

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Physical Chemistry

Department of Chemistry
Chemical and Life Sciences Laboratory, MC-712
600 South Mathews Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801-3364



A131 CLSL
Telephone: 217-333-2556
FAX: 217-244-3186
email: bmyler@illinois.edu

TO: Physical Chemistry Students
FROM: Physical Chemistry Faculty
DATE: June 12, 2017
SUBJECT: Preliminary Exam

The oral preliminary exam must be presented before the end of the fifth semester of graduate study. The main emphasis in the exam is your research, including that which you have already accomplished, and a proposal for the near future. *You* are responsible for all phases of the preliminary exam.

Format: The oral prelim committee usually consists of the student's faculty advisor and three other faculty members from the Department of Chemistry (exception: if you are in the chemical physics program, add Department of Physics). The names of the committee members need to be given to Beth Myler at least three weeks before the preliminary exam so the appropriate forms can be ordered from the Graduate College. The student prepares a prelim report described below, and distributes it to the faculty committee *not less than* one week in advance of the prelim date. The student then meets with the committee, gives a short, planned presentation, with discussion to follow. Students are promptly notified of the committee's decision. Details are given below. Plan on *1.5-2 hours* for the exam.

1. Selection of committee. The student, in consultation with his/her advisor and other staff members, chooses the members of the committee. Ordinarily the committee members will be the same as for the Ph.D. final exam, but due to circumstances (e.g. sabbaticals, leaves, etc.) these may change. For the Ph.D. exam, the committee consists of four members, two of whom must be tenured. These members should be chosen for expertise in the field, but diversity of viewpoint is also desired. At least one member should be outside Physical Chemistry. This professor might be chosen from other parts of the department (e.g. Analytical) or from another department (e.g. Physics, Materials Science and Engineering, etc.).
2. Date and time of prelim. The prelim is held at the mutual convenience of the student and the members of the committee prior to the end of the fifth semester of graduate study.

3. Preliminary Exam Form. Beth Myler in the IMP Office will order the form. *At least two weeks* prior to the date of the exam please email Beth (bmyler@illinois.edu) the following information: day and date, time, location, committee chair and committee.
4. Place. The student must arrange for a room for the prelim. The Physical Chemistry conference room (A133 CLSL) is the most convenient choice. Reservations for this room are arranged in the IMP Office (A131 CLSL). However, any other room can be used if desired. The student is also responsible for having the correct audio visual equipment. Some rooms already have projection facilities.
5. Prelim paper. This paper is neatly typed, and consists of two sections. The background information and accomplishments of the student's research program are described in the first section, which is no longer than five double-spaced pages, typed. Preprints and reprints of research papers should be appended to this section. The second section, limited to five pages, is a discussion of the goals and relevance of the proposed research. *These size limits are strictly adhered to.* The completed paper must be sent to the members of the committee *no less than one week in advance* of the prelim date. If the paper is not ready on time, the prelim *must be rescheduled*. When sending the pdf, please offer the committee a printed copy.
6. Prelim presentation. Prepare a presentation which briefly describes prior and proposed work. *Practice* this presentation until you are very good. Plan on a *twenty minute* presentation, assuming no interruptions. A rule of thumb is one transparency or slide for each two minutes of the talk (i.e. about 15-20 slides). Then given the inevitable interruptions and discussion, this should provide an hour's worth of exam.
7. On the day of the prelim. Check the room and projector. Practice your presentation and time it for twenty minutes. Get the preliminary exam form from the P. Chem. Office. *Bring it with you to the exam* and give it to your committee chair. Once a decision has been made, the committee will sign the form. Bringing it to the exam will save you having to hunt down the committee members later.
8. Decision. There are three possible outcomes: (1) pass, (2) fail, and (3) deferred. Students who pass are advanced to Stage III of the Ph.D. program. If a student fails the examination, the committee has the option to let the student completely redo the examination, with the second prelim date determined by the committee. If the student is not given a second attempt or the second attempt is also a "fail," then the student must leave the Ph.D. program. If the decision is to defer, the committee is in temporary adjournment for a maximum of six months. If the committee members think it is appropriate, they may request that you provide additional written material or repeat the oral presentation. Please see the following website for the most current information (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/chapterVI/section04#prelim>).