not serve as the University Rep.

The Doctoral Committee is responsible for both administrations of the Preliminary exam and oversight of the student's program of study.

Committee members must be approved by the ME Graduate Committee.

The preliminary exam shall be attempted during the 2nd year.

Notes:

1. Participation of the University Representative during the oral presentation of the exam is optional.
2. Major professor doesn't take part in the evaluation (scoring) process.
3. The page limit (20 pages) for the research proposal indicated above is maximum. A good quality research proposal of shorter length should not be penalized.
4. The students are encouraged to discuss the whitepaper and research proposal with their advisor before submission to the committee.

5. If a student fails the exam, Chair of the committee must ensure that detailed feedback is provided to the student.
6. If a student fails the exam, he/she can either select a new topic or continue to work on the same and improve based on the feedback provided.

Preliminary Exam Format (Timeline for Spring 2024)

Milestone	Complete No Later Than	Initial &Date (Student)*	Initial &Date (Chair)*
Formation of Doctoral Committee	Prior to Spring 2024 Classes CLASSES BEGIN January 8, 2024		
Student submits 1-page whitepaper on research proposal including problem statement, intellectual merit, and boarder impact to the Doctoral Committee.	Week of January 22, 2024 MLK HOLIDAY January 15, 2024		
Doctoral Committee reviews the whitepaper, makes suggestions, provides comments, and may suggest modifications to the topic (~one week).	Week January 29, 2024		
Student submits a 20-page (maximum) research proposal including theoretical framework, literature review (including a seminal/review paper), knowledge gaps, and proposed research (~6 weeks).	Week of March 4, 2024 SPRING BREAK March 11-14, 2024		
Committee reviews proposal & provides comments and questions (~2 weeks).	Week of March 25, 2024		
Response submitted by the student (~2 weeks).	Week of April 8, 2024 **DROP DEADLINE		
Oral presentation 30 min – Q&A (time as needed)	Week of April 22, 2024 FINAL EXAMS April 29 - May 3, 2024		

***Each milestone should be initialed by the student when submitted and initialed by the advisor or committee chair when written feedback is received and discussed.**

****STUDENTS WHO DO NOT COMPLETE THE EXAM PROCESS DURING THE TERM MUST DROP THE COURSE AND REQUEST THE EXAM FOR NEXT TERM!****

Preliminary Examination Evaluation Rubric

Evaluation Criteria	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Quality of White Paper Submission (formatting, grammar, importance)				
Quality of Research Problem Definition (Proposal)				
Technical Content (Proposal and Final)				
Importance to Mechanical Engineering				
Style and Clarity (Format & Language Proficiency)				
Completeness				
Response to White Paper and Proposal Feedback (response to emails, use of feedback, timeliness)				
Uncertainty of Computed Results or Experimental Data Adequately Addressed in the Proposal				
Intellectual Merit of the Proposal				
Broader Impact of the Proposal				
Responses to Written Questions / Suggestions from the Committee Members				
Communication Skills during Oral Presentation				

Responses to Oral Questions / Suggestions from the Committee Members				
Overall Recommendation of the Committee member	Pass/Fail (May include remediation such as course enrollment, teaching or research experience)			

Preliminary Exam Policy

The first four paragraphs of the Preliminary Exam policy as listed in the Graduate Bulletin (2020-2021, page 86) shall remain unchanged.

Currently, the fifth and last paragraph of the policy reads,

“If a student fails the preliminary examination prior to admission to candidacy, a re-examination may be requested, but it must be recommended by the student’s supervisory committee and approved by the Academic Dean’s Office. Students can take the preliminary examination for admission to candidacy only two times. At least one semester of additional preparation is needed before the re-examination. A second failure on the preliminary exam makes the student ineligible to continue in the degree program.”

The fifth and last paragraph is to be replaced by the following language, as approved by the Graduate Policy Committee on January 11, 2021:

“If a student fails the preliminary examination, 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, a student may register for a first and second attempt. Students 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.”

Additional Explanations for Discussion Purposes only (not to be included in the Graduate Bulletin):

“six full class weeks after the results of the first attempt are shared with the student” portion

- *Comment: This count Excludes semester time before classes start, as well as the weeks including Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas/winter holidays, a partial first-week during spring semester, the week with Martin Luther King Jr. Day, spring break, Memorial Day, Independence Day, final exam week, and any natural disaster weeks such as hurricanes, which will not be held against students. This does NOT require classes to be held in person.*
 - *Fall 2023 has 12 “full class weeks” in a 16-week session.*
 - *Spring 2024 has 13 “full class weeks” in a 15-week session.*
 - *Summer 2024 has 9 “full class weeks” in a 12-week session.*
- *This allows students to take the exam twice in the same semester, which may be needed to avoid a 9-month delay (from early spring semester to early fall semester in units where*

prelims are not given during the summer). At the same time, it gives students more time to prepare due to the not-full class weeks (helping students who must prepare while also taking and/or teaching courses), or even push the second attempt into the next semester, but not immediately and/or against their will.

- *Also note that it specifically states “after results are shared with the student” because it might take a couple of weeks for those results to be determined. For this reason, it says “six” weeks and not a higher number such as “eight.”*

“if necessary within the same semester” portion

- *Comment: Departments will/may have to change their prelim course coding to be repeatable in the same semester. By working with the Registrar’s office, we should be able to do that without syllabus submission. Doctoral programs can indicate to one central person whether they want this changed by a certain date, as we did with the “creative project” track option.*