

# Dissertation Proposal



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Students in BME are required to complete the dissertation proposal milestone by the end of their third year in the PhD program.

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. Candidates who do not propose by August 31 of their third year must submit a [deadline extension request](#).

The purpose of the proposal is to assess students' 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

### Preparing for Your Proposal

Step	Task	Notes and Resources
Step 1	Update your committee with the Graduate School if it has changed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Check committee membership</a>.</li><li>• If your dissertation committee has changed, submit a Request for Change in Doctoral Committee Form to the Graduate School. Email the Graduate Coordinator to use the <b>DocuSign</b> version of the form.</li><li>• Resolving committee changes before your proposal is not required, but must be completed at least 30 days before you defend.</li><li>• More information is provided about <a href="#">committee changes elsewhere in the handbook</a>.</li></ul>
Step 2	Meet with your supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss your plan and timeline to propose, and your supervisor's requirements in preparation for your proposal.</li><li>• Include one slide on professional development, drawing from your earlier professional goals and the IDP you completed as part of the qualifying exam. Discuss challenges you have faced and overcome, what steps you have taken to achieve your professional goals, and your current plans as a result. Have your supervisor review this slide in advance of your proposal.</li></ul>
Step 3	Schedule your proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All committee members should be present, but exceptions are given in the event of scheduling emergencies. Required participation is <i>N-1</i>.</li><li>• Members may participate virtually or in person.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Make use of services such as <a href="#">Doodle</a> or <a href="#">When 2 Meet</a></li><li>• It is your responsibility to communicate the schedule of your proposal to your committee members.</li><li>• Use the <a href="#">BME Room Reservation system</a> to reserve your space. If proposing in person, reserve the space at least 30 minutes in advance for set up time.</li></ul>
Step 4	Submit a program of work form and report your proposal date to the Graduate Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Download and complete the applicable program of work</a>.</li><li>• After your supervisor signs, email it to the Graduate Coordinator for inclusion in your student file.</li><li>• Report your proposal date, time, and location to the Graduate Coordinator.</li></ul>

Step 5	Submit your written proposal to your committee at least two weeks in advance of your oral presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Late submissions should be used sparingly, such as in emergency situations, and require approval of your full committee.</li> </ul>
Step 6	Prepare the Dissertation Proposal Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The form is available as a PowerForm in <b>DocuSign</b> and is launched by the student. Once you complete your part of the form and click Finish, it will route back to you. You will need to click the Release button in the form to release the form to your committee either just before or just after your proposal. <b>Launch the form here.</b></li> <li>If you are holding your proposal in person and wish to use a physical document instead, <a href="#">download it here</a>.</li> </ul>
Step 7	Learning outcomes forms - <i>no action necessary by you on this step</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Graduate Coordinator will circulate learning outcomes forms to your committee on the day of your proposal.</li> <li>If needed, the <a href="#">paper version of the form</a> is available here.</li> </ul>
Step 8	Save a copy of your signed proposal form for your records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When the form is fully signed, you will receive an email notification with a link to download the completed form. Save a copy for your records.</li> <li>The Graduate Coordinator receives the same download link and will automatically place a copy of the signed form in your student file.</li> </ul>

## At Your Proposal

Step	Task	Notes and Resources
Step 1	Give your proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to your prepared oral presentation, be sure to include one slide about professional development and provide your committee with a copy of the professional development section of your qualifying exam proposal. This should facilitate discussion about your prior plans, how they have changed, and offer your committee the chance to provide feedback.</li> </ul>
Step 2	Launch the proposal form in <b>DocuSign</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At your proposal exam, all members of your committee must sign this form to indicate approval of the proposal.</li> <li>Once you Release the form and click Finish, the form will route first to your committee chair (supervisor) and then to all other members for signature.</li> <li>If you are holding your proposal in person and have opted for a paper form, ask your committee chair to complete the form first, then all members must sign.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>