

Neuroscience Program Qualifying Exam Guidelines

The written part of the Qualifying Exam consists of a research project proposal that includes 3 aims and encompasses the amount of work expected for a 3-years NRSA postdoctoral fellowship:

- *NIH outline: Specific Aims (1 page); Significance and Innovation sections (1 page or less); Research Strategy including background, preliminary data and experimental approach (design and methods); timeline (13 pages)*
- *Length: 15 pages total including figures but excluding bibliography (no page limit for bibliography)*
- *Formatting: 11 pt Arial, single spaced, 1" margins*
- *Don't forget to include page numbers*

1) The student can develop the first 2 aims of the QE grant proposal through the Grant Writing Course N627.

2) During the preparation of these 2 Aims, the student can consult with the thesis advisor and other experts. Research issues (technical, conceptual, matters of scientific background) can be discussed with your thesis advisor and other experts. Research *and writing style issues* can be discussed with the N627 instructors

3) The student can also arrange a mock QE using this first proposal (2 aims) in order to practice answering questions and to receive feedback on his/her proposal. All students, postdocs and faculty members can participate except faculty selected to serve on the QE committee.

Through these activities, the student is expected to master the essentials of experimental design and grant writing as well as practice presenting and defending their proposal (this applies exclusively to the 2 aims generated for the Grant Writing Course).

4) A 3rd Aim must be developed independently by the student (without help from the advisor, N627 instructors or other individuals).

The QE committee must be the first to read and critique this new aim.

However, if a student is investigating the use of a technique, he/she can discuss the technique (not the aim) with an expert (though not with their own advisor or examination committee members).

5) The 3rd Aim must constitute a 'substantial aim' (e.g. equivalent to approximately 40-50% of the work proposed or ≥ 4 or more pages of the written proposal).

In the 3rd aim, the student is to showcase what he/she has learned about writing grants and designing experiments.

Exam:

~2 weeks before the exam, the student must submit the proposal to all committee members.

NOT ALLOWED: asking someone to edit the proposal (regardless of whether the student is a native English speaker or not).

**Questions?
Ask your QE committee Chair.**