

Guidelines for Chairing the Preliminary Examination

The following recommendations are aimed at facilitating an equitable examination process that allows participation of the advisor(s). Another goal is to ensure that the student receives coherent and timely feedback on their performance in order to maximize learning.

- The Chair of the Examination Committee may not be the advisor or co-advisor.
- Optimally, the chair should be the senior ranking committee member.
- The identity of the chair must be shared with the CMB Program Office.
- The chair assumes responsibility for summarizing and communicating the opinions of the committee during all phases of the examination, including review of specific aims, and preparation of the final report.
- During discussion of the student's performance the committee members should consider offering their opinions in order of seniority, with junior faculty first and ending with the advisor.
- All committee members should complete an independent assessment of the written proposal prior to the examination using the evaluation form provided. This should be shared with the chair.
- The chair should provide the student with a written summary of their performance using the evaluation form within 1 week of the examination. Ideally, this feedback should be approved by all committee members prior to sharing with the student.
- If the student fails the 1st examination, the chair is responsible for providing detailed written guidance to help the student address deficiencies in the proposal and/or oral defense. This guidance should include a timeline for retaking the exam, any additional coursework and recommendations for improving the research plan.