

## Scheduling the DBO (Doctoral Board Oral) Exam

### A Step-by-Step Guide for BME PhDs (Updated September 2022)

Note: This document is intended to succinctly outline the steps required to assemble a DBO committee and schedule the exam. More details about the exam format can be found in the BME PhD Handbook.

The DBO Exam is a Johns Hopkins University requirement for the PhD. It is typically scheduled to occur soon after coursework is complete. ***The DBO exam must be completed by 24 months following matriculation in the program.***

STEP 1 (6-18 months pre-DBO): As you take classes, consider which of your professors may be appropriate examiners for your DBO. Discuss potential DBO committee members with your research advisor(s). Ask other BME students who have completed their DBO about their experience with those faculty members you are considering. You may even ask potential committee members about their approach to being an oral examiner.

STEP 2 (6+ months pre-DBO): Make sure to understand the DBO committee composition requirements. The committee is made up of 5 members and 2 alternate members. At least 2 committee members must be from INSIDE the BME department. At least 2 committee members must be from OUTSIDE the BME department. Primary appointment governs INSIDE or OUTSIDE. Thesis advisors are always considered INSIDE. For specific eligibility rules and requirements, refer to the BME Handbook. Decide who you would like to be your 5 members and 2 alternates and ask them if they are willing to agree in principle to participate on your DBO exam.

STEP 3 (4-6 months pre-DBO): Use this [form](#) to submit your proposed list of Oral Examination Committee Members to the Program Directors. A response should be emailed to you within approximately a week. Your committee will either be approved, or changes may be required to adhere to DBO committee rules or other program requirements.

STEP 4 (3-6 months pre-DBO): Work with your committee members to schedule the exam (date, time, and location). Finding an agreeable time for all seven committee members can usually only be accomplished with a few months lead time. Email [BME-AdminSupport@jhu.edu](mailto:BME-AdminSupport@jhu.edu) to reserve a room. As soon as you settle on a date, time, and location, proceed to STEP 5.

STEP 5 (2+ months pre-DBO): Fill out the [JHU PhD DBO form](#) specifying the date and final committee composition, and send to the Program Administrator, who will submit it to the registrar's office. The School of Medicine will not accept this form less than three weeks prior to the scheduled exam date. The registrar processes these forms chronologically with respect to the exam date. The time required for approval (or rejection) of the form can vary. Most rejections simply require a corrected resubmission. Occasionally it will be necessary to alter the committee membership, in which case STEPS 3-5 must be repeated. This same form will be used by your DBO committee members to report the result of your exam back to the Program Administrator and the registrar's office.

STEP 6 (4-6 weeks pre-DBO): Devote this time to preparation. Research advisors recognize that you need this time to study, and that your pace of research progress may be slow during these weeks. It is reasonable to ask your committee members about topics they may cover. It is extremely valuable to form mock committees made up of post-DBO students and take practice exams. Many students begin the exam by providing a 5-minute summary of their research with 2-4 slides. You may decide on whether to do this in consultation with your research advisor.

STEP 7 (1 week pre-DBO): As your exam date nears, be sure to remind your committee members of your upcoming DBO exam (at 1 week prior and on the day before) and provide all of the necessary information (date, time, location, connection information if needed). Be sure you have cell phone numbers for all of your committee members so that you may contact them quickly if needed on the day of your exam. Your alternate members should be on-call at exam time in case they are needed.

STEP 8 (1 day pre-DBO): You made it this far. Send your final reminders. Make sure to get some rest before the big day.

Good luck!