

Changes to the EPS PhD Qualifying Exam Procedure

Written Exam Component

- All continuing students (effectively Y2 and Y3) have the option of 1 or 2 proposals.
 - Student and Faculty Advisor discuss the preferred number of proposals.
 - If 2 proposals are chosen, they should be “sufficiently different” (as before).
 - There can be tactical and/or practical reasons for doing 2 proposals (e.g., submission to a funding agency; broader range of questions on the Oral Exam; student has already invested considerable time and energy on a second proposal).
- New (Y1) and future students are required to submit 1 proposal.
- Proposal structure is as before, NSF or NASA style, 10-15 pages in length.
 - Students should consult with the Qualifying Exam Committee Chair (at the beginning of the proposal writing process) to discuss specific proposal requirements, including the desired format.
- As before, there is an initial review by the Faculty Advisor, followed by a preliminary review by the Exam Committee (minus the Faculty Advisor), followed by up to 2 formal reviews by the full Exam Committee. Faculty have up to 2 weeks to provide feedback.

Oral Exam Component

- The 3-hour oral qualifying exam is unchanged.
- Students prepare 1 short (15-20 minute) presentation that summarizes the main ideas and methodology of their proposal(s).
- Students should expect a rigorous and comprehensive examination on the proposal topic(s) and the chosen fields in general.

End of Year 1 Progress Meeting

- This is a new element, that requires all Y1 students to meet with their Faculty Advisor and two additional Faculty Members in Spring of Year 1.
 - Ideally, the two additional Faculty Members will be the Chair and a member of the Exam Committee.
 - The Y1 Progress Meeting is required of all current and future Y1 students. This includes both MS and PhD students.
 - The meeting length is ~60 to 90 minutes.
 - The last ~15 minutes of the Progress Meeting does not include the Faculty Advisor.
- The intent is to assess research progress at the end of Year 1, assess a proposal abstract, and to potentially identify and ameliorate any gross deficiencies.
 - The Progress Meeting will focus on the assessment of the submitted proposal abstract, e.g., is it appropriate? Should changes be made before submission to the 5-person PhD Exam Committee (3-person MS Committee)?
 - Deficiencies may include fundamental knowledge, methodologies, familiarity with prior work in the field, etc.
 - Plans to remedy these deficiencies may include a list of suggested papers to read and study, recommendation that a specific course be taken, additional training on a lab or numerical methods technique, etc.
 - This Progress Meeting will also facilitate the establishment of the student’s 5-member PhD Qualifying Exam Committee (or 3-member MS Committee) and submission of the proposal abstract(s) by Fall of Y2 (at which point they are formally assessed by the Exam Committee, as before).
- The minimum written deliverable in advance of the progress meeting is a completed proposal abstract.
 - Student submits the abstract to the 3 Faculty Members at least 1 week prior to the progress meeting.
 - Student, in consultation with Faculty Advisor, is responsible for choosing the two additional members, as well as scheduling the Progress Meeting.