



Department of Cell and Systems Biology

Please follow this procedure when setting up your CSB Ph.D. transfer / proposal exam.

Arranging for exam:

1. The Ph.D. proposal exam will be held within 13-20 months of entering the Ph.D. program.
2. Students who have entered the grad program as a M.Sc. student, but wish to transfer to a Ph.D. should:
 - a. Discuss the transfer with their supervisor(s), and submit the signed *PhD Transfer/Proposal Examination Pre-Approval Form* to the CSB Graduate Office.
 - b. The student will be registered in the Ph.D. program in their second year in graduate school following the transfer exam.
 - c. The PhD Transfer/Proposal Exam will be held within 13-20 months of entering the graduate program. The student will check the appropriate box on the *PhD Transfer/Proposal Examination Pre-Approval Form*, indicating when they will transfer.
3. For both Ph.D. transfer and proposal exams, student and supervisor should jointly recommend the examining committee:
 - a. **Supervisor (or Co-Supervisors)**
 - b. **Two members from the supervisory committee (usually CSB faculty)**
 - c. **One (or two) faculty member(s) from CSB or another graduate department at the University of Toronto who is not a member of the supervisory committee (external examiner)**
 - d. **Chair assigned by the Graduate Office (final appointment of a Chair will be based on suitability, scheduling and workload)**

The student and supervisor should invite any supervisory committee members NOT on the examining committee to participate in the evaluation. These faculty are not required to attend and do not have an official vote.

Title and list of examining committee members:

4. The title of the proposal, a brief abstract, and a list of committee members/examiners is due in the Graduate Office at least two weeks prior to the examination.

Written report:

5. A written report of between 4,000-8,000 words of text (not including figures, tables and references) is required. The report should describe the project, the relevant background literature, progress to date and a proposal for future work (see the 'CSB PhD Proposal Exam and Written Report' for specific details). The report should be distributed to all members of the examining committee and the CSB Graduate Office at least two weekends prior to the *in camera* examination.

Examination:

6. The candidate gives a 25-minute oral presentation to the department, followed by up to five minutes of questioning from the public.
7. An *in camera* questioning period and discussion with the committee members will then take place immediately following the oral presentation.
8. Questioning proceeds for approximately 90 minutes. The examining Committee Chair will remind the candidate of the intent and structure of the meeting (including order of questioning). The aim of the examination is to evaluate the following: i) the steps in the proposed program, including, where appropriate, details of the steps and the feasibility of their successful execution; ii) background knowledge directly related to the proposed research program; iii) the development of research skills directly related to the proposed research program; and iv) anticipated completion dates for the steps in the proposed program. The Committee Chair should ensure that the questioning should explore these elements, and that that the questioning is orderly, fair, and keeps to time, so that all committee members feel that they have adequately examined the candidate
9. The candidate is asked to leave the room during the discussion and voting on the proposal exam by committee members. The Chair of the exam answers the seven questions on the examination form based on the recommendations of the committee, and writes brief point form comments on the examination form.
10. A vote is taken by the chair of the PhD Proposal Examination Committee and a majority of 3 out of 4 voting members (not including the Chair of the PhD Proposal Examination Committee) is required to confirm the candidate passed the proposal examination. Individual votes from each examining committee member will be recorded on the confidential 'Voting Summary Form' and the candidate is then informed of the decision.
11. The candidate will keep a copy of the Examination Report Form and the original copy will be submitted to the CSB Graduate Office. The Examination Chair will send the Voting Summary Form directly to the Graduate Office.

The outcome for a **PhD proposal exam** will be:

- Pass and proceed in PhD program
- Fail: the student has shown a considerable lack of background knowledge and poor development of research and/or writing skills and will be asked to leave the program
- Re-examination: the student has demonstrated some of the required skills and knowledge but has not satisfied the committee. The student will be asked to repeat the proposal process within 3 months at which time the student will either pass or fail. The re-examination may or may not include the public seminar component, at the discretion of the examining committee.

The outcome for a **PhD transfer exam** will be:

- Pass and proceed in PhD program
- Transfer is not acceptable, and the student will be required to complete the MSc program.
(Note that a transfer examination may **NOT** be adjourned and then reconvened)

See the Department of Cell & Systems Biology Graduate Handbook for further details.