

Draft Policy for Preliminary Examination (Biostatistics and Data Science)

Valid for: 2021 and forward

1. A doctoral student who has successfully (B or better) completed 18 credit hours of biostatistics courses including the core courses listed below is eligible to take the preliminary exam. The core courses could have been taken elsewhere as a part of a Biostatistics master's program but a maximum of 8 credit hours can be transferred to SPH. Unless prior approval is obtained from the Department, a student should take the first preliminary exam no later than two years after entering the program.
2. The preliminary exam will typically cover materials from PH 1820, PH1821, PH1830, PH1831, PH1910, PH1911, PH 1915 and PH1950. There are two parts to the preliminary exam. One focuses on Theory and Methodology and the other focuses on Methods and Applications. The Theory and Methodology exam is an 8-hour exam (one full day), and The Methods and Applications portion will also be **one full day**, focusing on data analysis, statistical strategies for addressing public health research aims, their associated power analyses and writing narrative explanations on statistical results.
3. Soliciting answer to the questions from anyone is NOT allowed during the examination, including phone, text, email, social media.
4. The Theory and Methodology is **a session** without internet access, students are allowed to bring **only a set of pre-specified reference books**, while calculators as well as other supplementary materials (including statistical tables) will be provided.
5. For the Methods and Applications portion, students are allowed to use any statistical/computer software and access files on flash drive or shared drive in the internet, and again allowed to bring **only a set of pre-specified reference books**. Email is allowed for receiving questions and submitting answers, and internet is allowed for accessing software, their online manuals and general information about statistical methods/approaches. Searching/soliciting answers from internet specific to the examination questions is prohibited.
6. The biostatistics preliminary exam will be given once a year in August.
7. The preliminary exam will be graded double-blinded to both students and faculty. The evaluation of the preliminary examination will be conducted by an exam committee composed of Biostatistics Faculty.
8. If a student fails the preliminary exam, he/she must retake in the next year. The committee will decide on whether the student should retake the whole or part of the examination.
9. It is the School's policy that a student who fails twice on preliminary exam cannot stay in the doctoral program.
10. Students intended to take the exam in the summer must apply **by May 31st** of the exam year.
11. The policy may be modified to accommodate unusual circumstances (such as pandemics).

