

Chemistry Department Guidelines, Standards and Committee Evaluation Form for MS/MA Candidate Preliminary Seminars

I. Purpose of the Preliminary Seminar. The preliminary seminar has two roles: (1) to demonstrate to the Thesis Committee that the student has mastered the background literature germane to his/her thesis project and (2) to present to the Thesis Committee a coherent plan for the thesis project. The preliminary seminar should spend about equal time on each of these roles.

II. Guidelines and Standards for Preparing and Presenting the Preliminary Seminar. The student must meet the minimum guidelines listed below in order to complete successfully the preliminary seminar requirement.

(a) Written Abstract

1. The written abstract will be submitted to the seminar coordinator at least one week in advance of the seminar date.
2. The written abstract must be prepared with adequate attention to style, clarity, and organization, and any materials from the literature must be thoroughly referenced, if included in the abstract.
3. The written abstract should be aimed at a specialist readership and should be similar in style to an abstract of a review article in the student's field of specialization.

(b) The Public Seminar

1. The oral presentation must be sufficiently detailed and reflect a graduate-level understanding of the topic. The presentation should be aimed at a chemically educated general audience, not a lay audience.
2. The formal presentation shall be of adequate length (35-40 minutes). About half of the time should be used to present the background of the research area and half to discuss specific plans for completion of the project. Preliminary data may be shared but is not expected and is not required in the preliminary seminar. Note that a student who presents a seminar that is less than 25 minutes in duration will not pass.
3. The preliminary seminar must demonstrate a sufficient synthesis of ideas and a critical analysis of the subject matter.

(c) Standards for Presentation of Scientific Content

1. The student must demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the subject material in the oral presentation, and must give lucid responses to questions from the audience or her/his committee.
2. The student must display a familiarity with the relevant experimental or computational methods presented.
3. The student must be able to place the research topic in the broader context of the field. This may be done by demonstrating a reasonable awareness of related techniques and subject matter and the ability to evaluate weaknesses and strengths of the techniques or concepts.
4. The student should understand and be able to explain any words, formulas, or concepts they use in their written or oral presentation.

III. Evaluation.

(a) At the end of the oral presentation, the committee and the general audience will have the opportunity to ask questions of the student. The student may be questioned about any subject matter presented in the preliminary seminar, including experimental details, research progress, and any other subject areas deemed germane by the committee.

(b) The committee will evaluate the student's performance by the criteria on the Preliminary Seminar Evaluation Form which summarize the requirements noted in these guidelines. Each committee member must vote "Yes" or "No" on each question. If *any* of the criteria are not met (i.e. if a majority of committee members vote No to any question on the form), the student fails the examination. In committees where there is a positive, but split, vote, then additional work may be assigned to allay the concerns of the dissenting member(s) and a provisional pass will be recorded. If all of the questions are answered "Yes", but some deficiencies are uncovered by the committee, a "Provisional Pass" may also be recorded. In the case of a "Provisional Pass," the committee will assign some follow-up work to the student as well as a deadline for completion of the work, and the committee will withhold their signatures. If the work is satisfactorily completed by the deadline, then the committee will sign the form indicating a "Pass." If the deadline is not met, then a "Fail" will be recorded and signed off by the committee members.

(c) In the event that the student fails the first attempt at the preliminary seminar, the preliminary seminar may be repeated one time only. If the preliminary seminar requirement is not successfully completed within 4 semesters of the first attempt, the student may be disqualified from the MS program.

(d) At the discretion of the research advisor, the MS candidate who fails the Preliminary Seminar may be prohibited from conducting further laboratory research and from registering for Chemistry 298 units until such time as the student has passed the exam.

Date: _____

Memo To: Chemistry Office, DH 518 (Attn: Grad Files)

From: _____ (Student's MS or MA Advisor)



This memo certifies that _____ has presented the **Preliminary Seminar**, as required of all graduate students in the Master's Degree Program in the Chemistry Department of SJSU on _____ .
(date)

The majority vote outcomes from the committee are indicated below:

Yes	No
-----	----

1. Public Seminar

- 1.1. Presentation was sufficiently detailed, reflected a graduate-level understanding of the material.
- 1.2. Presentation was aimed at a chemically educated general audience.
- 1.3. Formal presentation was of adequate length (must be > 25 minutes, ideally 35-40 minutes).
- 1.4. Oral presentation was sufficiently informative.
- 1.5. Responses to questions were sufficiently lucid.
- 1.6. Material obtained from the literature (Tables, Figures, Data, ...) was properly cited.

Comments:

2. General Guidelines

- 2.1. Presenter demonstrated an adequate knowledge of subject matter.
- 2.2. Presenter displayed familiarity with relevant experimental or computational methods.
- 2.3. Presenter could place study topic in broader context of the field, e.g. via comparisons.
- 2.4. Presenter was able to appropriately explain words, formulas and concepts presented.
- 2.5. Seminar demonstrated a sufficient synthesis of ideas or critical analysis of the topic.

Comments:

3. Written Abstract

- 3.1. Abstract was prepared with adequate attention to style, clarity and organization.
- 3.2. Material obtained from the literature, if any, was properly cited.

Comments:

The result of this preliminary seminar is:

___ Pass ___ Provisional Pass ___ Fail (Required in the event of any majority "No" votes above.)

For provisional pass, work to be completed for a pass is detailed on reverse or on attached page.

For provisional pass, deadline for completion of assigned work _____

Committee Signatures

MS or MA Advisor: _____

Committee Member 1: _____

Committee Member 2: _____

Work to be completed to remediate provisional pass: