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 $\rightarrow$ End of fall term year 3!

Take the Candidacy Exam
fall term year 3 $\rightarrow$ 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:

- ✔ **Approval of Advisory Committee**
- ✔ **Specific aims page for exam proposal**
- ✔ **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.
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!

What to finish by December:
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
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!
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 \underline{a pass}!
Candidacy exam pass rate (initial attempt)

- Pass (unconditional or conditional)
- Re-exam or Fail

Percentage of exams

- 2012
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016
- 2017
- 2018
- 2019*
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<td>Shane Cunha</td>
<td><a href="mailto:shane.r.cunha@uth.tmc.edu">shane.r.cunha@uth.tmc.edu</a></td>
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<td>Neuroscience</td>
<td>John O'Brien (Qingchun Tong, back-up)</td>
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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.