

TO: Chemical Biology Students Taking the Prelim this Semester  
FROM: Prof. Scott Silverman  
DATE: May 9, 2007  
SUBJECT: Third-Year Preliminary Examination  
COPY TO: Research Advisors

The purpose of this message is to ensure that you are informed about some key aspects of the prelim exam process related to the written report and oral exam. This information is based on the guidelines established in previous years within the Chemical Biology area of our department.

**1. Written Preliminary Report.** Your written preliminary report should describe background material on your research project; your research progress to date; and your goals and plans for future research. The entire report should be no longer than ten double-spaced pages, including figures (please note: your committee may decide that a report which is too short to include the necessary information needs to be re-written). You should have an additional literature references section, but this section should cite only the most relevant work (i.e., do not provide hundreds of references). The completed report must be submitted, by you, to each member of your committee at least one week in advance of the prelim exam date. If this submission date is not met then your prelim exam may need to be rescheduled, so please complete and submit your report on time.

**2. Oral Preliminary Exam.** As stated in the Graduate Manual (sect. 5.2.19), the preliminary examination is designed to answer two questions: (i) Is the student sufficiently knowledgeable about science to warrant admission to candidacy for a Ph.D. degree? (ii) Has the student accomplished enough in their thesis research and thought enough about the direction their research should take (and why) to warrant admission to candidacy? To assist your committee members in answering these important questions, please prepare a brief oral presentation that describes your research project, including both your prior and proposed research. You may use PowerPoint or overheads, and it is reasonable for you to prepare approximately 20 minutes' worth of material, assuming no interruptions. Of course, your committee members will likely have many questions during your presentation, and the overall examination will likely take one hour if not somewhat longer.

Things you need to do:

1. Ensure that your four committee members, prelim exam date/time, and prelim exam location have been decided.
2. Prepare the written preliminary report and submit a copy to each of your committee members at least one week before the exam date.
3. Prepare the oral presentation and be prepared for questions from your committee members related to this presentation.
4. It would be reasonable for you to remind the members of your committee about your exam, perhaps the day before by email.
5. The Chemical Biology office will prepare the necessary paperwork and provide this to your research advisor, who will bring it to the exam.

Deadlines:

1. Determination of full four-member thesis committee (advisor + 3 other faculty): Monday, July 30, 2007
2. Scheduling of oral preliminary exam: Friday, September 7, 2007
3. Written preliminary exam report: Due in printed form at least one week in advance of the prelim exam date
4. Preliminary oral examination: Must be completed by Friday, December 7, 2007

Please note the September 7 deadline for the scheduling of your prelim exam. This deadline will require that you contact your committee members regarding their availability prior to that date. Please note that many faculty travel quite often, so getting your prelim exam on their schedules earlier rather than later may make life much easier for you.