

University of Illinois at Chicago  
College of Nursing

## Results of PhD Program Student Survey

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## Top 5 themes across faculty and student responses

- Standardization of preliminary exam process
- Consistently available statistic course sequence focusing on application and interpretation
- Consistent opportunities to improve writing with emphasis on publication
- Availability of alternate dissertation format, e.g., published or submitted papers in lieu of traditional chapters
- Blended or online advanced coursework

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Thank you for participating!!

Who participated:

Doctoral students: Sent to Doctoral student list serve, n = 50 responded

Faculty: Survey sent out to 42, n=24 responded (57% response rate)

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## Response to specific questions

**What was the format of the written part of your exam (n=29)\*?**

75.9% written papers  
24.1% written response to questions

**What was your overall experience of the preliminary examination process (n=26)\*?**

Negative	19.2%
Somewhat neutral	3.8%
Neutral	3.8%
Fairly positive	30.8%
Positive	42.3%

\*Indicates how many students answered the question

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### 8. In thinking about the preliminary exam process, what worked well (n=28)\*?

- Clear direction/outlines/guidelines
- Term ADVISOR appeared repeatedly
- **Advisor** that gives a lot of guidance (outlines, meetings etc.) so that student clearly understand the expectations (committee that gets along) – clearly facilitates the process
- Taking prelims in close approximation to the completion of formal course work

\*Indicates how many students answered the question

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### 9. What could have been improved (n=22)\*?

- NEED CON guidelines/standardized test/template for – too many inconsistencies among departments/students
- Clearer expectations, committee and advisor developing/coming together in a more timely fashion
- A lot of writing expected at this time – yet there is little guidance about the writing process
- “I thought the purpose of prelims was to demonstrate mastering the knowledge gleamed from coursework. It is turning out to be a justification of what to do for my thesis.”

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**Faculty response:**

**8. In thinking about the preliminary exam process, what worked well (n=18)\*?**

- Papers vs. Question format – no clear consensus on what might work
- First time student asked to critically think
- Exams are more efficient for assessing the mastering of content
- Papers are better – allows students to really demonstrate their knowledge, springboard into dissertation

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**Faculty response:**

**9. What could have been improved (n=16)?**

- Uniform criteria
- More structure
- Lack of standardization
- Too much “between-committee’ variability
- 2 responses – about this process being a ‘slow-down’
- Articulate competencies

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**Major theme:**

**Standardization of the preliminary exam process**

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## Revision is needed!!

The process:

- Analyzing and summarizing student and faculty feedback!!
- Reading, analyzing and summarizing published literature related to the topic
- Reviewing other CON's process/guidelines
- Reviewing doctoral program's objectives and competencies

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## What is the proposed change:

- Qualifying exam
- Preliminary exam
  
- Currently: Preliminary Exam  
Two parts: Written and oral

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### Qualifying exams

- Completed after the core (NUSC 505, 506, 511, 515 and 2 advanced stat) courses are completed
- Purpose: To determine student's knowledge in the area of research design, theory/philosophy of science, measurement and statistics
- Exam offered each February and April with another offering in October for those who are unsuccessful the first time

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➤ **Qualifying exam process: Two part process**

**Part I** – A one day closed book in class examination which will require students to answer XX questions. Questions will be based upon CORE course content.

**Part II** – Critique of 3 research articles selected by the Qualifying Exam Committee. Students will have one week to complete the take home exam.

Student responses to part I and II will be graded by members of Qualifying exam Committee.

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**Preliminary exam:**

Purpose: To demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge in the research concentration area that supports the student's dissertation research .

- Written and oral format
- Written part can be: The traditional 1-3 chapters (purpose & aims, related literature & methods)
- Oral part – gives the student an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge of the content beyond that which is revealed in the written format

Essentially: Presentation of dissertation proposal

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