

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry MS Comprehensive Exam Plan
Adopted Dec 2013, modified Fall 2014

M.S. students are required to write and orally defend a research proposal to their graduate advisory committee by the end of their second semester in the graduate program.

Research proposals must consist of a minimum of two single-spaced pages and a maximum of five single-spaced pages (not including references, figures, tables, curriculum vitae (CV), budget description, or appendices) and follow the general format of a grant application. The proposal must also include as appendices the student's CV and a brief budget description. We encourage students to use the format of a pre-doctoral fellowship proposal such as the format of proposals solicited by Alaska INBRE, BLAST, The Center for Global Change, NASA / NSF pre-doctoral fellowships. Note that some of the above-listed fellowships may have slightly different length guidelines than the above advice, but all are pre-approved as acceptable alternatives. If a student wishes to use another format, it must be approved by the student's graduate committee.

The written proposal must be submitted to the graduate advisory committee two weeks prior to oral defense.

For the oral defense, which typically occurs at the first full committee meeting in the Spring semester of the student's entry year, the student will give a 30-45 minute presentation of their proposal followed by an oral examination administered by their graduate advisory committee on the theoretical background, the experimental design, and significance of the proposed research. Proposal defense questions will require students to justify the importance and feasibility of research in a broader context. If you plan to have your MS comps at the first committee meeting, please schedule a 90-minute block of time.

Students must bring the graduate school form "Report on Comprehensive Exam" and the Department's "Graduate Program Assessment Form" to the meeting. These forms will be filled out by the committee in a closed session following the oral defense. An unsuccessful defense of the proposal may result in a conditional pass or a failed MS comprehensive exam. A conditional pass on the "Report on Comprehensive Exam" form includes a remedial plan from your committee and becomes a "pass" when that plan is completed. A student who fails the exam will be required to submit a revised proposal and defend it within four months of the date of failure. Failure may jeopardize continued financial support.