

Biophysics Program – Qualifying Exam Regulations

Reading Committee

During your first year, the Program Director serves as your advisor. You should arrange a meeting with the Director when you arrive, in order to discuss course and research rotation selections. At the end of the first year, another meeting with the Director is required in order to assess progress and discuss choice of dissertation laboratory. You are encouraged to meet more frequently as you deem necessary to further discuss course and research choices.

Once you have chosen a research advisor and have begun your thesis-related research, you are required to select a Reading Committee. You are required to have a Reading Committee in place no later than Fall quarter of your 3rd year in the Program. You will also need to complete the "DOCTORAL DISSERTATION READING COMMITTEE FORM", the "APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY FOR DOCTORAL DEGREE" form, and return it to the program office. Please contact or see Kathleen Guan to obtain these forms.

Choice of the members of this Committee is very important. The individuals you select will serve as an advising and consultative group for the duration of your graduate studies. They will evaluate your dissertation proposal and constitute the core of your thesis defense committee. You should consult with your research advisor on the selection of your Reading Committee. Besides your Principal Advisor (the Professor with whom you are doing your thesis-related research and who will serve as Chairperson on your Committee), the Committee should consist of at least two other faculty members whose areas of research interest and expertise overlaps with your proposed research topic.

If you choose to have a committee member who is not a member of the Stanford Academic Council, you must complete a "Petition for Doctoral Committee Member" form and return it to the Program Office. If, at any time, you change your advisor or a member of your Reading Committee, please complete a "Change of Advisor or Reading Committee Member" form and return it to the Program Office. If your Advisor is not a part of Biophysics, you will need to have a Biophysics faculty as your co-advisor on your Committee.

Qualifying Exam

You are required to arrange a meeting of your Reading Committee to present to them your proposed thesis related research project (Dissertation Proposal) by the end of Fall quarter of your 3rd year. In anticipation of this meeting, you should prepare an approximately 10 page summary of your proposed research and/or any progress you have made at that time. The precise format (e.g. inclusion of a timeline, methods section, etc.) is flexible and naturally can conform to the particular style of papers or proposals coming from your thesis lab. The main goal of the written portion is to briefly summarize your progress so far and carefully plan out your future thesis research plans. It is our intent that this process will be useful in crystallizing a research plan, on which your committee can give feedback and advice.

At the meeting, you should be prepared to make a 30-45 minute presentation of your research in which you discuss your results to date and propose further experiments. Audio-visual aids are not required, but may be useful if available. Following this meeting, the Chairperson of your Reading Committee must communicate to the Program Office in writing whether or not your proposal was approved by the Committee. This will serve as your qualifying exam. After this meeting, you must arrange a meeting with your Committee once a year on your academia progress, and twice a year past your 5th year.