

EEB Exam Committee Guidelines

All EEB Ph.D. students must pass a Comprehensive Examination consisting of written and oral competency exams (Stage 1) and a research proposal defense (Stage 2). Stage 1 is administered by the Exam Committee.

- Based on the subject themes the student selects (10 possible, found here <https://eeb.tamu.edu/people/faculty/core-faculty-research-theme/>), students will pick members of the EEB core faculty that correspond to the four core subject areas to form a four-member exam committee. This Exam Committee is separate from the student's research committee and will administer the written and oral exams (not the research proposal defense). Members on the student's research committee cannot also be on the exam committee.
- Before the exam committee meets, the student will send out a graduate student profile to the Exam Committee that summarizes their research project and lists courses taken (no longer than 1 page).
- The exam committee is expected to meet at least 60 days before the written and oral exams to discuss what topics/questions to focus on for each subject theme in preparation for the written and oral exams. This meeting is referred to as the exam prep meeting. All members of the exam committee will attend this meeting, along with the faculty chair of the research committee. The student should leave this meeting with a good idea of what material he/she needs to master to do well on the exams.
- Written exams should be completed approximately two weeks before oral exams. Each exam committee member will send the student exam questions with instructions on how to complete each question (e.g., open book, closed book, length, etc.). **Exam questions from each committee member should not exceed 48 hours to complete.** The student will need to submit answers to all written exams before the oral exam can take place.
- Members of the exam committee should send feedback to the student before the oral exams. Feedback should indicate if the committee member was satisfied with the student's answer and what areas need improvement. The depth of information associated with this feedback is at the discretion of the exam committee member.
- The oral exam will not exceed 3 hours and should focus broadly on the topics that were discussed in the exam prep meeting and written exams. The faculty chair of the research committee can attend the oral examination but may not ask questions or intervene on behalf of their student.
- Students will be evaluated on mastery of the subject material, synthesis and analytical capacity, critical thinking and relevance of literature review.

- The student is allowed to “fail” a research theme without failing the whole exam. If an exam committee member is not satisfied with the student’s performance on their theme, but the student passes the other themes, that exam committee member will determine the best way to retake their portion of the exam. Evidence of theme mastery might mean having to pass another face-to-face exam or writing a paper. If the student passes the second round of the exam, the exam is considered passed. If not, the exam is considered failed.
- When all exam committee members are satisfied with the student’s performance, they should sign the internal EEB document signifying a passed exam.