

Date:

Chair  
Committee on Graduate Affairs  
Department of Biology

RE: QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

Dear CGA,

I have attached 3 proposal abstracts for committee review as part of the preliminary process for the qualifying examination preparation. My suggested committee composition is listed below. I understand a CGA representative will be assigned to my committee upon CGA approval. I list below one major area of concentration and two minors.

My primary area of research focuses on \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Minors: \_\_\_\_\_ Minor: \_\_\_\_\_

My proposed committee consists of:

Dr. Roy Ritzmann, Professor, Department of Biology

Dr. Mark Willis, Professor and Chairman, Department of Biology

Dr. Jessica Fox, Assistant Professor, Biology

Dr. Hillel Chiel, Professor, Academic Advisor

(area of expertise)

Sincerely,

John/Jane Doe

Student I.D. Number

**Department of Biology  
Ph.D. Candidacy Research Proposal  
Abstract Form**

The purpose of this form is to standardize abstracts for topics of a research proposal to be submitted to the Biology Graduate Affairs Committee for approval. The abstract must contain a single-sentence description of the research problem and an overview of the research approach that will be taken to address the problem. Include no more than three key references.

**Candidate Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current research Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Abstract Title:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Abstract (250 word limit)**

**References (no more than 3)**

## Preparing for the Qualifying Examination

1. Meet with faculty advisor and establish proposed committee
2. Submit committee for approval to the Chair of Committee on Graduate Affairs via email along with 3 abstracts.
3. Once committee is approved and CGA member assigned, schedule accordingly. The use of whenisgood , google calendars enable you to provide extended timelines. Faculty schedules vary so allow enough options when organizing your initial meeting.
4. Schedule your initial meeting. Reserve Clapp 405 or seek department secretary advice for scheduling.
5. The approved committee will cover the scope of your examination. Take notes at the meeting. For clarity, send one email to all committee members present and reiterate the focus of the exam as stated in the meeting per your understanding. (i.e., Prof. will focus on\_\_\_\_, Prof. will ask questions, etc.)
6. When you are prepared, schedule your proposal seminar. 1) Reserve the room, secretary will make the flier and submit to faculty.
7. Schedule your examination. Obtain "Advancement to Candidacy" form and Warrant for Qualifying Examination form (2 copies) originally signed.

**WARRANT FOR QUALIFYING EXAMINATION**  
**Department of Biology**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Comprehensive Examination**

Major Field: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Areas: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Title of Research Proposal: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Oral Examination Results\***

Comprehensive  
Examination  
Pass

Fail

Defense of Proposal  
Pass

Fail

Signature of  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Committee Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chair of Examining Committee**

\*Two or more failure votes constitute failure on a portion of the exam.

## **QUALIFYING EXAMINATION**

The Qualifying Examination is a degree requirement which determines whether a student has acquired adequate knowledge in the field and can convey that knowledge. A PhD student is required to take the Qualifying Examination and successfully pass in order to Advance to Candidacy. Advancement to Candidacy allows the student to enter the dissertation research phase of the degree program and occurs after all coursework and examination requirements are satisfied.

The oral examination is composed of two parts: a defense of the research proposal and a comprehensive examination covering the three areas of biology.

## **QUALIFYING EXAMINATION PREPARATION**

The PhD candidate must submit an email to the Chair, Graduate Affairs Committee, Department of Biology containing the following information:

- 1) List of four faculty nominations with brief descriptions of their relevant expertise (3 faculty plus the Academic Advisor)
- 2) Primary area of concentration
- 3) Two Minor areas of concentration
- 4) 3 Abstracts of potential grant proposals as the written component of the qualifying examination (submitted on the official Abstract Proposal form). The abstracts should be no more than 250 words, pose a hypothesis and a few (2-3 specific aims to test your hypothesis) Include no more than 3 references (see sample attached). These abstracts must past review of the Committee on Graduate Affairs before you decide which one you should write into a proposal.

## **ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY**

Advancement to candidacy in a PhD program should occur within a maximum of 6 years post-matriculation with a bachelor's degree (no later than at the completion of 36 semester hours of graduate study) and 4 years post-matriculation with a master's degree (no later than at the completion of 18 semester hours of graduate study). Students may continue in pre-candidacy status beyond this time by means of a petition to the Biology Department Committee on Graduate Affairs (CGA) and final approval by the School of Graduate Studies based on evidence of student progress toward the degree.