

Ph.D. Examination Information Chemistry Option

The final examination for the chemistry Ph.D. program consists of two parts: a propositions defense and a Ph.D. thesis seminar and defense. The Ph.D. **Propositions Defense** is a separate examination with your Ph.D. examining committee on three propositions. The **Ph.D. Thesis Seminar and Defense** is a public, one-hour oral presentation followed by a closed-door defense of your thesis by your Thesis Committee.

The Thesis Committee

The Thesis Committee shall consist of at least four faculty members, three of whom must be from the Division of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. The committee shall normally include all members of the candidacy committee. Typically, one member will be in chemistry and in the same field, and one member will be in chemistry but out-of-field. If you need to replace one or more members of your candidacy committee, please see the Graduate Program Manager.

You are required to meet with your Thesis Committee in a fourth-year meeting before you begin your fifth year (i.e., by the end of September following your fourth year). When planning your fourth-year meeting, you should consult with your advisor to select a fourth member of your committee. Once your fourth member has been chosen and your fourth-year meeting is scheduled, enter the meeting date and update the names of your Thesis Committee members in REGIS under Graduate Degree Progress.

The Propositions Exam

Before the end of the fifth year and at least ten weeks before the Ph.D. Thesis Defense, you must take your Ph.D. propositions examination. The propositions exam begins with a 15-minute presentation by the student on a proposition of their choosing, as long as it is not a proposition derived from a postdoctoral application. The format is similar to that of a job interview. The other propositions will be examined orally. After scheduling a date for the propositions exam that is mutually satisfactory for you and your Thesis Committee, enter the date in REGIS.

You must submit a copy of the propositions, along with suitable abstracts, to the Thesis Committee no less than two weeks before the propositions exam. These propositions must be acceptable to the Committee before you can schedule your final seminar and defense.

Three propositions are required. Not more than one of these may be a carry-over from the candidacy exam, and there is no guarantee that a proposition accepted at candidacy will be accepted at the Ph.D. propositions exam. At least one proposition must be well-removed from your field of research. If one of the propositions is based on a proposal prepared for a postdoctoral fellowship, it should be preceded by a brief statement that states this and describes the student's original contributions to the proposal.

The propositions should display originality, breadth of interest, and soundness of training. You will be examined on your selection and formulation of propositions as well as on your defense of them. You should begin formulating a set of propositions early in the course of graduate study.

After successfully completing the propositions exam, email the Chemistry Graduate Program coordinator to let them know you passed. They will update your graduate progress in REGIS with the result of your exam.

Before the Thesis Defense

Guidelines for preparing your thesis are available from the Office of Graduate Studies: <http://www.gradoffice.caltech.edu/academics/forms>. Read this **before** preparing your thesis.

Additional guidelines, including LaTeX and Word templates, are available through the Caltech Library: <https://libguides.caltech.edu/theses>.

1. **Select a date (determined by you and your research advisor) for your defense.** Your thesis seminar should precede the defense. Make sure that the date and time are compatible with your committee members' schedules. Once finalized, enter the defense date in REGIS.
2. **At least one month prior to the defense date, begin exiting processes,** including Athenaeum membership termination and forwarding address forms.
3. **At least two weeks prior to the defense date, complete the following the Ph.D. Examination tab in REGIS – Graduate Degree Progress.** In REGIS, you will submit your Thesis Committee (for approval by the Option Representative and the Dean of Graduate Studies), examination details (date, time, location), the name you wish to appear on your diploma, full thesis title, short thesis title (for the diploma), and whether you plan to participate in commencement.
4. **At least two weeks prior to the defense date, distribute copies of your thesis.** Each member of your Thesis Committee should get a copy. You must also submit a complete draft to the Graduate Studies Office for proofreading.

After the Examination

The thesis will not be officially approved at the time of examination unless the thesis is completely acceptable. When making corrections or revisions, it is your responsibility to (1) make the necessary corrections or revisions, (2) submit the revised thesis to the members of your committee, and (3) ensure your committee members approve your thesis in REGIS.

If you have a subject minor, check to make sure all requirements and forms are completed.

The final, corrected thesis must be uploaded to CaltechTHESIS by the fifth week of the succeeding term (if defending in summer, fall, or winter) or two weeks before the degree is to be conferred (if defending in the spring).