

Dissertation Proposal

Please refer to the [COVID-19 resources page in the BME graduate handbook](#) for temporary changes to some policies and practices. All proposals must be held virtually in summer 2020. Students are encouraged to make use of [DocuSign](#) for forms (see details below).

The research proposal and oral exam includes both a written and an oral component. The written component involves submitting an NIH R01 proposal to the student's dissertation committee no less than two weeks prior to defending it orally to the same committee. Required sections are specific aims (1 page) and research strategy (12 pages). Doctoral candidates in BME are encouraged to propose in their second year of the program and no later than the end of the third year.

The purpose of the proposal is to assess student progress toward the completion of a Ph.D. Degree in Biomedical Engineering. During the oral examination the student will be expected to demonstrate the following:

1. Identification of an important and impactful research problem, including significant scholarly knowledge of the specific and related research areas. The student should be able to clearly articulate what the problem is and why it is important.
2. Creation of a viable research strategy and specific plan to address the problem. The student should be able to clearly articulate the planned solution and the outcomes of success. The proposal and presentation should include details of the proposed experimental, theoretical and/or computational methods and a timeline for completion of the proposed tasks.
3. Presentation of preliminary results. The student should demonstrate that they are able to carry out the proposed work with preliminary results using some of the proposed methodologies. The expectation is that the results of the research work are preliminary; content equivalent to a completed research paper is not expected at the time of the preliminary oral examination.

Dissertation Proposal Step-by-Step

Before Your Proposal

1. **Has your committee membership changed since you advanced to candidacy?**
 - a. [Check your committee membership here](#). If it is correct, skip to number 2. If it is not correct, learn how to change your committee membership below.
 - b. If so, you need to [submit a request to the Graduate School](#) to formally change your committee membership. Email the Graduate Coordinator to use the [DocuSign version](#) of this form. Resolving this change is not required before you propose, but must be completed at least 30 days before you defend. It is a good idea to submit this form as soon as committee membership changes occur. [Learn more about committee changes here](#).
2. **Meet with your supervisor.**
 - a. Discuss your plan to propose and your supervisor's requirements, if any, in preparation for your proposal. Create one slide as part of the presentation that focuses solely on professional development. Include your earlier plans when you entered the PhD program (IDP from your qualifying exam), challenges you have faced and overcome, what steps you have taken to achieve your professional goals, and your current plans as a result. Discuss this slide and have your supervisor review it prior to the proposal.
3. **Complete and print the [Program of Work form](#).**
 - a. Once your supervisor has signed this form, provide it to the Graduate Coordinator for review and placement in your student file.
4. **Arrange a date to give your dissertation proposal.**
 - a. This process takes time because all of the committee members should be present. You may use the [BME Room Reservation](#) system to reserve space for your proposal.
 - b. Required committee participation is set to $N-1$, meaning one committee member may be absent. Members may participate virtually. If you are in the process of changing your committee, your new committee members should attend your proposal, even if you have not formally updated your committee with the Graduate School.
5. **Notify the BME Graduate Coordinator** of the date, time, and location of your proposal.
6. **Submit your written proposal to your committee** at least two weeks in advance of your oral presentation.
7. **Complete the [BME Dissertation Proposal form](#)** in preparation for all members of your committee to sign at your proposal.
 - a. **To use the [DocuSign version](#) of the proposal form, please email the Graduate Coordinator and include a list of your committee members and their email addresses.** We recommend completing the DocuSign version on the day of your exam, shortly before the exam begins.
8. **Learning Outcomes Forms** will be circulated to your committee by the Graduate Coordinator via DocuSign, if advanced notice of your proposal was given. If you have notified the Graduate Coordinator of your proposal date and time, the forms will be launched on the day of your proposal. If needed, the [paper version of the form](#) is available here.

At Your Proposal

1. **Be sure you have launched the [DocuSign](#) version of the proposal form.**
 - a. At your proposal exam, all members of your committee must sign this form to indicate approval of the proposal.
 - b. If your committee did not approve your proposal, make an appointment with your supervisor and the Graduate Advisor to discuss what action you need to take to address the committee's concerns. Return to step 4 to propose again once you have addressed the concerns and are ready.
2. **Provide a copy of the Professional Development section of your Qualifying Exam** to the committee.
 - a. This will be used to discuss professional development and your progress from the qualifying exam to the proposal. If you do not have a copy, please contact the Graduate Coordinator.

Immediately After Your Proposal

1. Follow up with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure all documentation has been received by the Graduate Office.