

Preparing for Comprehensive Exams (Preliminary Exams)

1. Figure out three areas you would like to include in your exams.
2. Determine whom you would like to chair your exam committee. Contact that person and see if she or he will agree to be your chair. This person may be your adviser, but does not have to be.
3. Work with your committee chair to solidify your exam areas and to discuss faculty members who might serve as your primary examiner in each area. Your committee chair should be one of your examiners. You should also discuss who would be a good external member for the committee.
4. Contact prospective examiners to request that they serve on your exam committee and that they work with you in developing a reading list in a specific area. Also contact the external member and to see if he or she is willing to be on your committee.
5. When you have commitments from all four members, schedule a preliminary meeting to discuss the exams, the reading lists, the roles of each member, and timeline.
6. Work with each committee member to come to an agreement on the reading list for each area. In most cases, the student generates an initial list and then works with the faculty member to add and delete readings.
7. Send the combined reading list (divided into areas) to the entire committee and ask for their approval.
8. Read and study, take notes and memorize.
9. When you near completion of your study time, contact the committee saying you want to schedule the exam and offer possible times. Normally, exams should be scheduled to fall within the Fall or Spring semesters.
 - In your first sitting, you will write a timed essay in response to a set of questions.
 - A week later, you will write two responses to two sets of questions.
 - You will then have two weeks to write a synthesis paper and submit it to the committee.
 - After the committee has had time to read all of your exams, you will meet with the committee for an oral exam based on your written exams. Specific times are set for the intervals, but I couldn't find them.

Specific details are in the exam policy, available on the department's website:

http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/english.ndsu.edu/Grad_Program_Docs/Comprehensive_Exam_PHD.pdf

10. When you have agreement on the times, fill out the Request to Schedule Exam form, available at http://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/current_students/forms/#c215461, get the signatures needed, and submit it to the Graduate School within the time restrictions specified on the form.
11. Take the exam consisting of two timed writing sessions in which you will write three essays, one two-week synthesis paper, and an oral exam.
12. If you pass the exam, the Graduate School will be notified, but you will not officially pass your exams until you have written your dissertation prospectus and have had it approved by your dissertation committee, which is often the same as your exam committee, but it is not required to be so. The chair of your exam committee will then notify the Graduate School, and then you will be ABD.