Preliminary Exam Formal Scheduling and Reporting Procedures

Procedures for Students

1. Plan to submit your Ph.D. Program Plan [http://www.history.illinois.edu/graduate/forms/documents/PhDPortfolioForm.pdf] well in advance of the end of semester before you plan to take prelims, preferably at least the semester before. The Portfolio requires a variety of paperwork and approval at one of the monthly meetings of the Graduate Studies Committee, all of which must occur before your Prelim Planning Form can be submitted.

2. When circulating the Prelim Planning Form [http://www.history.illinois.edu/graduate/forms/documents/PrelimSchedulingupdated4910.pdf] before collecting their initials, talk to your examiners about planning the exam and about when it will take place. Make sure that if the faculty member will be off campus for the exam, this is conveyed to the Graduate Secretary so appropriate accommodations can be made for getting the exam and results.

3. Submit the Prelim Planning Form by the end of the semester before you plan to take prelims. Make sure it indicates which of the various prelim breadth requirements are satisfied by each prelim.

4. When submitting the Prelim Planning Form, let the Graduate Secretary know if you have special scheduling needs for prelims the semesters you plan to take them. Requests to take exams outside regular exam periods cannot be accommodated, but it is possible to work around anticipated travel and other schedules if done far enough in advance. Written exams are offered in four exam periods during the year: September, November, February, and April. Exams must be completed in two consecutive exam periods.

5. As your exam periods approach, advise the Graduate Secretary if you are TA’ing and need to schedule exams for particular days to accommodate your teaching schedule. The need to take a prelim will not be accepted as an adequate excuse for missing a section if no effort has been made in advance to schedule the exam around your teaching schedule.

Procedures for Examiners and Advisors

1. Be aware of the fields for graduate students whose dissertations you plan to advise. Think about whether these fields meet all of the prelim breadth requirements. Glance over the prelim planning form to check that there is not more than one overlapping examiner on all the fields, especially if you have been asked to examine in more than one field.
2. When you initial a Prelim Planning Form for any student, take the time to ask the student when the exam is likely to take place (e.g. what month and year) and discuss with the student whether you will be on campus. If you will be on leave but still agree to write the exam, arrange with the Graduate Secretary how you will write and convey the exam questions, receive the completed exam, and convey the final grade.

3. Respond promptly to the Graduate Secretary’s requests for exam questions. These requests are made well in advance of exam dates because there are many exams occurring on each date and advance preparation is necessary for the whole system to run smoothly. Exams should be composed in consultation with the other examiner. Do not simply send your own questions to the Graduate Secretary. Decide on the instructions, structure, and content of the exam and send the complete exam to the Graduate Secretary, as approved by both examiners.

4. Watch for the delivery of the exam as an attachment to your e-mail box on or soon after the date of the exam. Read and evaluate as soon as possible.

5. After reading a completed exam, consult with the other examiner before reporting a result to the Graduate Secretary. The result should be reported only after both examiners have read the exam and agree on the result. Once it is reported to the Graduate Secretary, the result can be conveyed to the student. Exams should be read with their results reported as promptly as possible.

6. If you wish to convey comments to a student who passed an exam, do so directly to the student after the result has been reported. Only in the case of failed exams will the Graduate Secretary record rationales for exam results.

7. In the case of a failed exam, consult the DGS and students’ advisor about the result. Students may petition to retake an exam with the approval of the examiners and their advisor. You may need to meet with the student in order to determine whether it is appropriate to agree to a retake.