

## BIOPHYSICS PRELIMINARY QUALIFYING EXAM (PQE) Committee

### Instructions for Committee Chair

#### The role of the PQE Committee Chair includes the following:

##### **BEFORE THE PQE DATE:**

- **Read/ review the student's PQE Proposal at least one week prior to the PQE date.** *Students are required to submit the PQE proposal to the PQE Chair at least 2 weeks prior to the exam date.*
- **Inform the student and Biophysics Program Administrator with approval (or disapproval) to proceed to the oral exam at least one week prior to the scheduled exam date.** *The review process is to catch any fatal flaws in the proposal prior to the exam. If approved, the proposal will then be sent to the other PQE Committee members, and the exam will take place as scheduled.*

##### **DURING THE PQE ORAL EXAM:**

- **At the start of the PQE Oral Exam, send the student out of the room.** *If the PQE is on Zoom, receive host role and place the student in the Waiting Room.*
- **With student out of the room, confer with the other PQE Examiners regarding their thoughts on the written PQE proposal.**
- **Agree upon a questioning procedure for the PQE committee members.** *It is typical to allow students to get at least a few slides into their presentation before questions begin. After that, questioning can take place throughout the student's presentation, and the student might not get to every slide.*
- **Bring the student back into the room to begin their PQE proposal presentation.** *If the PQE is on Zoom, admit the student from the Waiting Room.*
- **Once the PQE Committee feels satisfied that they have finished questioning the student on the PQE proposal, send the student out of the room again.** *If the PQE is on Zoom, place the student back in the Waiting Room.*
- **Decide on a result for the PQE proposal with the other Examiners.** Possible results are: **Clear Pass** -no further work on the PQE is required/ student passes to PhD candidacy and can begin full-time dissertation research; **Conditional Pass** -the committee feels the student would benefit from additional preparation- this may include rewriting defined portions of the proposal and/or re-taking the oral exam and/or taking additional coursework to compensate for deficiencies. The condition(s) should be given to the student at the end of the exam. The plan should be noted in the PQE evaluation form, along with the expected time frame for when the condition will need to be met. It may be helpful for the PQE Chair and student to communicate by email shortly after the exam in order to make sure that the terms of the condition are clear. A condition that consists of a write-up typically has a 30-day deadline. The student will receive a "pass" once this conditional work is completed to the satisfaction of the exam committee. If it is not completed satisfactorily, the student will receive a Fail and be asked to repeat the entire exam; or **Fail** -serious concerns based on the written and oral exam are evident (fatal flaws based on the written proposal alone should have been caught at the initial proposal review stage). In the case of a "Fail", the student may be required to repeat the PQE process. A follow-up meeting with program co-Chairs would determine a set of recommendations to address identified issues, and the student would be given the opportunity to retake the oral exam following completion of recommended work. Only 1 complete retake of the PQE is permitted. *Because of our very high admissions criteria, the PQE is not meant to be a culling process. Most students pass the PQE without qualifications.*
- **Bring the student back into the room to inform the student of the PQE results, including a summary of the overall assessment, strengths and any weaknesses of the written proposal, what went well during the oral exam and areas for improvement, and recommendations for future areas or concerns to which the student should pay attention, and/or allowing each examiner to add their individual comments.** *If the PQE is on Zoom, admit the student from the Waiting Room.*

##### **AFTER THE PQE ORAL EXAM:**

- **Complete the Biophysics PQE Reporting Form, incorporating comments from other examiners, and return to Biophysics Program Administrator.**