

BME Qualifying Exam Mutual Expectations Document

The purpose of this document is to align expectations between the graduate student and qualifying exam committee. Any question or concern that arises may be directed to either the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies or Director of Graduate Training.

Policies:

- Students must be in good academic standing (i.e., minimum 3.0 GPA; no more than two 'I's; no 'F's or 'U's) to complete the written and oral exam.
- Students may discuss the scope of the project and relevant literature with an advisor and/or colleague.
- Students may not share the written exam with an advisor and/or colleague or receive verbal/written comments in advance of evaluation by the qualifying exam committee.
- If a student is submitting a grant and requires feedback and guidance from his/her advisor in advance of the qualifying exam, he/she may submit the individually-prepared written exam to gradstudies@bme.gatech.edu prior to receiving feedback on the document.
- Students may meet with members of the qualifying exam committee in advance of the exam; committee members may *not* reveal specific exam questions in advance of the oral portion of the exam.
- Advisors should attend the oral portion of the exam as an observer to ensure that the student receives a fair examination.

Timeline:

- Oral and written portions of the exam must be completed between August 1 and November 1 of the student's second year.
- The committee chair must receive the written portion of the exam at least three weeks prior to the scheduled oral exam.
- In the event that the written portion is not received by the required time, the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies or Director of Graduate Training must be notified and the exam must be rescheduled.
- Students who fail to complete the written and oral portion of the exam by November 1 will be placed on academic probation, ineligible for program support funds, and forfeit financial support. Sanctions will be lifted when the exam is completed.

Exam Format:

- The exam should not exceed 4-pages and should include the following sections:
 - Project Summary/Abstract
 - Specific Aims (2-3)
 - Research Strategy:
 - Significance
 - Approach (1 specific aim in detail)
 - Bibliography and References Cited (not included in 4-page limit)
- The following formatting rules apply:
 - Font must be 11 points or larger.
 - Type density must be no more than 15 characters per linear inch.
 - Line spacing must be no more than six lines per vertical inch
 - Arial, Georgia, Helvetica, and Patino Linotype recommended to meet above requirements.
 - Figures must be readable and included in page limit.
 - Paper size must be 8 1/2" x 11".

- Margins must be at least one-half inch (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages.
- No headers or footers.
- Single-column page format recommended for ease of reading.
- Four pages total limit (not including citations).
- The exam contains an oral portion (60-90 min) that addresses fundamental engineering and bioscience concepts relevant to the student's research, as outlined in the written exam.

Assessment:

- Committee members will assess both the written and oral portion of the exam.
- Written exams are pass/fail and serve to narrow the scope of questioning for the oral exam.
- Only oral exams are assessed using the milestone rubric form. Written exams have no separate rubric and are evaluated as pass/fail on the Decision Form.
- Results for written and oral portions are compiled by the chair, who will facilitate a *separate* pass/fail vote for the written and oral portion of the exam.
- Votes may be open, but must be a secret ballot if requested by any committee member. The vote is binding and voting must take place prior to the exam committee's adjournment.
 - PASS:
 - If the vote is 3/0 or 2/1 in favor, the student passes that portion of the exam.
 - The committee may make conditions (required within the following academic term, or next term of course offering) with the pass, and those must be recorded on the Qualifying Exam Decision Form completed by the chair.
 - FAIL:
 - If the vote is 1/2 or 0/3 and conducted for the first time, the student must retake the exam.
 - The committee may fail either the written or oral portion, or both written and oral portions.
 - The student is required to retake only the portion with a fail decision.
 - RETAKE:
 - A student may retake the written and oral exam only once.
 - At the time of the retake, the student must be in good academic standing.
 - Oral exam retakes should be scheduled as early as possible contingent upon readiness of the student and meeting any conditions, not to exceed 3 months.
 - Written exam retakes should be submitted as early as possible, not to exceed 1 month.
 - A student must pass both the written and oral portion of the exam.
 - If the committee votes to fail on either the written or oral exam retake, the student may elect to complete a terminal thesis-based Master's degree or be withdrawn from the program.

Notification:

- The chair of the qualifying exam committee must complete the Qualifying Exam Decision Form and collect Milestones Evaluation Forms from each committee member prior to adjournment.
- The chair should deliver evaluations to the BME Academic Office.
- Students and faculty advisors will receive the results of the qualifying exam via an electronic copy of the decision form, rubrics, and letter from the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies.
- Students may meet with their exam committee chairs to debrief the exam.
- Exam committee members may provide comments on the written exam, but this is not required.
- A student who does not pass will meet with the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, exam committee members, and thesis advisor to discuss the results and make appropriate plans for next steps.