

**GUIDELINES FOR THE 1st COMMITTEE MEETING (Exam IIa)
& Ph.D. DISSERTATION RESEARCH APPROVAL (Exam IIb)**

**DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY & MOLECULAR GENETICS
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

EXAM IIa

PURPOSE

The purpose is to establish a Dissertation Committee and introduce the Committee to the student early in the education process. Since this step occurs in the Fall of the 3rd year, preliminary data are not the driving force for this meeting.

PROCESS

The format is for the student to submit to his/her committee the Specific Aims page (1 page) summary of the overall research plan 1 week prior to the committee meeting. The student will give a maximum 15-20 min. research conference presentation on the SA for their proposed research to the department; two or three students will present on the same day. The DGS will set the date for the departmental presentation in October of Year 3 and the student is responsible for organizing the committee to meet within 1 month (before or after) the presentation. Exam IIa must be held no later than six months after passing the PhD Qualifying Exam. Completion of Exam IIa will be documented by submission of a committee meeting report to the DGS for placement in the student's file. The report must be completed by the student and mentor, and signed by the committee members. Timely completion of Exam IIa is required to remain in good standing in Ph.D. candidacy.

The committee meeting will consist of a question and answer period in which committee members will probe the student's understanding of the literature and research project. The dissertation mentor should coordinate the process but allow the student to discuss the research. The meeting is expected to result in a research plan for Exam IIb Dissertation committee.

Exam IIa Presentation Format

The student will work closely with her/his mentor to prepare a 15 min. research conference composed of the following sections

- I. Introduction
 - Background & Significance of the project.
 - Preliminary data from the lab and/or student may be presented.
- II. Statement of Hypothesis and Specific Aims
- III. Experimental Design for each Aim
 - Preliminary data to support an Aim may be presented (if not presented in the introduction)
- IV. Timeline
 - Prioritization of experiments/key preliminary data to be generated in the next 6 months

It is expected that the student will apply the knowledge gained from journal club, seminar, and Exam I to prepare the Specific Aims page and departmental presentation.

EXAM IIb

PURPOSE

The purpose is twofold: 1) to engage the Dissertation Committee early in the process, and 2) to strengthen the writing skills of the student and to focus the student on his/her research goals. It is highly encouraged that the student submit the written proposal to an external agency for funding.

PROCESS

The student will submit a pre-doctoral fellowship proposal to his/her committee for approval. The committee will evaluate the proposal based on grantsmanship and research. Successful completion of Exam IIb will be documented by submission of copy of the approved proposal. An approved proposal is one signed by each committee member. Exam IIb must be completed within 4 months of passing Exam IIa (March 1 of Year 3 deadline). This will provide time to submit to national agencies (NIH and AHA) that have April and July deadlines. Approval of the written proposal is required to remain in good standing in Ph.D. candidacy.

REPORTING

The Dissertation Committee is responsible for monitoring the student's research and professional development progress. The Dissertation mentor will submit to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) the Committee Meeting Report form containing a written report summarizing the committee meeting and expected outcomes for the student. The report must be accompanied by the completed Thesis/Dissertation Advisory Committee Appointment form signed by the Dissertation committee.

In the event that the written proposal is inadequate or there are significant deficiencies identified during the presentation and question and answer session of the meeting, it will be at the discretion of the Dissertation committee to formulate a remediation plan or to recommend to GEC and the Chair of the Department that a student be terminated from the program for failure to make progress, or be given the option of leaving the program with an MS degree. In the event of the decision for remediation, the plan must be detailed in the Committee Meeting Report. It is at the discretion of the committee to determine the required time for the remediation, but a second meeting must be held within 6 months to monitor progress. Lack of progress during the remediation period due to insufficient effort or inadequate scientific aptitude on the part of the student may constitute grounds for cancellation of stipend support or termination from the Program.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

The student and mentor will select a national agency most appropriate for submission of a fellowship application for the research. The fellowship guidelines must require a minimum of 6 pages containing Specific Aims and Research Strategy sections. The student is expected to follow the guidelines provided by the agency for organization of the proposal. Typically, 0.5 inch margins, Arial 11 point font, standard single-spacing will be used. In addition, the student must submit a curriculum vitae, personal statement, and research goals for year 1 as part as of Exam II. Again, guidelines provided by the funding agency should be followed and this process should be closely monitored by the mentor.

Revised July 2015

Approved by the Graduate Executive Committee
Approved by BMG Faculty

Date: 04-09-15
Date: 08-04-15