

Human Genetics Graduate Program
Genetics & Genomics Home Area – Graduate Programs in Bioscience

Information for the Doctoral Committee about the 'First Exam':

The goal of the First Exam (also known as the Departmental Written Qualifying Examination) is for the committee (minus the faculty mentor) to assess the ability of the student to think as a scientist.

Our Program Requirements for the Doctoral Degree (PhD) read as follows:

“The Departmental Written Qualifying Examination (also known as the 'First Exam') and the University Oral Qualifying Examination (also known as the 'Second Exam') must be passed before students are advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree. The two examinations are distinct and cannot be combined into a single examination. [...] The faculty mentor is excused from participating in the [First Exam], which is administered by the remaining members of the doctoral committee. [...]

The [First Exam] takes place during early stages of the student's dissertation research project, preferably during the second year, and must be passed by the end of the fourth year in order to avoid a recommendation for termination from the program. The goal of the [First Exam] is to evaluate the student's ability to think as a scientist, i.e., to propose and critically evaluate experiments or method developments that would potentially expand knowledge in the principal field of study. To this end, the student writes a proposal following the style of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Research Service Award (NRSA) applications, and, one or two weeks after submission of the written proposal to the doctoral committee, defends the proposal in an oral presentation. The topic of the proposal is related to the ongoing research project of the student in the laboratory of the faculty mentor. However, in the [First Exam] the project itself is not under evaluation, as it is expected to be in its early stages. The oral part of the examination consists of a discussion of the proposal and of any additional questions posed by the committee to probe the student's general knowledge and understanding of human genetics.”

Notice also the following policy:

“Doctoral students must complete and pass the Departmental Written Qualifying Examination (also known as the 'First Exam') by the end of their fourth year in the program. Students will be allowed two opportunities to pass the examination within the above time frame and if the examination is not passed, the student will be recommended for termination of graduate study.”

The complete program requirements are available online at:

<https://grad.ucla.edu/programs/david-geffen-school-of-medicine/human-genetics/#program-requirements/2016-2017>