

Thesis Proposal

Within 12 to 18 months after admission to candidacy and at least 12 months prior to the final Dissertation Defense, in order to promote confidence that the planned research project is viable, students must:

1. prepare a Thesis Proposal (NIH NRSA or F31 format) and
2. present their Thesis Proposal in a publicly advertised seminar to their Thesis Advisory Committee and to other interested parties (ordinarily members of their track and of their host department).

Under no circumstances should the Thesis Proposal occur less than 12 months prior to the anticipated final Dissertation defense.

The writing, presentation, and questions associated with the Thesis Proposal have multiple aims, which include improving students' grant writing and oral presentation skills as well as helping to ensure a feasible research plan and efficient progression of the dissertation research. The latter end will also be served by subsequent meetings of the Thesis Advisory Committee at regular intervals. The intent of the Thesis Proposal is to take minimal time from research while still fulfilling these aims. This intent can be served when the Thesis Proposal is an expanded and updated version of the written Qualifying Exam proposal, supplemented with preliminary data. It is sometimes the case that 1-2 aims of the Thesis Proposal have already been completed or are partially completed at the time of writing the Thesis Proposal. These aims should be written up in the research plan as proposed experiments, and a note added describing the status of the aim (e.g. stating that the aim is either fully or partially completed and describe what is left to complete). Thus, it is the intent that the content of the Thesis Proposal stands as an early draft of the Doctoral Dissertation. However, it is recognized that the specific aims presented in the Thesis Proposal at an early stage of the research will likely be modified as additional data is obtained and the research progresses, prior to the final Dissertation.

It is anticipated that the Thesis Proposal will frequently provide a basis for an external grant application and eventually the final Doctoral Dissertation. Therefore, the written proposal should be prepared early enough to submit it as a grant application, receive feedback and potentially be awarded funding for the duration of the research project.

The student will present the Thesis Proposal a publicly advertised seminar presentation and include the Thesis Advisory Committee in the audience. The structure of this presentation should be along the lines of the written proposal, that is, introduction and background, hypothesis, significance, specific aims and what has been accomplished under those aims, and future research directions/experimental plan. After the oral presentation, the student will meet in private with the Thesis Advisory Committee and answer questions concerning feasibility, impact, interpretation, and addressing other potential concerns as per a normal Thesis Advisory Committee meeting. Please note that this is not a test of student knowledge. **The Thesis Proposal Seminar cannot be presented within the Molecular Medicine Student Seminar Series and should be scheduled prior to the student's research presentation in the Molecular Medicine Student Seminar Series.**

The written Thesis Proposal should follow the format of a NIH NRSA or F31 application, typically 7-12 pages, excluding references. See <https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/fellowships> A written proposal previously submitted to an extramural funding agency may serve as the basis for the Thesis Proposal. Students should submit their written proposal to their Thesis Advisory Committee members at least 2 weeks in advance of their scheduled Thesis Advisory Committee meeting. In addition, advertising for the oral presentation should be coordinated through the Academic Services Specialist at least 2 weeks in advance (see [Section G](#), Thesis Proposal Seminar).

The Thesis Advisory Committee will determine whether the written Thesis Proposal is satisfactory and whether the oral presentation fulfills the seminar requirement for *GPLS 608*, or whether additional requirements need to be met. The outcome of the Thesis Proposal should be documented on the Thesis Proposal form, faculty signatures obtained, and the completed document submitted to the track Leader and Program Director. It is the responsibility of the student to register for 1 GPLS 608 credit the semester following the successful completion of the Thesis Proposal.