

TO: Molecular Engineering Second-Year Graduate Students

FROM: Doug Ballard, Graduate Program Advisor

SUBJECT: Preliminary Examination

Attached is a sample timeline/checklist for the preliminary exam. Please note that you are responsible for scheduling your exam, after consulting with your supervisory committee. The exam takes approximately one and a half to two hours and is to be completed by students in their 2nd year by Friday of the last day of the Autumn quarter. Many faculty serve on several supervisory committees, so it is in your best interest to start this process as soon as possible in order to avoid schedule conflicts.

Meeting space is at the discretion of the student and their committee. Many students choose to use space in the NanoES/MoES building - <https://depts.washington.edu/molesdev/building/meeting-rooms/> be sure to consult the room availability calendar.

Also attached for your reference is the Prelim Examination Evaluation form.

Thank you,

Doug Ballard

Appointing the Preliminary Exam Committee

You must establish a Supervisory Committee in consultation with your Dissertation Advisor. For the purposes of this exam, you must secure at least three committee members, all of whom must be UW faculty. For your convenience, a list of MoES faculty is located at: <https://www.moles.washington.edu/people/faculty/>

Your Supervisory Committee guides you throughout your tenure in the graduate program. This will be the evaluation committee for your Preliminary Exam. Upon successful completion of the preliminary exam and after further research activity you may decide to change some of your committee members or add committee members, given new research directions or other concerns. The Supervisory Committee that guides you through the General Exam and Final Exam does not have to be the same as the Supervisory Committee that oversees your preliminary exam (although it typically is the same). Please refer to the Graduate Student Handbook on our website (<http://www.moles.washington.edu/phd/forms/>) for complete procedural details (pages 17-19), paying close attention to the requirements surrounding faculty endorsements to chair committees, what being an official GSR represents, minimum committee member requirements, etc... Once you have selected your potential committee members (in consultation with your Dissertation Advisor), e-mail their names and departments to Doug Ballard ([Doug83@uw.edu](mailto:Dougb83@uw.edu)).

Prelim Exam Timeline/Checklist

August or September

- Student notifies GPA at moleng@uw.edu of supervisory committee members' names after consultation with Dissertation Advisor
- Student sets exam date (after consulting with supervisory committee)
- Student reserves a room (schedule for 2 hours) with the assistance of MoES staff

3 weeks prior to exam

- Committee selects the paper to be critiqued.

1 week prior to exam, no later than 2 weeks after receiving the article

- Student submits paper critique and a clean copy of the subject paper to committee
- Student submits short research summary to committee. The research summary is a written report that summarizes the research conducted to date and provides a motivation and description of the planned PhD research going forward

Exam day (No later than the last Friday of the Autumn quarter)

Approximately .75 hours for the paper critique defense and .75 hours for the presentation and defense of the student's current knowledge as well as research progress/plan.

- Oral presentation of critique/questions
- Oral presentation of research/questions
- Committee evaluates performance

1 week after the exam (at latest)

- Advisor gives written recommendation (but not final decision) to student and sends a copy to the GPA
- Student written statement in response to the committee recommendation is sent to GPA (if applicable)

NOTES:

1. The Prelim Exam occurs during the student's 5th quarter (typically Autumn). To qualify, the student must have a 3.3 GPA based on at least 15 credits of graded UW coursework (in approved 400-level and all 500-level courses). The Supervisory Committee must have been established. See the Graduate Student Handbook on the web (<http://www.moles.washington.edu/phd/forms/>) for the most up-to-date information, such as the committee makeup and the format of the written documents you must submit.

2. The advisor coordinates selection of the paper to be critiqued. Typically, the advisor gives the other committee members a list of 2-3 candidate papers, and one is selected by consensus. The student is responsible for making sure the advisor is aware of the date on which the paper selection is to be given to the student.

4. Scheduling the exam and reserving a room can be very difficult because faculty serve on more than one supervisory committee.

Start early!



University of Washington
Molecular Engineering and Sciences Institute
Preliminary Examination Evaluation

Student's Name _____

Exam Date _____

Circle one rating for each category

1. Critical Thinking and Analysis

E VG G F P

Comments:

2. Knowledge of Scientific and
Engineering Fundamentals

E VG G F P

Comments:

3. Ability to make original and
independent research progress

E VG G F P

Comments:

4. Ability to formulate concise and
appropriate research plans

E VG G F P

Comments:

5. Written communication

E VG G F P

Comments:

6. Oral communication and presentation skills

E VG G F P

Comments:

Recommendation:

The undersigned members of the examining committee have reviewed the preliminary exam performance of the above named student and recommend that the student:

- ☐ Pass
- ☐ Conditional Pass: _____ (or attached)
- ☐ Fail – Option to retake Preliminary Exam by end of Winter Quarter in same academic year
- ☐ Fail – Possibility to continue MoE PhD after completion of MoE MS (within 2 quarters)
- ☐ Fail – Depart MoE PhD program with MoE MS degree (within 2 quarters)
- ☐ Other: _____ (or attached)

Examining Committee members:

Printed names

Signatures

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Student's comments (attach page(s) if needed):

Student's signature _____ Date _____
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Preliminary Exam Procedural Details:

- The advisor chairs the exam.
- Recommended Guidelines: Approximately .75 hours for the article critique defense and .75 hours for the presentation and defense of the student's current knowledge as well as research progress/future plans.
- Questions should probe student's understanding of MoE fundamentals relevant to the paper being critiqued and their ability to conduct independent research.
- The advisor prepares a written evaluation report (this form) with ratings and comments on the items listed above. It must be signed by the other committee members and constitutes the committee recommendation as to pass or fail.
- If a recommendation of fail is delivered, a meeting of all exam committee chairs will be held after all exams have occurred to discuss the recommendation and to determine a final decision. If there are no recommendations of fail, determination of final decision will be conducted over email after all exams have occurred.
- A vote of "Fail" constitutes unsatisfactory progress toward the Ph.D.
- A meeting with the student to convey the committee's recommendation (but not final decision) must occur within one week of the exam. The student has the option to submit a written statement in response to the committee recommendation.
- The advisor and/or student sends a copy of this form (and any resulting student statement) to the graduate program advisor (GPA). This serves as the official record that the exam has taken place.