

Physiology Program

Qualifying examination

The student becomes a candidate for the doctoral degree after passing a qualifying examination administered by a committee of the College of Graduate Studies.

Prerequisites

1. Each doctoral program shall define required courses and other prerequisites which must be satisfactorily completed prior to the qualifying examination.
2. In addition to these minimal requirements, the student's mentor may establish other prerequisites appropriate to the course of study undertaken by the individual student.

Scheduling

The graduate program in which the student is enrolled shall schedule the examination for the end of the student's second year (or soon thereafter); exceptions require approval by the Dean.

Qualifying Examination Committee

The proposed Qualifying Examination Committee is formed by the graduate student in consultation with the Mentor. The proposed committee is submitted for approval to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who will also assign the Committee Chair. The Mentor and student, in consultation with all the other committee members, will determine dates and times at which they can all participate in the exam. These dates and times must be communicated by the dissertation Mentor, in writing, to each committee member who, in turn, must confirm in writing his/her continued commitment to participate. If a committee member cannot devote the required hours on the dates and times specified, either that committee member must be replaced with another faculty member approved by the Dean or other dates and/or times must be selected which allows all the committee members to fully attend. If a committee member later finds s/he cannot fully participate in the entire exam and it is not feasible to find a replacement, the oral exam can go forth with a few as four committee members, one of which must be the Mentor, provided the remaining committee members and the student agree to do so.

Nature of Qualifying Examination

The examination shall cover areas appropriate to the student's training and research interests. The student shall provide a list of his/her undergraduate and graduate courses and training, and a brief summary of any research undertaken, at the time the request for examination is made. At the discretion of the Graduate Program in Physiology, the examination will consist of a written component, and an oral component.

Written component. The format for the Graduate Program in Physiology is: a research proposal on the candidate's research area. The research proposal will be 15 pages in length (including figures). The composition of the research proposal will include a description of an area to be researched. This description will (a) identify the specific aims and hypotheses to be addressed in the specific research (estimated length: one page), (b) provide the background and significance of the proposed research (estimated length: seven pages), (c) describe the preliminary studies performed and results of these studies (estimated length: two pages or less), and (d) describe the experimental design and methods used to address the specific aims (estimated length: five pages). The latter shall describe not only the methods, but also the potential pitfalls for these methods, alternative approaches, and predicted outcomes.

If the student took the Grant Writing course, then s/he will have may use this grant as a base for the Qualifying Examination with the inclusion of an additional Specific Aim. In formulating the additional Aim, the student may not consult with the Mentor or other faculty members. The Committee Chair and student schedule a time for the examination. The Chair also specifies the time at which written material (research proposal) is to be turned in to the Qualifying Examination Committee.

Oral component. The oral component of the Qualifying Examination will focus on the written document, but student should be able to demonstrate a comprehensive appreciation of Physiology. The Qualifying Examination Committee shall meet at the call of the Chair within two (2) weeks after the completion of the written section at which time the student shall be examined orally. At the end of the oral examination, the student shall be evaluated on the basis of his/her performance on both the oral and written sections, and the Committee shall take action as outlined below.

Voting procedures. Each member of the Qualifying Examination Committee, including the Chair, is entitled to one vote. The mentor, participating in the first portion of the discussion, leaves the room so that other committee members can engage in a discussion without the mentor. Finally, the mentor returns to the room and casts a ballot. For a committee member's vote to be counted, s/he must have participated in the entire exam and his/her vote must be cast in person. To reach a decision on any of the motions listed below, more than one-half of the committee members present must approve the motion. The vote shall be by ballot. Motions will be for (a) approval without reservations, (b) approval with Honors (unanimous decision), (c) approval pending completion of recommendation(s), (d) failure, or (e) delay final action for no more than thirty (30) days for further examination or in order to take other action deemed appropriate by the Qualifying Examination Committee. Further examination, may be either written, oral, or both, and may cover all or selected areas. Should the Committee delay decision for re-examination or other appropriate action, final decision to approve or disapprove under this section rests with the Qualifying Examination Committee. If none of the above motions receive more than one half of the Committee's votes, the student is failed by the Qualifying Examination Committee.

Students are referred to the Student Handbook for additional policies regarding the Qualifying Examination.