

# Qualifying Exam Peer Advice BMEGG PhD Program

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# Congrats to 1<sup>st</sup> years on Fall Quarter



- After you finish classes, each PhD student plans, manages, and schedules their own QE either toward the end of Year 2 or during Year 3
  - Minimum 3.5 GPA overall, required classes done, teaching requirement done

Grad School Memes With Relatable Themes

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/GradSchoolMemesWithRelatableThemes/>

# My biggest fears for the QE

- My preliminary data is not enough
- I will get questions that I do not know how to answer
- I will fail the QE

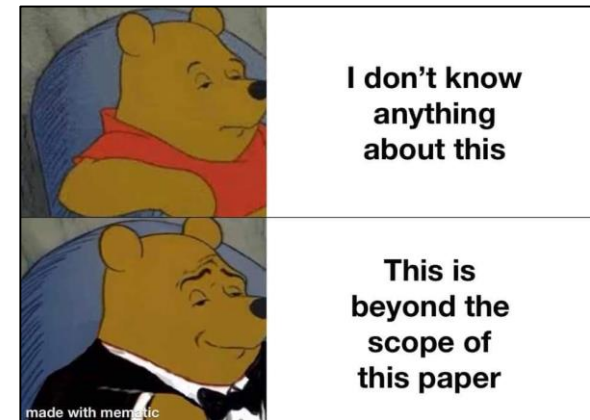
# Preliminary Studies

- Research is collaborative and continuous
- Preliminary studies come from many places:
  - Previous or current projects from your lab
  - Previous publications from other labs (academic literature)
  - Data that you collected on the project
  - Data from a collaborator or lab mates

# How to... answer questions?



- You have spent 2-3 years focusing/obsessing/stressing on the details... and now you need to step back and see the big picture as well
- Your committee does not know about the details of your project, they will ask you about the big picture
- Consider both to be important!
- You can define the boundaries of the project.



# QE results...pass, fail, not pass?

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

GRADUATE STUDIES

## REGULATIONS REGARDING QUALIFYING EXAMINATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

When a qualifying examination is given, it is the responsibility of all members of the committee to be in attendance for the entire examination. Unanticipated or unavoidable absence will be explained in detail by the Chair in the report on the outcome of the examination, and a specific plan for completion of the examination within 72 hours by ALL members of the committee will be detailed. In the event that the CHAIR is absent, the remaining members of the committee shall suspend the examination after waiting a reasonable time, and after attempting to contact the Chair. In this case, the Chair shall report the results as "No Examination" and explain the circumstances in detail. The examination shall then be rescheduled and conducted in the same manner and format as intended for the original examination. **NOTE: STUDENT MUST BE REGISTERED WHEN TAKING ANY PORTION OF THE EXAMINATION.**

1. The Qualifying Examination Committee Chairperson shall report the result of the first examination\* as one of the following:

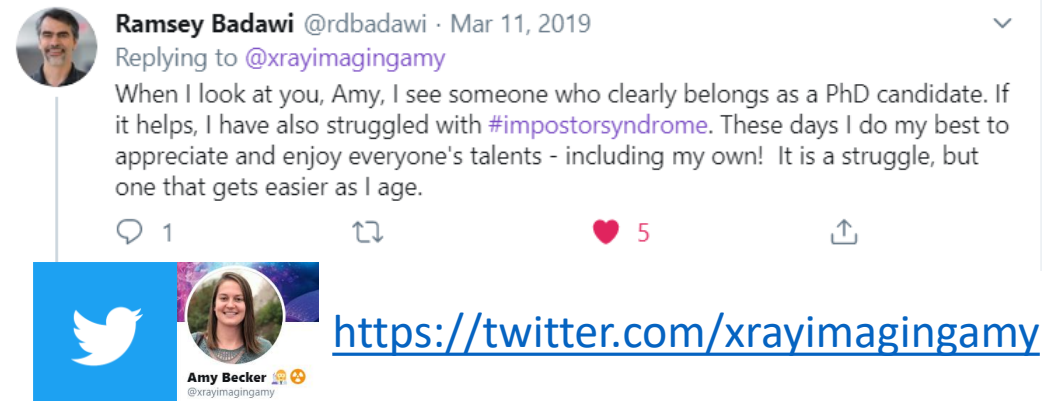
- A. PASS:
- B. NOT PASS:
- C. FAIL

NO conditions or additional requirements may be appended to this decision.

Should specify whether the student is required to retake all or part of the examination, list additional requirements, and state the exact timeline for completion of requirements to achieve a "PASS".

# The psychology of the qualifying exam

- The moment of feeling completely prepared will never happen so do not let imposter syndrome prevent you from setting a schedule
- Work from your QE date backwards to set deadlines for yourself
- Your practice presentations and meetings with committee members will give you the feedback you need to feel prepared
- You are smart
- You can think
- You can do it



# QE in a nutshell

1. Form a committee of 5 faculty members
2. Set a date and make a schedule
3. Write NIH format research proposal, 13 pages
4. Create PowerPoint presentation about proposal
5. Give 30-minute presentation followed by questions and discussion





# How to... form a committee?

- Think about the project as a collection of specialties
- Each committee member brings in knowledge of a specialty
- The QE is perceived as an “exam” but its not just that...
  - They are invested in your success and learning
  - They can teach you a new perspective to consider the project
  - They are humans who care, and they want you to pass
  - View them as peers who can exchange ideas with you
- Discuss potential members with your peers, lab mates, PI

# How to... make a schedule?

- QE DATE:
- Final practice presentation, DATE:
- Meet with each committee member individually, DATES: \*\*make time for this\*\*
- Final draft to committee: 2-4 weeks before QE, DATE:
- Second practice presentation, DATE:
- First practice presentation, DATE:
- Second proposal draft to PI & lab mates & others, DATE:
- First proposal draft to PI & lab mates, DATE:
- Submit official QE Committee Form for approval to Graduate Studies: 4 weeks before QE
- Submit official QE Committee Form for approval to Christal Wintersmith: 5 weeks before QE

# How to... write NIH format proposal?

- Ask your lab mates & friends for their QE proposal as an example
- Accept that your first draft will be bad... ALL first drafts are bad
- Start using a reference manager (**Mendeley**, EndNote, Zotero)
- Use your class project to write a project proposal

# How to... write NIH format proposal?

- 13 pages single spaced, 11-point font, 0.5" margin all around
  - 1 page is the Specific Aims page
  - 12 pages research proposal including figures (excluding references)
- Introduction, Specific Aims, Background & Significance, Innovation
  - Aim 1: Intro, Hypothesis, Preliminary Studies, Research Design, Expected Outcome
  - Aim 2: Intro, Hypothesis, Preliminary Studies, Research Design, Expected Outcome
  - Aim 3: Intro, Hypothesis, Preliminary Studies, Research Design, Expected Outcome
- You are likely to have more preliminary studies for Aim 1 than Aim 2 & 3

# How to... present a proposal?

- Tell a story that is easy to follow, lots of introduction
- Give the necessary parts and wait until questions to address small details
- Prepare to talk about fundamental background knowledge
  - **Pro tip:** Dump all the details into slides, then as you develop the presentation, move your extra slides to the end to have all the technical details and background knowledge tucked away nearby
  - **Pro tip:** Once your presentation is developed and you end up with too many slides, take things out that you cannot explain/understand well
- Practice with BESA student seminar series and at lab meeting
  - Collect feedback, but decide on your own which feedback to incorporate

# How to... manage your anxiety?

## In person counseling: free for all UC Davis students

### Individual Counseling

**Cost:** No Charge

**Access:** By appointment only. Learn more about scheduling an appointment.

**Eligibility:** All registered students.

**Location:** North Hall

Individual Counseling is confidential short-term therapy available to all registered UC Davis students at no charge. The initial appointment will help clarify if short-term individual counseling is recommended, and an appointment will be made with a staff member as soon as possible. If longer term counseling services are needed, referral to a community professional will be made. Individual Counseling appointments are located at North Hall.

### Schedule or Cancel an Appointment

**How to Make a Medical or Counseling Service Appointment**

Login to Health-e-Messaging

**[Schedule appointment online here:](https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/services/appointments)**  
**<https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/services/appointments>**

*Or call (530) 752-2349 to schedule*

## Online counseling: free for all UC Davis students

### Online Visits

Quick and easy access to care

UC DAVIS  
STUDENT HEALTH AND  
COUNSELING SERVICES

LiveHealth<sup>®</sup>  
ONLINE

COUNSELING

**Coupon Code: UCDCOUNSELING**

Select the counselor and appointment time that works with your busy schedule. Your session is provided via video on the electronic device you choose, in the location of your choice. It's easy, convenient, and with the provided coupon code, **UCDCOUNSELING**, offered at no cost to you, just like our on-campus service.

**[Schedule appointment online here:](https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/online-visits)**  
**<https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/online-visits>**

# BMEGG Website Resources

- [BMEGG Website Qualifying Exam Page](#)
  - [BMEGG QE Guidelines for Students](#)
  - [BMEGG QE Guidelines for Faculty](#)
  - [Qualifying Exam Application](#)
  - [Acing your Qualifying Exam](#)
  - [Quick Guide for Grant Applications \(NIH\)](#)
  - [Additional Hints to Help you Succeed](#)
  - [QE Regulations \(Grad Studies Doc\)](#)

## Qualifying Examination

### Overview and Purpose of the Qualifying Examination

The primary purpose of the Qualifying Examination (QE) is to evaluate that the student is academically qualified to conceptualize a research topic, undertake scholarly research, and successfully produce the dissertation required for a doctoral degree. The QE must evaluate the student's command of the field, ensuring that the student has both breadth and depth of knowledge, and must not focus solely on the proposed dissertation research. In addition, the QE provides an opportunity for the committee to provide important guidance to the student regarding his or her chosen research topic.

The Qualifying Exam should be completed before the end of the 3rd year of graduate study. The QE is typically scheduled at the end of the 2nd year or early in the 3rd year, after all required Ph.D. coursework and program requirements have been completed (*except completion of the dissertation and Examination 2*). Eligible students will have a minimum 3.5 GPA and be registered for the quarter they plan to complete the exam.

### Timeline:

10-12 weeks prior - Discuss potential committee members with Major Professor and Graduate Program Advisor

6-8 weeks prior - Set date of exam and reserve room

5-6 weeks prior - Submit signed QE Application form to Graduate Program Coordinator. (*The Graduate Program Coordinator will submit the QE Application to Graduate Studies for approval. The QE cannot proceed until Graduate Studies has approved the committee.*)

2-4 weeks prior - Meet with Committee Members

2-4 weeks prior - Share QE Proposal with Committee Members

### Exam

1 week post - Upon successful result, complete Advancement to Candidacy Form and establish Dissertation Committee

### Resources for preparing for your QE:

[BMEGG Qualifying Examination Guidelines for Students](#)

[BMEGG Qualifying Examination Guidelines for Faculty](#)

[Qualifying Examination Application \(GS319\)](#)

[Acing your Qualifying Exam](#)

[Quick Guide for Grant Applications \(NIH Format used for QE proposal\)](#)

[Additional Hints to Help You Succeed on Your QE](#)

[QE Regulations \(Graduate Studies document\)](#)

# How to... find another helpful workshop?



FEB  
27

Preparing for the Qualifying Exam: Managing Anxiety

by GradPathways Institute...

Following

Free

Register

## Description

For UC Davis Graduate Students Only

In this workshop, you will gain insight into the attitudes and beliefs that induce your anxiety and learn strategies to manage your anxiety before, during, and after your qualifying exam.

*Workshop Leader: Dr. Bai-Yin Chen*, Licensed Psychologist, Counseling Services. Bai-Yin Chen is a psychologist specializing in college mental health and graduate student concerns and issues.

## Date And Time

Thu, February 27, 2020  
11:00 AM - 12:00 PM PST

[Add to Calendar](#)

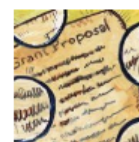
## Location

UC Davis  
Memorial Union  
Garrison Room  
Davis, CA 95616

[View Map](#)

## Grad Pathways!

Here are other upcoming events from this organizer



Wed, Jan 15 at 2:00 PM

**Grant Writing 101**

Davis, CA



Wed, Jan 22 at 5:00 PM

**Creating an Effective and Memorable Presentation**

Davis, CA



Thu, Jan 23 at 11:30 AM

**"Mentee Me": The Role of Mentee in Mentorship**

Davis, CA

Contact Amy for questions about this presentation: [aebecker@ucdavis.edu](mailto:aebecker@ucdavis.edu)