**Student Mentor Groups: November 2, 2017**

**Topic: Preparing for Qualifying Exams**

**Check-in:**

* Are there any questions or concerns?
* Start thinking about set-up of third rotations. It’s better to do this now because the end of the semester gets hectic with all of the holidays. You definitely want to try to have your rotation set up before the end of this semester.
* The next GSO meeting is Nov. 3rd (tomorrow) in **R1-106** (conference room in Founder’s Gallery between ARB and Sun Terrace). Free pizza and news!

**“**The qualifying examination consists of a written and an oral component. The written component is an NIH-type predoctoral fellowship proposal (F31 Research Training Plan) describing the student's proposed dissertation research project. The oral component consists of an examination of the student's general knowledge in his or her chosen area of research as defined by the written proposal, conducted by and Examination Committee, consisting of the Supervisory Committee plus an Advanced Concentration Director.” –IDP Handbook

**Guide to Qualifying Exams**

***Things to consider: Your concentration, committee, and PI are all variables that will give each student a unique experience during the exam. Seek insight from students in your lab, and students with common committee members.***

1. Your exam should be scheduled for the fall semester of third year, most advanced course work should be completed.
   * Must be scheduled by Sept. 1
   * Must be completed by Nov. 1
   * You will not be able to register for Spring classes if you miss the deadline

(all exceptions must be first approved by the Dr. Rowe)

* + Copies of written proposal are due to committee members and concentration director(s) 10 business days before the exam
  + The Graduate Administrator for your concentration should be noted of scheduling details and receive a copy of written proposal for records at least 10 business days prior to exam
  + The student should schedule 2.5 hours (minimum) for the oral examination
  + Written proposal format and guideline can be found in IDP handbook page 17
  + Oral examination guidelines can be found in IDP handbook page 18
  + Check with your concentration directors to see if there are any other additional requirements for your specific concentration.

1. Preparation for the Qualifying Exam
   * Begin reading and collecting literature on your project as soon as you join a lab
   * Establish relationships with your committee members
   * Prior to the Qualifying Exam it is suggested that you read at least the past two years of publications from each of your committee members. This will help to give you an idea of the questions your committee members might ask.
   * Take the **grant writing** course the summer before your exam
   * It is suggested that you begin writing your written proposal well before your qualifying exam date.
   * Have your PI review your grant & presentation before presenting it to your committee
   * Take some time off from the bench to focus on preparing your presentation and filling gaps in your current knowledge
   * Be careful putting too much on a slide! You are responsible for every word in the figure/image even it is not your own
   * **Practice your presentation** in front of lab mates (who may be more familiar with your project) and post-qual IDP students, from inside and outside your concentration
   * Have people ask you questions related both to your specific project, and your entire field of study
   * DO NOT MAKE UP ANSWERS, admit that you do not know, you will reach this point
   * ***BREATHE!*** Take a minute to collect yourself and your thoughts before immediately giving an answer. Ask to repeat/rephrase a question if needed. Draw things out on the whiteboard. (These things are not only helpful but also take more time out of the exam)
2. Examination Committee
   * Supervisory committee must all be present
   * Committee chair (and Co-Chair, when applicable) and external member must be physically present
     1. Other members can attend virtually per graduate school policy
   * Supervisory committee will appoint an examination chairperson
     1. This cannot be the student’s mentor
     2. Their duty is to moderate the exam and evaluation
   * A concentration director, or designated representative, must be present
     1. They will participate in all events of the examination including evaluation
   * The mentor may ask questions but should not speak on the student’s behalf
3. Outcomes of the Exam
   * At the end of the exam you will be asked to leave the room so the committee can deliberate on your performance
   * Pass: student is admitted to candidacy for Ph.D.
   * Conditional Pass: the student does not have to retake the oral examination, but there is an additional work that must be done in order to pass (i.e. additional coursework, re-write written proposal, etc.)
   * Fail with re-examination: the student failed the exam but has the option to retake the oral exam (exam must be done in a different semester)
   * Fail: the student does not move forward as Ph.D. track, no option to retake the qualifying exam
     1. This outcome has never happened on a student’s first attempt
     2. M.S. degree may be suggested
4. Admission to Candidacy
   * The admission to candidacy form must be prepared by the graduate administrator assigned to your concentration several days before the exam
   * Your mentor and all supervisory members must complete the form after oral examination
   * It will be filed in your records once the Office of Graduate Education and Graduate School sign off on it

**TAKE HOME: First year students should not be stressing about the details of qualifying exam procedure, the IDP handbook provides all this information. At this point they should be informed of qualifying exam basics, and how to keep themselves organized and prepared for the future.**