



Department of Civil Engineering

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

Guidelines for the PhD Preliminary Examination in the Department of Civil Engineering

December 2021

Exam Purpose

1. To evaluate the potential of prospective PhD students.
2. To confirm mastery of the relevant academic coursework.
3. To identify subject matter areas in which the candidate may need additional study.

Each doctoral student must take a Preliminary Examination as determined by the faculty of their specialty area. The exam should be taken no later than the end of the second year of doctoral study. The content of this examination will include material at the terminal master's level and will be formulated by graduate faculty members in the program track.

Exam Description

The exam should consist of one or more of the following:

1. Short research proposal
2. Series of take-home exams formatted by committee or faculty members
3. CU Boulder preliminary exam

Students should discuss these items with their primary advisor and faculty committee members.

Examination Outcome

The Preliminary Examination Committee will render one of three decisions:

1. **UNCONDITIONAL PASS** - Student has passed the Examination and may continue in the program for the PhD degree. Doctoral degree students will need to pay attention to the rules regarding registration for dissertation hours.
2. **CONDITIONAL PASS** – Student will have passed the exam pending satisfaction of the conditions imposed by the committee. **STUDENT MUST SATISFY THESE CONDITIONS BEFORE REGISTERING FOR ADDITIONAL DISSERTATION HOURS.** The student must satisfy these conditions within a time frame not to exceed four (4) months. Failure to satisfy the conditions will result in a failure of the Examination.
3. **FAIL** – The student has failed the Examination. The Graduate School Rules stipulate that a student failing the Preliminary Examination may, at the program's discretion, retake the examination once. The retake will be in the form designated by the committee and must be completed within twelve (12) months. A student who fails to retake the exam within twelve (12) months is subject to immediate dismissal from the Graduate School.

The outcome of the exam should be communicated to the Graduate Program Coordinator on the same day of the exam or soon following the exam. If a student passes conditionally, the stipulated conditions should be shared with the Graduate Program Coordinator and student.

Graduate School Rules and Policies

The department follows the Consolidated Graduate School Rules and Policies on the examination. Please consult this publication and note the following requirements. In some cases, (e.g., committee size) department rules may be more stringent than Graduate School rules.

- 1.** The preliminary examination is typically completed by the end of the second year.
- 2.** The student must have at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA prior to taking the examination.
- 3.** Students are required to be registered during the term in which their exam takes place. If the exam is scheduled in between terms, students are required to be registered in the semester that immediately follows. Students should be registered before the exam paperwork is submitted.
- 4.** All required non-thesis credit hours should be close to completion; and all transfer credits must be officially approved (listed on UCD transcript) prior to the term in which examination is taken.
- 5.** No more than 3 thesis credit hours can count towards the PhD student's 30-hour thesis credit requirement prior to passing the preliminary exam.