

# **AUBURN UNIVERSITY**

## **Policy on General Doctoral Examinations**

A general examination, often called the “preliminary examination,” is required of all applicants for the degree of doctor of philosophy. It consists of written and oral testing by the student’s advisory committee (or by an examination committee designated by the student’s academic program) in the student’s major and minor. The written portion of the examination does not require approval in advance by the Graduate School. The oral portion, however, does require such approval. Arrangements for the oral examination must be made by application to the Graduate School at least one week in advance of the examination. The primary purpose of the general examination is to assess the student’s understanding of the broad body of knowledge in a field of study. The examination also affords the advisory committee an opportunity to review the student’s proposed research and understanding of research methods and literature in the chosen field. If the general examination reveals deficiencies in any of these areas, the advisory committee may recommend remedial work, re-examination, or discontinuation of doctoral study.

The general oral examination should be conducted immediately after the successful completion of the written examination and well before the final examination. At least one complete semester (preferably more than one) must intervene between the general oral and final examinations. The two examinations thus cannot be taken either in the same semester or in consecutive semesters. Some departments have specific requirements for conducting these examinations, and the student should become familiar with these. Successful completion of the oral examination requires unanimous support of the student’s advisory committee. If the general oral examination is failed, a re-examination may be given on recommendation of the committee and approval by the dean of the Graduate School. Further examinations require exceptional circumstances and approval by the Graduate Council.

The student becomes a candidate for the degree on successful completion of the general examination.