

PRELIMINARY EXAM INSTRUCTIONS

The Ph.D.-seeking student is expected to attempt and pass the oral/preliminary exam **WITHIN** two years of entering the program (or 2 years after the qualifying exam for Bioinformatics students only), usually by the end of the second year (or third year for Bioinformatics students) at UIC.

Format

The preliminary exam format will closely follow that of the NIH fellowship grant application:

- Specific aims (firm 1 page limit)
- Significance (~1 page)
- Innovation (~1/2 page)
- Approach (~4.5 pages)

The student is expected to provide some preliminary results and, more importantly, outline his/her research plan. This document is limited to 7 pages (excluding references), and *the student must provide the Preliminary Exam Committee with copies of the research proposal at least one week prior to the actual preliminary exam.*

Committee Members/Committee Recommendation Form

The [Committee Recommendation Form](#) must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and then the Graduate College for approval **at least 3 weeks prior to** the preliminary exam.

The preliminary exam committee consists of at least 5 people. Specific requirements for the committee include:

- at least two core BioE faculty (a list will be posted on our website)
- at least one faculty must come from outside of the UIC Bioengineering Department
- at least three faculty must be Graduate Faculty with full membership
- at least two faculty must be tenured
- chairperson of the committee must have full membership (not necessarily tenured)
- Check the Graduate College [website](#) for the membership status of individual faculty
- For any faculty without membership in the Graduate Faculty, a CV will need to be included with the Committee Recommendation Form.

Preferably, the preliminary exam committee will remain the same and become the final thesis committee.

Program code for the Bioengineering program is *20FS0408PHD*.

Program code for the Bioinformatics program is *20FS1909PHD*.

Changes to the committee may be requested before the exam occurs using the [Request for Change in Thesis Title/Committee Member\(s\) Form](#).

Registration Requirements

- Student must be registered **for credit** the term when they take the preliminary exam. Students must register for the summer term if taking the preliminary exam during that term.

- Students must be in good academic standing.
- Following the preliminary exam, students must register each semester (excluding summer) until successfully defending the dissertation.

The preliminary exam must be one year prior to the dissertation defense. Students who plan to defend their dissertation before a year has elapsed must submit a *Graduate Student Petition* requesting an exemption from the one-year minimum requirement.

Announcement

The preliminary exam must be open to the academic community of the university. *Students are responsible for e-mailing the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) at least one week prior to the exam date with the announcement (date, time, location, advisor) and abstract.* The exam announcement will be distributed to the students and faculty one week prior to the presentation date. The first portion of presentation of a preliminary exam is open to the general public. The second-half of discussion/questioning/critique is between the student and committee members only.

Examination Report Form

After the Graduate College approves your Committee Recommendation Form they will send the Examination Report Form and a cover letter to the department. The GPC will e-mail you that it is ready to be picked up from the Bioengineering office. It is the student's responsibility to notify each committee member of the request to serve as a member of the committee.

The Examination Report Form must note the date of the preliminary exam and be signed by each member of the committee with the grade of "pass" or "fail" marked. A candidate cannot be passed if more than one vote of "fail" is reported. If the result was "pass with conditions," the exact conditions and time-frame to complete the conditions must be specified and the chairperson must notify the Graduate College **in writing** as soon as the conditions have been completed.

The completed Examination Report Form needs to be submitted to the GPC as soon as possible so it can be submitted to the Graduate College within two business days following the examination.

PRELIMINARY EXAM TIMELINE

Prior to Preliminary Exam

At least two months prior to exam
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult with research advisor regarding anticipated date of prelim and committee composition• Confirm registration in coursework and/or thesis research for semester of prelim• Contact potential committee members regarding availability• Coordinate with committee members for date/time when all members are available
At least three weeks prior to exam
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the Committee Recommendation Form and submit to GPC• Reserve a room (contact the GPC when requesting a BioE classroom)
One week prior to exam
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send preliminary exam announcement to the GPC with date, time, location, advisor and abstract• Provide copies of the research proposal to each member of the committee• Pick up the Examination Report Form from the GPC once you are notified that it is ready

Following the Preliminary Exam

Immediately
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm that every committee member has signed the Examination Report Form and marked their grade (“Pass” or “Fail”) on the form• Make sure the chairperson indicates the Examination Date and any conditions that may have been made by the committee• Submit the White and Pink copies of the form to the Graduate Program Coordinator within two business days of the exam
Few weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduate College will confirm passing of prelim and send doctoral candidacy letter to the Bioengineering department• Receive notification from the GPC regarding availability of candidacy letter and order form for PhD Candidate business cards (offered by the COE)
Registration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Register for each semester (excluding summer unless planning to defend summer term) after passing prelim until successfully defending the dissertation.• Dissertation defense should be at least a year after the prelim. Otherwise, a petition will need to be submitted to the Graduate College.• If all coursework and research hours are complete and no assistantship/fellowship/tuition waiver is applied then students can petition for zero hour registration Option A or B using a Graduate Student Petition