

BESS

The BioEngineering Student Society

1st year PhD Student Checklist

Every Semester

- **Did you register for classes?**
 - Typically best to register close to the start of the semester. The later you register, the later your term bill is due!
 - First year students should register during orientation

- **Did you get your tuition remission form?**
 - When you are done registering for classes, take note of the date that your term bill is due.
 - Contact Larry (sometimes Mary Ellen if on Biotech Fellowship), to prepare your tuition remission form. Inform them of your term bill due date and pick up the completed form when it is ready.

- **Did you submit your tuition remission form?**
 - Before the date that your tuition remission form is due, you must go to a student accounting office on campus. **BRING A PRINTED COPY OF YOUR TERM BILL WITH YOU.** There are offices on College Ave Campus (sometimes a long line) or Busch Campus.

 - College Ave:
Records Hall
620 George Street
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-1175

 - Busch Campus:
Administrative Services Building (ASB), Room 308
65 Davidson Road
Piscataway, NJ 08854

- **Did you either 1) accept the school health insurance or 2) waive your health insurance online?**
 - If you are accepting the school health insurance, Larry will be in contact with you. Gary Buschhorn (buschg@grad.rutgers.edu) is another important contact who may be able to answer more questions that you may have.
 - You may choose to waive the insurance only if you are covered by another source (spouse, parent, etc). You must provide proof of coverage. There should be a link on

your term bill that you can follow to waive the insurance. The deadline is typically during the first month of classes. This must be done every semester!

- **Before the fall semester starts (typically expire end of August), did you renew your parking pass?**
 - Public Safety Building 55 Commercial Avenue New Brunswick, NJ 08901
 - Bring a printed copy of your Fellowship/GA/TA offer letter.
 - Bring cash/check/card. The fee is typically around \$30.
 - This only needs to be done once per year.
 - In some cases, this can be done online, to avoid in-person wait lines.

Research Rotations

PhD students can complete rotations between labs before they decide on a thesis advisor at the end of their first year. This is optional, but encouraged.

- **Did you reach out to professors to see if they can take you as a rotation student?**
 - Meet professors at various events (Orientation, BESS lunches, etc), or read about their research on the BME website.
 - Reach out to professors that you are interested in working with early in the semester to ask if you can do a rotation with them.
 - During your rotation (typically a semester long), decide if you like the environment, research topics and advisor, and if you could see yourself working there for the next 4-6 years. It is understood that you are busy with classes in your first year, but you should spend enough time in lab to be able to make a good decision.
- **Did you decide on an advisor?**
 - When you have decided on a lab, talk with the advisor to see if they can officially take you as a student
 - Larry will follow up at the end of spring semester requesting who your thesis advisor is.

Qualifier Checklist

Briefly, the qualifier is an NIH-style 10-page proposal from a given or pre-approved chosen topic that you have to write and then orally defend in front of a committee of three professors.

- **Did you take the BME writing/qualifier course?**
 - This is offered in the spring semester—it is one of the required courses. The class will keep you up-to-date with the deadlines and help you with the writing/qualifier process.
- **Did you choose a topic?**
 - There are certain restrictions on choosing a qualifier topic. Check the qualifier guide for before you start. There are suggested topics as well, however, they are quite broad and you can almost propose anything that is backed up by published scientific papers.

- The topic cannot be the exact research that you are doing in lab. There can be some overlap, but it must be independent of the work that you are actually doing. The idea must be your own original work.
 - Submit your topic via email to Larry and the Graduate Program Director around spring break (official deadline will be given in the writing course).
- **Did you write your specific aims?**
- These need to be submitted soon after the topic.
 - This is the most important part of the qualifier—it will guide the construction of the entire document.
 - Do not hesitate to go to other people to refine your specific aims.
- **Did you attend the Q&A session?**
- A Q&A session will be held by BESS in late April or early May.
 - Prepare a list of questions that you have before attending.
- **Did you establish a schedule?**
- The PhD qualifier is a lot of work, and during the semester you will also need to do lab work and take others courses at the same time. Although the qualifier due dates fall in early June, you must do a lot of planning during the spring semester. Budget your time well!
- **Did you ask others for help?**
- Make sure you talk to the others while you are developing your qualifier. Working solely on your own may lead you in the wrong direction.
 - Senior students and professors are more than happy to help with brainstorming topics, improving your writing and watching you practice the oral defense!
- **Did you schedule the oral defense?**
- An oral defense in the form of a powerpoint presentation is part of the qualifier process.
 - There will be three committee members (BME professors) that will evaluate your proposed topic. These are assigned to you by the department—look out for this email in mid-May!
 - Contact the three committee members as soon as you get their names to schedule a time convenient for all of you. It is best to use an online scheduling site, like Doodle Poll.
 - Contact Larry to reserve a presentation room for the final date and time that you decide.
- **Did you submit the written document?**
- Larry will need a copy of the completed written proposal in early June. This needs to be a full version—although changes can be made from this date until you send the document to your committee. Look out for emails with official deadlines.
 - The written qualifier will need to be submitted through Sakai to be checked against Turn It In for plagiarism. More instructions will be given in the writing course.

- Send the final written document to your committee members approximately one week before your oral defense date so that they can read it.
- **Did you prepare for the oral defense?**
 - After submission of the written proposal, work on your power point presentation and make sure to practice! It is a good idea to have supplemental slides beyond the formal presentation that may help you answer questions that your committee members have!
 - On the day of the oral exam, dress business casual and be in the room at least 30min before to setup projector/laptop. Ask Larry or Stratos if you need a projector and pointer.
- **Did you finish the oral defense?**
 - After you defend, the committee may ask you to step out of the room so that they can discuss your work in private. They will either notify you immediately, or through email if you passed, conditionally passed (most common), or failed. If you conditionally passed, your committee may request that you complete revisions to the proposal or take additional courses. Await further direction from your committee/Larry if you conditionally pass or fail.
 - Once you pass (congrats!), you will get an email that you need to submit the final version of your proposal to Larry or through Sakai.
 - Attend the Congratulatory Qualifier BBQ over the summer that BESS throws!

If you have any other questions in the course of your first year ask Larry (les42@soe.rutgers.edu).