

Guide to First Committee Meeting

September 10, 2026

Documents to Take or Complete

Unless already completed:

- [Thesis Committee Membership Form](#)
- Program of Study for QBioS (see the companion Program of Study document)
- [Doctoral Minor form](#) (if courses will be complete by fall)

Topics to Discuss

Students generally give a PowerPoint about their research progress. You can ask current Ph.D. students for examples.

- Course work taken and planned
- Timeline for Ph.D.
- Research topic

You should prepare a short description of your research plans (about 20 minutes, no more than 25). Here are some categories you could cover, which can be modified based on the amount of preliminary results you have thus far. The intent is to give the committee a general sense of your plans, focusing largely on:

- Introduction to the topic
- Background and significance
- Potential thesis aims
- Preliminary results
- Potential research strategies

Note that the first meeting is meant to provide critical input in advance of your candidacy exam. The written proposal is described in the handbook and will include a more detailed description of your research strategy, breakdown of aims, preliminary results, and expected timeline.

After the Meeting

Student: Inform Lisa and update your profile in the QBioS student tracker.

Committee chair: Provide a ½ to 1 page summary to the student (and CC Lisa) covering three topics:

- **Program of study:** Brief feedback on the courses taken thus far, progress in coursework, and any deficits or needs moving forward, if applicable.
- **Writing requirement:** Brief feedback on scientific writing progress, including long-form reports in classes (for example, the final paper for BIOL/PHYS 6750), articles, or formal writing coursework.
- **Thesis proposal:** Feedback on the status of the thesis topic and preliminary advice on progress that would help advance the written and oral thesis proposal.

First Committee Meeting FAQs

Is the meeting mandatory?

Yes, this meeting is mandatory.

Is the meeting evaluative?

No, the meeting does not have a grade or any kind of formal evaluation; it is meant to be helpful. The central objective is to begin a dialogue with your thesis proposal committee. Forming a committee and getting them in the loop early with respect to your plans (however preliminary they might be) is one of the strongest indicators of staying on track and on time for your thesis.

I don't have any data or results yet – do I still need to meet?

Yes, you do. We don't expect you to have many results yet, or any! This initial meeting can last 30–45 minutes and is meant to give you a chance to tell the committee about yourself, what courses you have taken, summarize the work you have done (in your thesis group and in your rotations), and share your thoughts about initial thesis directions.

Can I delay the meeting?

We would prefer you have this meeting by the end of October, but we can accommodate meetings before December 1 without special permission from the QBioS Graduate Committee.