

**THESIS PROPOSAL MEETING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**  
**Plant Biology Program**  
**April 2009**

Q: What is the purpose of the thesis proposal meeting?

A: The thesis proposal meeting is to help you plan and execute your thesis work. You will present the questions you want to address and the methods you wish to use to your committee and solicit feedback on your ideas. This is intended to crystallize your thinking about your project and force you to think deeply about the research you are doing, how it fits into the current field, and how you will interpret your anticipated results.

Q: Do I need to have a lot of preliminary data before I propose?

A: No. The thesis proposal meeting is NOT to show how much bench work the student has accomplished to date. Preliminary data can be helpful but is not essential. It is more important for the student to be able to present a logical, well thought-out rationale for why he or she is pursuing the proposed questions, and why they have chosen the approaches they are proposing. This should include critical analysis of published data in the area of research.

Q: Why is the thesis proposal meeting so early compared to many other DBBS programs?

A: The goal of moving the thesis proposal meeting earlier in the program is get students onto a productive line of research as quickly as possible. The first thesis committee meeting is the perfect time to make sure that you understand the background, have thought carefully about your proposed experiments and to make adjustments in your plan as necessary after all of your reading and after comments from your committee.

Q: Where do I learn more about how to assemble my thesis advisory committee and how to prepare my thesis research proposal?

A: See the Plant Biology Program Academic Guidelines on the Plant Biology Web Site (<http://www.biology.wustl.edu/plant/Guidelines.pdf>), pages 5 - 6.