

Interfaculty Graduate Program Biological and Biomedical Engineering Ph.D. Preliminary Meeting Policy & Procedures

Objectives

- Determine whether the overall objectives are appropriate for a Ph.D.
- Review the student's academic background. Although there is no formal course requirement for the Ph.D., the Committee may recommend or require course work in the Ph.D. program to complement the background and/or correct gaps in training.
- Define the general areas the student will be responsible for in the Ph.D. Thesis Proposal and Comprehensive Exam meeting. The areas for general questioning should include at least one area in the life sciences and at least one area in the physical sciences and engineering, as determined by the committee.

Timing

The Ph.D. Preliminary Meeting must take place, and the form must be completed and signed, according to the following time schedule.

Curriculum Year Upon Entry	Deadline for Preliminary Meeting
1	Within five (5) months of starting the Ph. D. program
2	Within three (3) months of starting the Ph.D. program

Procedure

The student should prepare a brief document summarizing:

- The overall objective of the Ph.D. work
- Rationale for the proposed work
- Their training and background

Normally this document will be prepared with the aid of the Supervisor. It should be about two (2) pages long and cannot exceed five (5) pages including references and figures. This document should be circulated to the Committee, with a copy to info.bbme@mcgill.ca, one week prior to the meeting unless otherwise specified by the GPC. Failure to circulate the document on time may impact the student's status in the program. Additional details may be found here: [Requirements for completing a PhD Degree](#).

At the start of the meeting, the Committee will meet without the student to review the student's file. The student will make an oral presentation of the planned research topic and answer questions from the Committee members. The presentation should be no longer than ten (10) minutes, not including questions.

The objective of the questioning will be to determine the student's current state of knowledge in areas related to the proposed research so that the Committee may advise the student with respect to additional reading and/or course work. It is to be expected that there will be questions the student will not be able to answer.

The student will then withdraw and the Committee will:

- Determine the meeting outcome (as defined below)
- Identify areas of concern and suggest corrective action
- Define the general areas (typically three to five) the student will be responsible for during the Ph.D. Thesis Proposal and Comprehensive Exam Meeting
- Determine any other advice to be provided to the student
- Based on the outcome, set the date for the next meeting which will normally be the Ph.D. Comprehensive Preparation
- Determine if the make-up of the Committee is appropriate, and if not, what changes should be made

Outcomes

The meeting will result in one of the following 3 outcomes:

Satisfactory – The Committee is satisfied with the content of the student's initial presentation. The general objectives make sense and the student has the appropriate background. A date will be set for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Preparation Meeting, normally within six (6) months (for a Ph.D. 2 entry) or eleven (11) months (for a Ph.D. 1 entry) of the Preliminary Meeting.

Conditional – The overall presentation is acceptable but there are one or more areas that the student must address. The Committee will impose one or more conditions which must be fulfilled, and set the deadline for their completion. Once these conditions are met, a date will be set for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Preparation Meeting following the same schedule as in the case of a Satisfactory outcome.

Failure to meet the conditions to the satisfaction of the Committee, by the deadline, will result in the meeting outcome being deemed unsatisfactory and the procedure outlined in the following section will apply.

Unsatisfactory – The overall objectives of the Ph.D. work and the underlying rationale are not defined clearly enough. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled in accordance with our [unsatisfactory guidelines](#). Students with two unsatisfactory meetings may be asked to withdraw from the program.

Reporting

The Chair's Representative will prepare a summary of the Committee's findings and recommendations.



The student will be asked to return, whereupon the Chair's Representative will communicate the Committee's evaluation to the student and answer any questions. The Committee members and student will then sign the meeting summary forms.

Following the meeting, the Supervisor will prepare and circulate detailed minutes of the meeting documenting the Committee's recommendations and advice to the student. This should be done no later than one week after the meeting. Once approved by the Committee members, the minutes will be added to the student's file, attached to the meeting form. A copy will be provided to the student, Committee members and the Graduate Program Director.