PhD Research Proposal Policy (updated 4-29-15)

1) Purpose
To determine the student's readiness for embarking on a novel, independently designed PhD dissertation research project. This policy outlines the standard procedure for approval of the PhD Research Proposal, which is one of the three prerequisites for attaining PhD candidacy by the end of the 3rd year of enrollment (see PhD Candidacy Policy).

2) Procedure
- A PhD student who has successfully completed the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination and has collected sufficient preliminary data for demonstrating viability of a novel, independently designed PhD dissertation research project is responsible for scheduling the PhD Research Proposal defense with his/her Dissertation Committee. Full-time students are expected to present the PhD Research Proposal in written and oral format no later than the end of the 3rd year of enrollment. Part-time PhD students should present the PhD Research Proposal within one year of completion of all didactic requirements as outlined in the approved Plan of Study.
- The written PhD Research Proposal consists of a NIH-style research proposal or an appropriate equivalent on a novel topic chosen by the student in consultation with the Supervisory Faculty. The sections to be included in the PhD Research Proposal are: abstract, hypothesis, specific aims, background and significance, preliminary data, research plan, and references. Margins and font size should follow the NIH format. A maximum of 12 single-spaced pages, excluding references, is allowed. To underline feasibility of this novel research idea, inclusion of preliminary data is mandatory. The subject of the research proposal must be clearly distinct from publically available research data.
- The subsequent oral defense of the written PhD Research Proposal should be scheduled within two (2) weeks of its submission. The first component of the oral examination will consist of a presentation and defense of the research proposal. The presentation should include no more than 25 slides and be no more than 30 minutes long. Committee members are entitled to ask questions on all aspects of the proposal, as well as on fundamental concepts of the student's research area. Student must be prepared to discuss methods and procedures relevant to the sub-specialty of pharmaceutical sciences research.

3) Assessment
- The outcome of the PhD Research Proposal defense is determined by a private vote of the Dissertation Committee. A simple majority of the Dissertation Committee must support a decision. Three outcomes are possible: 1) Pass without stipulation; 2) Pass with the stipulation that modifications be completed as determined by the committee; and 3) Fail.
- If the student fails the oral defense, the Dissertation Committee will determine the parameters for a second attempt. A second failure will result in dismissal of the student from the PhD degree program.

4) Reporting
- The PhD Proposal Defense form must be used to document major conclusions of the oral examination of the written PhD Research Proposal with the dissertation Committee. The student is responsible for completing the top portion of this form and for bringing a hardcopy to the meeting. The Supervisory Faculty will act as the official recorder.
The completed and signed *PhD Proposal Defense* form must be returned within one week after the oral examination to the graduate program office for inclusion in the student’s file.

A copy of the proposal abstract outlining approved hypothesis and specific aims must be submitted to the graduate program office for inclusion in the student’s file.