

**DEPARTMENT OF  
MICROBIOLOGY, IMMUNOLOGY, AND CELL BIOLOGY**

*WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER*

***Doctor of Philosophy  
in Immunology and Microbial Pathogenesis***

All Ph.D. students are required to take comprehensive preliminary examination, which normally will be at the end of the second year in graduate school assuming that the students enter the program after the first year in the common core curriculum. The process of candidacy includes (1) passing a written comprehensive preliminary examination and (2) successfully defending an oral candidacy exam for a research proposal.

**Comprehensive Preliminary Examination**

As students successfully completed all required graduate courses from the first year common core curriculum. The examination will be formulated by the Scholarship Committee from questions submitted by the faculty and usually administered in June.

The examination will consist of three major areas, Basic Microbiology, Immunology, and Microbial Pathogenesis. Students will be expected to select questions and provide detailed discussion type answers. The scored candidacy examination and recommendations (**pass/fail**) will be forwarded to the Scholarship Committee and the departmental chair for further action. The committee will consider **a score of 70%** on any section to be a passing performance and will use the average score for all of the questions in a given section of the examination in determining overall performance. If a student fails any section of the written preliminary examination, that section must be taken **a second time within four months of the date of the first exam.**

However, in order for a student to retake any part of a preliminary exam, or an entire exam, an affirmative and supportive vote by the majority of faculty attending a faculty meeting must occur. If a student does not receive this affirmative faculty vote after having failed his/her first attempt at the preliminary exam, the student is barred from continuing in the program. **If a student fails the written examination a second time, he/she will be dismissed from the program.**

If one or more specific sections of the qualifying examination is/are failed, the Scholarship Committee is responsible for the decision to re-administer a portion or all of this examination. The departmental chair, and the Scholarship Committee of the Graduate Program in Immunology and Microbial Pathogenesis must approve exceptions to this process. In compliance with the WVU Graduate Catalog (p. 37), **in no case will this examination be administered more than 3 times.**

## Candidacy

After successfully passing the comprehensive written preliminary examination, students **must complete an NIH style research proposal using the format of the NIH-PHS398 Grant Application Form** to be considered for candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The Scholarship Committee will provide a set of specific instructions for this written portion of the candidacy examination. The proposal should be in the area of the student's proposed research and formulated in consultation with the selected graduate advisor.

The written proposal will be presented to the graduate advisory committee for review and the proposal will be defended as the focal point of an oral candidacy exam administered by that committee. This oral examination is not limited to the research proposal and should include general questioning of the candidate to establish scientific competency. Passing performance on the candidacy examination is voted on by the committee and no more than one dissenting vote is allowable. **The oral candidacy exam must be taken within 12 months after a student successfully passes the written comprehensive preliminary exam.**

Students who fail to take the candidacy exam within this time frame will have their tuition waiver withheld until the exam is held. Exceptions to the 12-month deadline must be approved at least one month prior to the 12-month deadline by the chair, the Scholarship Committee, and the graduate advisory committee. **If a student fails the candidacy examination, he/she must repeat the examination within four months.** A second failing mark on this examination will normally result in dismissal from the program. Exceptions to this process must be approved by the departmental chair, the Scholarship Committee, and the Graduate Advisory Committee. In compliance with the WVU Graduate Catalog (p. 33), **in no case will this examination be administered more than 3 times.**