

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION INFORMATION

The Biological Sciences Division requires that "a general oral or written qualifying examination, separate from course examinations, must be passed by the student upon the major subject offered and such subordinate subjects as may be required by the Department concerned." In GGSB, this examination has two parts 1) the Preliminary Examination and 2) the Qualifying Examination. The examination procedures have been designed to ensure that preparing for the exams should be an educational experience for the student. Questions about these examinations that are not answered by the information that follows should be directed to the Graduate Program Administrator.

Preliminary Examination (Part I)

The objective of the Preliminary Examination (Part I) is to determine the strength of a student's general knowledge of genetics as well as his/her ability to synthesize an overview of research problems of active interest, based on the literature. The exam is typically taken in September following the student's first year.

Students must have completed the 4 required courses and at least three of the four elective courses to sit for the Preliminary Exam. Students also must have a "B" average or permission from the Steering/Curriculum Committee to take this exam.

For the Preliminary Exam, students will be given questions to choose from and will pick 3 of these questions to answer. Students are expected to prepare responses for all three of the questions. A starting point for references will be included with the Exam. Two weeks after receiving the questions, the student will be asked to present his/her answers orally for three questions.

The Preliminary Exam lasts for approximately two hours. Students are allowed to use books, reference materials, lecture and seminar notes to prepare their answers. Students are also free to discuss the questions among themselves and with faculty. The format of the presentation should be a short lecture (approximately 10-15 minutes) designed to teach a generally knowledgeable group about the topic. The presentation should concisely review the pertinent background information, state the question being asked, and lay out an experimental plan (if applicable). Potential pitfalls and difficulties should be evaluated. Answers should not be read from a prepared text. However, one 5x8 note card and six PowerPoint slides for each question may be brought to the Exam. There will also be a board to write on. One of the purposes of the Preliminary Exam is to provide practice in oral presentations and discussion. The faculty will question the student further about the general subject of the presentation. There will be three examiners on each Preliminary Examining Committee from the GGSB faculty. The Preliminary Exam committee members are made public three days prior to the Exam.

Based upon the student's performance, the Preliminary Exam Committee **recommends** one of the following options:

- A. Pass unconditionally.
- B. Pass conditionally, with written answers to a question(s) required. Answers should be submitted within two weeks. The student will then meet again with the Exam Committee to defend his/her answers.
- C. Pass conditionally, with further course work required in one or two areas.
- D. Fail, with the recommendation that the student retake the exam within the quarter.
- E. Fail, with the recommendation that the student leave the program.

The CSAC then meets to consider this **recommendation**, taking into account the student's overall academic performance as well as his/her performance on the Exam. If a student who fails the Exam is allowed to retake it, the Committee for the re-take will be selected by the CSAC in consultation with the Chair of the GGSB and will contain at least one member of the first Preliminary Examining Committee and at least one new member.