

## EPIDEMIOLOGY PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION

The Preliminary Examination for doctoral students (PhD) in Epidemiology is designed to meet the academic standards and needs of the Epidemiology faculty and students and to be in accordance with The University of Texas School of Public Health requirements for doctoral-level examinations. The Epidemiology Preliminary Examination Committee (PEC) develops, administers, and scores the exam.

**Purpose:** The Preliminary Examination is designed to evaluate whether doctoral students in Epidemiology have the substantive knowledge and methodological skills required to proceed in the program. Therefore, the intent of the examination is to evaluate the student's command of concepts related to the design, conduct, analysis and interpretation of epidemiologic studies. The exam is intended to allow students to demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply information from their courses. Students must pass the Preliminary Examination as part of the process of becoming a doctoral candidate.

**Exam Administration Dates and Details:** The Preliminary Exam is offered twice each academic year for all students across the campuses. Exams are typically in January prior to the start of the Spring semester and in May after the Spring semester. Process, dates and forms for the Preliminary Exam are located on the school website under mySPH using the Preliminary Exam tab of Academic Requirements. Exam dates are posted annually for each fiscal year. Students are allowed 2 opportunities to take the exam. If they fail the second examination they are not allowed to continue in the Epidemiology doctoral program

**Eligibility:** Students who intend to take the Preliminary Exam must submit an Epidemiology Preliminary Examination Intent Form. To be eligible to take the exam, students must be registered or on an official leave of absence in the semester prior to the Preliminary Exam date. In addition, they must have completed and received a grade of B or higher, or a "P" in the following five courses:

### **Requirements for students matriculating in Fall 2017 or after:**

PH 2710L: Intermediate Epidemiology (old name: Epidemiology III) *or equivalent*  
PHD 2711L: Advanced Epidemiology (old name: Epidemiology IV)  
PHD 2712L: Experimental Methods in Epidemiology  
PH 1830L: Categorical Data Analysis **OR** PH 1831L: Survival Analysis  
1 elective course (≥2 credits) in Epidemiology within PH2600-2999 course range or PH2126 (Fundamentals and Applications of GIS)

Additional details related to submission of the Intent Form and course requirements are provided in the Epidemiology Preliminary Examination Intent Form. Doctoral students generally take the exam after completing 18-27 credit hours in the doctoral program. Students should plan their course work so they complete the required courses within their first 27 credits. Students who would like to delay taking the Preliminary Examination beyond the completion of 27 credit hours must ask for a delay of exam from their Advisor and the Preliminary Exam Chair. Please note that knowledge and concepts from fundamental Epi classes such as PHM2612 Introduction to Epidemiology (old name: Epi-I) and PH2615 Field Epidemiology (old name: Epi-II) will be covered in the preliminary exam. In every fall and spring semester a workshop is offered by the Preliminary Examination Chair to provide discussion of the exam process. Students who have submitted a Preliminary Examination Intent Form and in the rare event need to reschedule their

exam date, must discuss the situation and develop a rescheduling plan with their Advisor and the Preliminary Exam Chair.

### **ADA Accommodation**

If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, whether new or existing, please contact the Assistant Dean in Academic Affairs and ADA Accommodation Coordinator for UTHealth School of Public Health. Request for accommodation must be received at least 4 weeks prior to the Preliminary Examination date.

**Exam Content and Format:** Questions for the Preliminary Examination are developed by UTSPH epidemiology faculty based on three peer-reviewed published manuscripts/articles from the epidemiologic literature. The exam questions are developed to assess the student's ability to apply and interpret fundamental concepts and methods in epidemiology and biostatistics. The questions focus on the methods of the study, the analyses, the graphs or tables with results, hypothetical questions, calculations and the interpretation of the results. The exam does not focus on the actual topic of the research which would require a specific expertise in a content area beyond what is provided in the manuscript/article. The exam questions may be developed from fabricated data. Exam questions often require recall of definitions and concepts, application of definitions and concepts to situations, interpretation of data and figures, understanding, application and interpretations of statistics used in the article, calculations and interpretation of the results. The required epidemiology and biostatistics courses, and the prerequisite courses for those, provide the basis for the exam concepts.

The Exam is administered on paper, is closed-book, and proctored in a single administration at the students' home campus. The manuscripts/articles used for the exam are provided to the students 24 hours in advance of the exam for review and study. Copies of the manuscripts/articles are also provided to the students during the exam. Students must bring a scientific calculator and pen to write the exam. No other materials are allowed.

The five-hour exam period includes time for breaks/snacks. Students may only leave the room for a bathroom break and only one person at a time, but no materials or phones can be taken out of the room. Use of cell phones, iPads and other electronic devices connecting to the internet are not allowed during the exam.

**Exam Evaluation:** The exams are scored by members of the Preliminary Examination Committee. The graders are blinded to the identity of the student. The student is notified in writing of the outcome of the examination by their academic advisor and/or the Preliminary Exam Chair.

The overall exam score is computed as the weighted average of the score for the three individual manuscript/article sections and questions. Each section of the exam counts as one third of the overall exam score. To pass the exam, students must have an overall score of at least 80% with no score <70% on an individual exam section.

There is no partial pass on the Preliminary Exam. No numeric scores are distributed. The exam is scored as Pass/Fail:

### **Pass**

- Student achieves an overall score of  $\geq 80\%$  with no score <70% on an individual exam section

**Fail**

- Student achieves an overall score <80% *OR*
- Student achieves an overall score of ≥80% and 1 or more exam sections is scored <70%

Students who receive a failing score must re-take the exam at the next Preliminary Examination offering. Students are required to develop a Remediation Plan with their advisor. On request, the Preliminary Examination Chair will meet with the Academic Advisor and failing student once to review the student's exam as taken. Students who are retaking the exam must submit a Preliminary Examination Intent Form and their completed Remediation Plan prior to the second exam date. Students may take the exam a maximum of two times.

Revised 10/2007

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