

## Policies and Procedures on Preliminary Examination Option 1:

### Research Grant Proposal Development

The preliminary examination is a time-honored and ubiquitous process in Doctor of Philosophy graduate programs across the United States. Its purpose is to assess the extent to which Ph.D. students who have taken all, or nearly all, of their courses in their approved Program of Study are “qualified” to undertake the rigors of the final stage of the Ph.D. program – the dissertation research. Section E.4.4 of the Graduate School’s *Graduate and Professional Bulletin* states “A preliminary examination shall be administered at least two terms before the final examination to determine whether the student is qualified to continue toward the doctorate” (p. 27). What “qualified” means varies somewhat depending on university and program, but in the School of Education at Colorado State University, it means proficient at a level that is satisfactory to your graduate committee in three key areas:

- (a) broad and deep content knowledge in your specialization;
- (b) knowledge at an advanced level of social science research design methods and analytic techniques; and
- (c) professional writing skills.

The *research grant proposal development* option will assess your skills on each of these three areas. First, your introduction, rationale, and literature review sections of your proposal narrative will assess, at some level, your knowledge of contemporary theory and empiricism in your content specialization. Second, the technical method section of your proposal narrative will allow your committee to examine your ability to conceptualize an appropriate design and analysis for a set of questions driving your proposed grant application. Finally, the quality of your writing, from both a technical and a grammatical perspective, will assess your professional writing skills. Below you will find specific guidelines concerning this option. Make sure you look at the document “Preliminary Examination General Guidelines – SOE PD 15” for general guidelines, some of which have been repeated below.

1. You must complete and submit **SOE Form 14** with your advisor to the School of Education Graduate Programs Office at [kelli.clark@colostate.edu](mailto:kelli.clark@colostate.edu) prior to starting your writing for the preliminary examination.
2. You may write a proposal in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP) of your choosing or you may work with your advisor to respond to an RFP that is in a generic pool held by the Associate Director of Graduate Programs. Once you and your advisor jointly identify which RFP to which you would like to write your examination proposal, please submit the RFP to the Associate Director of Graduate Programs for her/his review and approval. Assuming you receive his/her approval, you may begin to organize materials you will need to develop your proposal **but you may not begin writing the actual proposal until**

**the day your examination begins.**

3. Regardless of the source, the RFP must conform to the following set of guidelines:
  - a. It must be a **research** RFP; that is, it must solicit proposals that have rationale, research questions or hypotheses; a methodology, and data analysis and interpretation sections at a minimum;
  - b. It must have guidelines that allow for a proposal length of at least 15 single-spaced pages of narrative;
  - c. It should allow for budgeting for up to three years (but one year is OK), and for somewhere in the \$50,000 per year and higher neighborhood;
  - d. It must have published selection criteria that proposal reviewers would use to evaluate the quality of proposals if your proposal were actually submitted for consideration;
  - e. It must solicit proposals to conduct research on some area of education, spanning pre-kindergarten to higher education; proposals can focus on a wide variety of topical areas such as educational policy, classroom interventions, professional development, personnel development, methodology, organizational training and development, to name just a few. The only constraints are that it **must** be research, and it **must** have some connection to education.
4. Your proposal may be a genuine attempt to solicit funding from an active RFP or it may be an exercise with no intent of actually seeking funding.
5. You will have **one month** to write your examination research proposal.
6. You will be able to schedule this examination at several relatively open times during both academic semesters and in the summer. In the fall semester you may start the writing process any time during the first two weeks of October, with the oral defense to occur no later than eight weeks after the one month writing period has concluded. In the spring semester, you may schedule the exam to begin any time during the first two weeks of February with the oral defense to occur no later than eight weeks after the one month writing period has concluded. During the summer term, you may only write the exam during the month of July, starting on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Because many faculty (very likely including one or more who are on your graduate committee) are not under contract during the summer, your oral defense must be scheduled in the time period starting after classes begin for the fall semester and ending the third week of September. This means the earliest you may defend your dissertation and submit a GS Form 24 will be the following summer.

7. Your final submission upon completion of your writing and your completed **SOE Form 15** must be sent electronically to the School of Education Graduate Programs office at [kelli.clark@colostate.edu](mailto:kelli.clark@colostate.edu).
8. The documents that you send to the School of Education Graduate Programs Office must include (a) the RFP to which you wrote your proposal, (b) your proposal (formatted according to RFP formatting guidelines), and (c) your signed transmittal page (**SOE Form 15**).
9. In addition to negotiating with your advisor which option you select for your exam, you must confirm with your Graduate Committee a date on which you will complete a two-hour oral follow-up which will culminate with the signing of the GS Form 16. This oral follow-up must be scheduled **within eight weeks following the day you complete your writing of the exam**. During the first part of the oral follow-up, your committee members will query you about various aspects of your writing, regardless of which option you have chosen. The remainder of the time in this oral follow-up will involve queries by your committee on any aspect of your specialization content or research methodology course content. **This oral follow-up will no longer include your dissertation proposal defense. You may talk about ideas for your dissertation with your committee at this oral follow-up, but that should be the extent of it.**
10. All members of your Graduate Committee will be expected to evaluate your preliminary exam writing, and you can expect questions about your knowledge of both research methodology and specialization content at your oral follow-up mentioned in #9 above to come from all committee members.