

PH.D. PRELIMINARY EXAM PROCEDURES

Department of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology, Bryn Mawr College

Initial Procedure

1. Consult with your proposed Dissertation Director (DD)/Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and up to three additional faculty committee members to select and develop exam fields. Students are permitted to take up to two exams with one examiner. Students will generally start these discussions after the successful completion of their M.A.-thesis/M.A. qualifying papers at the end of the second year of the program but may wish to start thinking about their options prior to this. Feel free to discuss your ideas and/or choices at the End-of year Meetings with the entire faculty of your department.
2. After completing this process and in consultation with the DGS/DD, complete and submit the [Application for PhD Candidacy](#). A copy will automatically be sent to the necessary departments and individuals. Due dates for these forms can be found on the [GSAS calendar](#).
3. When all your examiners encourage you to take the written exams, inform the Director of Graduate Studies and Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology administrator of your intention to proceed to the exams. At this point you will need to fill out the [Preliminary Examination Scheduling Form](#). Complete the form in consultation with your committee members.
4. The Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology administrator will work to schedule the oral exam with the committee members and make note of any travel, audio, or video conferencing needs. Once a date has been set for the oral, the dates of the written exams should be adjusted if necessary to fit the required time frame, allowing at least one week between the final written exam and the oral exam, with the last possible date for the oral as five weeks from the first written prelim.

Taking the Written Exams

Written exam questions should be completed within the specified time frame and will be distributed by the Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology administrator on your chosen dates (see prelim exam scheduling form details above). It is expected that all students will take the exams on campus. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate School. Students completing the exams on-campus should either plan to complete their exams at their carrels or reserve a room to complete each of their written exams. If you require any help with booking a room(s), please feel free to ask the Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology administrator. If you are permitted to take the exam(s) off-campus, the same procedure as outlined below will apply.

On your selected date, and shortly before the start time of your exam you will receive the exam via email from the administrator. Each written exam must be completed in four hours (9am-1pm or 12pm-4pm) and once the designated exam slot has concluded, you should immediately email your completed work back to the administrator. Please double check that the exam has been saved correctly and opens before emailing it back. Students should bring their own laptop or reserve a loaner laptop if they prefer to type the exam. If you intend to complete the exam by hand, blue books will be provided for you and should, again, be returned to the administrator following the completion of the exam. If you prefer to complete the exam by hand, please note this on the preliminary exam scheduling form.

Faculty are to provide the written exam questions, including any special instructions (e.g., specific formatting requests), no later than three business days prior to the exam. Exam format—including number and choice of questions, expected length and style of response, citation requirements, etc.—is determined individually by each examiner as appropriate to the field of study. Any questions regarding exam format and expectations should be directed to the faculty member supervising the prelim field. Preliminary exams are not normally open book exams and students should not consult the internet or any other sources or materials (unless specifically asked to do so by the preliminary examiner) during the exam.

Taking the Oral Exam

The oral exam will last at least one hour and no more than 3 hours and is generally conducted in person in a private room on the College campus. Committee members who are away from campus may occasionally participate by phone or video conference. Questions might cover additional material from the student's exam lists, closer readings of specific texts or images, follow-up regarding the substance of the written exams, or other topics. Generally, each examiner is given 15-20 minutes to ask questions, although this structure may vary. The outside chair is responsible for setting an order of examiners, keeping time, ensuring that the exam proceeds according to GSAS rules, collecting assessments and signatures, and submitting the form to the GSAS office at the exam's conclusion. The student will normally be sent out of the room at the beginning of the exam (so the examiners can discuss the order of questions) and then again at the end of the formal exam (so the examiners can deliberate the outcome). The outcome of the exam will then be shared with the student upon their return to the room.

The exam has three possible outcomes: Satisfactory, Partially Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory. In the event of a Partially Satisfactory grade, an explanation will be provided about any additional work that must be completed prior to advancing to candidacy. All students are encouraged to consult this overview alongside the current [GSAS Academic Rules](#) and [GSAS Preliminary Examination Guidelines](#).

Last updated 9/20/2023 by Jennie Bradbury