

The Graduate Committee proposes the following change to the Department Handbook, regarding the rules concerning the PhD preliminary exam on p.124. The existing text is in black; the Committee proposes to add the underlined text in red.

Upon passing the qualifying examinations and selecting an advisor, a Ph.D. student is required by the Department of Mathematics to pass one preliminary examination in the student's area of specialization. Students must complete the quals and the qual course- work requirements before attempting the preliminary exam. The preliminary examination may be written, oral, or a combination of both. A preliminary examination committee of at least three faculty members, including the advisor, will decide on the form of the exam, and give the student an outline of topics and suggested readings. The committee will then design the exam and evaluate the student's performance. A Ph.D. student must pass the preliminary examination by the beginning of the eighth semester in order to remain in good academic standing. If a student does not meet this deadline, the Graduate Committee may require a mentoring agreement and/or recommend that the student be placed on academic probation. The advisor should inform the department's Graduate Program Coordinator that the student has passed the preliminary examination, by filling out the prelim exam webform.

Here is the rationale for the proposed change. Currently, the rules do not say what happens if a student fails to pass the prelim by the stated deadline. The stated consequences are consistent with those stated in the policies on SP/LP/NP grading and advisor change, which were approved by the Department in Fall 2024. Most students pass their prelim before the deadline, but in the rare cases where they do not, the changes give the Graduate Committee explicit authority to take action if necessary, while still allowing for discretion. (As a note, the preliminary exam is a purely Departmental requirement (as opposed to the oral comprehensive examination and the final PhD defense, which are Graduate School requirements). As such, this proposed change does not need to be approved by any unit beyond the Department.)