Instructions for the IDT Preliminary Exam

The question(s) for your Preliminary examination is attached. No later than two weeks prior to your oral exam date, you must submit a paper copy of your completed written exam to each member of your committee, including your chairperson. The oral defense of the preliminary exam must occur by the last exam period of your second year in the program. (Reference the IDT Web site for exam periods, exam scheduling, etc.)

You may begin working on the written exam immediately. The exam is considered "open notes/open book". You may use all resources at your disposal including the library, the Web, your notes, spell checkers, etc. The only thing you are not at liberty to do is discuss your answers (or exam questions) with anyone outside your committee.

Please consider your chairperson your point of reference with respect to any questions concerning the procedures and schedule for this examination. Please do not go to another graduate student for clarification. You may request clarification concerning the nature of the question(s) or the procedures for the examination; however, you should not share drafts of your written responses with anyone. The written product should be yours and yours alone. Prior to the submission of the examination, no one else should critique or edit either your draft or final written response.

Your written response should not be a mere recount of information. Rather, your written response should extend beyond recount, including higher levels of thought and analysis; for example, periodic summaries and syntheses that tie important ideas together. While exact page count varies, it is estimated that the typical prelim document will be approximately 25-35 pages in length, excluding reference pages. However, rather than adhere to a specific page count, you should strive to respond completely to your exam question(s).

In evaluating your written responses, we will be looking for evidence that you meet the following criteria:
- Presents literature in a non-biased fashion.
- Demonstrates evidence of reading and citing primary sources.
- Represents thoroughly the relevant literature base, including relevant theoretical and empirical work.
- Presents adequate detail in reviews of literature to draw substantiated conclusions.
- Organizes content clearly and logically.
- Adheres to APA guidelines for writing style and references.
- Uses standard English properly.
- Refines writing to be free of typographical and grammatical errors.

Prepare and include one integrated reference list for your entire written response. Further, before you hand in your work, write a one to two page reflection about the examination as a learning, thinking, and writing exercise. The APA-formatted document submitted for review should include your: (a) reflection; (b) list of exam question(s); (c) response to the question(s); and (d) reference list.

Please plan on dividing your time fairly equally among researching, thinking, and writing. If you get stuck, move on to another question/question subsection or take a day or so away from the task. Remember that good writing comes from rewrites, rewrites, and more rewrites. You should devote a significant amount of time to revising and refining your document before submitting it to your committee.

Inevitably examinations create some anxiety, but as much as possible, try to view this examination process as a professional milestone that will help prepare you for your dissertation research and your future career. We wish you every success with your preliminary exam.