

GUIDELINES FOR DISSERTATION COMMITTEES

THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR GENETICS UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

I. Summary of Responsibilities

Committee Roles:

- Oversee and evaluate student's progress in research
- Assist student in timely completion of project
- Assure high quality of dissertation
- Recommend changes in student's status
- Read and evaluate dissertation

Committee Responsibilities:

- Evaluate progression towards degree by participating in annual committee meetings
- Critically and fairly evaluate student progress and make appropriate recommendations for the committee reports
- Provide expertise to assist student with specific approaches and methodology
- Approve transition from bench work to dissertation writing
- Evaluate and provide corrections to final dissertation

Student Administrative Responsibilities:

- Organize annual committee meetings
 - o Schedule 1st committee meeting within 6 months of passing Exam 1
 - o Distribute research proposal / progress reports for committee meetings at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting.
- Schedule dissertation defense date and inform DGS of defense at least two weeks prior to the defense (see section III)
- Complete final revisions of the written dissertation within the semester of the defense and submit to the Graduate School prior to deadlines for final submission of dissertations.
- Apply for degree

Department Responsibilities:

- DGS must submit to the School of Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies the student's pending defense at minimum two weeks prior to the defense.
- Chair must approve the dissertation.

II. Committee Meetings- Timelines and Documentation

By the end of the second year in the Ph.D. program, a Dissertation Committee will be formed which will serve as the Reading Committee and Examining Committee for the student. The Committee will consist of the mentor, three other faculty from the Biochemistry Department (at least three Committee members must be primary faculty in Biochemistry), and one member outside of the Department. The committee's composition must be approved by the Graduate Executive Committee (GEC).

The role of the dissertation committee is to oversee the student's progress in the program, specifically progress towards timely completion of the dissertation research. The committee may offer advice and recommend changes in direction of the research should they feel such changes are necessary for timely completion of a high quality dissertation. Ultimately, it is the committee's responsibility to evaluate student progress in terms of Departmental expectations for the dissertation. Specifically, the dissertation should be an original piece of research of high quality and publishable in a peer reviewed journal.

Each student must meet regularly with his/her Dissertation Committee. There must be at least one formal meeting per year and the first Committee meeting must be held no later than six months after passing the PhD Qualifying Exam (Exam 1). After each meeting, the mentor must complete Part B **Committee Meeting**

Progress Report. The content of this document should summarize committee member comments and contain specific feedback for the student to know the expectations and goals to be accomplished before the next meeting. **The report must be approved by all committee members and student, and the final approved form sent to the Biochemistry Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). An electronic form is sufficient and the approved meeting report should be sent to the DGS within 1 week of the committee meeting.** The completed form is placed in the student's file and serves as a record to indicate progress in graduate research.

The Dissertation Committee is responsible for monitoring the student's research and professional development progress. Ultimately, it is the committee's responsibility to determine whether a student remains in good standing in the program. If deficiencies are identified during a meeting, the *Committee Meeting Progress Report* must contain a remediation plan with the areas of weakness identified and the expectations outlined for the next review period. It is at the discretion of the committee to determine the remediation period and whether more frequent meetings are required. Lack of progress during the remediation period due to insufficient effort or inadequate scientific aptitude on the part of the student may constitute grounds for cancellation of stipend support or termination from the Program. The dissertation committee has the authority to recommend to GEC and the Chair of the Department that a student be terminated from the program for failure to make progress, or be given the option of leaving the program with an MS degree.

When the student and mentor believe work for the dissertation is almost complete, they will call a meeting of the committee to obtain approval and guidance for preparation of the written dissertation. The mentor should submit to the Biochemistry DGS and the Departmental Chair an email with the following information:

Student's full name, Mentor's name and date, and written comment attesting that the student has permission to write his/her dissertation.

When a dissertation defense date has been set, the student must complete the following:

- submit the dissertation to the Dissertation committee members and department Chair at least two weeks prior to the defense date.
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- inform the DGS and seminar director of the scheduled defense date at least two weeks prior to the defense. The DGS must submit an online form to the School of Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies confirming the student's dissertation defense at minimum two weeks prior to the scheduled defense.
- Therefore, it is the student's responsibility to submit to the DGS the following information at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense:

Student's name (as you want to appear on announcements), mentor's name, committee member names, title of dissertation, defense date/time/location.

The student is responsible for making final revisions of the written dissertation within the semester of the defense and prior to Graduate School deadlines for final submission of dissertations. Once the student has submitted the approved dissertation to the School of Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies, he/she has fulfilled all requirements for degree and is eligible to apply for the Ph.D. degree.

Revised July 2013

Approved by the Graduate Executive Committee

Approved by BMB Faculty

Date: 07-29-13

Date: 08-20-13

Date: 09-24-13

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When the student and mentor believe work for the dissertation is almost complete, they will call a meeting of the committee to obtain approval and guidance for preparation of the written dissertation. A maximum period of six months (four months for students in year six and above) is permitted between the time a student receives approval from their committee to write and the dissertation defense. Failure to meet this deadline will require another committee meeting at which a decision must be made to extend this deadline or take alternative actions resulting from failure to progress toward the degree.

Students must be up to date in meetings and paperwork in order to qualify for student travel awards.