

**The Pennsylvania State University  
Graduate Degree Program in  
Biomedical Engineering**

*Graduate Student Handbook*  
*Thesis MS*  
*Ph.D.*

**2023**

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## **THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

The University is committed to equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment for all persons. It is the policy of the University to maintain an environment free of harassment and free of discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information, or political ideas. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, as well as sexual misconduct and relationship violence, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University's educational mission, and will not be tolerated. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Office. The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5901; Email: [aao@psu.edu](mailto:aao@psu.edu); Tel 814-863-0471.

Penn State encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact the Student Disability Resources, 814-863-1807, in advance of your participation or visit.

## OVERVIEW OF BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING

This program provides graduate level training in engineering and the life sciences and their integration. Students graduating from this program will have acquired expertise in the application of engineering principles to fundamental problems in biology, clinical problems in medicine, or in the development of new biomedical instrumentation. They are also expected to produce scholarly work to be published in peer reviewed journals and presented at national conferences. Graduate curricula and student assessment in biomedical engineering is under the direction of the Program Chair and a Graduate Curriculum Committee that is composed of Graduate Faculty representing several departments in the Colleges of Engineering, Health and Human Development, Science, and Medicine.

Opportunities for specialized research are offered by Graduate Faculty working on electrical, mechanical, and biophysical properties of biological materials and the application of this knowledge to understanding molecular, cellular, tissue, and organ level processes involved in health and disease. Specific applications include:

- artificial organs
- biomaterials
- bioMEMS
- nanotechnology
- biophotonics
- cellular and medical imaging
- cardiovascular engineering
- cell signaling and protein dynamics
- mechanobiology
- neural interfaces
- tissue engineering
- regenerative medicine

Extensive computer facilities and specialized equipment are available to support a combination of studies that employ experimental observations and their analysis through mathematical modeling and computer simulations.

## I. General Information

The Penn State graduate degree program in Biomedical Engineering is a degree granting program that includes faculty members from multiple departments and colleges at Penn State. This list includes faculty with their primary appointment in the Biomedical Engineering Department and affiliated faculty who have their primary appointments in other departments. All faculty who advise M.S. and Ph.D. students in Biomedical Engineering must be members of the Graduate Faculty in Biomedical Engineering.

### Admission Process

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the [Graduate School “Application for Admission. Requirements listed here are in addition to the Graduate Council policies listed under \[GCAC-300 Admissions Policies.\]\(#\)](#)

Students are admitted to the Graduate School by the University Examiner, following favorable recommendation by the Graduate Officer and Graduate Admissions Committee. Procedures to be followed are outlined in the Penn State Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin.

A new policy was introduced effective July 5, 2012. HR 99 Background Check Process calls for all new hires to undergo a background check. New hires must complete the background check process before working for Penn State. One important new requirement is that “all individuals engaged by the University, including those engaged prior to, as of, or after, the effective date of this policy, to self-disclose criminal arrests and/or convictions as outlined in the Penn State Arrest and Conviction self-disclosure form within a 72-hour period of their occurrence.” Please take the time to review the entire policy at <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/OHR/hr99.html> The minimum departmental requirements for admission to graduate standing (for both master’s and doctoral degrees) are:

Students with a degree in engineering, physics, or the life sciences from an approved institution are eligible for admission. All students must have a strong background in physics and mathematics. This background should include chemistry, calculus-based physics, and mathematics through calculus and differential equations. Students who lack this background may still be considered for **provisional admission** but will have to make up any deficiency early in their graduate program. These remedial courses will be required in addition to the stated graduate program course requirements. Students with a 3.0 (or higher) junior/senior GPA and with appropriate course backgrounds will be considered for admission. The best-qualified applicants will be accepted up to the number of spaces available. Exceptions to the minimum average may be made for students with special backgrounds, abilities, and interests, at the discretion of the program.

Applications to the Biomedical Engineering Ph.D. Program, the One-Year Master’s Biomedical Engineering Program and the Two-Year Master’s (with Thesis) Biomedical Engineering Program are accepted online only through the Penn State Graduate School’s [Online Application Portal](#). The following items are uploaded as part of the application process:

The language of instruction at Penn State is English. All international applicants must take and submit scores for the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or the IELTS (International English Language Testing System), with the exceptions noted below:

- **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for international students only**
    - TOEFL/IELTTS Institution Code is **2660**
    - Department Code is **45**
    - ALL international students from non-English speaking countries are required to submit a TOEFL or IELTS score

**TOEFL:**

    - ***Internet-based test (iBT)*** - a total score of 80 with a 19 on the speaking section for the internet-based test (iBT).
    - Applicants with iBT speaking scores between 15 and 18 may be considered for provisional admission, with Graduate School approval, which requires completion of specified remedial English courses ESL 114G (American Oral English for Academic Purposes) and/or ESL 116G (ESL/Composition for Academic Disciplines) and attainment of a grade of B or higher within the first semester of enrollment.
    - ***Paper-based test (taken July 2017 or later)*** – a combined total of the 3 sections evaluated must be 60 or greater.

**IELTS:**

    - The minimum acceptable composite score for the IELTS Academic Test is 6.5.  - **EXCEPTION:**
    - International applicants who have received a baccalaureate or a graduate degree in a country in which standard English is the predominant language and from a college/university/institution at which the language of instruction is English are exempt from the TOEFL/IELTS requirement. Countries that meet this qualification can be found here: <https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission/>
  - Applicants who do not meet the minimum requirements will be considered for admission on a Provisional basis and will be required to take an English-speaking course.
- Answer the program specific questions in the online application. Please be as specific as possible.

**PLEASE NOTE:** TOEFL scores are to be sent to Penn State ***electronically*** via the Graduate School Online Application. Applicants should send hard copy scores directly from the IELTS testing agency to Penn State's Graduate School at:

**The Pennsylvania State University  
Graduate Enrollment Services  
114 Kern Building  
University Park, PA 16802**

Once documents for an application have been received by Penn State, they officially become a University document and cannot be returned to applicants.



Please do not submit information with your application that cannot be used in the admission decision process, e. i., Individual Education Plans (IEP), medical records, statement from physicians or psychologists, or legal documents. Such information will be destroyed and will not be included in the application packet.

- **Official Transcript**

Applicants recommended for admission will be notified by the Graduate School that official/original transcripts/documents and their official English translation must be sent from the originating institutions for review by the Graduate School in order to finalize an admission decision. Notarized copies are not sufficient. This step is only required after the application has been reviewed and if the applicant is offered admission.

International applicants must hold either (1) a bachelor's degree from a U.S. regionally accredited institution or (2) a postsecondary degree that is equivalent to a U.S. baccalaureate degree earned from an officially recognized degree-granting international institution.

- International applicants must submit official or attested university records, with certified translations if the records are not in English. Notarized copies are not sufficient.

- **Resume**

Provide a traditional resume describing your educational and professional history including research, work, volunteer and other pertinent experience

- **Three (3) Letters of Recommendation**

(PLEASE NOTE: only two (2) letters of recommendation are required for the one-year non-thesis M.S. in Biomedical Engineering program)

- The references you list in the online application will be given directions via email for submitting their letters

## Deadlines for Admission

Fall admission: December 1<sup>st</sup> of previous year (e.g., Dec 1, 2023 for Fall 2024 admission).

Spring admission: July 15<sup>th</sup> of previous year (e.g., July 15, 2023 for Spring 2024 admission).

**Spring applications are only reviewed at the request of PSU BME faculty members.** There is not a standard review process by the BME Admission Committee. Do not apply for spring unless directed to do so by a particular faculty member.

## Student Aid

Graduate assistantships are available to Ph.D. students in the Biomedical Engineering program and other forms of student aid are described in the [Tuition & Funding](#) section of The Graduate School's website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the [course load limits](#) set by The Graduate School. Students in the one-year M.S. Biomedical Engineering program are **not eligible** for graduate assistantships.

## Notification

Applications completed by the posted December deadline will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee and decisions will be made, via email, during January/February. Applications completed by the July deadline will be reviewed on a rolling basis and applicants will be notified if openings remain. Please note that fall

enrollment is strongly recommended.

When an application is approved by the Admissions Committee, the following occurs through different Penn State offices.

1. A letter of recommended acceptance is sent to applicants by electronic mail. An admission recommendation is also forwarded to the Penn State Graduate School by the Graduate Programs Coordinator of Biomedical Engineering.
2. The Graduate School must approve the Department recommendation of acceptance. If approved, applicants will be notified by the Graduate School.
3. International applicants will then be notified by the office of International Students and Scholars (OISS), which will issue an I-20 form. Any questions regarding visas, I-20, etc., must be directed to the OISS Office. The Department of Biomedical Engineering is unable to assist with international student visas.
4. All applicants are considered for research or teaching assistantships and applicable fellowships. Applicants will be notified by the Department of any assistantship offers or fellowships at the time of admission.

The Admissions Committee carefully reviews each application and discusses the potential of each applicant. As such, the decisions of the Admissions Committee are final and not subject to further review.

### Lab Rotation Policy

For graduate students that are offered admission to the Ph. D. program, offer letters will state if the student will be directly admitted into a faculty's lab or if the student will need to complete lab rotations during their first semester. The rotation policy is as follows:

- “It is expected that during your first semester you will meet with faculty to discuss potential Ph.D. projects, and identify an appropriate lab to join or carry out lab rotations to help you select the optimal lab for your Ph.D. If rotations are preferred, you are expected to complete 2 - 3 rotations at 5 weeks each during your first semester. You will need to get a **signed written agreement** with the faculty you are selecting for rotation.”
- The Laboratory Rotation Agreement form can be found in Appendix H.

## II. Graduate Program Office

The Graduate Program Office for the Biomedical Engineering Department is located in 122B CBEB. The Graduate Programs Assistant, Virginia Simparosa ([vls5248@psu.edu](mailto:vls5248@psu.edu)), 122B CBEB, is available to assist students between the hours of 8:30-4:30 Monday through Friday in person or via Teams/Zoom. If she is unavailable, you may contact Lisa Daub ([lq1@psu.edu](mailto:lq1@psu.edu)), Administrative Staff Coordinator in 122C CBEB.

The Graduate Program Office can help with the following:

- answer administrative questions and supply forms
- schedule controlled bioengineering classes
- schedule candidacy, comprehensive, and final oral exams
- prepare contracts
- prepare letters for leaving the country for international students

**Keys:** Keys may be obtained by asking your adviser to send an email to JoElle DeVinney at [jes5@psu.edu](mailto:jes5@psu.edu) detailing which lab keys are needed. Keys can then be picked up at her office in 124 CBEB. Once you leave the Biomedical Engineering Program, all keys need to be returned to JoElle.

**Purchasing Equipment and Supplies:** Graduate students may be responsible for purchasing supplies for their lab. Before ordering any supplies or equipment, please see Santina Newlen ([smn19@psu.edu](mailto:smn19@psu.edu)), 122A, CBEB for the correct procedures for ordering and completing the forms. In addition, be prepared and know what budget and fund number to use. Consult your adviser for this information.

**Mail:** All graduate students will have a mailbox outside of 122 CBEB or in Millennium Sciences Building. Inter-university mail and all outgoing mail is picked up at 1:00 pm Monday–Friday. Students may put personal mail in the outgoing wire basket as long as it has postage.

**Sending FedEx Packages:** The office staff in CBEB can send out packages. Bring the package to 122 CBEB along with shipping information, phone number of recipient, budget number to be charged, weight and whether or not the package needs insured.

Packages are delivered in the mailroom outside of 122 CBEB daily by Fed EX and UPS. **Each student is responsible for checking deliveries of their lab supplies.** This room is used by the entire department for many functions, so please be diligent in retrieving your packages.

### III. Tuition and Registration

Continuous registration is required of all graduate students. Students are required every semester to complete the “Financial Responsibility Agreement” and the “Pre-Registration Guide” in LionPATH. Failure to complete these two activities will result in a **HOLD** on your account and you will not be able to be registered for any courses. *All graduate students who register late (after the regular add deadline) will be responsible for payment of all late fees incurred.*

#### Tuition Bills

After enrolling in classes, all students will receive an e-mail notification from the Penn State Bursar’s Office requiring payment of tuition. Students should follow the instructions outlined in the e-mail to file the tuition bill electronically. This will include logging into your student center to view and pay your statement. **Do not ignore this e-mail.** Tuition and tuition related fees (activities fee) are covered under assistantships/fellowships. Other fees are the responsibility of the student. Please continue to monitor your account as your tuition will recalculate and will be covered once your appointment is fully processed by the department.

#### Full-time Academic Status

Most loan granting agencies and other organizations will consider a 9-12 credit course load to be full-time status, fulfilling their registration requirements. The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) requires that all international students on student visas must achieve "full-time academic status" during the Fall and Spring semesters. All students on an assistantship should register for 12 credits/semester. Research credits should be used to bring students up to the **12-credit load**. This reflects the research responsibilities of the graduate students in the BME program. Any graduate student registered for BIOE 601 is considered to have a full-time academic status (Note: Student must have passed the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam in the **prior** semester before registering for BIOE 601). Students must request registration for BME 590, BIOE 600 and 601 through the Graduate Programs Coordinator. For full details, see the Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin website at: <http://bulletins.psu.edu/bulletins/whitebook/index.cfm>.

***\*\*600 and 601 courses are added to your schedule by the Graduate Programs Coordinator (GPC) in the department. An email should be sent notifying the GPC that the Financial Responsibility Agreement is complete and the course can now be added for thesis credits, if needed.\*\****

#### Course Load

It is required by the department that students on assistantships/fellowships should register for **12 credits** per semester. Self-funded MS students are permitted to take up to 15 credits. These credits can consist of course credits (400 and 500-level), and research credits (600- level). Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements. A graduate student may register for or audit courses below the 400 level in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree and only by the recommendation of the adviser and/or advisory committee. Undergraduate courses in the Department of Biomedical Engineering are denoted by BME.

The Graduate School requires that all students receive a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better to graduate. Students must have a 3.0 minimum GPA in order to take the Qualifying and Comprehensive Exams. Only grades of C or better count toward MS and Ph.D. course requirements.

After passing the Comprehensive Exam, all Ph.D. students must maintain "continuous registration," which requires them to register for BIOE 601 for the Fall and Spring semesters. If Ph.D. students use University facilities during Summer Session or plan to take their Comprehensive Exam during the summer or defend and take their Final Exam\*, they must be registered for coursework.

\*Students who take their Comprehensive Exam or Final Exam during the summer should apply for free summer tuition (STAP). Students will receive an email in April about applying for STAP. For more information, please visit the following website:

[Summer Tuition Assistance Program](#)

[BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING \(BME\) courses](#)

## IV. Student Insurance

Health insurance is mandatory for all international students (and their dependents) who are supported on assistantships/fellowships or who are self-supported. US students on other health care plans may file a waiver on-line with the Student Insurance Office if they are covered under another health insurance plan. International students may file a declination form on-line, but they must present evidence of being covered under another health care plan which is equivalent to the Penn State plan. Students on assistantships/fellowships are automatically enrolled in the medical, dental and vision plans. Insurance premiums are deducted monthly from the assistantship stipend. Penn State will pay 80% of insurance coverage and the student is responsible for 20%. Students who are not on assistantships/fellowships must pre-pay for health care coverage.

The insurance subsidy for eligible dependents is 75% of the annual premium expense for spouse, domestic partner OR children; 76% of the annual premium expense for family.

Detailed information on health insurance, including the health insurance booklet, enrollment deadlines and table of monthly payroll deductions is available at:

<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness/health-insurance>

It is each student's responsibility to notify the department, payroll office, and the international office (if applicable) if there is a change of address during your stay at Penn State. Please change the information on LionPath and more importantly, on Workday, <https://worklion.psu.edu/>. The Workday system is available for students who are on a paid assistantship or fellowship.

## V. Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

During the first year of study, all graduate students studying for the M.S. and/or Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering are **required** to complete the free online Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI) training provided by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). This may be completed during BIOE 591 <https://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari>. Upon completing the training, participants are issued a certificate of completion. Email the certificate to the Graduate Programs Assistant prior to the end of their second semester of study. All graduate students shall participate in five hours of discussion based Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) education. This requirement is considered a prerequisite for scheduling of the comprehensive exam and may be satisfied by enrollment in BME 591, Biomedical Engineering Ethics and Professional Development, or IBIOS 591, Ethics in the Life Science if located in Hershey. Please register for the ethics course during your first fall semester. **This is also a requirement for graduation.**

### Code of Conduct

The Biomedical Department has adopted the same Code of Conduct as The Graduate School. Please refer to the links below regarding the code policies.

<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct#>

## VI. Laboratory and Shop Safety

The cornerstone of the Laboratory Safety Program is the [Laboratory and Research Safety Plan \(LRSP\)](#) which includes the [Unit Specific Plan](#) and accompanying [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOPs\)](#). The LRSP has been developed to promote the safety of employees, students and visitors working in laboratories and research areas across the University. The plan provides guidelines for prudent practices and procedures for the safe management of chemicals and other hazards possible in the laboratory/research setting, and for work practices regarding equipment and personal protective equipment that are capable of protecting individuals from potential health hazards.

Graduate students must follow safe laboratory and shop practices. The department maintains an active Laboratory Safety Committee composed of faculty and staff who carry out periodic laboratory inspections. Students are expected to be responsive to the safety improvements suggested by the committee, and to serve on the committee when asked.

All graduate students must receive EHS safety training from the University, and a copy of the EHS certificate should be kept on file in each laboratory where the student works. The safety training for all new graduate students will be done

Questions about safety issues should be addressed to the Department's Safety Officer (Gene Gerber). Additional information can be obtained from the University's [Environmental Health and Safety](#) website.

### Biosafety

The goal of the Biological Safety Program is to ensure the safe and proper use of biohazardous materials, such as bacteria, viruses and fungi. This is done by providing training on the proper use of such materials, ensuring that proper personal protective equipment (PPE), safety devices and work practices are used, and that work with biohazards is done in appropriately equipped laboratories. The aim of this program is to allow faculty, staff and students to handle potentially dangerous biological materials without endangering their health and well-being. Additional information can be obtained from Environmental Health and Safety's (EHS) website regarding [Biosafety](#).

### Biomedical Shop Safety

The Department of Biomedical Engineering Shop is located at 110 Chemical and Biomedical Engineering Building. Hours of shop access are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. only

Before using the shop you must read, sign, and have on file a copy of the [Biomedical Engineering Department Shop Safety Regulations](#).

Before any equipment can be used, students and staff **MUST** pass the [The Learning Factory training courses](#). To operate the Skill Level 1 power tools, a "*Safety/Power Tool*" training class **MUST** be completed in advance. To operate the Skill Level 2 power tools a "*Machining 1*" training class **MUST** be completed in advance. Additional information on the Department's website can be reviewed for specific shop equipment skill levels at [Biomedical Engineering Shop Policies](#), along with specific shop regulations.



## VII. Appointments

### Residency Requirements

Over a twelve-month period, the graduate student must spend at least two consecutive semesters, excluding summer sessions, as a registered full-time student engaged in academic work at the Penn State campus(es) offering the Ph.D. degree in the student's graduate major program.

### Period of Appointment

The Pennsylvania State University operates on a semester calendar system. The period of instruction each fall and spring semester is 15 weeks. Graduate assistants are appointed for 18 weeks each semester, for, on average, the number of hours per week appropriate to the assistantship appointment type (e.g., quarter-time, half-time or three-quarter-time). All graduate assistantship appointments are made for one or two semesters. The summer session is a separate appointment. Students are expected to be involved in assistantship activities for an approximate total of 18 weeks per fall and/or spring semester during the dates indicated on their Terms of Offer, not including official University holidays, campus closures (including for inclement weather, etc.) and during spring break and the Thanksgiving holiday break. Under particular circumstances, primarily for students whose first semester will be during the summer sessions, students may be appointed to traditional graduate assistantships during the summer session for a period of up to 12 weeks. However, in most cases, students are appointed as Summer Lecturer/Researchers during the summer sessions, [see GSAD- 905](#) (previously PR17).

There may be exceptional circumstances such as with specialized maintenance and/or data collection from research animals, where assistantship activities must be conducted during University holidays/closures and cannot be delegated to other individuals, or when an experimental protocol runs over months and cannot be interrupted or suspended to allow time away. In such circumstances, the graduate student should be made aware prior to the start of the assistantship appointment involving the affected period, and other time away should be arranged in exchange. Students should consult with the following individuals as needed to address any concerns about a request that assistantship activities span University holidays/closures: assistantship provider, adviser (if not the same individual), Graduate Program Chair, College/School Administrator for graduate education (typically an Assistant/Associate/Senior Associate Dean). Finally, if preferred or if necessary, when the previously mentioned individuals cannot assist, the Associate Dean for Graduate Student Affairs in the Graduate School serves as Ombudsperson for Graduate Students and is available to discuss any student's specific situation.

All financial support and continuation in the program are contingent upon satisfactory academic and research progress, satisfactory fulfillment of your assistantship duties, adherence to all University policies and standards, and professional conduct at all times, as described under [GCAC-800 Student Conduct and Performance Policies](#). While supported by any assistantship, the exact nature of a student's assistantship duties is determined in accordance with each student's background, experience, and program needs. The University reserves the right to determine and confirm suitability for assistantship responsibilities.

Financial support is contingent upon successful completion of a background check that verifies the individual has no criminal or other record that would preclude appointment to the assistantship in the University's judgment. Therefore, in order to verify eligibility for future assistantship support, successful completion of a background check will be required. Please note that the existence of a criminal conviction does not automatically disqualify an individual from consideration for an assistantship. The University will consider the nature and seriousness of the offense, the length of time since the conviction, the nature of the position/assistantship duties, and any discrepancies from what is self-reported by the individual.

Preference in renewals normally is given to those students who have shown superior aptitude in the performance of assistantship activities and in academic progress. A graduate assistantship may be terminated prior to completion of the full term of the appointment if the student fails to meet departmental standards as described above, following due process procedures as described in [GCAC-804 Procedures for Termination of Assistantships Due to Inadequate Performance](#).

In circumstances when paid leave from the activities of a graduate assistantship is necessary, refer to the Graduate School's Leave of Absence policy ([GSAD-906 Graduate Student Leave of Absence](#)).

### Eligibility

New Ph.D. appointments are contingent upon the student's admission to the Graduate School as a degree-seeking student enrolled in residence. Certain IUG students in simultaneous degree programs, approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, are also eligible.

### Objectives of Assistantships

Graduate assistants are students, and graduate assistantships provide pedagogic and educational experiences designed to make students better instructors, researchers, and scholars. Thus, it is a general policy to assign graduate assistants largely scholarly tasks that will provide a useful and meaningful experience in their major field. Assistantship activities may include teaching, research, and other activities as assigned by the unit providing the assistantship.

### AEOCPT (American Oral English Communication Proficiency Test)

All international students must take the American Oral English Communication Proficiency Test (AEOCPT) which evaluates American English-speaking skills before they can work as a teaching assistant (TA). Discuss with your advisor whether you will be asked to TA during the course of your studies. This test is scheduled by the Graduate Programs Coordinator for you. For more information, go to the following link: [AEOCPT](#)

### Responsibilities and Employment Prohibition

A graduate assistant may perform classroom or laboratory instruction, research, or other activities. The tasks assigned to a graduate assistant often are identical in nature to those required of all candidates for the advanced degree sought. If all of the assistantship activities assigned to the graduate assistant are required of every degree candidate in the applicable graduate degree program as a condition of receiving the degree, it must be noted in the Terms of Offer. If all of the activities assigned to the graduate assistant are required of every degree candidate in the applicable graduate program as a condition of receiving the degree, state and local taxes will not be withheld.

Graduate assistants should not be expected or required to complete additional hours of assigned assistantship activities beyond the average weekly hours for their appointment type (and not including those required for their degree, as indicated above); in the exceptional circumstance that this does occur, other time away from the assistantship should be arranged to allow the average weekly hours to match the respective appointment type (quarter-time, half-time, or three-quarter-time) over the duration of the appointment.

Additional compensation may be paid to a graduate assistant by the University for additional hours of activities only with special, advance approval of the administrative head of the unit in which the assistantship

is held and the head of the student's graduate program, with the primary considerations being that the additional hours of activities do not compromise the student's academic progress, or their assistantship responsibilities. If the additional hours are not related to the assigned assistantship activities, a wage appointment should be used, whereas if they are related to the assigned assistantship activities, the appointment type should more appropriately be changed (e.g., from a half-time to a three-quarter-time appointment), rather than adding the additional hours as wage payroll.

A graduate assistant may accept concurrent employment outside the University only with prior permission from the head of the unit providing the assistantship and the head of the student's graduate program, with the primary considerations being that the additional hours do not compromise the student's academic progress, or their assistantship responsibilities.

### Evaluation and Performance

Each graduate assistant shall be supervised and assisted in assigned activities until the graduate assistant gains experience and skill enabling him or her to take responsibility. In addition to ongoing feedback as necessary, each graduate assistant shall be formally evaluated at least once each year, and the supervisor shall discuss with the graduate assistant the individual's performance during the appointment period, with the goal of continued professional development for the graduate student.

## VIII. 2 Year Thesis Master's Degree Requirements

Below are the requirements for the M.S. degree in terms of general requirements as delineated by the Graduate School and specific requirements set by the Biomedical Engineering Program. Course expectations are set up so that coursework during the semester will require up to half of the students' time with research activities taking up the majority of the time. Summers are generally set aside for full-time research. Beyond the specific course requirements listed below, M.S. students are expected to publish at least one first-author paper based on their research. This is not a requirement for graduation, however.

The policies described here apply to the M.S. degree in Biomedical Engineering. Official Graduate School policies covering all M.S. degrees at Penn State can be found at: [graduate education policies](#)

Minimum Requirements:

- 30 credits that must include the following:
  - At least 24 credits at the 500-level or above
  - 20 credits must be earned at a Penn State Campus and recognized by the Graduate School
    - 6 credits of Biomedical Engineering
    - 6 credits Life Science
    - 6 credits Technical/Quantitative/Biomedical Engineering electives
  - At least 12 credits must be lecture or lab-based (not independent study) and at the 500-level (not including the ethics course or the graduate seminar). An additional 6 (or more) credits are at the 400 or 500-level. Recommended core courses:
    - Cell and Molecular Biology BME 512
    - Systems Physiology BME 597
    - Numerical Methods BME 504
    - Statistical Analysis BME 597
  - At least 6 credits of BIOE 600 (Thesis Research-**only allowed 6 credits with a letter grade additional 600 credits [or all of them] to be graded R**)
  - Students must register for BIOE 590 (BIOE Colloquium) each semester in attendance.
  - 1 credit Biomedical Engineering Ethics and Professional Development, BIOE 591 Completion of online training in Responsible Conduct of Research. See the following website for details: <https://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari>
- Master's Thesis with oral defense. Each student must follow the Graduate School's Ph.D. guidelines regarding uploading the online submission. **A pdf of the final thesis must be submitted to the Graduate Programs Assistant.**

### M.S. Thesis

A thesis is required of all M.S. students. This thesis must be defended orally in front of the student's Master's Thesis Committee, which is composed of the adviser plus two other members. The thesis committee is generally the same as the student's academic advisory committee, but it does not need to be. All thesis submissions will be digitally approved by their committee members via the eTD application. This allows committee members the ability to review the previously vetted document and give their approval electronically. All requested changes by the committee following the final defense should be communicated to the student and completed **before** the final document is uploaded to the eTD site. (Changes that are requested to the document after submission to the eTD require the review and approval of each committee member and the Graduate School every time a change is made.)

The Graduate School Office of Theses and Dissertations provides a Thesis Guide, which provides

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formatting instructions, can be located at on the Penn State Graduate School web site at <https://gradschool.psu.edu/completing-your-degree/thesis-and-dissertation-information/thesis-dissertation-performance-and-oral-presentation-deadlines-calendar/>

## M.S. Thesis Deadlines

The deadline for submitting the final thesis to the Graduate School is generally 3-4 weeks before the end of the semester. Firm dates are established by the Graduate School and are located at <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/thesisdissertationperformance-calendar/>.

To complete the thesis, it is necessary to leave sufficient time for the reading committee to read and critique the thesis and for the student to defend it and incorporate any revisions from the committee into the final version that is submitted to the Graduate School.

Therefore, **the oral thesis defense** must occur no later than **one week** (preferably longer) before the Graduate School thesis submission date. The student must provide each committee member with a pdf version of the thesis **at least one week** before the thesis defense (a hard copy if asked). Meeting these deadlines will be strictly enforced and is the responsibility of the student. Failure to meet deadlines will result in postponement of graduation until the following semester.

The thesis draft submitted to the committee should be complete, copy edited, spell checked, and thoroughly reviewed by the primary adviser. When submitting the thesis draft to the advisory committee, also provide an electronic version for review by the Program Chair. **Remember: completed theses must be submitted in pdf version to the thesis reading committee and the Program Chair at least one week before the thesis defense and at least two weeks before the Graduate School thesis submission deadline.**

\*\*\*Once the final thesis is uploaded, *a pdf version, via email, must be submitted to the Graduate Programs Assistant to keep on file in the department.*

## Transfer credits

A maximum of 10 graduate credits earned at other accredited institutions may be applied toward the requirements for the master's degree. However, credits cannot have been used for a previous degree. To receive credit for transfer courses, the student must provide a syllabus of the course taken and a completed petition form, available from the Biomedical Engineering Graduate Programs Assistant. All courses will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

### *Example Timeline for Biomedical Engineering M.S. Degree*

Semester 1  
August, set up academic advisory committee and define course plan for year 1

- Take two 3-credit courses
- Take 1 credit BME 591 (Bioengineering Ethics and Professional Development) and 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits up to at least 12 total credits
- Take online Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research

Semester 2

- Take two 3-credit courses
- Take 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits up to 12 total credits

### Summer

- Carry out research toward thesis

### Semester 3

- Present yearly update to advisory committee and plan courses for year 2 (before classes begin)
- Take two 3-credit courses
- Take 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits up to 12 total credits

### Semester 4

- Take 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits up to 12 total credits
- Write and defend Masters' thesis (can push to summer)

## Master's Along the Way Option

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/masters-along-the-way-procedure/>

Option 2 is for MS students.

Discuss with the Program Director any interest in applying for a Ph.D. and obtaining your Master's along the way.

## IX. Integrated Undergraduate/Graduate Degree (IUG) Program

An integrated undergraduate-graduate (IUG) degree program overseen by the Schreyer Honors College combines a Penn State baccalaureate degree with a master's degree as a continuous program of study. It provides the student an opportunity complete both a Bachelors' and Masters' degree in 5 years.

### IUG Admission Requirements

Students must be in the Schreyer Honors College. Application materials must be filed during the scholar's fifth or sixth semester of study (the Junior year). **The latest date for applying is April 1<sup>st</sup> of the Junior year (sixth semester)**. See the Biomedical Engineering Departmental regulations and Schreyer Honors College regulations for more specific guidelines for applying. **\*Students applying for the IUG must have a meeting with the Schreyer Honors College prior to applying to the Graduate School.**

Students should complete the Graduate's School online graduate application at: <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/apply/>. In addition, they will need to upload their personal statement and current resume. Their honor adviser and thesis adviser should upload their letters of recommendation. Should the honor adviser and thesis adviser be the same person, then another faculty member should be asked by the student to submit a letter of recommendation. The third letter of recommendation will be provided by the department head. Students do NOT need to supply GRE scores. Once you submit your application, please tell the Graduate Programs Assistant and she will provide the transcripts and updated audit.

The student along with their IUG adviser should complete the plan of study. Once completed and signed by their adviser, it should be given to the Graduate Programs Assistant to be included in the overall graduate application packet.

### IUG Degree Requirements

Students in the IUG program must complete the same requirements as normal M.S. students in Biomedical Engineering with the exception that up to 12 credits of coursework are allowed to double count for both undergraduate and graduate requirements. For the M.S. portion of the degree, a minimum of 30 credits and must include the following:

- 6 credits of biomedical engineering; 6 credits of life science; 6 credits of technical/quantitative/bioengineering electives
- 6 credits of BIOE 600 Thesis Research
- 1 credit of BME 591 Ethics
- BIOE 590 (Biomedical Engineering Colloquium); students must register for 590 every semester they are in attendance for the IUG program.
- At least 12 credits must be lecture based and at the 500 level, **NOT** including BME 591 or 590.
- 24 credits must be at the 500 level or above
- Up to 12 credits may be double counted for the undergraduate and graduate program. However, 6 of these credits must be at the 500 level.
- Completion of the online training in Responsible Conduct of Research, which may be included as part of BME 591.
- Completion of thesis and oral defense.

A complete final pdf copy of thesis to Graduate Programs Assistant. Upload final version of



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thesis to Graduate School and Schreyer Honors College.

## Semester Report

Each semester, an IUG Scholar must complete the [IUG Semester Report](#) and submit it to the Graduate School by February 15<sup>th</sup> for Spring semester, June 15<sup>th</sup> for Summer semester, and October 15<sup>th</sup> for Fall semester. It must be signed by the student, graduate program head, undergraduate program adviser or honors adviser, college Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education and the Graduate School/GES (114 Kern Building). This form is required by the Graduate School in order to properly process courses taken by an undergraduate student so they can be counted toward the graduate degree or toward both the graduate and undergraduate degrees. Failure to submit these Semester Reports will result in no graduate level transcript.

Once the student signs and the undergraduate adviser signs, the form needs to be given to the Graduate Program Assistant in the Biomedical Engineering department so that the other required signatures can be completed.

## X. Masters' Thesis Information

### How to submit a Masters' Thesis

- Become familiar with the format requirements by reading the Thesis Guide carefully <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/thesisdissertationguidepdf/>.
- Activate the intent to graduate on LionPath during the semester in which you plan to graduate. Go to ([gradschool.psu.edu/completing-your-degree](http://gradschool.psu.edu/completing-your-degree)) for deadlines. Upload a draft of your thesis for format review (Word or pdf file) to the eTD Web site ([Format Review](#)) the specified deadline. Corrections and detailed instructions will be returned to you by e-mail within two weeks.
- Make any changes required by adviser and readers. Receive approval in the form of signatures on the Masters' Approval Page.
- Review the thesis one final time to be sure that no further changes are needed. It will not be possible to make corrections after final approval by the Thesis Office. Convert the file to a pdf for eTD submission. If you cannot do this, contact the Thesis Office for assistance.
- Go to the eTD Web site (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/about-etds/>) and upload the final eTD. Submit supporting materials to the Thesis Office (Note: It doesn't matter if you upload first or submit the materials first). Supporting materials are: signed Master's Approval Page and thesis fee (cash or a check payable to Penn State; please write your student id number on the check. Please be sure to check the website for current fee.)
- Await notification of thesis approval by e-mail. If changes are required, you will be notified. Your eTD will be accessible on the eTD Web site immediately after graduation unless you have restricted access.

Check with your adviser to see if he/she wants a bound copy and if so, you must work out the payment arrangements. Pricing brochures are available (<http://www.multimediaprint.psu.edu>).

**NOTE:** It is the student's responsibility to check with the Graduate School for any changes or additions the Graduate School may have imposed after the printing of this handbook.

### Thesis/Dissertation Deadlines and Format Review

Every thesis and dissertation at Penn State must be reviewed and approved by the Thesis Office (a division of Graduate Enrollment Services). There are no exceptions.

Thesis deadlines (calendar) for each semester can be found on the Graduate School's Website at: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/thesisdissertationperformance-calendar/>

It is the responsibility of the thesis/dissertation author to be aware of and to meet deadlines for submission. **Failure to meet the specified deadlines will result in the removal of your name from the graduation list.** It is not necessary to submit the thesis/dissertation for format review a second time if graduation is postponed to a later semester.

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The length of time required for review of the thesis or dissertation by the Thesis Office varies according to the number of documents awaiting review at any given time. If you submit early in the semester, you will most likely get it back in less than a week. If you wait until the final deadline, it may take longer. In either case, you will be notified by e-mail when the review is completed.

## XI. Ph.D. Degree Requirements

Completing a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering consists of satisfying minimum course requirements, passing two formal exams (Qualifying Exam and Comprehensive Exam), and completing and defending a dissertation (Final Exam). The Ph.D. is a research-focused degree and research is expected to be the focus of students' energies with coursework providing depth of understanding and developing the breadth of knowledge expected of a doctoral candidate. Students are expected to begin their research work upon entering the program, and course requirements are set up with the expectation that during the first two years of study students spend at least half of their time carrying out research with the remainder devoted to coursework. Later years are devoted entirely to research activities. While the number of publications resulting from doctoral research varies, the general expectation is that Ph.D. students should publish at least three first-author publications prior to completing their dissertation. It is permissible (and recommended) to use content from the student's first-authored papers in the dissertation.

The policies described here apply to the Ph.D. degree in Biomedical Engineering. Official Graduate School policies covering all Ph.D. degrees at Penn State can be found at:

[University Bulletin | Penn State \(psu.edu\)](#)

### Ph.D. Course Requirements

Upon entering the Ph.D. program, the student will be assigned an academic advisory committee, consisting of three members of the Biomedical Engineering Graduate Faculty (including the adviser). Working with this committee, the student will select courses appropriate to their research and professional goals.

The minimum credit requirements for a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering are as follows:

- Total **minimum** number of course credits is 29.
- 20 credits must be earned at a Penn State Campus and recognized by the Graduate School.
- A minimum of 8 courses (24 credits) at the 400- or 500-level. This must include:
  - 6 credits of Biomedical Engineering and 6 credits Life Science, with the remainder being Technical/Quantitative/Biomedical Engineering Electives.
  - 12 of these credits (four courses) must be 500 level lecture or laboratory-based courses.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Cell and Molecular Biology BME 512
- Systems Physiology BME 597
- Numerical Method BME 504
- Statistical Analysis BME 597
- The other 12 credits can be 400 or 500-level lecture-based courses and cannot include the ethics course or colloquium (changed in 2018, applies retroactively to current students).
- At least 12 credits of BIOE 600 (Thesis Research)
- Ph.D. students must attend colloquium (BIOE 590, 1 credit) every fall and spring semester until they have passed their Comprehensive Exam for a **minimum** of 4 credits.
- 1 credit Biomedical Engineering Ethics and Professional Development, BME 591 (required for all graduate students-taken **during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester/offered in fall only**).
- Completion of online training in Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) see the following website for details: <https://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari%20also%20see%20page%2015> also see page 15. RCR required for all graduate students.
- Any other courses as determined by student's adviser and/or academic advisor committee.
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Students who enter the Ph.D. program with a Masters' degree will work with his/her advisory committee to determine the suitability of substitutions for courses already taken. For each course substitution a Graduate Course Substitution Form (included in the appendix) must be filled out and signed by the Director of the Graduate Program. Note that for Ph.D. coursework requirements, official credit transfers from other institutions are not used and this substitution form is used instead. These forms are included with Academic Advisory Committee Meeting summaries in the student's file.

## Biomedical Engineering Colloquium

The Biomedical Engineering Colloquium (BIOE 590) is held every week during the Fall and Spring semesters. All graduate students must register for BIOE 590 (1 credit) each semester in attendance. Ph.D. students must register for BIOE 590 (1 credit) until they have passed their Comprehensive Exam for a **minimum** of 4 credits. **Attendance is mandatory.**

### *Example Timeline for Biomedical Engineering Ph.D. Degree*

#### Semester 1

- In August, set up academic advisory committee and define course plan for year 1
- Take one to three 3-credit courses
- Take 1 credit BME 591 (Bioengineering Ethics and Professional Development)
- 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits (**if needed** to reach **12** credits)
- Take online Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research \*

#### Semester 2

- Take one to three 3-credit courses
- Take 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits (**if needed** to reach **12** credits)\*\*

#### Summer

- Take Qualifying Exam

#### Semester 3

- **Form Doctoral Committee and give yearly update to new Committee and plan courses for Year 2 (before classes begin)**
- Take one to three 3-credit courses
- Take 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits (**if needed** to reach **12** credits)\*\*

#### Semester 4

- Take one to three 3-credit courses
- Take 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits (**if needed** to reach **12** credits)\*\*

#### Year 3

- Present yearly update to Doctoral Committee and plan courses for Year 3 (before classes begin)
- Take any classes suggested by Doctoral Committee or relevant to research and career goals
- Take 1 credit BIOE 590 Colloquium until passing Comprehensive Exam
- **Take Comprehensive Exam if all required coursework is completed**
- Register for BIOE 600 research credits (12 total credits) until passing Comprehensive Exam

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and register for BIOE 601 after.\*\*

#### Years 4 and 5

- Carry out full-time research
- Meet with Doctoral Committee at least once per year and at least 6 months prior to final defense
- Complete and defend dissertation

**Note:** Ph.D. students are expected to carry out research full-time during all summers. In rare cases when appropriate courses are offered, students may also take coursework during summer terms.

\*Send CITI certificate to Graduate Program Assistant for Milestone completion.

\*\*Graduate Program Assistant must enroll students in BIOE 600/601. Send an email with PSU ID#, advisor name and # of credits needed for the semester. **MUST** sign Financial Agreement in LP first.

## XII. English Proficiency Exam

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is required to demonstrate a high level of competence in use of the English language, including reading, writing, and speaking, as part of the language and communication requirements for the Ph.D. (Note: this is separate from teaching assistant testing.)

To fulfill this requirement, the English proficiency of each doctoral student in Biomedical Engineering will be evaluated based upon the written and oral portions of the Qualifying Exam. Verbal communication skills will be assessed during the oral portion of the Qualifying Exam. The candidate's communication skills will be examined by the Qualifying Exam Committee and a judgment of acceptability will be made or a recommendation for remedial course work in English will be made.

Competence in English must be formally certified by all graduate programs before the doctoral **Comprehensive Exam** is scheduled. (International students should note that passage of the minimal TOEFL requirement does not demonstrate the level of competence expected of a Ph.D. from Penn State.) It is the responsibility of the student to meet these requirements by taking whatever remedial steps are necessary to demonstrate an acceptable command of the English language.

### XIII. Selecting an Academic Advisory Committee

Upon entering the program, the student will select an Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) consisting of three members of the Biomedical Engineering Graduate Faculty (including the adviser). The Committee will be selected based on the student's academic focus area. For Ph.D. students, an effort will be made for these same faculty to be responsible for administering the Qualifying Exam at the end of the first year.

The Academic Advisory Committee is responsible for working with the student and adviser to select coursework for the student based on the background, thesis area, and future goals of the student. All students must meet the minimum course requirements of the program, but the AAC has final say on what courses need to be taken by the student to best train them, independent of minimum requirements.

- **Committee will meet at least once a year and in time to help student select courses (generally during week before classes start in August). There is a form to be completed and turned in to the graduate program coordinator verifying that you have met.**
  - For every yearly meeting, students will create 1-page document summarizing the hypothesis (or goals) and specific aims of the project, a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation and current resume. Committee will complete progress report form and a completed audit form and attach to the aims page and hard copy of presentation slides. All documents should be given to the graduate programs coordinator to be placed in the student's academic folder.
- For IUG and Masters' students, the academic advisory committee will generally serve as their thesis reading committee.
- For Ph.D. students, the Doctoral Committee will replace the academic advisory committee after completion of the second year of the Ph.D. and before registering for the Comprehensive Exam.



## XIV. Ph.D. Qualifying Exam

### Policy Statement

The primary purpose of the Qualifying Examination is to provide an early assessment of whether the student has the potential to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes the program has defined in its formal Learning Objectives, including evidence of critical thinking skills, necessary for a successful researcher in the disciplinary field.

- a. The Qualifying Examination is conducted early in a student's program to ensure that the considerable investment of time, resources, and effort required by the student has a high likelihood of leading to completion of the Ph.D.
- b. Additionally, the Qualifying Examination may assess if the student is well grounded in the fundamental knowledge of the discipline.

**Scheduling:** It is the responsibility of the major Graduate Program Head to ensure that the Qualifying Examination is scheduled within the required time limits as defined below.

**All students must take the Qualifying Examination within three semesters (not counting the summer semester) of entry into the doctoral program.**

- Students who have been identified as Master's-Along-the-Way upon admission into the graduate program may be allowed an extension such that the three-semester time limit will begin upon completion of the master's degree.
- Students pursuing dual-title degrees must take the Qualifying Examination within four semesters (not counting the summer semester) of entry into the doctoral program.

**To be eligible to take the Qualifying Examination the student must have:**

- Earned **at least 18 credits** in courses eligible to be counted toward the graduate degree (these may be graduate credits earned previously at other recognized institutions from which transfer credits would be accepted) or the equivalent as determined and documented by the program.
- A grade-point average of 3.00 or greater for work done at the University while a graduate student.
- No incomplete or deferred grades.

The Qualifying Exam is the first of three formal exams required for a Ph.D. The exam is taken at the end of the first year of study, typically during the week following Spring semester final exam week. The exam is also given at the end of Fall semester. The purpose of the Qualifying Exam is to ensure that students possess the qualifications expected of a Ph.D. student and have the potential to perform at the high level expected of a Ph.D. biomedical engineer upon completion of the degree. **The format of the exam** is a written proposal on a research topic different from the student's dissertation project, followed by an oral defense.

The focus of the exam is to provide convincing evidence that the candidate has the creativity, maturity and confidence to carry out Ph.D. level biomedical engineering research. Candidates are evaluated on the following criteria:

- (1) Demonstration of a mastery of the course work undertaken during the current graduate program and prior undergraduate and/or graduate academic programs. This coursework includes

engineering, mathematics, the physical and chemical sciences, and biology at the molecular, cellular, and systems levels.

(2) A well-defined and superior ability to approach the solution of new problems by the methodical and logical application of sound scientific methods based upon fundamental principles of engineering and the physical sciences.

(3) The ability to write a coherent and rigorous proposal and present it orally to the committee.

(4) An ability to demonstrate extensive general knowledge of a traditional engineering or physical science discipline in which the candidate possesses a major and readily recognizable strength.

### Qualifying Exam Proposal Topic

The student is responsible for defining the topic of the proposal. Advisers and others may be consulted to refine the research topic. The proposal must be on new research (not problems that have already been solved). The topic can be broadly related to the student's research area, but the proposal must:

- outline research that is distinct from the student's research project,
- be different from other research being carried out in the lab,
- not overlap with any past grant proposals written by the student's adviser.

Proposals can cover either hypothesis-based or design-directed research. Proposals must combine tools/topics from both the biological sciences and engineering, and students should make an effort to integrate engineering tools and quantitative analysis into their proposals.

### Applying for the Qualifying Exam

The student must submit an application for the Qualifying Exam **by noon on the Friday** that falls 5 weeks before the end of the spring semester. The application (see Appendix H) consists of a title, a 250-word summary of the proposal, and suggested list of committee members. Applications are reviewed by the Qualifying Exam committee as to their suitability for an exam topic, and either approved or returned with suggestions for modifications of the proposal. Approvals are given one week after submission. The student will be given four weeks to complete the proposal. Oral defenses will be scheduled on the week after the Spring semester final exam week. Students are expected to be available and on campus for scheduling the oral defense. The specific dates will be given at the beginning of each semester.

### Written Proposal

The student will prepare a research proposal suitable for a Ph.D. level research project. The proposal will be in the form of an *NIH R21* research grant consisting of a title page, specific aims page, research strategy, and full reference list.

Researching the literature will be the primary tool for developing the proposal. The student may solicit technical advice and consult with experts on campus and in the department as a way to learn about critical techniques, instruments and key experiments. Otherwise, the adviser and other faculty should not be consulted to read and critique rough drafts of the proposal beyond the specific aims. Students are encouraged to solicit critiques on writing and presentation from fellow students. Students should not carry out research to generate preliminary data for their Qualifying Exam.

The format of the research proposal will consist of the following sections, with recommended page limitations:

### **I. Title Page (see Appendix)**

- (a) Provide a succinct title for the proposal and the estimated starting and ending dates of the research.
- (b) Name of the student.
- (c) Name of dissertation adviser.

### **II. Proposal format for Specific Aims and Research Strategy**

All text should be typed single space. Arial font with a size of 11 points should be used. 0.5-inch margin should be used on the top, bottom and sides of each page. Each page should be numbered at the bottom. Figures should all have legends, and images taken from the literature should be properly referenced. Proposals that do not adhere to the format requirements will be rejected without an oral defense.

### **III. Specific Aims (1 page)**

State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology. A figure on the specific aims page is allowed.

### **IV. Research Strategy (6 pages)**

Significance (0.5-1 pages): Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses. Describe the scientific premise for the proposed project, including consideration of strengths and weaknesses of published research or preliminary data crucial to the support of your application. Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields. Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

Innovation (0.5 pages): Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms. Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions. Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.

Approach (the remainder of the 6 pages): Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Describe the experimental design and methods proposed and how they will achieve robust and unbiased results. Statistical tests to assess significance should be described. Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims. If the project is in the early stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high-risk aspects of the proposed work.

### **V. References (no page limit)**

Provide a list of all references cited in the above sections that is in the format of articles written for major journals, such as Nature. Citations within the text may be made by either author (year) or by number.

Provide the full citation in the bibliography, i.e., authors, title, journal, volume, page numbers and year. The student is expected to have critically read and understood the publications that provide the foundation of their proposal. It is recommended to limit the number of references to a maximum of 40. The use of EndNote, Mendeley, or equivalent bibliographic software is strongly recommended. Sample R21 grants can be found at: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/sample-applications>.

Students submit a PDF file of the completed proposal by noon on the Friday the proposal is due to the Graduate Program Assistant, Virginia Simparosa (vls5248@psu.edu). She will coordinate with the student and committee to select a time for the oral defense of the proposal.

## Qualifying Exam - Oral Defense and Evaluation

A two-hour oral exam will be scheduled following submission of the written proposal. During the oral exam, the student will present a 12-minute (maximum) overview of the proposal, which will be followed by a period of questions and answers from the committee. Students should bring a hard copy of the proposal to the exam and are allowed written notes, *but PowerPoint slides and overheads are prohibited*—this is a “chalk talk.” Student will have use of the blackboard/whiteboard and the committee will have a copy of the proposal, so the student can refer the committee to specific figures in the proposal. The committee will be charged with the task of evaluating the proposal and any questionable areas established by the student’s academic record. Students are expected to be particularly well grounded in technical areas closely related to the proposal.

A standing Qualifying Exam committee, made up of at least four Biomedical Engineering Faculty plus the student’s adviser, will administer the exam. The adviser should attend however, they cannot participate in exam scoring. The committee will grade the written and oral components in areas using a five-point scale with 1.0 being the best and 5.0 being the lowest. See the Appendix for a copy of the Qualifying Exam Evaluation form. Scores from all committee members are averaged and in each category a score of **better than a 3.5** is defined as passing a category. To receive a passing grade for the Qualifying Exam, a student must receive a score **better than 3.5 on at least six of these seven categories**. If a student’s performance is unsatisfactory in two areas, they may retake the exam on just these two categories in the next semester and must then pass both categories. Unsatisfactory performance in three or more categories will require the student to retake the entire exam in the following semester. If the student does not pass all seven criteria [or just the two that need to be retaken] on the second attempt, **the student may not continue with the Ph.D.** In this case, the student may obtain a Master’s degree upon completion of the requirements for that degree.

Students will be notified of the outcome of their exam within one week of the oral defense. Upon passing the Qualifying Exam, notification of the passing of the Qualifying Exam is forwarded to the Graduate School and the student is then classified as a Ph.D. Candidate in Biomedical Engineering.

## Qualifying Exam – Requesting Accommodations

If there is any reason why you are unable to take the Qualifying Exam during the normal exam schedule (e.g., illness, personal/family difficulties, mental health issues, etc.), you should request an accommodation by contacting the Chair of the Qualifying Exam Committee. These accommodation requests must be made prior to taking the exam. Additionally, if you would like to request any accommodations to the exam format, you may contact Penn State Student Disability Resources (<http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources>) and discuss your options.

## Qualifying Exam – Grad School Policy

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-604-qualifying-exam/>

## XV. Committee Formation

### Doctoral Committee

In preparation for the Comprehensive Exam, students, together with their adviser, must form a Doctoral Committee. The Doctoral Committee consists of a minimum of four members of the Graduate Faculty including the adviser, who serves as the chair. The adviser must be a member of the Graduate Degree Program in Biomedical Engineering. At least two committee members must be members of the degree program in Biomedical Engineering. The committee must also include an “Outside Field Member” who is not a member of the faculty of Biomedical Engineering. Finally, at least one member of the doctoral committee must have his/her primary appointment outside the administrative unit in which the adviser’s primary appointment is held. The Graduate School will approve the committee and notify all persons.

Detailed information regarding the makeup of the committee is on the Committee Appointment form.

**The Committee Appointment Signature Form MUST be completed at least 3 weeks prior to the Comprehensive exam, but preferably after passing the Qualifying Exam.** Once the form is filled out, the student will return the form to the **Graduate Programs Assistant** for submission to the Graduate School. All signatures are obtained electronically through Adobe Sign.

\*Please note if a committee member is added or dropped from the committee any time before the final exam is taken, it is the responsibility of the graduate student to notify the graduate programs coordinator, as a new Committee Appointment Signature Form needs to be completed and processed by the Graduate School.

## XVI. Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam

### Comprehensive Exam Policies

The next step toward the Ph.D. degree is the Comprehensive Exam, which is given when the candidate has completed all required course work. The Comprehensive Exam is generally given between the end of the second year and the end of the third year of the Ph.D. program and must take place at least one year prior to the Ph.D. dissertation defense (final exam). The exam is intended to evaluate the candidate's mastery of the major (and if appropriate, minor) field. The Biomedical Engineering Program uses the Comprehensive Exam as an opportunity to evaluate the Ph.D. student's dissertation proposal. In preparation for the exam, the student must form a Doctoral Committee, schedule an exam time, and prepare a detailed Ph.D. dissertation proposal according to departmental guidelines.

A candidate for the Ph.D. must have satisfied the English competence and the communication requirement before taking the Comprehensive Exam. This requirement is fulfilled during the oral Qualifying Exam. All candidates are required to have a minimum grade-point average of **3.00** for work done at the University at the time the Comprehensive Exam is given and may not have deferred or missing grades. The student must be registered for the semester in which the Comprehensive Exam is taken. The student can be registered for BIOE 600 to satisfy this requirement. The student must have the Comprehensive Exam request form completed via the **Graduate Programs Assistant** and then approved by the Graduate School before the Comprehensive Exam can be given.

The exam is scheduled and announced officially by the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services upon recommendation of the Biomedical Engineering Graduate Officer or Department Head, by forwarding the exam forms to the Graduate Programs Coordinator. **\*\*Two weeks' notice is required by the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services for scheduling this exam.** Therefore, three weeks' notice is required to submit to the Graduate Programs Assistant. The exam is given and evaluated by the entire doctoral committee. A favorable vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the Committee is required to pass. In case of failure, it is the responsibility of the Doctoral Committee to determine whether the candidate may take another exam. The results are reported to the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services via the signed exam form that is returned directly through an electronic process.

The comprehensive examination may be held fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid with some individuals participating in-person while others participate remotely. Student preference for delivery mode should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree on the mode. If the student and adviser cannot agree on the mode, the Graduate Program Head will make the final decision. Either the student or adviser can appeal the decision of the Graduate Program Head to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education for the College of Engineering.

When a period of more than six years has elapsed between the passing of the Comprehensive Exam and the completion of the program, the student is required to pass a second Comprehensive Exam before the final oral exam will be scheduled.

### Format of the Comprehensive Exam

As part of the Comprehensive Exam, Ph.D. candidates are required to submit a pdf version of the dissertation proposal to their Doctoral Committee. **PDF versions of the written proposal must be given to all Committee Members at least one week prior to the exam.** Failure to meet this deadline will result in postponement of the exam. Send a PDF copy to the Graduate Program Assistant for your record.

It should be read by the primary adviser and revised by the student prior to submitting it to the Doctoral Committee.

The oral component of the Comprehensive Exam is a two-hour closed-door session in which the candidate prepares a 30-minute PowerPoint presentation (roughly 25 slides) based on their work to date and content of their proposal. The Committee will ask questions and evaluate the student's mastery of coursework, broad knowledge of their field, and specific details of their proposal.

The objective of the dissertation proposal is three-fold. First, the proposal itself serves to outline the course of the student's proposed research program with sufficient detail so that the student's adviser and members of the doctoral committee may provide useful guidance and input into design and execution of the proposed research plan. Secondly, the act of writing the proposal enables the student to map out a clear course of research activities that are logical and methodical. Third, writing the proposal serves as a training exercise that will be of use to the student in the preparation of future applications for research funding. Where applicable, this document can be submitted as training grant proposal to the NIH or other funding agencies.

### Format of the Comprehensive Exam Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal

The format of the proposal will be similar in style to an NIH R21 proposal. Examples of NIH proposals can be found online at: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/sample-applications>. The proposal should contain the following sections:

#### **I. Title Page** (see Appendix)

#### **II. Summary** (1/2 page)

State the proposal's broad, long-term objectives and specific aims, making reference to the health or biology relatedness of the project. Describe concisely the research design and methods for achieving these goals. Avoid summaries of past accomplishments and the use of the first person. This abstract is meant to serve as a succinct and accurate description of the proposed work when separated from the proposal. Do not exceed the ½ page limit. Make the summary page separate from title page and specific aims.

#### **III. Specific Aims** (1-page limit)

State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology. A figure on the specific aims page is allowed.

#### **IV. Research Strategy** (6 pages)

##### Significance (max. 2 pages):

Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress in the field that the proposed project addresses. Describe the scientific premise for the proposed project, including consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of published research or preliminary data crucial to the support of your application. Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability,

and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields. Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

**Innovation** (max. ½ page):

Explain how the application challenges and seeks to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms. Describe any novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation or interventions to be developed or used, and any advantage over existing methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions. Explain any refinements, improvements, or new applications of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions.

**Approach** (the remainder of the 6 pages):

Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Describe the experimental design and methods proposed and how they will achieve robust and unbiased results. Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims. If the project is in the early stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high-risk aspects of the proposed work. Provide a tentative sequence and timetable for the investigation.

## **V. Bibliography**

Provide a list of all references cited in the above sections that is in the format of articles written for major journals, such as the American Journal of Physiology or Journal of Biomechanics. Citations within the text may be made by either author (year) or by number. Provide the full citation in the bibliography, i.e. authors, title, journal, volume, page numbers and year. The student is expected to have critically read and understood the publications that provide the foundation of their proposal. There is no limit to the number of references for the thesis proposal. The use of EndNote, Mendeley, or equivalent bibliographic software is strongly recommended.

## **VI. Appendix**

The student should include as an appendix any manuscripts on which he/she is first or middle author and which have been published, accepted, or submitted to date as part of their doctoral studies. The committee will use these manuscripts along with preliminary data in the proposal to evaluate the student's progress to date. There is no page limit or format requirements for the appendix.

All text in the proposal (not including the appendix) should be typed single space and a minimum font size of 11 points should be used. A minimum ¾-inch margin should be maintained on the top, bottom and sides of each page. Each page should be numbered at the bottom. Figures should all have legends, and images taken from the literature should be properly referenced.

## **Approvals**

The dissertation proposal must be approved by the Dissertation Adviser and all members of the student's Doctoral Committee. *In addition, program approval by the Biomedical Engineering Program Chair is also required.* The Biomedical Engineering Program Chair will review the proposal to ensure conformity to these guidelines and Graduate School regulations, and to ensure that adequate facilities and program commitments are available to facilitate completion of the proposed studies.



## XVII. Final Dissertation Defense

The doctoral candidate who has satisfied all other requirements for the degree will be scheduled by the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services, via the **Graduate Programs Coordinator**, on the recommendation of the Biomedical Engineering Program Chair, to take a final exam. **\*\*Three weeks' notice is required by the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services for scheduling this exam\*\***. According to Biomedical Engineering Program policy, the final oral exam may not be scheduled until at least one year after the Comprehensive Exam was passed. Every Ph.D. student must meet with their Doctoral Committee ***within 6 months of their Final Dissertation defense date***. This meeting is to preview the dissertation structure with the committee and to ensure that the student, advisor, and committee all agree on expectations for the dissertation and defense.

**It is the responsibility of the doctoral candidate to provide a copy of the dissertation to each member of the Doctoral Committee and Program Chair at least two weeks before the date of the scheduled exam**. The copy given to the Committee must be complete and have been thoroughly edited by the Advisor. Failure to meet this deadline with a completed dissertation will necessitate rescheduling of the final exam. Consult with your Committee regarding the preference of a printed copy or a PDF.

Candidates must be continuously registered and maintain their student status until they pass the final oral exam, and their dissertation is accepted by their Doctoral Committee. This may be satisfied by registering (fall and spring semesters); BIOE 601 and BIOE 610 are for Ph.D. dissertation preparation and are full-time, non-credit courses.

Both the Dissertation Adviser and the student are responsible for ensuring the completion of a draft of the dissertation and for adequate consultation with members of the Doctoral Committee well in advance of the oral exam. Major revisions to the dissertation should be completed before this exam. The dissertation should be in its final draft, with appropriate notes, bibliography, tables, etc., at the time of the oral exam; both the content and style should be correct and polished by the time the final draft of the dissertation is in the hands of the Committee.

The final exam of the doctoral candidate is an oral exam administered and evaluated by the entire Doctoral Committee. It consists of an oral presentation of the dissertation by the candidate and a period of questions and responses. These will relate in large part to the dissertation, but may cover the candidate's entire program of study, because a major purpose of the exam is also to assess the general scholarly achievements of the candidate. The portion of the exam in which the dissertation is presented is open to the public. This public session is followed by a closed-door session of the candidate and the committee in which more detailed questions and specific concerns of committee members are addressed. Following this discussion, the candidate is excused from the room, the committee decides on pass or fail, and the candidate is then notified of their status.

The final examination may be held fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid with some individuals participating in-person while others participate remotely. Student preference for delivery mode should be strongly considered, but the student and adviser must agree on the mode. If the student and adviser cannot agree on the mode, the Graduate Program Head will make the final decision. Either the student or adviser can appeal the decision of the Graduate Program Head to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education for the College of Engineering. The exam request and a request for exceptions must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Enrollment Services, via the **Graduate Programs Assistant**, for approval **at least three weeks prior to the date of the exam**.

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A favorable vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the Committee is required to pass. The results of the exam are reported to the Office of Graduate Enrollment Services, via the Graduate Programs Assistant. If a candidate fails, it is the responsibility of the Doctoral Committee to determine whether another exam may be taken.

\*\*If a member of the Committee needs to be changed, a new committee signatory page needs to be signed and submitted to the Graduate School for approval. This must be completed at least 2 weeks prior to the exam. Please see the Graduate Programs Coordinator for assistance.

\*\*\*Once the final dissertation is uploaded to the Graduate School, **a pdf version must be submitted to the Graduate Programs Coordinator to keep on file in the department.**

## XVIII. Doctoral Dissertation Information

### How to Submit a Doctoral Dissertation

- Become familiar with the format requirements by reading the Dissertation Guide carefully (<http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/current/thesis.html>).
- Activate the intent to graduate on LionPath during the semester in which you plan to graduate. Go to <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/thesisdissertationperformance-calendar/> for deadlines.
- Upload a draft of your dissertation for format review to the eTD Web site: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/about-etds/> by the format review deadline. Corrections and detailed instructions will be returned to you by email within two weeks. (Note: the format review can be done either before or after the oral defense, as long as the deadline is met.)
- Make any changes required by your Committee and Office of Theses and Dissertations. Receive approval from the committee in the form of signatures on the doctoral approval page.
- Review the dissertation one last time to be sure that no further changes are needed. It will not be possible to make corrections after final approval by the Office of Theses and Dissertations. Upload the final dissertation, as a pdf file, to the eTD Web site by the deadline.
- Submit the supporting materials to the Office of Theses and Dissertations (this may be done either before or after you upload your file). Supporting materials are: signed doctoral approval page, ProQuest/UMI Agreement, Survey of Earned Doctorates, and \$95 fee (cash or check). All forms can be found at <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/current/thesis.html>.
- Await notification of approval (if further changes are required, you will be notified).
- All thesis and dissertation submissions will be digitally approved by their committee members via the eTD application. This allows committee members the ability to review the previously vetted document and give their approval electronically. All requested changes by the committee following the final defense should be communicated to the student and completed **before** the final document is uploaded to the eTD site. (Changes that are requested to the document after submission to the eTD require the review and approval of each committee member and the Graduate School every time a change is made.)
- Following the approval of the thesis/dissertation by the Office of Theses and Dissertations, each Committee member will receive an email directing them to the ETDA link (Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Application). Upon login a list of the submission(s) that require attention can be viewed.
- Following the approval of the Committee members, the Chair/Head of the program will receive an email requesting their approval.
- Provide one pdf copy to the department via email to the **Graduate Programs Coordinator**. Check with your adviser to see if he/she wants a bound copy and if so, you must work out the payment arrangements.

## Thesis/Dissertation Deadlines and Format Review

Every thesis and dissertation at Penn State must be reviewed and approved by the Thesis Office (a division of Graduate Enrollment Services). There are no exceptions.

Thesis deadlines (calendar) for each semester can be found on the Graduate School's Website at: <http://gradschool.psu.edu/current-students/etd/thesisdissertationperformance-calendar/>

It is the responsibility of the thesis/dissertation author to be aware of and to meet deadlines for submission. **Failure to meet the specified deadlines will result in the removal of your name from the graduation list.** It is not necessary to submit the thesis/dissertation for format review a second time if graduation is postponed to a later semester.

The length of time required for review of the thesis or dissertation by the Thesis Office varies according to the number of documents awaiting review at any given time. If you submit early in the semester, you will most likely get it back in less than a week. If you wait until the final deadline, it may take longer. In either case, you will be notified by e-mail when the review is completed.

## XIX. Intent to Graduate

You must apply to graduate on LionPath during the semester in which you plan to graduate. This will put your name on the graduation list so that a diploma is printed for you. If you fail to meet the other deadlines (e.g., submission of the thesis/dissertation for format review), your intent to graduate will be removed. It does not carry over to the next semester.

<https://www.registrar.psu.edu/graduation/intent.cfm>

### Final Submission, Approval, and Letter of Certification

The Graduate School, the University Libraries, and the graduate faculty of Penn State have established format standards that a thesis or dissertation must meet before receiving final approval as fulfillment of a graduate requirement. The Office of Theses and Dissertations is the unit of the Graduate School responsible for certifying that theses and dissertations have been prepared in accordance with these established regulations.

Every thesis and dissertation must be reviewed by the Office of Theses and Dissertations for format only and are not edited for spelling, grammar, or punctuation. Masters' papers are not reviewed by the Office of Theses and Dissertations.

When a thesis or dissertation is submitted to the Office of Theses and Dissertations, it must meet the formatting and deadline requirements set forth in the Thesis and Dissertation Guide. All doctoral dissertations and masters' theses must be submitted electronically. For more information on electronic theses and dissertations (eTDs), visit the eTD website.

When the final thesis/dissertation is uploaded, it is examined once more to make certain that the required revisions have been made and all the pages are present. If everything is in order, the document will be approved and the author will be notified of the approval. The eTD will be available online immediately after the degree conferral date (unless restriction is requested). **Without exception, changes cannot be made to the thesis or dissertation after approval by the Thesis Office, so it is important to carefully proofread the thesis/dissertation before final submission.**

All thesis and dissertation submissions will be digitally approved by their committee members via the eTD application. This allows committee members the ability to review the previously vetted document and give their approval electronically. All requested changes by the committee following the final defense should be communicated to the student and completed **before** the final document is uploaded to the eTD site. (Changes that are requested to the document after submission to the eTD require the review and approval of each committee member and the Graduate School every time a change is made.)

Following the approval of the thesis/dissertation by the Office of Theses and Dissertations, each committee member will receive an email directing them to the ETDA link (Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Application). Upon login a list of the submission(s) that require attention can be viewed.

Following the approval of the committee members, the chair/head of the program will receive an email requesting their approval.

There will be a hard deadline each semester for the electronic approval process to be completed. If that deadline is not met, the student will graduate the following semester.

If you require documentation stating that you have met the requirements for the degree before graduation, you may apply to Graduate Enrollment Services in 114 Kern Building (814-865-1795) for a Letter of

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Certification. You should apply for this letter at least two weeks before you need it. The letter will be provided only after approval of your final dissertation.

## APPENDIX A: Biomedical Engineering Graduate Faculty

**Igor Aronson**, \* Ph.D., Huck Chair Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Chemistry, and Mathematics. Biophysics, materials science, and applied mathematics and chemistry.

**Justin Brown**, \* Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering; Associate Department Head; Undergraduate Program Coordinator. Tissue engineering and regenerative medicine.

**Peter Butler**, \* Ph.D., Associate Dean for Education and Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Membrane biophysics, cell mechanotransduction, vascular physiology; use of quantitative light microscopy to investigate the molecular bases of vascular function.

**William Hancock**, \* Ph.D., Professor of Biomedical Engineering Motor proteins, cytoskeletal mechanics, quantitative cell biology.

**Daniel Hayes**, \* Ph.D., Department Head of Biomedical Engineering; Professor of Biomedical Engineering; Director, Center of Excellence in Industrial Biotechnology, Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences & Materials Research Institute. Biomaterials, engineering for applications ranging from regenerative medicine to lab-on-a-chip technologies.

**Deb Kelly**, \* Ph.D., Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Director of Center for Structural Oncology. Cryo-EM, structural biology, In situ TEM, breast cancer, glioblastoma, pancreatic cancer.

**Sri-Rajasekhar Kothapalli**, \* Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Focuses on developing novel optical, ultrasound and photoacoustic imaging/sensing technologies for both pre-clinical and clinical applications in cancer and neurological diseases'

**Nina Lauharatanahirun**, \* Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Biobehavioral Health.

**Yuguo (Leo) Lei**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering; Graduate Program Coordinator. Sartorius Cell Culture Facility, Huck Institutes of Life Sciences; Cell therapy, cell manufacturing, biomaterials.

**Xiaojun (Lance) Lian**, \* Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Directed Differentiation of human pluripotent stem cells to cardiovascular, blood, brain, and pancreatic cell lineages.

**Xiao Liu**, \* Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Developing and integrating multimodal neuroimaging techniques and computational methods.

**Keefe Manning**, \* Ph.D., Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Schreyer Honors College, Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Hemodynamics, pediatric heart defects, blood rheology and cardiovascular prosthetics.

**Scott Medina**, \* Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Cell Signaling and Cancer, Nanomedicine and Drug Delivery, Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine.

**Justin Pritchard**, \* Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Cell and Molecular Bioengineering, Cell Signaling and Cancer.

**Spencer Szczesny**, \* Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Tendon/ligament, multiscale mechanics, computational modeling, mechanobiology.

**Meghan Vidt**, \* Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Musculoskeletal, Shoulder, Upper Limb, Medical Imaging, Orthopaedic.

**Yong Wang**, \* Ph.D., Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Using synthetic oligonucleotides and polymers to develop antibody-like nanomaterials, programmable protein delivery systems, and tissue-like nanostructured biomaterials.

**Pak Kin Wong**, Ph.D., \* Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Advanced biomanufacturing and microfluidics to study collective cell migration, and cancer metastasis. BioMEMS for clinical diagnostics.

**Cunjiang Yu**, \* Ph.D., Associate Professor Biomedical Engineering.

**Nanyin Zhang**, \* Ph.D., Professor of Biomedical Engineering. Translational Neuroimaging and Systems Neuroscience.

## APPENDIX B: Graduate Faculty with Courtesy Appointment in Biomedical Engineering

**James Adair**, Ph.D., Professor of Material Science and Engineering, and Biomedical Engineering. Nanoscale materials and phenomena for biological, electronic, optical, and structural applications; property manipulation for designer particles and materials; colloid and interfacial chemistry; material synthesis and chemistry; powder and material characterization; and powder processing.

**Jean Paul Allain**, Ph.D., Lloyd and Dorothy Foehr Huck Chair and Professor of Nuclear Engineering

**Harry Allcock**, Ph.D., Evan Pugh Professor of Chemistry. Application of chemical synthesis to polymer chemistry, materials science, and biomedicine; and the chemical synthesis of new materials to generate useful combinations of properties.

**Huanyu Cheng**, Ph.D., James L. Henderson, Jr. Memorial Associate Professor of Engineering Science and Mechanics.

**Daniel Cortes Corrales**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering. Aims to develop non-invasive techniques to diagnose and evaluate treatment strategies for degenerative disease and injuries in orthopaedic tissues.

**Francesco Costanzo**, Ph.D., Professor of Engineering Science and Mechanics. Clot fracture mechanics with applications in surgical therapy of acute stroke.

**Nikki Crowley**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Biology.

**Wayne Curtis**, Ph.D., Professor of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology. Biotechnology, plant biology pharmaceutical production using plants.

**Melik Demirel**, Ph.D., Professor of Engineering Science & Mechanics. Synthesis and fabrication of functional materials, bioinspired engineering, biointerfaces, multi-scale computing for biological systems.

**Michele Diaz**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology and Linguistics. Director of Human Imaging at the Social, Life, and Engineering Sciences Imaging Center. Using fMRI to understand regions of brain related to speech.

**Nikolay Dokholyan**, Ph.D., Professor of Pharmacology, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and Biomedical Engineering.

**Patrick Drew**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Engineering Science & Mechanics and Neurosurgery. Neurovascular coupling, vascular development, neurophysiology, neural engineering.

**Jing Du**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering. Solid mechanics, Fracture mechanics, Biomechanics, Biomaterials, Bio-inspired design, Medical devices, Electronic devices.

**Aida Ebrahimi**, Ph.D., Associate Professor Electrical Engineering.

**Mary Frecker**, Ph.D., Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Biomedical Engineering. Mechanical design, compliant mechanisms, design optimization, medical devices.

**Andris Freivalds**, Ph.D., Professor of Industrial Engineering. Industrial ergonomics, cumulative trauma disorders, biomechanics, work physiology.

**Bruce Gluckman**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Engineering Science & Mechanics, neurosurgery and biomedical engineering. Dynamical and pattern forming systems.

**Esther Gomez**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering and Biomedical Engineering. Biomechanics, fibrosis and cancer, tissue engineering, biosensors.

**Weihua Guan**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. Electro-fluidic and opto-fluidic devices and systems for biosensing and actuation, bioMEMS/NEMS, Lab-on-a-chip, Micro/Nanofluidics, Electrokinetic Phenomena, Point-of-care Testing.

**William Higgins**, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of electrical engineering and biomedical engineering. 3-D/4-D medical imaging analysis and visualization and virtual endoscopy.

**Xiaogang Hu**, Ph.D., Dorothy Foehr and J. Lloyd Huck Chair in Neurorehabilitation.

**Yun Jing**, Ph.D., Professor in Applied Sciences.

**Christine Keating**, Ph.D., Professor of Chemistry. Biological interfaces, experimental models for intracellular organization, biomolecular- nanoparticle conjugates, multiplexed biosensors.

**Reuben Kraft**, Ph.D., Shuman Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering. Computational solid mechanics, finite element analysis, numerical modeling, blast physics, high performance computing.

**Michael Krane**, Ph.D., Research Associated in Applied Research Laboratory. Experimental studies in unsteady fluid mechanics: fluid- structure interaction, acoustics, speech sound production, sleep apnea, snoring, multiphase flows.

**Robert Kunz**, Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Applied Research Laboratory and Professor of Aerospace Engineering. CFD algorithm/code development, biomedical engineering and biological system simulation, turbulence modeling and turbulence dispersion.

**Gregory Lewis**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation. Development and Testing of a Novel Simulation Technology for Fracture Treatment Education.

**Jean-Michel Mongeau**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering. Biomechanics and Bioengineering,



Neuromechanics, Sensors & Controls.

**Thomas Neuberger**, Ph.D., research associate in the Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences and Assistant Professor in biomedical engineering. Imaging techniques of MRI.

**Ibrahim Ozbolat**, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Engineering Science and Mechanics. Bioprinting and Tissue Engineering.

**Dipanjin Pan**, Ph.D., Huck Chair Professor and Professor of Nuclear Engineering.

**Elizabeth Procotor**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery, Pharmacology, Biomedical Engineering and Engineering Science & Mechanics.

**Gerson Rosenberg**, Ph.D., Jane A. Fetter Professor of Surgery and Biomedical Engineering. Mechanical circulatory assistance, the electric artificial heart, artificial organs.

**Robert Sainburg**, Ph.D., Professor of Kinesiology. Neural mechanisms underlying control of multijoint arm movements in humans.

**Howard Salis**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, and Chemical Engineering. Synthetic Biology, Genetic compilers, Metabolic Engineering.

**Amir Sheikhi**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor Chemical Engineering

**Christopher Siedlecki**, Ph.D., Professor of Surgery and Biomedical Engineering. Cardiovascular biomaterials, structure/function, relationships of proteins and surfaces, protein and cellular interactions and implanted biomaterials, surface modification and characterization, scanning probe microscopy.

**Julianna Simon**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Acoustics and Biomedical Engineering

**Hongtao Sun**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

**Akif Undar**, Ph.D., Professor of Pediatrics, Surgery and Biomedical Engineering.

**Jennifer Wagner**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor Engineering Design

**William Weiss**, Ph.D., Professor of Surgery and Biomedical Engineering. Implantable circulatory support devices, electromechanics, transcutaneous energy transmission.

**Tak Sing Wong**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering. Bioinspired engineering, Interfacial engineering, Micro- and Nano-manufacturing.

**Hui Yang**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering. Healthcare informatics and signal processing, sensor- based modeling and analysis of complex systems, nonlinear stochastic dynamics.

**Qing Yang**, Ph.D., Professor of Radiology and Biomedical Engineering. Ultra-fast imaging, pulse sequence and k-space sampling method developments; fMRI; high field MRI/NMR (susceptibility effects, dielectric effects); RF coil design.

**Sulin Zhang**, Ph.D., Professor of Engineering Science & Mechanics and Biomedical Engineering. Mechanics of nanostructured materials, small-scale contacts and nano-bio interfaces, cellular mechanics, biomechanics and multi-scale methods across different length and time scales.

**Ruobo Zhou**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Chemistry

**Tao Zhou**, Ph.D., Assistant Professor Engineering Science and Mechanics.

## APPENDIX C: Biomedical Engineering Graduate Courses:

*These courses will have the BME designation instead of BIOE in the future they may not be offered every semester*

- 501 BIOENGINEERING TRANSPORT PHENOMENA** (3 cr.) Application of the equations of mass, energy, and momentum conservation to physiological phenomena and to the design of artificial organs.
- 503 FLUID MECHANICS OF BIOENGINEERING SYSTEMS** (3 cr.) Cardiovascular system and blood flow, non-Newtonian fluid description, vessel flows, unsteady flows and wave motion, wind-kessel theory, TRANSMISSION line theory.
- 504 NUMERICAL METHODS IN BIOENGINEERING** (3 cr.) Numerical methods and computational techniques for modeling physiological systems and medical devices. Topics include differentiation equations, finite difference methods and finite element methods. Programming and finite element modeling software will be covered. Examples include physiological systems at the organ and cellular levels, physicochemical analysis of biological systems, and transport phenomena in engineered devices. Computing programming experience is required to be successful in this course.
- 505 BIOENGINEERING MECHANICS** (3 cr.) Application of the principles of continuum mechanics to characterization of the passive and active mechanical properties of soft and hard tissues and their constituent cells. Fundamentals of the description of stress and strain and advanced topics in visco-elasticity are considered to describe the normal and diseased state at the tissue, cellular and molecular level. Prerequisites: EMCH 210, ME 033 or equivalent.
- 506 MEDICAL IMAGING** (3 cr.) Medical diagnostic imaging techniques, including generation and detection of ultrasound, X-ray, and nuclear radiation; instrumentation and biological effects. Prerequisite: PHYS 202.
- 508 (MATSE 508) BIOMEDICAL MATERIALS** (3 cr.) Properties and methods of producing metallic, ceramic, and polymeric materials used for biomedical applications. Prerequisites: None
- 509 MECHANOBIOLOGY** (3 cr.) Explore the molecular bases of cell mechanics and the role of mechanics in cell biology.
- 510 BIO MEMS AND BIONANOTECHNOLOGY** (3 cr.) Build basic foundations for understanding electrical, mechanical, and chemical transducers in biomedical applications through learning BioMEMS fabrication, design and analysis.
- 512 CELL AND BIOMOLECULAR ENGINEERING** (3 cr.) Graduate level cell and molecular biology course for engineers emphasizing molecular mechanisms.
- 513 BIOENGINEERING LABORATORY TECHNIQUES** (3 cr.) Laboratory techniques in cell molecular biology, protein biochemistry and cell culture with an emphasis on engineering analysis and quantification.
- 514 QUANTITATIVE MICROSCOPY** (3 cr.) Application of advanced microscopy to quantification of cellular and molecular function.
- 515 CELL MECHANICS AND BIOPHYSICS** (3 cr.) Advanced topics and recent developments in cellular engineering; applications of engineering science to cell biology. Prerequisite: BIOE 505
- 517 (MATSE 517) BIOMATERIALS SURFACE SCIENCE** (3 cr.) Special properties of surfaces as an important causative and mediating agent in the biological response to materials. Prerequisite: None.
- 518 NANOBIOMATERIALS** (3 cr.) Foundational course in synthesis, fabrication and characterization of nano biomaterials and their applications in biomedical engineering.

- 519 ARTIFICIAL ORGAN DESIGN (3 cr.)** Basic techniques and principles of a multidiscipline approach to artificial organs design. Prerequisites: None.
- 552 (EMCH 552, IE 552) MECHANICS OF THE MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM (3 cr.)** Structure and Biomechanics of bone, cartilage, and skeletal muscle; dynamics and control of musculoskeletal system models. Prerequisite: consent of program. Prerequisite or concurrent: BIOL 472
- 553 (IE 553) ENGINEERING OF HUMAN WORK (3 cr.)** Physics and physiology of humans at work; models of muscle strength; dynamic movements; neural control; physical work capacity; rest allocation. Prerequisite: BIOL 041 or 472.
- 590 BIOENGINEERING COLLOQUIUM (1 cr.)** Weekly series of seminars by speakers from outside and within Penn State University on new and developing research areas in Bioengineering, and presentations by registered students on their thesis research. All students are required to attend; M.S. degree students must register for four semesters and Ph.D. students must register every semester until comprehensive exam is passed.
- 591 BIOENGINEERING ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (1 cr)** Discussions focused on issues related to medical device development and marketing, responsible conduct of research, and meeting oversight requirements by Institutional review Boards for human studies and IACUC oversight of animal experiments.
- 596 INDIVIDUAL STUDIES (1-9 cr.)** Opportunity for advanced graduate students to study independently in consultation with a faculty adviser.
- 597 SPECIAL TOPICS (1-9 cr.)** This designation is assigned to new or developing graduate courses covering specialized areas of interest in Bioengineering. Past offerings have focused on topics such as advanced studies of cardiovascular function, advanced topics in artificial organ design and cellular biomechanics.

Some 400-level biomedical engineering courses may be used towards your degree in consultation with your adviser and/or advisory committee. Biomedical engineering courses are denoted by BME and can be found on the Undergraduate Bulletin page at the following: [undergraduate-bulletin](#)

## APPENDIX D: Life Science Elective Courses

Coursework is divided into three categories: Bioengineering Courses, Life Science Electives, and Technical Electives. For technical electives, students can choose courses in engineering, math, physics, chemistry, or other departments. Bioengineering courses can also be used as technical electives. Life science electives are courses that focus on biology and physiology at the molecular, cellular, organ or organism level. **Courses such as bioinformatics, analytical techniques, and similar technical courses that focus on analytical tools and do not focus on biology do not count as Life Science Electives.** Below is a list of courses that count as Life Science Electives. Students should explore course offerings in other departments and consult with other students and faculty to learn about the most up-to-date course offerings across campus. Each student's advisory committee will be responsible for determining whether specific courses count toward life science or technical elective distributional requirements; the Graduate Curriculum Chair, will make final decisions on distributional requirements.

**BIOL 404 Cellular Mechanisms in Vertebrate Physiology (3)** This course considers cellular mechanisms governing physiological aspects of vertebrate cell signaling and their adaptation to particular organismal functions.

**BIOL 409 Biology of Aging (3)** Mechanisms of the aging process, with special reference to man. Unfavorable progressive changes in molecules, cells, systems, and organisms. <sup>[SEP]</sup>Effective: Summer 1984 <sup>[SEP]</sup>Prerequisite: 6 credits in biology

**BIOL 411 Medical Embryology (3)** Develops an understanding of human reproductive physiology, embryological processes, their time frames, and the development of major human body systems. The course emphasizes clinical correlations and the medical consequences of developmental abnormalities.

**BIOL 413 Cell Signaling and Regulation (3)** Introduction to the themes of cellular signaling and regulation through critical review of primary literature.

**BIOL 416 Biology of Cancer (3)** This course intends to illustrate biological basis of cancer development, and discusses aspects on prevention, detection, and treatment of cancer.

**BIOL 422 Advanced Genetics (3)** Chromosomal mechanism of heredity; cytoplasmic and polygenic inheritance, chemical genetics, genomics, and experimental evolution.

**BIOL 426 Developmental Neurobiology (3)** Overview of basic developmental processes as they apply to the central nervous system.

**BIOL 430 (B M B 430, ENT 430) Developmental Biology (3)** Molecular and genetic analyses of mechanisms involved in differentiation and determination in biological systems.

**BIOL 432 Developmental Genetics (3)** An advanced course in developmental biology, focusing on the use of genetics techniques to study fundamental questions of animal development. <sup>[SEP]</sup>

**BIOL 443 Evo-devo: Evolution of Developmental Mechanisms (3)** How evolution of animals and plants can be traced to changes in the regulation and/or interactions of genes controlling development.

**BIOL 460 (ANTH 460) Human Genetics (3)** The human genome, its variation, origins, and relation to disease and other traits.

**BIOL 465 General Cytology (3)** Structure and function of organelles of plant and animal cells, mitosis, meiosis, cytological techniques.

- BIOL 469 (BB H 469) Neurobiology (3)** Comprehensive examination of neuroanatomy and physiology designed to integrate the principles of neurochemistry, neuroendocrinology, and molecular biology.
- BIOL 470 (BB H 470) Functional and Integrative Neurosciences (3)** Neurobiological function in motivated behaviors, motor and sensory functions, learning and memory development, sexual differentiation, and pathology.
- BIOL 471 Molecular Neurobiology/Cell Biology Laboratory (3)** Introduction to modern molecular and cellular methodologies. The course is designed to integrate the principles of molecular cell biology with neurochemistry and neuroendocrinology.
- BIOL 472 Mammalian Physiology (3)** Mechanisms concerned with normal animal function, with special emphasis on humans.
- BIOL 479 (AN SC 479) General Endocrinology (3)** Endocrine mechanisms regulating the morphogenesis, homeostasis, and functional integration of animals.
- BIOL 497A Biology of RNA (3)** This course will explore the biological functions that RNA plays in diverse organisms, including transcription, translation, virology, and RNA- interference.
- B M B 400 Molecular Biology of the Gene (2-3)** Biochemistry of genetic phenomena, including the structure, replication and dynamics of genes and chromosomes, their expression and regulation.
- B M B 401 General Biochemistry (3)** Principles of the structure and function of biological molecules, including carbohydrates, lipids, membranes, proteins, and enzymes. Students may not receive credit for both CHEM 476 and B M B 401.
- B M B 402 General Biochemistry (3)** Comprehensive survey of the pathways and regulation of intermediary metabolism.
- B M B 406 Molecular Biology (3)** A discussion of current aspects of cell molecular biology with a laboratory emphasizing current biotechnology techniques.
- B M B 432 (MICRB 432, VB SC 432) Advanced Immunology: Signaling in the Immune System (3)** The study of signaling pathways that regulate the immune response.
- MICRB 410 Principles of Immunology (3)** Theories of immunity; focuses on the basis for the acquired immune response at the organ, cell, and molecular levels.
- B M B 442 Laboratory in Proteins, Nucleic Acids, and Molecular Cloning (3)** Laboratory in enzyme purifications and assay techniques; nucleic acid isolation and characterization, including plasmid preparation.
- B M B 443W Laboratory in Protein Purification and Enzymology (3)** Laboratory in protein isolation methodology, enzyme kinetics, and physico- chemical properties of proteins.
- B M B 460 (MICRB 460) Cell Growth and Differentiation (3)** Mechanisms and regulation of protein trafficking, organelle biosynthesis, cell development, signaling and cell cycle control. Emphasizes experimental design and analysis.
- B M B 464 Molecular Medicine (3)** An exploration of the impact of advances in molecular biology on understanding disease mechanisms, medical diagnosis, and therapeutics.
- B M B 465 Protein Structure and Function (3)** A study of the relationship between structure and function of proteins; internet analysis to predict structure and function is included.

**B M B 474 Analytical Biochemistry** (3) Physical/chemical theory and techniques that emphasize purification and characterization of biological macromolecules, including proteins, lipids and nucleic acids.

**B M B 480 (MICRB 480) Tumor Viruses and Oncogenes** (3) Oncogenes, DNA and RNA tumor viruses, and relevant experimental techniques with emphasis on molecular basis of carcinogenesis and gene regulation. [SEP]

**BIOTC 489 (V SC 489) Animal Cell Culture Methods** (3) An overview of animal cell culture methodology and its practical application in bioprocess technology.

**VB SC 420 General Animal Pathology** (3) Nature and mechanisms of the disease process including degenerations, growth disturbances, inflammation, host-parasite relationships and neoplasia.

**VB SC 448W Current Topics in Immunology** (3) Study of current approaches and questions driving research in immunology and infectious diseases.

### **Graduate Level Courses**

**BMMB 501 Core Concepts in Biomolecular Science** (5) Introduction to broaden one's understanding of biochemical and biophysical principles and the basic aspects of eukaryotic and prokaryotic cell biology.

**BMMB 541 Molecular Biology of Animal Development** (3) The course emphasizes comparative molecular genetic analyses of developmental gene networks using vertebrate and *Drosophila* model systems.

**BMMB 551 (IBIOS 551) Genomics** (3) Structure and function of genomes including use of some current web-based tools and resources for studies and research in genomics.

**BIOL 571 (PHSIO 571) Animal Physiology** (3) Mammalian cardiovascular, respiratory, renal, and gastrointestinal systems.

**BIOL 572 (PHSIO 572) Animal Physiology** (3) Mammalian nervous, endocrine, metabolic, and reproductive systems.

**VB SC 520 Pathobiology** (3) The course deals with the mechanism of disease. Topics are: homeostasis, vascular injury, inflammation, neoplasia, genetic disorders, and biochemical toxicology.

**VB SC 534 Current Topics in Cancer Research** (3) A discussion of current cancer research literature with the focus on primary research literature.

Note: Other Life Science courses not listed here can be used with approval of Dr. Daniel Hayes, Chair of the Graduate Curriculum Committee.

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## **APPENDIX E: Sample Title Page For Qualifying And Comprehensive Exams**

Penn State Biomedical Engineering  
Program Ph.D. Qualifying Exam

Research Proposal

A New Method of Determining Molecular Dimensions

Proposed Start Date: September 1, 1904

Proposed Completion Date: April 1, 1905

Submitted by: Albert A. Einstein

Adviser: Professor I. Dunno

## APPENDIX F: Qualifying Exam Evaluation

*This form is used by Qualifying Exam Committee members to evaluate candidates in their performance on the exam. The candidate must achieve a score better than 3.5 on six out of the seven categories to pass the exam.*

- I. **Writing – sentence structure, grammar, organization** SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_
1. **Excellent.** Good grammar, minimal typos, appropriate usage and style, ideas are clear and easy to follow
  2. **Very good.** Some spelling, grammar, style problems, or ideas are unclear in places.
  3. **Adequate.** Writing is acceptable for 1<sup>st</sup> year PhD student but needs work on clarity or sentence structure.
  4. **Poor.** Serious writing problems that require remediation.
  5. **Unacceptable.** Concern that student will be unable to write his/her dissertation and papers.
- II. **Oral presentation and English skills** SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_
1. **Excellent.** Presentation is clear and organized. Answers to questions were relevant and logical.
  2. **Very good.** Presentation was concise, but some ideas needed clarification or logical connections were lacking.
  3. **Adequate.** The points were made but not clearly and logically.
  4. **Poor.** Very hard to understand points being made, answers to questions were not relevant.
  5. **Unacceptable.** Serious concerns regarding speaking and basic English skills.
- III. **Overall quality of the proposal including significance of problem, logic, innovation and rationale** SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_
1. **Very good.** A well thought out proposal on a significant topic with minor weaknesses.
  2. **Good.** Clear objectives with 1-2 major weaknesses in study premise, logic, innovation, or rationale.
  3. **Adequate.** Clear objective, but was not compelling, aims not supported, and/or several major problems in study design.
  4. **Poor.** Objective is unclear, experiments are not well justified or described, lack of innovation, or other significant problem in the proposal.
  5. **Unacceptable.** Student needs to pick another problem and redevelop aims and study.
- IV. **Engineering and physical sciences fundamentals** SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_
1. **Excellent.** Student demonstrates strong, graduate-level understanding of fundamentals of engineering, physics, or chemistry. Able to setup basic analytical equations to describe problem/phenomena.
  2. **Very good.** Student displays knowledge of engineering, physical, or chemical considerations of problem but lacks mastery.
  3. **Adequate.** Student has basic understanding of core engineering, physical, or chemical principles but needs to strengthen knowledge of engineering, chemistry, or physics to graduate level.
  4. **Poor.** Student exhibits deficiencies in engineering, physical, or chemical understanding and has difficulty applying existing knowledge from classes to research problem.
  5. **Unacceptable.** Student lacks basic understanding of engineering, physics, or chemistry and cannot demonstrate knowledge from basic coursework.
- V. **Mathematics fundamentals** SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_
1. **Excellent.** Able to swiftly and independently solve upper undergraduate-level or graduate-level mathematical equations relevant to proposal.
  2. **Very good.** Solid engineering and mathematical skills but a few weak points.
  3. **Adequate.** Capable of solving basic mathematical problems, but some significant weaknesses were identified and required some coaching.
  4. **Poor.** Significant weaknesses in mathematical ability identified. Could not solve basic mathematical equations without significant help. Some course-based remediation is warranted.
  5. **Unacceptable.** Major weaknesses in mathematics. Concern whether student can handle graduate-level engineering and mathematics.
- VI. **Life science fundamentals** SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_
1. **Excellent.** Solid grasp of principles of molecular/cell biology and systems physiology.
  2. **Very good.** Good foundations of biology at multiple size scales.
  3. **Adequate.** Sufficient for Bioengineering PhD, but room for improvement.
  4. **Poor.** Significant weaknesses in life science fundamentals identified.
  5. **Unacceptable.** Little or no knowledge in life sciences.



VII. **Integration of engineering and biology in solving research problem**

SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Excellent**. Demonstrates high level proficiency to solve novel biological or medical problem with engineering principles and technology.
2. **Very good**. Identifies important biological / clinical problems but flaws identified in relevance of application of engineering principles or technology to problem.
3. **Adequate**. Able to integrate engineering and life science, but connections need to be strengthened. Integration lacks innovation or impact.
4. **Poor**. Significant weaknesses connecting relevant engineering principles/technology with biology/medicine.
5. **Unacceptable**. Little or no connection between engineering and biology/medicine.

*Score Each Category on a scale of 1.0 (Outstanding) to 5.0 (Poor). Passing is a score better than 3.5.*

## APPENDIX G: Tips on Writing Papers, Proposals and Theses

Below are some words of wisdom about how to be efficient and effective in your scientific writing. One eternal truth is that writing is hard and to become a better writer, you must work at it and allocate sufficient time for both writing and revising.

### Dissertation structure

A dissertation typically consists of an introduction chapter, some number of chapters that make up the various projects carried out and/or papers written during graduate studies, and a concluding chapter that ties everything together. If you have published papers, these can be included as chapters, there is no need to rewrite work that has been published or submitted. The peer-reviewed papers that come out of your work are the most important product of your research.

### Getting started:

To start writing a paper or thesis, make an outline. Then fill in the outline with figures and tables that make up the results. Build your outline with successively more detail, and then replace these details with sentences and paragraphs and your written document will take shape. As you develop an outline go through it with your adviser to make sure you are on track.

To write a paper, write the Results first. Then write the Discussion in relation to the Results. Then write the Introduction and link it to the Discussion.

### General writing tips:

- Generally getting a first draft is the hardest step. However, good writing requires multiple rounds of revisions. Don't underestimate the time required for revising and tightening text to focus ideas and clarify the presentation.
- Strive for clarity and brevity in your writing. Use first person ("we carried out the experiment" rather than "the experiment was carried out"). Put key action in verbs rather than nouns. Use active verbs. Avoid long introductory phrases or clauses and make subjects of sentences short and concrete.
- Minimize use of acronyms (if you use it 3 times or less, don't use acronym). Minimize use of jargon, and avoid lab jargon – consider renaming reagents, procedures, protocols, etc. for the purpose of writing (which is a different process than the day-to-day work in the lab).
- In revising text, distill your ideas, distill your sentences, and remove redundant text. Consider that adding more details can dilute your central message and most important points – readers can only take so much in so keep your focus.
- Throughout the thesis help guide your reader by using introductory sentences to paragraphs and transitions between paragraphs. You should strive for flow, and also give your reader signposts along the way to help guide them.
- In the age of spellcheck, there is no excuse for misspelled words and obvious grammar errors. Any thesis given to a committee must be free of spelling and grammar errors. If you feel writing clearly and using correct wording and grammar might be a problem, please have someone else look through the thesis first.
- In a paper, thesis or dissertation, the wording must be your own. No sentences can be derived from anyone else's work; this is plagiarism, and any evidence of plagiarism will result in an unacceptable thesis, as well as other consequences.

## Figures and legends

- Use figures and diagrams to help your readers navigate the key points.
- Take the time and care to make excellent figures. Think about the best way to plot the data to emphasize the point you are making. Do not use fancy Excel colors and shading. Make axes and labels large and readable. Images should not be pixelated.
- If images are taken from published work say that clearly and include reference number, e.g., “Image adapted from Jones et al (19)”. For theses you do not need permissions from journals to use figures.
- All figures should have a legend that includes figure number, figure title, and a description of every panel in the figure. It is OK if there is redundancy between the text and the figure legends – ideally a reader should be able to go through the document and look at the figures and read the figure legends and get the main points that way.

## Abstract

- Write a good abstract. This is the first thing that everyone reads and the only thing that many read. It is important to make a good impression and summarize your work clearly and succinctly. **ABSTRACT SHOULD BE NO MORE THAN ONE DOUBLE SPACED PAGE FOR MS AND UP TO 2 PAGES FOR PHD DISSERTATION.**

## Introduction Chapter

### *What to include:*

- An overview of your field of study that sets up your key questions and hypotheses
- Transitions between sections to help make the introduction a logical whole
- Clear statement of key questions and hypotheses
- Figures and diagrams to help explain the points you are making.
- A paragraph at the end of the introduction that previews the rest of the thesis for the reader, describes chapters and how they relate to published work, and lays out collaborations involved in the work.

### *What not to include:*

- A list of everything you can think of that might touch on your project

## Middle Chapters (and Papers)

- ☐ Each chapter can (and ideally should) be a published or planned paper. If it is published, make sure you clearly describe how the chapter relates to the published work (Is it the published paper word for word? Is it the paper plus some additional data? Is it part of the paper?). Be specific.
- At the beginning of each chapter, you should set up the question you will be asking. You need to make your audience excited about the hypothesis or design goal - this means they need to understand what the hypothesis or goal is and why it is important.
- In writing a paper, make sure that the first paragraph of the Introduction and the last paragraph of the Discussion are conceptually linked. Conclude the Introduction with a paragraph that previews the results and sets up the rest of the paper.
- Organize the Results section as a series of sub-sections, with each referring to a particular figure or table. Describe fully in the text everything that is contained in the figures. Think of the Results section as describing a logical sequence of experiments, with each sub-section starting with a description of the experimental design, followed by a description of the resulting findings written in the past tense. Stating the question being addressed in each sub-section is a good organizational tool. Remember that the sequence of presentation need not (and generally should not) follow the timeline of the experiments; instead build the best story you can with the data that you have.

- Discussion
- The first paragraph is an important setup of the discussion. Make it a summary of the key results and a roadmap of the rest of the discussion.
- In the Discussion, be sure to describe how the results answer the question(s) you posed in the Introduction.
- Acknowledge limitations and how work agrees or conflicts with other studies.
- Discuss the implication of the work for the field and how it may impact other fields.
- At the end of each chapter, you should have some sort of conclusion or wrap up section. What was the answer to your question? Why is it important?
- If you include work of others, make sure to clearly acknowledge their specific contributions in the figure legends.
- Materials and Methods can be included within each chapter (either before Results or after Discussion) or it can make up a separate chapter in the thesis.

### Conclusion/Future Directions Chapter

- The goal of the last chapter is to position your work in the field. You should say what you have learned, how this has advanced the general understanding in the field. Include some models to summarize your work. Tie this text into points you raised in your Introduction Chapter 1.
- Point toward the next questions or design iterations and larger questions. Don't just focus on what you would do over the next months if you continued; instead, think in a larger perspective of the field and discipline.

### Thesis Timeline

- Get a complete draft to your advisor 1 month before your defense. Ideally, you should go back and forth with your advisor writing and revising chapters that are evolving into papers. Your advisor should have read your thesis that you submit to the committee.
- Get your thesis to your committee 2 weeks before the defense. This should be a fully polished document with all figures, references, and sections. Failure to meet the deadline will result in the defense being postponed.

### Other writing resources

K.L. Turabian. A manual for writers of research papers, theses and dissertations. Chicago style for students and researchers. 8<sup>th</sup> edition. University of Chicago Press. – Has sections on research to writing, proper citations, and style.

K. Kelner. Tips for publishing in scientific journals. *Science Careers* (2007).

DOI: 10.1126/science.caredit.a0700046

J. M. Samet. Dear Author – advice from a retiring editor. *Am J Epidemiol* **150**:433–436 (1999)

W.A. Wells. Me write pretty one day: how to write a good scientific paper. *J. Cell Biol.* **165**:157-58 (2004).

<http://careers.ucsc.edu/grad/>

## APPENDIX H: Forms

### LABORATORY ROTATION AGREEMENT FORM

[Lab Rotation Agreement](#)

### GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING FORM

[Biomedical Engineering Committee Meeting Form Link](https://www.bme.psu.edu/assets/docs/forms/aac-meeting-form-2022.pdf)

### GRADUATE COURSE SUBSTITUTION PETITION

<https://www.bme.psu.edu/assets/docs/forms/Graduate%20Course%20Substitution%20Petition%20Fillable.pdf>

### APPLICATION FOR PHD QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

[Application for Qualifying Exam Link](#)

### IUG SEMESTER REPORT

[https://www.shc.psu.edu/documents/academics/opportunities/iug/iug\\_semester\\_report.pdf](https://www.shc.psu.edu/documents/academics/opportunities/iug/iug_semester_report.pdf)

### TRANSFER OF CREDIT FROM AN EXTERNAL INSTITUTION

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/forms-and-documents/ges-owned-forms-and-documents/xfercredit2pdf/>

### TRANSFER OF GRADUATE COURSE FROM PENN STATE UNDERGRADUATE TRANSCRIPT TO PENN STATE DEGREE GRADUATE PROGRAM

[Transfer from UG to GR Course Link](#)

### RESUME STUDY/CHANGE OF GRADUATE DEGREE OR MAJOR

<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-admissions/how-to-apply/current-students/>