

BHI PhD qualifying exam policy

Effective April 2024

PhD qualifying exam:

There are two goals of our qualifying exam:

- (1) Assess students' knowledge of the **breadth** of the field, and
- (2) Assess students' research readiness, including their **in-depth** knowledge in a particular subfield of biomedical & health informatics.

Accordingly, there are two portions of this exam: a breadth portion common to all students, and a depth portion that is different for each student. Both portions include a written component as well as an oral examination.

Committee(s):

There will be a qualifying exam committee for breadth comprised of faculty in BHI-core. This committee will participate in the writing of the breadth portion of the exam and will participate in the oral examinations. This committee will be made up of 5 faculty who will be equitably assigned to individual student oral examination subcommittees. (See below).

In addition, each student taking the exam must select a **depth faculty** who will administer the depth portion of the exam and will also participate in the oral exam, including the overall assessment of the student's performance. This depth faculty may be any member of the BHI-core faculty, e.g., the student's assigned academic advisor. Ideally, the depth faculty member goes on to become the student's prospective PhD chair, but this is not expected for all students. (The depth faculty person may also be a member of the breadth qualifying exam committee.)

Written components:

For **breadth**, students are responsible for all material taught in our core BHI curriculum. Early in Autumn quarter, an exam consisting of four (4) questions will be distributed to students, to be completed in one week's time, with a page limit of five (5) pages.

For **depth**, students must work collaboratively with their **depth faculty** over the summer quarter to develop a modest reading list from the primary literature in the sub-field of their choice. This list of readings must be finalized by August 1st. The number of readings may vary depending on student and domain, but as an approximate guideline, we might expect a list of 10-20 journal articles.

The **depth document** will be due by the first day of Autumn quarter, and will be a 6-8 page summary and review of content from those readings. This document should synthesize and organize thematically the content and should also identify gaps in the literature that could be addressed with future research. The document does NOT need to include anything like specific aims or a concrete proposal for research and is NOT expected to be a systematic review of the literature.

Oral component:

Oral exams for all students will occur over 2-3 weeks, scheduled after students have completed the written materials, and after faculty have read and assessed those documents. Each student will have an oral exam subcommittee of 3 faculty: 2 members of the qualifying exam breadth committee and their depth faculty member. The student duration of the oral exam will be 40-45 minutes. Students will be notified as soon as possible of their result, but exam proceedings must be kept confidential until all students have completed their oral exams. The exams will begin with a brief ~10 minutes depth presentation by the student, followed by depth questions, followed by breadth questions. All members of the subcommittee will assess overall performance.