

Chemical Biology Program

Dissertation Advisor and the Dissertation Advisory Committee Policy

Choosing a Dissertation Advisor

When the Dissertation Advisor has been selected (usually by the end of year 1), the Dissertation Advisor Declaration Form, must be completed and submitted to the Chemical Biology Coordinator for Program approval.

Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC)

After passing the PQE, a DAC of at least three members (in addition to the Dissertation Advisor) must be appointed by the end of August of the student's third year and a meeting scheduled by the end of November. Students should meet with their advisor to select the committee; subject to program approval, any three faculty members may be on the committee. Once students have decided on their committee they should email their selections to the Chemical Biology Coordinator for program approval.

The Committee should meet with the student at least once a year through G5 and every six months thereafter, until Ph.D. dissertation writing is underway. The Chair of the DAC is responsible for the preparation of the DAC Report, which should be signed by all committee members at the conclusion of each meeting, and submitted to the Chemical Biology Coordinator. If these requirements have not been met, the student may not be allowed to register for the semester or their stipend could be withheld.

Role of the DAC

The role of the DAC is to assist the student in defining the dissertation project, review scientific progress, offer critical evaluation, suggesting extension or modification of objectives, arbitrate differences of opinion between the student and the advisor if they arise, and decide when the work accomplished constitutes a dissertation. Our hope is that the committee will help students in the early stages to get their research off to a good start, and that they will be a resource for students at any point during their graduate career.

Procedures for Setting up DAC meetings

Students should contact the Chemical Biology Coordinator, who will assist them in scheduling all meetings and who should receive a copy of all information that is given by the student to his or her DAC committee prior to the meeting.

Dissertation Proposal and DAC Report Policy

Students are to submit a brief summary of progress (five or fewer pages not including images and references) to their Dissertation Advisory Committee and Chemical Biology Coordinator at least one week before the meeting and be prepared to give a twenty minute presentation. The student is also responsible for bringing a copy of the DAC report to each meeting. This report is to be filled out by the Chair of the committee and returned to the Chemical Biology Coordinator immediately following the completion of the meeting. **The chair of the committee is also responsible for designating time during the meeting for both the student and advisor to address to the committee separately. The**

chair should try to illicit information regarding how both the advisor and student assess work in the lab is going and if there are any issues or conflict.

The format for the written report is as follows:

- Background and Significance
- Specific Aims
- Preliminary Results
- Future Plans

Dissertation Preparation and Defense

The Dissertation Advisory Committee, in consultation with the Dissertation Advisor, determines when it is time for a student to stop laboratory work and begin to write a dissertation. Once a student has been given permission to write a dissertation, the Chemical Biology Coordinator should be contacted to schedule an appointment to discuss requirements, dates, etc.

A pamphlet entitled “Form of the Doctoral Dissertation” describing the requirements of the University in writing the dissertation, is available at http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/current_students/form_of_the_phd_dissertation.php.

Dissertation Examination Committee

GSAS states that the Dissertation Examination Committee must be comprised of three faculty members. Two of the faculty must be FAS faculty or be a member of the program faculty. The third member can be from outside of Harvard. They strongly recommend that the chair of the committee be a FAS faculty member. The Chairperson of the DAC should preferably chair the examination, but students may invite another DAC member to do so. The role of the chairperson is to (a) be impartial, (b) arbitrate problems, and (c) administer the exam.

The student and the Dissertation Advisor shall submit, in rank order, a list of potential examiners to a Co-Director, with whom, in consultation, a final list is generated. After the Co-Director approves the list of examiners, the student shall then set up the exam by contacting the examiners, giving them details as to date, time, etc.