

# Physics Department Preliminary Examination Procedures

Revised October 30, 2018  
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## Statement of Purpose

The preliminary examination will cover a range of core topics in undergraduate physics. The examination serves a number of purposes:

1. By passing the examination, students demonstrate mastery of undergraduate physics.
2. The process of studying for the preliminary examination is critical for synthesizing the topics in physics

{ at least 55% for a \conditional PhD pass"

In a \conditional PhD pass," results from the examination will be used to diagnose deficiencies in the student's core knowledge. Conditions for a complete pass will be specified by the Graduate Studies committee, subject to approval by the department. Some example conditions are:

Grade for an upper level course in the area of deficiency.

Take and achieve a specified grade in a course in the area of deficiency.

Directed study in which student writes a paper or completes a research project in the area of deficiency.

Oral examination covering material in deficient area.

If the student does not meet the conditions specified by the Graduate Studies committee, they will be ineligible to receive a PhD.

## Time line

All students entering the program are expected to pass with a 40% by the beginning of their third semester (usually the fall semester of their second year).

Students pursuing a PhD are expected to receive an unconditional or conditional PhD pass by the beginning of their fourth semester.

Students are strongly encouraged to take the examination during each offering so that they may identify deficiencies requiring improvement for subsequent offerings. While it is not required, students may elect to take the examination upon entering the program (during the first week of their first semester).

Under certain circumstances, students with a weaker background may require remedial work in physics. These students are identified in the admission process or during their first semester. They will be informed at that time that we expect their first year to be spent in preparation for the full graduate curriculum. The preliminary first, p tharv