

# Proposal by the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC)

(for the 2022/2023 academic year)

1. **Students are required to pass the proficiency exam by the end of the spring semester of their first year.**
  - This requirement follows the university Ph.D. degree requirements as outlined in the Florida State University Graduate Bulletin under Diagnostic exam (see text below from page 79) and additional information at [https://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/graduate/information/graduate\\_degree/](https://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/graduate/information/graduate_degree/)
2. **The proficiency exam consists of four subject areas to be defined by the Proficiency Exam Committee (PEC), e.g.**
  - a. quantum mechanics,
  - b. electrodynamics, relativity,
  - c. classical mechanics,
  - d. thermodynamics, statistical mechanics, and modern physics.
3. **To pass the exam, a student must demonstrate proficiency in each subject area, as determined by the PEC.**
  - a. A student who passes a subject area may skip that subject area in subsequent exams.
  - b. The GAC will discuss the status of students in the program who fail the exam on the last attempt. (not intended for the handbook)
4. **Every proficiency exam will be composed of four separate sessions, each covering one of the four subject areas.**
  - The PEC decides on the problems and on the exact format of the exam, i.e. the number and types of problems for each section and the allocated time students have to work on them.
5. **The proficiency exam will be offered three times per year:**
  - a. **The August Exam will be held before fall classes start. Results need to be available by advising day.**
    - This exam will serve as a diagnostic exam for incoming students.
    - An incoming student who fails the exam must enroll in the fall proficiency exam preparation course.
    - Students can ask for a prep course waiver, e.g., because they have already passed the subject areas offered in the fall prep course.
  - b. **The December Exam will be held in the week of the Finals.**
    - A student who fails the exam on this attempt must enroll in the spring proficiency exam prep course.
    - Students can ask for a prep course waiver, e.g., because they have already passed the subject areas that are offered in the spring prep course.
  - c. **The April Exam will be held in the week of the Finals.**
6. Graduate students typically register for three courses in the fall and spring of their first year. **The proficiency exam preparation course serves as one of these courses.**
7. **The proficiency exam preparation course is offered on an S/U basis.**

8. The December/April proficiency exam may be considered the “final exam” of the corresponding preparation course, but formally remains a separate requirement of the Ph.D. program.
9. The instructor of the preparation courses will automatically be a member of the PEC.
10. Students admitted to the MS program (Bridge Fellows) must take both preparation courses and both the December and April exams. They must pass at least two subject areas in these two exams and pass the entire exam by the second spring to enter the PhD program.
11. For current students who have not yet passed the exam, the final decision about staying in the program will be made by the GAC and PEC.