

Guidelines for Preparing for the Preliminary Examination

1. The applicant should read the [Proposal Writer's Guide](#) (Office of Research and Sponsored Projects of The University of Michigan). The discussion of the Introduction, Background and Description of Proposed Research sections will likely be the most useful.
2. The **written proposal (WP)** may be organized in any form that the applicant feels is most appropriate but should include the items listed below. Some suggestions for suitable preparation for the **oral examination (OE)** are also indicated.

Title Page

Introduction (including a statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the research).

Background (including a literature survey and a description of research already performed by the applicant).

WP: The literature review should be selective and critical.

OE: The applicant is expected to be intimately familiar with the relevant literature, the opinions of previous workers in the subject, and to be critical of shortcomings in earlier work.

Description of Proposed Research (including method or approach and expected difficulties). This must constitute about 50% of the text of the written proposal. The Project Description should provide a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include: objectives for the period of the proposed work and expected significance; relation to the present state of knowledge in the field and to work in progress at Michigan and elsewhere. The Project Description should outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken and, where appropriate, provide a clear description of experimental methods and procedures.

WP: A specific research program should be put forth (e.g., identify variables to be studied and their levels); the expected research program sequence; decision points expected during the course of the research; the methods of data reduction, evaluation, interpretation and presentation, etc.

OE: The applicant is expected to display a thorough grasp of the physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics, etc., relevant to the conduct of the theoretical or experimental research program. The methods used by others or proposed to be used should be thoroughly understood.

A **timetable** for conducting and reporting the research: The timetable should be clearly based upon the scope of the work described in the description of the proposed research.

List of references. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers and year of publication.

Curriculum Vitae.

The written research proposal must not be longer than 15 pages of text (including figures, excluding title page, list of references, and CV), of which about 50% must be the description of the proposed research.

Use one of the following typefaces: Arial, Times, Times New Roman, Palatino (if using a Mac), Courier New, Palatino Linotype, Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger. A font size of less than 11 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figure, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters.

No more than six lines of text within a vertical space of one inch.

Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch.

While line spacing (single-spaced, double-spaced, etc.) is at the discretion of the proposer, established page limits must be followed.