

Department of Biology Graduate Program Handbook

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY'S GRADUATE PROGRAM

The Graduate Program in the Department of Biology provides students with specialized training through course work, research, and teaching. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) establishes the minimal University guidelines for all graduate degrees. The Biology Department has established additional requirements that all students must satisfy. It is your responsibility as a graduate student to ensure that you have met all departmental and university requirements for your degree. Please note that graduate students must fulfill the requirements of the catalog that is current during the semester they enter the program. This is the case for both University and Department of Biology requirements. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with changes in requirements.

This book provides you with the Departmental and a summary of University requirements; however, a complete description of University requirements can be found in the Graduate Catalog. Please keep this book and a copy of the Graduate Catalog handy and refer to them as you progress through your degree. Additional information can be obtained from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, located in the Jack K. Williams Administration Building, and the Biology Graduate Advising Office, located in Butler Hall Room 102.

II. DEADLINES FOR GRADUATE DEGREE

The Department of Biology has established the following deadlines. The schedule is identical for both degrees granted in the Department of Biology.

BIOLOGY DEPT. DEADLINES	
Ph.D. Degree	
Choice of Major Professor	By the end of the 2nd Semester
Degree Plan Filed with Department	Before registering for the 3rd Semester
Proposal Draft submitted to Advisor	End of 4 th Semester
Proposal Filed with Department	During the 5th Semester (see page 18)
Preliminary Exam	During the 5th Semester (see page 19)
Final Examination	Within Four Years of Completing the Prelim Exam

A. ALL PAPERWORK SHOULD BE SUBMITTED THROUGH THE BIOLOGY GRADUATE ADVISING OFFICE

All paperwork to be filed with the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS) or other university offices **must** be routed through the Biology Graduate Advising Office. The Graduate Advising Office will review the document, obtain signatures from the Department Head or Graduate Advisor, log in the paperwork, make copies for your departmental file, and file the paperwork with OGAPS.

B. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE DEGREE

All graduate students must adhere to the requirements set forth by the department in order to remain in good standing. If a student has not met the required Departmental or University deadlines as specified in this handbook or the Graduate Catalog, they will no longer be in good standing with the department and may be blocked from registration the following semester. The block will not be lifted until the requirement is met. Requests for exemptions will be considered by the Graduate Advisor in consultation with the Graduate Programs Committee on a case-by-case basis.

III. THE FIRST YEAR

A. RESEARCH ROTATIONS

The Biology Department requires all incoming students to complete two seven-week laboratory rotations during their first semester. Rotations acquaint new students with research programs in their areas of interest, provide a perspective on approaches and procedures used in modern biology, and create useful contacts in other labs. At the conclusion of rotations, a major professor is chosen by the mutual consent of the graduate faculty member and the student. Students have the option to do one or more additional seven-week rotations in the second semester.

B. REQUIRED COURSE WORK FOR 1st-YEAR STUDENTS

All Department of Biology graduate students are required to enroll in the following graduate courses during their first year.

- 1. First-year students are required to enroll in BIOL 697, Method of Teaching Biology Laboratory.** BIOL 697 is a Department of Biology training program for teaching assistants (TAs). This training program is given as a workshop during New Graduate Student Orientation in August. Additionally, Texas A&M University provides a one-day mandatory TA training workshop. All new graduate students will be registered for these TA training programs during orientation and must attend, regardless of whether or what they teach during their first year.
- 2. First-year students are required to enroll in BIOL 681, Seminar in Graduate Orientation.** This seminar meets one evening per week from 5:30-7:00 PM and will include discussions of requirements of the program, departmental resources, graduate funding, choosing a major professor, writing skills, oral presentations, and other topics important to new graduate students. Another objective of this seminar is to provide a setting for camaraderie to develop between members of the new class.
- 3. First-year students are required to enroll in BIOL 691, Research (Rotations),** in order to receive credit hours for their participation in faculty-supervised laboratory rotations. Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grades will be assigned by the Graduate Advisor based on faculty evaluation of a student's performance in each rotation.
- 4. First-year students are required to enroll in for BIOL 689-601: Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research.** This one credit course meets in the spring and will include discussions of how to recognize and avoid committing fraud in science. Topics will include scientific ethics, negotiation techniques, plagiarism, record-keeping, data management, peer review, conflict management, and the regulations covering animal and human experiments.
- 5. All Biology graduate students are required to register for BIOL 681, Seminar in Departmental Colloquium,** at least once. Students fulfill this requirement in the first year of graduate study.

C. ADDITIONAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. All graduate students are required to register for BIOL 682, Graduate Student Research Seminar**, which is a course involving presentations of a student's research results. Every scientific career step involves presentation of a research seminar, including the thesis defense. Therefore, the department requires a research seminar series for each of our graduate students. The graduate student research seminar is a one credit hour course that should be listed on the degree plan. For the PhD degree, one hour of BIOL 682 should be listed as a required course, and one hour should be listed under Prerequisites and other courses. Regardless of whether registered or not, graduate students should attend the weekly Graduate Student Research seminar throughout their graduate careers, unless they have an unavoidable course or teaching conflict. BIOL 682 will be offered each spring semester.
- 2. All Ph.D candidate students are required to register for a journal club every semester.** Biology Ph.D. graduate students will enroll in a formal one hour Journal Club every fall and spring semester, beginning in the fall of their second year and continuing until they graduate. A graduate student can enroll in any journal club they want, as long as they have the consent of the instructor. Formal journal clubs taught outside the department will also fulfill this requirement.
- 3. All graduate students are required to fulfill the course requirements of the Biology Department.** These graduate course requirements for Biology are listed on page 10, and the requirements for Microbiology are listed on page 11. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that students are broadly trained within their particular discipline. Courses selected to fulfill these requirements must appear on the degree plan.
- 4. Minimum Credit Hour Requirements**
All students must remain in continuous enrollment throughout their graduate careers regardless of their source of support. Graduate students must enroll for at least one credit hour during every regular semester (Fall and Spring) while working towards their degrees. Enrollment for a minimum of one credit hour also is required in the Summer semester for all students using university facilities.

There are higher enrollment requirements for students receiving a graduate assistantship. All graduate students receiving a graduate teaching or graduate research assistantship must register for a minimum of 9 semester credit hours during the Fall and Spring semester. In the Summer, students receiving a graduate assistantship must register for a minimum of 3 semester credit hours during the summer session in which they are employed or any combination of 6 semester credit hours during the entire Summer if they are employed for the entire summer. For example, 3 hours in SSI and 3 hours in SSII (total 6 hours) or 6 hours in the 10-week summer session.

D. REQUIRED TEACHING

The requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree is two semesters. Previous teaching experience at the University level may be used to fulfill this requirement at the discretion of the Graduate Advisor.

E. CHOICE OF MAJOR PROFESSOR

All students must identify a major professor by the end of their first year. The major professor must be a member of the Department of Biology Graduate Faculty. Students must inform the Graduate Advisor of their choice of major professor and request that the major professor notify the Graduate Advisor of their agreement.

F. REQUIREMENTS FOR A CO-CHAIRED COMMITTEE

Occasionally, a student can best complete his/her graduate program by working under the direction of two faculty members. Under these circumstances, a student may elect to be co-chaired by two Texas A&M faculty members. In general, students should request a co-chaired committee only if necessary for their graduate training. The co-chairs should both provide ongoing intellectual contributions and be active mentors to the student. In the case of students who are residents in other academic departments, the Biology co-chair must be willing to act as a conduit to maintain lines of communication between the department, the advisory committee, and the student.

One of the co-chairs must be a member of the Department of Biology Graduate Faculty. The other co-chair may be a member of any other department on campus (including Biology). Students with co-chaired committees must satisfy all Biology requirements for degrees and must take at least 50% of their 691 research credit hours as Biology hours.

G. Guidelines for Requesting a Co-Chaired Advisory Committee

Requests for a co-chaired committee must be reviewed and approved by the Biology Department Graduate Program Committee (GPC) before the Graduate Advisor will approve a student's Degree Plan.

Requests for a co-chaired committee should be submitted to the Biology Graduate Advising Office and must contain the following:

A. Student Statement of Purpose:

This letter, from the requesting student, should outline the reasons for requesting the co-chaired committee and the reasons for designating the specific Biology faculty member as their choice of co-chair. The student should outline the role(s) each co-chair will take in guiding the student's academic and research progress.

B. Letters from Faculty Co-Chairs:

A letter is required from each co-chair outlining his or her contribution to the student's academic endeavors and/or research projects and confirming their approval of the shared duties as co-chairs of the student's advisory committee. The faculty co-chairs may be requested to meet with the GPC to discuss their contributions prior to approval of the request by the GPC.

H. ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An Advisory Committee supervises a student's course work and research, examines a student's progress, and approves all documents required for progress toward a degree. The Advisory Committee will approve the degree plan, read and critique the proposal and thesis or dissertation, and administer the oral exams. The Advisory Committee, chaired by the major professor, is a primary source of direction and intellectual support for a student's research.

In order to provide the student with maximum input on course choices and research direction, the Advisory Committee should be constituted soon after the choice of major professor. Students are expected to meet with their Advisory Committee before the end of their First year.

The University requires that a graduate student's Advisory Committee must include a total of at least four members of the graduate faculty. In addition to the University requirements, a Biology graduate student's Advisory Committee must include at least two tenured or tenure-track Biology graduate faculty. The University requires that one member of the Advisory Committee be from a department other than the student's home department. Joint faculty members are considered Biology faculty and cannot serve as the out-of-department member of a Biology graduate student's Advisory Committee.

I. REQUIRED COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All graduate students are required to have at least one committee meeting each academic year. An Advisory Committee Meeting Report form must be submitted to the Graduate Advising Office no later than the end of summer term of each academic year. Failure to do so may result in a registration block for the Fall semester. The first committee meeting has a unique set of forms to be completed by the Advisory Committee, and subsequent meetings all use the standard Advisory Committee Meeting Report. These can be obtained from the Biology Graduate Advising Office or downloaded from the Biology Graduate Program web site; copies are included in the appendix of this manual.

J. FILING THE DEGREE PLAN

The Degree Plan lists the course work and research hours to be completed by a student during graduate study. The department or university cannot change the requirements for graduation once the Degree Plan is approved, and the student can only change the Degree Plan by filing a petition with OGAPS. The student, in consultation with the Major Professor and Advisory Committee, decides upon the courses included on the degree plan that are in addition to the departmentally required courses. The list of required courses starts on page 10, in addition a certain number of seminars, lab rotations and other required courses are listed on pages 5-7. The minimum total number of hours required on a Ph.D. degree plan is 96 hours; however, for students entering with a M.S. degree awarded in the U.S. (or its equivalent as determined by the Office of International Admissions), the minimum number of hours is 64.

It is important that students review the limitations on the use of undergraduate courses, seminar hours, research hours, and transfer courses (detailed in the Graduate Catalog) prior to submitting a degree plan. When a student files a degree plan, a template should populate with the required

courses that all students must take, such as 681, 697, 685, etc. It will be up to the student to fill in four 3-credit hour courses, all 691 hours, and any additional courses required by the committee.

The degree plan must be filed electronically <https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/>. Instructions can be found at the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies web site, <http://ogaps.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students>.

Departmental Course Requirements:

1. All Ph.D. students are required to take BIOL 681 Seminar in Graduate Student Orientation.
2. All Ph.D. students are required to take BIOL 697 Methods in Teaching Biology Laboratory.
3. All Ph.D. students are required to complete at least 3 additional hours of 681 (seminar). These must include 1 hour of Departmental Colloquium (BIOL 681).
4. All Ph.D. students are required to complete 2 hours of BIOL 682 (Graduate Student Research Seminar). On the degree plan, one hour of BIOL 682 should be entered as a required course, and the second hour should be listed under prerequisites and other courses. All graduate students should attend this seminar each week even when they are not registered for it as a class.
5. Graduate students are required to take a minimum of 4 courses taught by Biology faculty, from either or both of the Foundation and Specialization course listings. Exemptions will be considered by the GPC. These courses are listed on page 14 at the beginning of this section.
6. Students with co-chairs from outside the Dept. of Biology must satisfy all Biology course requirements and must take at least 50% of their 691 research credit hours as Biology hours.

K. Petitions

During the course of a student's career it may be necessary to request a committee, course, or degree change. Any petition that requests some change to a student's program must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies' Document Processing Submission System (OGAPS DPSS): <https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/>.

IV. GRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR PhD IN BIOLOGY

Biology PhD graduate students are required to take a minimum of any 4 BIOL graduate courses from either or both Foundation and Specialization course listings. Exemptions will be considered by the GPC. Additional courses can be included to the student's degree plan by the student's individual committee; suggested courses from other departments are included in the supplementary list.

Foundation Biology courses (taught every year by 2 or more faculty members):

BIOL 606	Bacterial Genetics
BIOL 609	Molecular Tools
BIOL 610	Evolution
BIOL 611	Developmental Biology
BIOL 613	Cell Biology
BIOL 627	Principles of Neuroscience I
BIOL 698	Behavior Genes and Evolution

Specialization Biology courses (taught every year or every other year)

BIOL 601	Biological Clocks
BIOL 602/603/604	TEM
BIOL 608	Light Microscopy
BIOL 615	Signaling in Development and Behavior
BIOL 622	Advanced Microbiology Physiology
BIOL 625	Structural and Molecular Biology
BIOL 628	Principles of Neuroscience II
BIOL 635	Plant Molecular Biology
BIOL 636	Plant Cell Biology
BIOL 644	Comparative and Developmental Neurobiology
BIOL 649	Comparative Endocrinology
BIOL 650	Genomics
BIOL 651	Bioinformatics
BIOL 652	Epigenetics
GENE 612	Population Genetics (Taught by Biology faculty)

Supplementary courses

STAT 651/652	Statistics in Research I and II
GEOL 651	Paleo Community Analysis (substitutes for STAT 651)
GENE 603	Genetics
BICH 603	General Biochemistry
BICH 631	Biochemical Genetics

V. MICROBIOLOGY GRADUATE COURSE REQUIREMENT

All Microbiology Ph.D. students are required to take a minimum of four 3 credit hour courses. Each student must take BIOL 606 Bacterial Genetics, and at least three additional 3 credit hour specialization courses relevant to the field of microbiology, which are selected in consultation with their dissertation committee.

Required Course

BIOL 606 Bacterial Genetics

Specialization Courses (taught every year or every other year)

BIOL 609 Molecular Tools
BIOL 650 Genomics
BIOL 651 Bioinformatics
BIOL 613 Cell Biology
BIOL 611 Developmental Biology
BIOL 601 Biological Clocks
BIOL 602/603/604 TEM
BIOL 608 Light Microscopy
BIOL 615 Signaling in Development and Behavior
BIOL 622 Advanced Microbial Physiology
BIOL 625 Structural and Molecular Biology
BIOL 689 Digital Biology
STAT 651/652 Statistics in Research I and II
GENE 603 Genetics
BICH 601 Fundamentals of Biochemistry
BICH 603 General Biochemistry
BICH 631 Biochemical Genetics
MSCI 635 Basic Immunology
MPIM 601 Microbial Pathogenesis of Human Disease
MPIM602 Immunoregulation
MPIM 607 Applied Epidemiology

Other COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR BIOL AND MICRO PHDS:

BIOL 682 Graduate Student Research Seminar Ph.D. (Taken in 2 semesters)
BIOL 697 Method of Teaching Biology Laboratory Ph.D. 1 hr
BIOL 681 Seminar in Graduate Orientation Ph.D. 1 hr
BIOL 681 Seminar in Departmental Colloquium Ph.D 1 hr
2 additional hours of 681 (prefix can be BIOL OR MICR)

OTHER COURSE OPTIONS:

Special Topics courses:

These courses cover current topics of interest and may or may not become permanent courses. Typically, they are 1-3 credit literature-based courses and are announced at the beginning of each semester. If these courses are well subscribed for 3 consecutive academic years then they can be moved up to the major course category and given a BIOL course number.

Undergraduate background courses:

If a graduate student enters the program without the background needed for a graduate course in a particular area, it may be appropriate to first take an undergraduate course. For example, for graduate students who have not taken molecular biology, genetics, biochemistry, or neurobiology, we recommend that they take BICH 431 Molecular Genetics, GENE 302 Genetics (majors course), BICH 440/441 Biochemistry I/II (majors course), ZOOL 434/435.

VI. Timeline for Graduate Studies

Year 1:

- Complete required courses/seminars
- Complete rotations
- Choose advisor
- Develop degree plan with advisor
- Set up advisory committee
- Hold first committee meeting
 - Outline research project
 - Discuss degree plan
 - Obtain committee approval for degree plan
- Submit degree plan to the Biology Graduate Advising Office to be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS)

Year 2:

- Complete required courses/seminars
- PhD students submit draft of research proposal to their advisor by end of Spring semester

Year 3:

- Complete yearly seminars
- PhD students complete preliminary exam:
 - Submit research proposal to advisory committee (deadline: 3rd Monday in September)
 - Submit Preliminary Exam Checklist two weeks before preliminary exam commences (deadline: 3rd Monday in October)
 - Complete written and oral exams (deadline: Last working day of November)

Year 4 and beyond:

- Complete seminar course each year
- Hold committee meeting each year
- PhD students complete their final exam
 - Write dissertation
 - Submit completed Permission to Defend Thesis form to the OGAPS two weeks before defense
 - Distribute thesis to advisory committee two weeks before defense
 - Defend dissertation
 - Obtain committee approval for thesis
- Submit dissertation approval form and dissertation PDF to the Thesis office.

VII. GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

To earn a Doctor of Philosophy degree a student must meet the requirements of both the University and the Department of Biology. The Department of Biology requirements are outlined below, along with a summary of the University requirements. Please refer to the Graduate Catalog for a complete description of University requirements and policies.

Please note that graduate students must fulfill the requirements of the catalog that is current during the semester they begin their degree requirements. This is the case for both University and Department of Biology requirements. It is the student's responsibility to keep up with changes in requirements.

REQUIREMENTS

A. Laboratory Rotations and Identify a Major Professor

All incoming students must complete at least two seven-week laboratory rotations during their first semester, and they must identify a major professor by the end of their 2nd semester (excluding summer terms). Sponsorship by the Chair or Co-chair must be submitted in writing to the Graduate Advisor by the end of the 2nd semester.

The committee chair or one of the co-chairs must be a member of the Department of Biology graduate faculty. Requests for a co-chair from outside the Department of Biology must be approved by the Graduate Program Committee (see requirements on pages 7-8).

B. Establish an Advisory Committee

The advisory committee, chaired by the major professor, is a primary source of direction and intellectual support for a student's research. The advisory committee should be constituted soon after the choice of major professor in order to provide the student with maximum input on course choices and research direction. The advisory committee will approve the degree plan, read, critique, and approve the proposal and dissertation, and administer the preliminary exam and the final defense.

The University requires that a doctoral student's advisory committee be composed of no fewer than 4 members of the graduate faculty who are representative of the student's field of study and research. The chair or one of the co-chairs of the advisory committee must be from the student's major department, and at least one of the members must be from a department other than the student's department.

The Biology Department has established the following additional requirements for doctoral students. The advisory committee must contain at least 2 tenured or tenure-track members of the Biology graduate faculty. Faculty having joint appointments in the Department of Biology are considered Biology faculty and **cannot** serve as the out-of-department member of a Biology graduate student's advisory committee.

C. Degree Plan

The degree plan should be developed in consultation with the student's advisory committee and submitted through the OGAPS DPSS system (<https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/>) prior to registering for the 3rd semester (excluding summer terms). This deadline was established to ensure that students consult with their advisory committees about course work before beginning the second year of study.

For Ph.D. students, a minimum of 96 credit hours beyond the baccalaureate degree or 64 credit hours beyond the Master's degree is required. Some Master's degrees awarded in countries other than the U.S. are not equivalent to a Master's degree awarded in the U.S. In these instances, the student will be required to have 96 hours on their degree plan.

The degree plan should include the course work required by the Department of Biology. These requirements are described in the following section. For limitations regarding the use of certain graduate courses and transfer credit see the Graduate Catalog. All doctoral degree plans must carry a reasonable amount of 691 (Research) hours.

D. Teaching requirement

All Ph.D. students are required to teach for at least two semesters.

E. Foreign Language

No foreign language is required.

F. Research Proposal

The Ph.D. student must prepare a research proposal for approval by his or her Advisory Committee. The Proposal describes the research that a student intends to undertake. The proposal is not a contract to perform the described research and significant research progress need not be completed at the time of proposal submission. The proposal is a mechanism to assist students in clarifying research goals early in their graduate program, to encourage students to become familiar with the primary literature in their field, to provide experience in scientific writing, and to facilitate research interactions between students and members of their Advisory Committee. In the proposal, the student describes the rationale for the research project, the objectives of the research to be performed, and outlines the methodologies to be used.

Students will prepare a proposal describing their planned research. The proposal format will be determined by the student's advisory committee during their first committee meeting. Suggested formats include:

NIH R01 applications (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>)

NSF research proposals (http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/nsf04_23)

NIH postdoctoral fellowships (<http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/funding/416/phs416.htm>)

Research Proposal Guidelines:

1. A draft of the research proposal should be submitted to the student's advisor by the end of the 4th semester. The proposal must be approved by the student's advisor then submitted to the entire advisory committee by the 3rd Monday in September of their 5th

semester (excluding Summer; i.e. the first semester of year 3). The advisory committee will evaluate the proposal and request any changes by the last business day in September. Students will complete any changes and gain approval by the committee to proceed with the preliminary exam by the 2nd Monday in October.

2. After revisions and approval by the advisory committee, the proposal should be submitted along with the signed official cover sheet to the Biology Graduate Advising Office. The official cover page is available in Appendix II.
3. Students performing research involving human subjects, infectious biohazards, and/or recombinant DNA must attach a copy of the appropriate research compliance approval form to the proposal when proposal is submitted. Proposals that include research with vertebrate animals (including antibody generation in rabbits or mice) must include a copy of an approved Animal Use Protocol cover page. Information on Animal Use Protocols can be found at <http://animal.tamu.edu/approval.html>.

G. Preliminary Examination

The purpose of the preliminary examination is for the student's advisory committee to determine whether the student has a mastery of the subject matter of all fields in the program, an adequate knowledge of the literature in these fields, and the ability to carry out bibliographical research. The preliminary examination is **required**.

Eligibility Requirements for the Preliminary Exam:

1. The student must be registered for at least 1 hour for the semester or 5-week summer term during which any portion of the preliminary exam may fall. If the entire exam falls between semesters, the student must be registered for the term immediately preceding the exam.
2. An approved degree plan was on file with OGAPS at least 90 days prior to the first written examination.
3. The student's official GPR at the time of the examination must be at least 3.000.
4. All English language proficiency requirements must have been satisfied.
5. All committee members must have scheduled or waived the written portion and agree to attend the oral portion of the exam or have found a substitute. Only one substitution is allowed and it cannot be for the committee chair.
6. At the end of the semester in which the exam is given, there are no more than 6 hours of course work remaining on the degree plan (except 681, 684, 690, 691, and 692). The head of the student's department has the authority to approve a waiver of this criterion.
7. The time span from the first written examination to the oral is no more than three weeks. (In cases of department-wide written examinations, this criterion is not applicable.) The head of the student's department has the authority to approve a waiver of this criterion.

The preliminary examination includes both a written and an oral examination in which the student's Advisory Committee tests a Ph.D. student's mastery of his or her field of specialization. The preliminary examination will be administered during the 7th semester (including summer sessions) by the student's advisory committee; ***in other words, the student will take their written and oral exams in the fall semester of their 3rd year.***

The Ph.D. preliminary examination will consist of the proposal described above, a written and an oral examination. During this exam, students are expected to demonstrate that they: 1) understand fundamental biological concepts; 2) have gained detailed knowledge of scientific literature in their research area and the ability to critically evaluate it; 3) are able to formulate specific, plausible and testable hypotheses; 4) are able to design controlled experiments that distinguish among competing hypotheses; 5) are familiar with techniques within their discipline; 6) understand the theory underlying the proposed techniques; and 7) can communicate effectively both in writing and in the oral presentation. Details of the exam format and requirements follow.

Preliminary examinations cannot be taken until all the course requirements of the Biology Department have been completed and less than six hours of formal course work remain to be completed on the degree plan.

Written exams will be taken during the week starting with the last Monday in October. Each student will arrange a time to take the written exam from each advisory committee member. Exams will be evaluated and returned to the committee chair, who will then forward the exams to the student. Students will have the opportunity to discuss any deficiencies in their exams with advisory committee members during the first full week of November.

Oral exams will be taken during the second full week of November. Students are responsible for scheduling a mutually agreeable two hour block of time for the committee to give the oral exam. Students are expected to prepare a 20-40 minute presentation on their proposal and will be examined on their proposal and general knowledge of biology. The committee will meet at the end of the exam and evaluate student performance. The student passes the preliminary exam if there is no more than one dissenting vote among advisory committee members.

In the event of a failure, the advisory committee has the option to allow a retake of the preliminary exam. The written and oral portions of the exam, administered as described above, must be completed within a three week timeframe prior to Spring break. In the event of a second failure, no further retakes will be allowed. The student's status in the Biology graduate program will then be determined by the student and the advisory committee.

If the student does not schedule and pass their preliminary exam before the end of their 9th semester (including summer), immediately upon the 10th semester (i.e. fall semester of their 4th year), they are *automatically* reassigned to the Masters with Thesis track.

The results of the examinations should be reported on the Report of the Preliminary Exam form. The chair will bring the completed Report form to the Biology Graduate Advising Office, which will submit the form to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. Failure to submit the form to OGAPS within 10 working days of the exam will result in the preliminary exam being recorded as a failure. Copies of the official forms can be downloaded from the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies web site: <http://OGAPS.tamu.edu/OGAPS/currentExams.htm>

After passing the preliminary examination, all degree requirements must be completed within four calendar years. Otherwise, the student will be required to repeat the preliminary exam.

H. Admission to Candidacy

For admission to candidacy for a doctoral degree, the student must have: (1) completed all formal course work on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690, and 691, (2) a 3.0 graduate GPR and a Degree Plan GPR of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan, (3) passed the written and oral portions of the preliminary exam, (4) submitted an approved dissertation proposal, and (5) met the residence requirements. The final examination will not be authorized for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

I. Continuous Registration

Once all course work on the degree plan other than 691 (Research) is completed, a doctoral student must be in continuous registration until all further requirements for the degree have been completed. See the Graduate Catalog for additional information on the continuous registration requirement.

J. Pre-Defense Publication of Dissertation Material

Students should be aware of the agreement that is signed when a journal (hard copy or electronic) accepts an article for publication. At that time, the student assigns rights to the journal as publisher. The student must obtain written permission from the copyright holder to include the material in the thesis, dissertation, or record of study. Some journals and publishers have previously granted TAMU such rights, these can be found on the thesis office website.

K. Dissertation

The ability to perform independent research must be demonstrated by the dissertation, which must be the original work of the candidate. The dissertation describes the research performed by a student during graduate study and the unique contribution the student has made to advance the frontiers of knowledge. The student, in consultation with his or her Advisory Committee, determines the content of the dissertation. The dissertation must be approved by the student's Advisory Committee. The dissertation should be submitted to the members of a student's Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the Final Examination.

The dissertation must be original work, grammatically correct in a format consistent with that used in scholarly journals in the candidate's field. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies controls the format of the dissertation. Students must follow it exactly, or risk having it rejected by the Thesis Clerk. Instructions and the Thesis Manual is available on-line at <http://thesis.tamu.edu/>.

The student must submit an original copy of the dissertation in a form approved by the student's Advisory Committee to the Graduate Advising Office in order to obtain the Department Head's approval and signature a minimum of two weeks prior to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies deadline for submitting the dissertation to the Thesis Office. If the Department Head deems the dissertation unsatisfactory, it will be given to the Graduate Program Committee for review. The Graduate Program Committee will make a

recommendation of action to the Department Head, student, and the members of the student's Advisory Committee.

Students are required to submit an electronic thesis/dissertation (ETD) as a pdf file to the Thesis Office instead of using the traditional blue-line paper. Paper copies of these ETDs will not be sent to the library or to the departments. All electronically submitted manuscripts can be accessed from the Internet via <http://etd.tamu.edu> or through the library website, <http://library.tamu.edu>. Information on how to submit an electronic thesis/dissertation is available on the Thesis Office website: <http://thesis.tamu.edu>.

Deadlines for submission of manuscripts to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies are published each semester in the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies calendar. A copy of this calendar can be found at <http://ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Calendars>.

L. Final Examination/Dissertation Defense

In order to graduate at the end of a given semester, the final exam for a doctoral degree must be passed by deadlines announced in the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies calendar. Students must be registered for at least one credit hour during the semester or summer term in which the final examination is held.

To be eligible to take the final examination, a student must be advanced to candidacy. The preliminary examination results and research proposal must have been submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at least 14 weeks prior to the date of the defense. However the Final Examination must be held within three years of advancement to candidacy.

Request for permission to hold and announce the final oral examination must be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies at least 10 working days before the requested exam date. This request must be approved by the student's advisory committee, the Biology Dept. Graduate Advisor (or Department Head), and OGAPS. This announcement must be made on the official form, which can be downloaded from the OGAPS website. A sample form can be seen in Appendix II.

The student's advisory committee will conduct the final examination/dissertation defense. The final examination is not to be administered until the candidate's dissertation in substantially final form is provided to the Advisory Committee, and all concerned have had adequate time to review the document. The Department of Biology requires that the dissertation in substantially final form be submitted to the members of a student's Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to the Final Examination. In order to allow sufficient time for revisions and for Department Head approval, the Final Exam should be scheduled no later than 4 weeks prior to the OGAPS deadline for submission of the Dissertation.

All Ph.D. students receiving degrees through the Department of Biology will be required to present a Departmental Seminar covering their dissertation research, to be held immediately prior to the final examination. This seminar must be announced two weeks prior to the

scheduled date and time (indicating that the student is a doctoral candidate), be advertised as a departmental seminar, and be open to all interested parties. Presentation of this seminar is to be followed by an open question period. Following the open question period, the student's Advisory Committee will conduct the Final Examination.

Whereas the final examination may cover the broad field of the candidate's training, it is presumed that the major portion of the time will be devoted to the dissertation and closely allied topics. Persons other than members of the graduate faculty may, with mutual consent of the candidate and the major professor, be invited to attend a final examination for an advanced degree. Upon completion of the questioning of the candidate, all visitors must excuse themselves from the proceedings when the Advisory Committee begins its deliberation on the results of the examination.

A positive vote by all members of the graduate committee with at most one dissension is required to pass a student on his or her exam.

M. Application for Degree

Graduate students who expect to complete their work at the end of a given semester must apply for graduation by submitting the electronic application for degree to the Office of the Registrar and by paying the required graduation fee at the Fiscal Department no later than the Friday of the second week of the fall or spring semester or the Friday of the first week of the first summer term. The electronic application for degree can be accessed via the website degreeapp.tamu.edu. Graduate students in interdisciplinary programs should attend the ceremony of their home academic department.

The Biology Graduate Advising Office should be notified when you apply to graduate so your file can be reviewed with time to identify and address any problems.

N. Time Limit

All graduate work must be completed within 10 consecutive calendar years. If within this time period a student does not complete all requirements for the degree sought, he or she cannot receive graduate credit for any course work that is more than 10 calendar years old at the time of the final examination.

VIII. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Ombudsperson for Graduate Education

The Ombudsperson for Graduate Education assists graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators to solve conflicts informally. The ombudsperson serves as a neutral listener, information resource, advisor, intermediary, and mediator. The ombudsperson advocates for the processes of graduate education by being equally open and accessible to all parties.

Ombudsperson contact information:
Ombudsperson for Graduate Education
1113 TAMU
College Station, TX 77842-1113

(979) 845-3631

ombuds@tamu.edu

B. Residence

Students who enter the doctoral degree program with a bachelor's degree must spend two academic years in resident study at College Station or Galveston. If a Master's degree has been awarded, one academic year is required. One academic year may include two adjacent regular semesters or one regular semester and one adjacent 10-week summer semester. See the Graduate Catalog for additional information on residence requirements.

C. Minimum GPR (Scholastic Deficiency)

A student's Graduate GPR is expected to remain at or above 3.000 (on a 4.000 scale) during his or her graduate career. If a graduate student's cumulative GPR falls below 3.000, he or she will be on scholastic probation and notified of this in writing by the Graduate Advisor. A copy of the memo will be sent to the student's advisor. The student will meet with his or her advisor and advisory committee to develop a plan to overcome the scholastic deficiency. The plan should include the course(s) to be taken and the grade(s) the student must receive to return to good standing with the department. A copy of the plan signed by the student and the advisory committee will be given to the Graduate Advising Office for the student's file. If the student has not yet chosen a major professor, he or she will meet with the Graduate Advisor to develop such a plan, a copy of which will be put in the student's file. The student will be given one semester (excluding summer terms) to raise his or her GPR above 3.000. If after one semester the student remains scholastically deficient, he or she will be informed of this in writing by the Graduate Advisor. The student may request the Graduate Program Committee for a second semester of academic probation. If the request is denied or if after two full semesters the student remains on scholastic probation, he or she may be asked to leave the graduate program and the GPC and Graduate Advisor will submit a request to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies that the student be dismissed from the University for scholastic deficiency.

D. Financial Support

Graduate students in the Department of Biology can be supported by graduate teaching assistantships (GAT), graduate non-teaching assistantships (GANT), graduate research assistantships (GAR), or fellowships. GAR support is usually provided by individual faculty and is funded by research grants. Fellowship support may be provided by the University, Federal grants, or other sources and is awarded on a competitive basis.

In order to be eligible for support, students must be registered as full-time graduate students. In the Fall and Spring semesters, a minimum of 9 credit hours is required. For summer support, required registration is a minimum of 6 credit hours for the 10-week session or 3 credit hours per five-week summer session.

E. A&M Policy on the on maximum Doctoral (G8) Hours

A full-time doctoral student will be allowed to pursue his/her program for seven calendar years before a charge of out-of-state tuition is initiated. If a student is pursuing a doctoral degree on a

part-time basis, he/she would have up to 99 semester hours before the university would begin to charge out-of-state tuition if they pass the seven year mark.

Students who exceed these time limits will be charged out-of-state tuition to compensate for this lack of state support. In the rare cases where a doctoral student requires more time to complete the degree, he/she can apply to the Department of Biology for funding to cover the out-of-state tuition penalty. These requests will be reviewed by the Graduate Program Committee and Graduate Advisor.

F. Graduate Students at TAMU-Galveston

Students undertaking research at the Galveston campus toward a Biology Degree are required to adhere to all requirements, deadlines, etc. of the Department of Biology. Residence on the Galveston campus will satisfy the residency requirement for graduate students.

VIII. Participation in Departmental Committees

Graduate students are encouraged to participate in departmental Committees. Regular elections are held to select graduate student representatives to the Graduate Programs, Graduate Recruiting and Admissions, and Frontiers committees. These elections are held under the auspices of the Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA). Students are encouraged to join and become active in the BGSA, as it provides an organized means of communicating student concerns to the faculty and administration. BGSA officer elections are held at the beginning of the Fall semester.

Committees/ Positions:

- BioGSA
 - Primary Advisor: Faculty Position
 - Chief Student Leader: Student Position
 - Treasurer: Student Position
 - IT Officer/Webmaster: Student Position
 - General Officer 1: Student Position
 - General Officer 2: Student Position
 - General Officer 3: Student Position
 - General Officer 4: Student Position
- GRAC: Graduate Recruiting and Admissions Committee
 - 1 Student Position
- Graduate Programs Council
 - 1 Student Position
- SPRC: Student/ Post-Doc Research Conference
 - 1 Student Position
- Outreach Committee

First-Year Assessment of Graduate Students

At the first committee meeting for each graduate student, which is to be held before the fall semester of Year 2, the student's committee will be responsible for determining if the student should continue in the Biology Department's graduate program. The following skills will be evaluated by examining the student's performance in courses, teaching assignments, research, and by the student's performance during the committee meeting.

1. Motivation
2. Logic and critical thinking (analysis of data, logical conclusions)
3. Ability to develop a testable hypothesis and design scientific studies.
4. General knowledge (general biology, areas specific to the student's research area, ability to retain information)
5. Ability to communicate

After the meeting, the student will leave the room and each committee member will fill out an assessment form to indicate if they find the student's performance in each of the 5 areas acceptable or unacceptable. These forms must be turned into the Graduate Advising Office after the meeting.

Of the 20 judgments (4 committee members \times 5 areas) for a Ph.D. student or 15 judgments (3 committee members \times 5 areas) for an MS student, 6 unacceptable ratings (counting no more than three unacceptable ratings from any one committee member) constitute a failure. In the case of a failure, the committee will provide a summary letter that describes the concerns of the committee and measures needed to correct these deficiencies to the student and the Graduate Advisor within one month of the committee meeting.

If the student fails in their first attempt, he or she may request a second assessment meeting to be held within 6 months of the first or choose to leave the program. The second assessment meeting will require the same assessment forms as the first, but the committee may choose to focus on only certain areas.

A Ph.D. student with 6/20 unacceptable ratings (counting no more than three unacceptable ratings from any one committee member) on the 2nd try may, at the discretion of the committee, be allowed to change to a Master's degree or will be required to leave the program. A Masters student with 6/15 unacceptable ratings (counting no more than three unacceptable ratings from

any one committee member) on the 2nd try will be required to leave the program. The student may appeal the decision through the Graduate Advisor to the Department Head.

Postscript:

- 1) Sunset Clause: If the current plan is approved by the faculty, we will review the merits of the first year graduate assessment after 3 years and modify the plan as recommended.
- 2) GPC/GRAC will develop a set of questions that will provide examples for committees to use to assess each of these areas.
- 3) Each committee member will make a provisional assessment of the student individually, prior to a general discussion of the student's performance.
- 4) Evaluation of the first year graduate student assessment:
 - A. The effectiveness of the first year assessment meeting will be formally assessed each year as follows:
 - a. Determine the number of students who pass or fail on the first and/or second try each year. If the quality of the graduate students in the program is improving, we expect the overall numbers of students passing on the first try to increase each subsequent year.
 - b. Determine the average time it takes graduate students to take their preliminary exam as compared to the average time of students prior to implementation of the first year assessment.
 - c. Determine the number of students who passed or failed their preliminary exam as compared to the numbers prior to implementation of the first year assessment. We expect if the assessment plan is successful that the numbers of students that pass their preliminary exam on the first try will increase.
 - d. Determine the average and variation in time to degree of students before and after implementation of the first year assessment. We expect if the plan is successful that more doctoral students will finish their degrees within 5 to 6 years. (Currently, the mean is 6.2 years with a range between 4 and 10 years.)
 - e. Assess if the quality of our incoming graduate students and graduate student applicants is improving based on GPA, GRE scores, and research experience following implementation of the first year assessment.

- f. We will develop a questionnaire that asks for faculty and student perspective of the first year assessment.

Department of Biology
Report of the First Year Graduate Student Assessment

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Degree: _____

Instructions: Each committee member independently rates the student's performance in each of the 5 areas as acceptable or unacceptable. Of the 20 judgments (4 committee members × 5 areas) for a Ph.D. student or 15 judgments (3 committee members × 5 areas), 6 unacceptable ratings (counting no more than three unacceptable ratings from any one committee member) for a Ph.D. student or M.S. student constitute a failure. In the case of failure, the committee will provide a summary letter that describes the concerns of the committee and measures needed to correct these deficiencies to the student and the Graduate Advisor within one month of the committee meeting.

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Motivation: | Acceptable_____ | Unacceptable_____ |
| 2. Logical/critical thinking: | Acceptable_____ | Unacceptable_____ |
| 3. Ability to develop a testable hypothesis
and design scientific studies: | Acceptable_____ | Unacceptable_____ |
| 4. General knowledge: | Acceptable_____ | Unacceptable_____ |
| 5. Ability to communicate: | Acceptable_____ | Unacceptable_____ |

Name of Committee Member: _____

Signature of Committee member: _____

Department of Biology
First Year Graduate Student Assessment
Committee Chair Report

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Degree: _____

Total number of Acceptables: _____

Total number of Unacceptables: _____

Summary and recommendation of the committee:

Signature of Committee Chair: _____

Signature of Student: _____

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

Student Name _____ Meeting Date _____

The following items were discussed at this meeting:

On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate how this student is progressing, with 1 being insufficient progress, 5 being good progress, and 10 being outstanding progress. Each committee member should fill out a form and sign at the bottom.

Logical/Critical Thinking:

1	2	3	4	5
Insufficient progress		Good Progress		Outstanding Progress

Ability to Develop a Testable Hypothesis and Design Scientific Studies:

1	2	3	4	5
Insufficient progress		Good Progress		Outstanding Progress

General Knowledge:

1	2	3	4	5
Insufficient progress		Good Progress		Outstanding Progress

Technical Skill:

1	2	3	4	5
Insufficient progress		Good Progress		Outstanding Progress

Communication Skills:

1	2	3	4	5
Insufficient progress		Good Progress		Outstanding Progress

Progress to Degree:

1	2	3	4	5
Insufficient progress		Good Progress		Outstanding Progress

Action Plan:

Committee Chair

Committee Member

Committee Member

Committee Member

Student

Acknowledge:

Graduate Advisor



PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION CHECKLIST & REPORTS

The student is responsible for completing this checklist before the preliminary exam is scheduled. This checklist must accompany the report of the exam results (using the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) form, "Report of Preliminary Exam"). The student should initial each appropriate blank indicating that the specified criterion has been satisfied, or where appropriate, been waived. Failure to satisfy the listed criteria will result in the given exam being disallowed in which case it will need to be retaken.

Student's Signature: _____ UIN# _____

Name

1. Registered for semester or 5-week term during which the exam occurs. (If the entire exam is between semesters, then the student must have been registered for the preceding term.)
2. Student has an approved degree plan, which was filed at least 90 days prior to the first written examination.
3. GPR over all eligible courses since beginning graduate work at Texas A&M is greater than or equal to 3.000 as indicated in the degree evaluation in Howdy. (Includes 300 and 400 level courses taken while in a graduate program but does not include transfer courses.)
4. GPR over all courses on the degree plan (excluding transfer courses) is greater than or equal to 3.000 as indicated in the degree evaluation in Howdy.
- 5a. US Citizen
- 5b. Non-US Citizen who has satisfied at least one of the following: (a) a TOEFL score of at least 550 paper based/213 computer based/80 internet, (b) a GRE-verbal score of at least 400, (c) IELTS score of 6, (d) a GMAT-verbal score of at least 22, (e) satisfactorily passed or waived all portions of the ELPE, or (f) obtained an OGS Waiver.
6. All committee members, have scheduled or waived the written portion and agreed to attend the oral portion of the exam or found a substitute. Only one substitute is allowed; there may not be a substitute for the chair.
7. At the end of the semester in which the exam is given, there are no more than 6 hours of course work remaining on degree plan. (Does not include 691s)

If no, waiver approved by Department Head: _____
8. The time span from the first written to the oral is approximately three weeks. In cases of department-wide written examinations, this criterion is ignored.

If no, waiver approved by Department Head: _____

Approved:

Name:
Advisory Committee Chair

Name:
Department Head OR
Intercollegiate Faculty Chair

Date



Office of Graduate Studies
 Texas A&M University
Report of the Preliminary Examination

The undersigned duly appointed examining committee has conducted the preliminary examination of _____ . We have examined the candidate for a mastery of all fields in the program and for an adequate knowledge of the literature in these fields.

Record of Vote for Pass or Failure: (*Votes are to be tallied, e.g., 3 pass; 1 no pass. A positive vote by all members of the graduate committee with at most one dissention is required to pass.*)

_____ **Number of Pass Votes** _____ **Number of No Pass Votes**

If the exam was not passed: The committee, with no more than one member dissenting, **(does) (does not)*** recommend that this student be given one re-examination, when adequate time has been given to permit the student to address the inadequacies emerging from this examination.

**Please strike through the inappropriate words in bold face.*

Date _____

Name: _____	Chair or Co-Chair <i>Please strike through the inappropriate words.</i>
Name: _____	Co-Chair or Member. <i>Please strike through the inappropriate words</i>
Name: _____	Member
Name: _____	Substitute for _____

Please sign AND print your name:

In compliance with the Texas Open Records Law, the student will be allowed to review this form upon written request.

PLEASE MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS AND RETURN ORIGINAL TO THE
 OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

FOR OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES USE ONLY

1. Residence requirement complete: Yes _____ No _____

2. Research proposal approved: Yes _____ No _____

3. Formal course work completed: Yes _____ No _____

4. Other course work remaining: _____

May be admitted to candidacy upon completion of item(s):



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Thesis Office

WRITTEN DISSERTATION (Ph.D.) OR RECORD OF STUDY (Ed.D, DE.n.)
APPROVAL FORM

Student's Name: _____
 (Name must match TAMU student records)

Degree (check one): Ph.D. (Dissertation) Ed.D. (Record of Study) DE.n. (Record of Study)

Date of Defense: (mm/dd/yy or Exempt): _____ Today's Date (mm/dd/yy): _____

Anticipated Date of Graduation (Month Year): _____

Major Subject: _____

Dissertation or Record of Study Title: _____

We the undersigned duly appointed committee have read and examined this manuscript. We certify it is adequate in scope and quality as a dissertation or record of study for this doctoral degree and indicate our approval of the content of the document to be submitted to the Thesis Office for processing and acceptance, OR we indicate our dissent below. A vote by all members of the committee with at most one dissension is required to pass.

	Approve	Disapprove
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chair: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student Contact Information:

_____ UIN

_____ Student's Email Address

The student must submit this signed approval form and a PDF file of the thesis to the Thesis Office for review. Students must clear the Thesis Office within a year of their final defense. To graduate in a given semester, a student must meet the scheduled deadline for submittal of the signed approval form and the thesis in final form. The Office of Graduate and Professional Studies posts a calendar for each semester, and these dates must be observed.

PLEASE TAKE THIS ORIGINAL SIGNED APPROVAL FORM TO THE THESIS OFFICE.

Sterling Evans Library – Room 612

Revised 2/13