

**Medical Biophysics Graduate Program
Regulations & Guidelines
for the
PhD Mid-Level Comprehensive Examination**

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Purpose: The mid-level comprehensive examination for Ph.D. students in the Department of Medical Biophysics is designed to focus on an examination of the student's particular area of interest, and in related areas deemed to be appropriate for inclusion in **Chapter 1** of the Ph.D. thesis, entitled **General Introduction** (see Medical Biophysics Better Thesis Initiative).

Examining Mid-Level Knowledge: Examination of a student's mid-level knowledge occurs by oral examination on one formal occasion. The topics that will be covered at the exam will be presented in the format of a **Table of Contents** for the **General Introduction** and approved at an advisory committee meeting at least one term prior to the exam. The student must demonstrate sufficient knowledge in the topics which should broaden the student's background and prepare them for their thesis defense.

Scheduling the Examination: For students that have reclassified to a PhD, it is mandatory to complete the mid-level examination prior to the end of the 12th term. For those students defending in or before their 12th term, the mid-level needs to be done prior to the thesis defense term. The mid-level examination must be successfully completed during these mandatory timeframes, or the candidate will be declassified to MSc status. Declassification will trigger the loss of departmental stipend support and may trigger the loss of scholarship or funding from other sources. For direct entry PhD students, the mid-level must be done prior to their 9th term. Copies of the **General Introduction** must be sent to the examination committee at least 2 weeks before the examination.

The Examiners: The examination panel for the mid-level examination will consist of:

- the student's advisory committee,
- an expert in the field, and
- a representative of the Graduate Executive Committee who is not a member of the student's advisory committee and is not serving as the expert in the selected field.

The Graduate Executive Committee representative may, but is not expected to, ask questions and will participate as Chair for the meeting. The Graduate Executive Committee representative must not serve in any other role during the mid-level examination. That is, the Graduate Executive Committee member cannot be part of the student's advisory committee and cannot serve as the examiner who is the expert in the selected field. If one of the advisory committee members is an expert in the selected field, no external examiner need be invited. The members of the examining committee are responsible for reading the **General Introduction** prior to the examination and attending with prepared questions on the selected topics.

Examination Format: For the mid-level examination, the student must prepare a 30 minute presentation that provides a forum for discussion of the **General Introduction**. The examination committee will ask questions at the end of the presentation in a style that mimics the thesis defense. There will be two rounds of questions; the first round will be 10 minutes per examiner, and the second round will be 5 minutes per examiner.

The student must be prepared to defend all topics covered in the presentation and **General Introduction** and must demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of the chosen fields. The student should read extra material to answer the questions that will be asked during the oral examination. The student is encouraged to approach the mid-level examination in the same manner as his/her oral defense. The examination will take approximately 90 minutes. Please allow 2.5 hours when scheduling for the mid-level examination to ensure adequate time for evaluation of the student's performance and for summarizing the recommendations.

Evaluation of the Examination: At the end of the mid-level examination, the student will be asked to leave the room, while the examiners evaluate the student's performance (strengths and weaknesses) and give advice for improvement. The examination panel should provide specific feedback on the ability of the student to answer questions in preparation for the oral thesis defense. This information must be outlined on the departmental form "PhD Mid-Level Comprehensive Exam Report Form" which must be completed by the meeting Chair. The completed form must be signed by all members of the committee and the student before submission to the department office. The student must print out a copy of the form available on the Medical Biophysics website under program related forms and bring it to the examination.

Negative Outcome: If the performance is judged unsatisfactory, the reasons must be clearly stated on the form with suggestions for improvement, and a second attempt should be scheduled. If the performance is judged unsatisfactory during the second attempt, the student will be asked to withdraw from the graduate program. The decision by the mid-level examination committee to judge a performance as unsatisfactory will not be taken lightly. The committee will view unsatisfactory performance during the mid-level examination as equivalent to failure to successfully defend a doctoral thesis. The student may appeal the decision of the mid-level examination committee following the procedures listed on this URL: http://www.schulich.uwo.ca/biophysics/graduate/current_students/policies_and_procedures.html