

Molecular and Cell Biology (MCB) Department at the University of California Berkeley

MCB Grad Network (MGN)

2nd year event summary

In early Spring, before 2nd year students schedule their qualifying exams, a 1-hour event is held with one moderator and 4-6 panelists.

General topics covered during 2nd year panel discussion:

- General format of oral qualifying exam
- Timeline of preceding written proposal
- Logistics of talking to your committee ahead of time, getting as much scientific feedback as you can
- Best practices of study group preparations
- Best practices for solo study and writing
- Getting over needing to be in lab
- Practice, practice (and probably practice again)
- Who to invite to your practice quals
- Practice, don't just think about, how to use the white/chalk board
- Prepare yourself for intense pressure: you may get flustered or upset (yes you might cry), and need to figure out ways to deal with it and move on in the moment
- The whole point is to find the limits of your knowledge
- Practice responding to these questions with what you do know that is relevant and based on this what you might speculate
- Maintaining physical and mental health is hard during this time, but super important
- How to deal with guilt of not being in lab
- How to mitigate inevitable stress as is best for you
- How to maintain relationships during this time
- Making an appointment with Counseling and Psychological Services is not an indicator of weakness, it is smart!
- At what point can counseling help? Make a pre-plan with benchmarks that if you lose a certain amount of sleep or weight or start drinking a certain amount, you commit to go.
- Make specific plans to study and make specific plans to relax, too. You can always study on a hike!

Survey:

- 1) Did you attend? [yes or no]
- 2) Did you find the panel useful? (i.e. Would you recommend it to future 2nd years prior to their QE?) [yes or no]
- 3) What was useful about the Qualls Panel? Do you have any suggestions on how to improve it? [Free response]
- 4) Is there anything that wasn't discussed that you wish had been? [Free response]