



**SECOND-YEAR STUDENT
ADVISING MEETING:
Candidacy Exam Edition**

April 7, 2021

GSBS Response to Pandemic: Degree Milestones Deadlines

Deadlines for degree milestones are extended by one semester for all current students, including:

Submit Petition for PhD Candidacy

~~summer term year 2~~ → **End of fall term year 3!**

Take the Candidacy Exam

~~fall term year 3~~ → **End of spring term year 3!**

Petitioning for Candidacy:

Submit Petition for PhD Candidacy Form to GSBS for approval by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) by December 17.

The petition includes:

- ① Approval of Advisory Committee
- ② Specific aims page for exam proposal
- ③ Proposed Exam Committee

ASC will review and approve, usually with no changes.

Petitioning for Candidacy:



The Chair of your Exam Committee must be from your Program



If you have an approved second area of concentration, one member of the Exam Committee must be a member of that program



TIMELINE FOR CURRENT SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS

Let's see where you
should be headed!

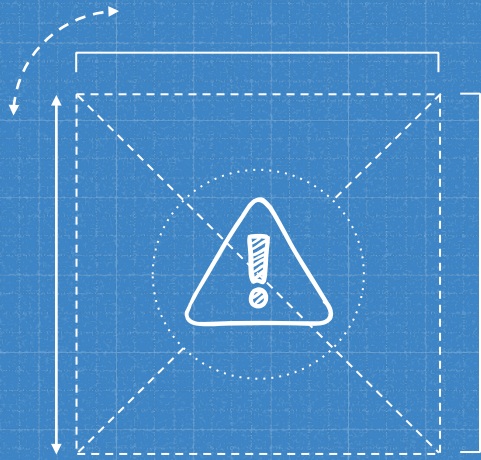
What to do this summer:

Talk with your Program Director to confirm specifics about your program's exam format.

Decide on your exam topic (usually your dissertation project) and begin writing specific aims.

Talk to your advisor - when should you take the exam?

Schedule a meeting with your committee if you haven't had one in a while.



It's important to meet with your committee!

Make sure to discuss your timeline for taking the candidacy exam with your committee. They can tell you whether you're ready for the exam or not.

If they decide you're not ready, your committee chair (advisor) can propose an extension for you.

What to finish by December:

Select Exam Committee members and fill out petition for candidacy.

Schedule an exam date when your Exam Committee members are available.

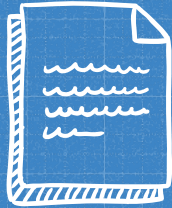
Submit PhD candidacy petition by December 17!

Meet with your Advisory Committee for approval to submit your petition, including specific aims.

Talk with your advisor if you need changes in your work schedule while you're preparing for the exam

Take the exam by May 6!

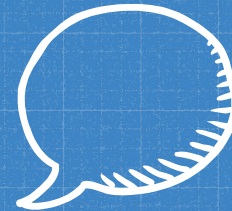
After you get ASC approval:



Write a proposal
in the NIH format
of 6+1.



Send the proposal to
the exam committee
and GSBS two weeks
before exam





Take your exam!
You'll give a
presentation then
answer questions
from your exam
committee.

**Some program formats and policies
vary, check with your representative.**

Getting feedback from others:

Students may seek feedback on the exam proposal from others, such as peers and faculty, including the advisor. Just keep in mind:

 Final proposal must be the original work of the student

 Text must be composed entirely of the student's writing and not that of any other person

 Others have the option of declining to give you feedback, even your advisor

From GSBS Candidacy Exam Guidelines:

The proposal should not be a simple recapitulation of a section from the advisor's research grant.

Rather,

it should demonstrate the student's ability to think independently and develop all aspects of a research project. The student will be expected to expand upon the current project to include the student's own original ideas that go beyond those of the mentor.

The final research proposal must be the original work of the student. The text must be composed entirely of the student's writing and not that of any other person.

Prepare for the originality review:

Student Attestation

When you submit your petition for the candidacy exam, you will be required to attest that the exam proposal you submit will be written entirely in your own words.

Advisor Review

The final proposal that you submit to your committee ant to the GSBS (2 weeks before the exam) will be sent to your advisor for review of its originality.

Tips on Exam Committees

- Discuss member selections with your advisor
- Pick an experienced chairperson and meet with them
- Include experts on the topic of your proposal
- Hand in your proposal on time
- Remind your committee of time/location two days before
- If exam is online, check connectivity with committee members

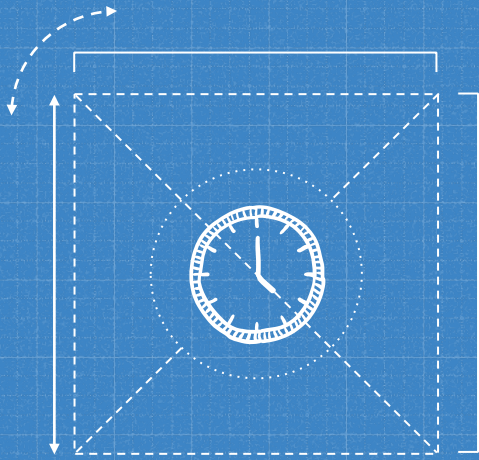
Tips on exam preparation

Be ready to:

- Critique and defend your own proposal
- Discuss pitfalls and alternative strategies
- Provide critical interpretation of potential data
- Describe the basis for methodology
- Describe recent publications on the subject

Do a mock exam (or two...or three!)

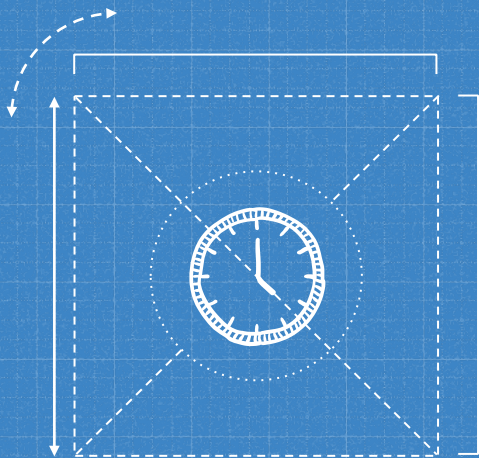
- Don't use just friends
- Find students and postdocs from labs of your committee members



EXAM DAY?!

All exam committee members must be present.

If anyone cannot attend the exam, any GSBS faculty member may substitute. Just let Dr. Mattox know ASAP!



EXAM DAY?!

Be confident!

This is your research. You know your project best.



Remain calm!

Your committee is there to help you grow as a scientist.

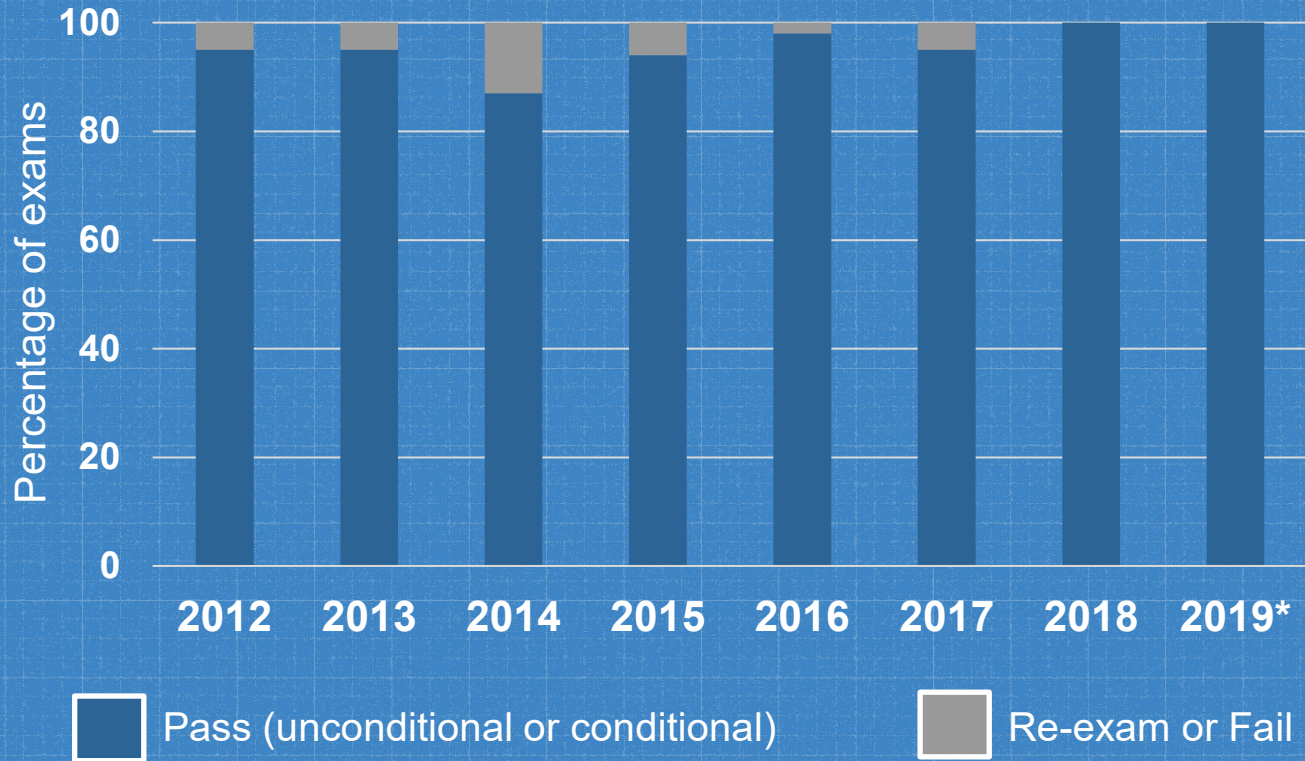


Remember that a conditional pass is

a pass !



Candidacy exam pass rate (initial attempt)



<u>Program</u>	<u>Candidacy Exam Rep</u>	<u>Email</u>
Biochemistry and Cell Biology	Shane Cunha	shane.r.cunha@th.tmc.edu
Cancer Biology	Menashe Bar-El	mbareli@mdanderson.org
Genetics and Epigenetics	Pierre McCre	pdmccrea@mdanderson.org
Immunology	Pamela Wenzel	pamela.l.wenzel@th.tmc.edu
Medical Physics	Richard Wendt	rwendt@mdanderson.org
Microbiology and Infectious Diseases	Nayun Kim	nayun.kim@th.tmc.edu
Neuroscience	John O'Brien (Qingchun Tong, back-up)	john.obrien@th.tmc.edu; qingchun.tong@th.tmc.edu
Quantitative Sciences	Jeffrey Chang	jeffrey.t.chang@th.tmc.edu
Therapeutics and Pharmacology	William Plunkett	wplunkett@mdanderson.org

Important deadlines



December 17, 2021: Submit petition for PhD candidacy

May 6, 2022: Complete the candidacy exam

Remember! If your advisory committee thinks you need more time to prepare, your advisor may ask for an extension on your behalf.