

Written Preliminary Exam for MCDB Students

A subcommittee of the Graduate Studies Committee called the Graduate Studies Implementation Committee consisting of 4 individuals, appointed by the co-Director of Graduate Studies (MCDB) is charged with preparing and administering the Written Preliminary Exam for MCDB students. Committee members serve 2 year terms as preceptors and each prepare a module for the exam. Modules consist of 8-10 papers, and questions based on those papers. Each year 4 modules in different sub-areas are offered (i.e. Genetics, Cell Biology, Developmental Biology, Molecular Biology, Bioinformatics, Plant Biology, etc). Students are required to choose 3 of the 4 modules and complete them. The exam will be taken during a specified time, and the preceptors will grade the exam in a timely manner. Failure to complete the exams by the specified deadline will result in a failing grade. Exams will be graded on a high-pass (HP), pass (P), low-pass (L), fail (F) basis. Possible results of the exams are described in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Modules			Result
P	P	P	Pass
P	P	L	Contingent Pass
P	P	F	Retake 1 module
P	L/F	L/F	Retake 2 modules
L/F	L/F	L/F	Retake 3 modules

Students who have to repeat a module (or closely related module) in the following year must pass them with a P or HP. Failure to pass (or contingently pass – see below) three modules over a two-year period will constitute failure to meet the eligibility requirements to advance in the PhD program. In such cases the MCDB co-Director of Graduate Studies may convene a meeting of the preceptors and the student's PI to examine extenuating circumstances and may choose to re-instate the student pending some remediating course of action (i.e. re-examination etc.). Such re-instatement meetings are at the discretion of the co-Director of Graduate Studies and are expected to be rare. If a student receives one L on a module in the first year they take the exam, the examination committee will contingently pass the student and contact their PI and recommend a remediating course of action (i.e. enrolling in a course, a customized reading assignment etc.). It will be the responsibility of the student and the PI to follow through on the recommended course of action. Each year the papers and questions for a given module will be different.