



GRADUATE PROGRAM POLICY & STUDENT HANDBOOK

Fall 2023

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DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
GRADUATE PROGRAM POLICY

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This policy was established on 12.07.96. Revisions to the policy have been made and approved on the following dates: 31.8.95, 5.8.96, 10.9.97, 15.7.98, 10.8.99, 3.7.01, 18.8.04, 31.3.06, 6.12.06, 13.3.07, 1.2.13, 1.9.15, 18, and 5.10.18

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

The policies outlined in this document are intended to align with those of the Utah State University School of Graduate Studies as published in official catalogs, bulletins, and codes. However, as noted on the School of Graduate Studies [Admissions](#) Requirements web page, Department policies may set minimum requirements that exceed those of the School of Graduate Studies.

The Department of Biology offers two advanced degrees, the Master of Science (MS) Plan A and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The Department of Biology does not award degrees under the non-thesis programs – Plans B and C.

SECTION II

ROLES OF CO-DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS, GRADUATE PROGRAMS COMMITTEE AND THE STAFF ASSISTANT FOR THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

A. Co-Directors of Graduate Programs

1. The Co-Directors of Graduate Programs are tenured faculty members of the Department of Biology appointed by and responsible to the Department Head. The term is indefinite. Responsibilities of the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Serve as Co-Chairs of the Graduate Programs Committee and fulfill other duties appropriate to the graduate studies mission of the department.
 - b. Assign graduate teaching assistants to courses and instructors based on instructor requests and appropriateness of students to the assignment.
 - c. Oversee orientation of graduate students.
 - d. Oversee the Staff Assistant for the Graduate Programs Committee in responsibilities relating to graduate programs.
2. Students with questions on graduate policies or procedures should consult the Biology Graduate Program Policy (this document) and other departmental policy statements, the [School of Graduate Studies website](#), the [USU General Catalog](#) or their Major Professors or Committees for guidance. Failing that, or in the case of conflicts, serious disagreements, or confusing circumstances, the student is strongly encouraged to contact the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs for advice.

B. Graduate Programs Committee

The Graduate Programs Committee (GP Committee) consists of the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs, Faculty Members, and a Student Representative. Faculty Members of the GP Committee and the Graduate Student Representative are appointed to the committee by the Department Head. The GP Committee has the following responsibilities:

1. Evaluate applications to the graduate program and make recommendations to the Department Head regarding admission and classification of applicants.
2. Approve a faculty member as Major Professor for each incoming student.
3. Evaluate applicants for financial awards and make recommendations to the Department Head regarding the awarding of the various Fellowships, Scholarships, Annual Teaching Assistantships, Recognition Awards, and Tuition Awards and Waivers available in the Department.
4. Approve Supervisory Committee assignments, design and/or approve programs for students requiring a status change, and hear appeals from students claiming grievances.
5. Develop policy governing all aspects of graduate student academic life for approval by

the faculty and the Department Head.

C. Staff Assistant for the Graduate Programs Committee

1. The Co-Directors of Graduate Programs and the GP Committee are assisted by a Staff Assistant (GP Coordinator) who is an administrative staff member of the Department of Biology. In addition to other departmental responsibilities, the GP Coordinator's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Serve as coordinator to graduate students and faculty in facilitating graduate forms, attending monthly meetings held by the School of Graduate Studies (RGS), verify policy changes and consult with the GP Committee on any changes to policy.
 - b. Serve as a facilitator for the GP Committee, Supervisory Committees, Major Professors, and graduate students, as needed.
 - c. Respond to general inquiries from prospective graduate students and process graduate student applications.
 - d. Maintain the graduate student section of the department's website, student information database and files, and inform the GP Committee of delinquencies and accomplishments in graduate student performance.
 - e. Verify and submit tuition awards and grant awards made by the Department to the College of Science.
 - f. Prepare nomination packages for fellowships and awards designated by the GP Committee.
 - g. Complete surveys and reports as assigned by the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs, Administrative Manager, and Department Head.
 - h. Support the Co-Directors, GP Committee, Administrative Manager, and Department Head in accomplishing all relevant tasks of the Biology Graduate Programs.

SECTION III

ADMISSION TO GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN BIOLOGY

No student may be admitted (under any status classification) to the Department of Biology without approval by the Graduate Programs Committee, without agreement of a Biology faculty member to serve as the student's Major Professor and without agreement by the Department Head and the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies.

A. Admission Procedures and Criteria

1. Application

An [electronic application](#) is available on the School of Graduate Studies (RGS) website. The following documents must be submitted to RGS for admission to the MS or PhD programs:

- a. Separate official transcripts of all work beyond high school.
- b. Three electronic letters of recommendation.
- c. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores for verbal, quantitative, and analytical sections.
- d. International students must also submit the following:
 - 1) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score or International English Language Testing System (IELTS).
 - 2) [Affidavit of Financial Support](#) as specified by the School of Graduate Studies
 - 3) Application for I-20 Form; Certificate of Eligibility.

2. Matriculated Status

The Graduate Programs Committee considers many criteria in evaluating students for admission to graduate study in the Department of Biology. Applicants should not assume that achievement of a particular test score or grade point average will ensure admission. The following criteria are used as admission guidelines:

- a. Completion of a baccalaureate degree in an accredited undergraduate program appropriate for graduate studies in Biology. An applicant whose background course work is notably deficient, but who otherwise meets the above criteria for admission, may be asked to complete certain preparatory courses specified by the Graduate Programs Committee or the student's Supervisory Committee when it is established.
- b. A grade point average of 3.0 (B) or better for the last two years of study or 60 credits, whichever is greater.
- c. GRE verbal and quantitative, with a score in the upper 50th percentile and an analytical score of 3.5 or above.

- d. Students whose native language is not English and who score less than 79 (Internet-based exam), 233 (Computer-based exam) or 550 (Paper/pencil based exam) on the TOEFL, or 6 on the IELTS, may be required to complete the Intensive English Language Program. The [Intensive English Language Institute](#) will test the students when they arrive on campus. Any fees are the responsibility of the student.
 - e. International students ordinarily must have an offer of an assistantship to be considered for admission. First-year students whose native language is not English are not normally awarded teaching assistantships (TA). A prep TA may be available to international students whose native language is not English. A prep TA assignment is normally for one year or less. After one year, a prep TA is expected to fulfill a regular TA assignment or pursue another source of funding.
 - f. Some programs (i.e., Ecology, Neuroscience) may have additional requirements. Contact the individual program director for information.
 - g. A faculty member in Biology must agree to serve as Major Professor. External faculty and research faculty may not serve as a Major Professor.
3. Provisional Status
The Department does not admit students on provisional status.
 4. Non-matriculated Status
The Department does not admit students on non- matriculated status.

B. Notification Procedures

1. All applicants will be notified of the acceptance decision by an email or letter from either the Department of Biology or the School of Graduate Studies or both.
2. An offer of admission into the Department is valid for one year from the date of issuance if a faculty member maintains interest in serving as the student's advisor. A student deferring admission must submit a written request to the School of Graduate Studies.
3. An offer of financial support must be accepted within the time indicated in the letter of offer or it becomes invalid. After accepting the offer, the student must report in person to the Department at the date and time indicated, or the offer is void.
4. All applicants for teaching assistantships or other Department-sponsored funds should have completed their application by 1 December.
5. The initial disposition of all financial assistance applications, including notification of applicants, is usually completed by 15 April.
6. Teaching assistants are required to sign an annual contract with the Biology Department.

SECTION IV

MAINTAINING MATRICULATED STATUS, PROBATIONARY STATUS, AND TRANSFERRING A DEGREE

A. Matriculated Status

A graduate student must meet the following requirements to maintain [matriculated status](#) in the Department.

1. Registration Requirements

- a. A full-time matriculated graduate student must be one of the following:
 - 1) Registered for 9 or more graduate credits; or
 - 2) Registered for 6 or more graduate credits if employed as a graduate assistant; or
 - 3) Registered for 3 graduate credits when all required coursework is completed and only the research component of the degree remains (the student's Program of Study must have been submitted to RGS); or
 - 4) Registered for at least 3 graduate credits during the semester of the final thesis/dissertation defense. This requirement can be met by coursework or research credits (6970 or 7970). A student cannot be enrolled through the Continuous Graduate Registration ([RGS catalog](#) E.2) during the semester of the final thesis/dissertation defense.
- b. Fellowship recipients and students employed as graduate assistants or graduate instructors must be registered as full-time matriculated students during all semesters of the assistantship or fellowship.
- c. Summer enrollment is not required to maintain continuous registration.
- d. [Continuing Graduate Advisement](#) (6990 or 7990) credit does not count towards credit for the degree and may not be used until after a student has successfully defended.

2. Scholarship Requirements

- a. Graduate students are required to maintain at least a 3.0 GPA each semester.
- b. All courses (except independent study and research courses) on the Program of Study will be used in the calculation of the GPA. If an approved Program of Study is not on record with the Department, all courses at USU since the prior degree will be used to calculate the GPA.
- c. Graduate students may be required by their Supervisory Committee to repeat courses in which their performance was unsatisfactory.

3. Progress towards the Degree

- a. The GP Coordinator monitors progress towards the degree for each student and reports to the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs. The following deadlines will be used to assess progress:

Forms and Deadlines						
Degree	Requirement	Fall Start	Spring Start	Summer Start	Thesis (MS) / Dissertation (PhD) Submission within 1 year of final defense	Requirement
PhD	Supervisory Committee Assignment	end of second term (15 May)	end of third term (31 Dec)	end of third term (15 May)		Publication Guide
	Program of Study	end of second term (15 May)	end of third term (31 Dec)	end of third term (15 May)		Title Page
	Comprehensive Examination	2 years (15 Aug)	2 years (15 Dec)	2 years (15 May)		Copyright Ownership Authorship
	Application for Candidacy and Research Proposal	immediately after completion of comprehensive examinations; at least three months before final defense				Individual Development Plan
MS & PhD	Individual Development Plan	to be completed annually				Professional Development Plan
	Professional Development Plan	to be completed annually, spring semester				Electronic Thesis / Dissertation
MS	Supervisory Committee Assignment	end of second term (15 May)	end of third term (31 Dec)	end of third term (15 May)		Format and Style
	Program of Study	end of second term (15 May)	end of third term (31 Dec)	end of third term (15 May)		IRB Approval
	Comprehensive Examination	1.5 years (15 Jan)	1.5 years (15 June)	1.5 years (15 Oct)		
	Masters Thesis Proposal Form	during the semester after the supervisory committee form				

- b. Each student and the Major Professor will be periodically supplied with a progress report by the GP Coordinator. In this report, forms that have been submitted and examinations passed will be indicated as well as other information relative to the policies set forth in this document.
- c. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the data are up to date. All forms must be processed through the GP Coordinator to ensure proper procedure is followed

- and to ensure accurate record keeping.
- d. It is the responsibility of the student and Major Professor that these requirements are met in a timely manner.
 - e. If a student does not complete a requirement within the specified time, he/she will be placed on probation for one semester. Students who do not meet the requirement during probation will be recommended for termination from the program.
 - f. Students who do not submit a [Supervisory Committee](#) assignment or the [Program of Study](#) by the appropriate deadline will not qualify for a tuition waiver or award.
 - g. Progress towards the degree is monitored closely by the Graduate Programs Committee and taken into consideration for teaching assistantship and award/scholarship selections.
4. Continuous Registration and Leave of Absence
- a. Students must be regularly and continuously enrolled in a minimum of 3 credit hours until all degree requirements have been met.
 - b. If a student is not using any university facilities or faculty time, then the student may meet the continuous registration requirement by paying the [Continuous Registration](#) fee (not required for summer semester). Continuous registration requires the approval of the Department Head and the School of Graduate Studies. A student requesting continuous registration should request a letter from the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs stating the reason for the request.
 - c. If a student must leave school for any reason acceptable to the Department and the School of Graduate Studies, the student will be granted a leave of absence by the School of Graduate Studies upon application. A student requesting a leave of absence should seek approval from the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs by submitting a [Leave of Absence](#) form to the GP Coordinator.
 - d. If continuous registration is not maintained by use of the above means, the student and the Department will be notified by RGS. If there is no response from the student, the student's records will be placed in the inactive file. To reactivate an inactive file, a student must submit a [Readmission Application](#) to the GP Coordinator for departmental review. Reactivation is subject to approval of the Department and the School of Graduate Studies.
 - e. The School of Graduate Studies reserves the right to retroactively apply fees for the continuous registration requirement.

B. Probationary Status

Students will be placed on probationary status by the School of Graduate Studies when their grade point average (GPA) is below 3.0 for any two consecutive semesters and RGS

will consult the Department regarding termination. The Graduate Programs Committee will consider the student's probationary status and make recommendations to the Department Head. This may include:

1. A remedial study program, as outlined by the Supervisory Committee. The student is given specific requirements and deadlines. If these are not met, the student is recommended for termination.
2. In the case of termination, [reapplication](#) is required to regain matriculation.

Students will be placed on probationary status by the Department when they fail to meet the deadlines of their program requirements. The student will be placed on probationary status for the period of one semester. If the student fails to meet the requirement at the end of that period, he/she will be recommended for termination.

Students may also be placed on probationary status by the Department, when their Major Professor recommends such action based on inadequate progress towards their degree. The Major Professor must petition the Graduate Programs Committee in writing. The Graduate Programs Committee will consider the request and make a recommendation to the Department Head. A student placed on probationary status for inadequate progress towards their degree will be given [specific requirements](#) and deadlines to meet. If they fail to meet these requirements and deadlines, they will be recommended for termination.

C. Transfer from Master's to Doctoral Program

Students accepted into the MS program may petition the Department to transfer to the PhD program. The student and their Major Professor should consider the following guidelines and [submit a petition](#) to the Department GP Coordinator to transfer from the MS to the PhD degree. The Graduate Programs Committee will review the petition and make a recommendation to the Department Head regarding whether or not the student should be admitted to the PhD program.

1. All students admitted into the PhD program in the Department must have a significant broadening experience in biology, or a closely related field, at some point in their college career. This broadening experience must consist of significant exposure to scientific perspectives, research or mentoring approaches, and academic systems other than that in the Department of Biology at Utah State University. This requirement can be satisfied by completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree in Biology or a related field, in a department other than the Department of Biology at Utah State University, or some other academic experience of equivalent extent and rigor.
2. Students are strongly discouraged from getting all of their academic degrees from any one department. The Department will make exceptions to this policy only under unusual circumstances. A student with a BS degree from the Biology Department who wishes to obtain a PhD from the same Department without obtaining a MS degree elsewhere must first be admitted into a MS degree program in the Department. After being enrolled in this program for at least one year and having made substantial progress, the student may petition the Graduate Programs Committee for admittance to a PhD program. The petition must consist of:
 - a. A statement from the student indicating the reason for the change, career goals, and progress to date in the MS program, and a 1-2 page synopsis of the

research proposed for the PhD program; and

- b. A proposed Program of Study showing the minimum amount of coursework that will be included as part of the PhD program (the actual Program of Study will not be finalized until a 5-member PhD supervisory committee has given its approval); and
- c. A detailed description of how the requirement for a “broadening experience in biology” will be met during the PhD program. This experience will normally consist of a separate research project, with or without coursework, carried out at an institution other than Utah State University. The experience must involve a consecutive time period at the institution equivalent to at least one semester, should only be peripherally related to the PhD project, and must be substantial enough that there is reasonable expectation the work will result in submission of a manuscript for publication (the student will be required to present a Department seminar on the project upon returning to USU); and
- d. A letter signed by all MS Supervisory Committee members stating that they have discussed the implications of the change in degree program with the student, approve of the proposed Program of Study and the broadening experience, and recommend admission of the student into a PhD program in the Department.

SECTION V

STUDY AND RESEARCH

A. Graduate Student Advisement

1. Every student must have a Major Professor; new students are assigned a Major Professor based on the student's interests and faculty availability upon mutual agreement between student and faculty.
 - a. The Major Professor must be a faculty member whose primary appointment is in the Department of Biology. An External Faculty member of the Department, Research Faculty, or Emeritus Faculty may not serve as a Major Professor.
 - b. The Major Professor is usually also the Research Director. An External Faculty member, Research Faculty, or Emeritus Faculty may serve as Research Director.
2. Although the Department expects most student / Major Professor relationships to last for the entire degree program, either the student or the Major Professor may terminate the arrangement at any time.
3. A student may change their Major Professor if the change is agreed upon by all parties and is approved by the Graduate Programs Committee.
4. Changes in the student / Major Professor association that are not agreed upon by all parties should be mediated by the Departmental Co-Directors of Graduate Programs.
5. If a Major Professor is not found within three months, the student will be terminated from the program.

B. The Supervisory Committee

1. The Supervisory Committee superintends the entire graduate program of the matriculated student. Prospective members are chosen by the Major Professor and graduate student for their potential contribution to the student's academic and research program. Supervisory Committee membership is approved by the Graduate Programs Committee, the Biology Department Head, and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies (RGS). The RGS maintains a list of faculty approved to serve on Supervisory Committees.
 - a. It is fundamental that the Supervisory Committee be convened **by the end of the second semester** of graduate study to consider and approve the student's program of coursework, and to help guide the student's research agenda. Therefore, the Major Professor and student should select the members carefully and promptly confirm their willingness to serve.
 - b. The approval of the Supervisory Committee may be obtained by filing the [Supervisory Committee Approval](#) form (SCAF) with the GP Coordinator. The Graduate Programs Committee will review the suitability of the Supervisory Committee based on the student's research and academic objectives. Approved forms will be forwarded to the Department Head, and then to the School of

- Graduate Studies. Forms for Supervisory Committees whose membership may require modification or explanation will be returned to the Major Professor. To aid the Graduate Programs Committee in its decision, a short (1-2 page) outline of the research project, including objectives, procedures, and plan of analysis must accompany the SCAF. (This is not the same as the formal research proposal). The School of Graduate Studies will save approved forms to the student's official file.
- c. Prompt selection of an effective Supervisory Committee is fundamental to the student's success. It is closely scrutinized by the Graduate Programs Committee as an indication of satisfactory student progress.
2. Master of Science Degree Supervisory Committees shall consist of not fewer than three (3) voting members.
 - a. At least two of the committee members must be members of the Department of Biology. At least one member must represent the student's area of specialization, and at least one must be from outside the specialization area.
 - b. For the purpose of the supervisory committee, USDA ARS scientists will only be considered members of the Biology Department when filling the role of the research advisor; otherwise, they may fill the role of an outside member.
 - c. A student may request that a person outside of the University with a terminal professional degree (e.g., PhD, MD, DDS, and DVM) serve on his/her committee. An outside person can serve either as:
 - 1) A third voting member who wants to be approved by the Department GPC as an external member. To approve the external member, the Major Professor must provide the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs with a vitae of this individual and a statement of suitability. Approved requests will be forwarded to the GP Committee, Department Head, Dean, and Graduate School for final approval; or
 - 2) A third voting member who will only serve on a single student's committee. In this case the Major Professor must provide the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs with a vitae of this individual and a statement of suitability. Approved requests will be forwarded to the Department Head, Dean, and Graduate School for final approval; or
 - 3) A fourth non-voting member.
 - d. The Supervisory Committee Chairman (Major Professor) must be a member of the Department.
 - e. The Research Director must be a member of the Supervisory Committee.
 3. Doctor of Philosophy Degree Supervisory Committees shall consist of not fewer than five (5) voting members.
 - a. At least two of the committee members must be tenured or tenure-track faculty members of the Department. At least one member must be from a Department other than Biology. If the Research Director is from outside the Department, then a second outside member must be on the committee.

- b. For the purpose of the supervisory committee, USDA ARS scientists will only be considered members of the Biology Department when filling the role of the research advisor; otherwise, they may fill the role of an outside member.
 - c. A student may request that a person outside of the University with a terminal professional degree (e.g., PhD, MD, DDS, and DVM) serve on his/her committee. An outside person can serve as a fifth voting member who will only serve on a single student's committee. In this case the Major Professor must provide the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs with a vitae of this individual and a statement of suitability. Approved requests will be forwarded to the Department Head, Dean, and Graduate School for final approval; or
 - 1) A sixth non-voting member.
 - c. The Supervisory Committee Chairman (Major Professor) must be a member of the Department.
 - d. The Research Director must be a member of the Supervisory Committee.
4. Changes in the Supervisory Committee
- a. Changes in the Committee will be allowed:
 - 1) To fill vacancies created by the actual or de facto resignation of a member when that resignation renders the Committee invalid. Defacto resignation shall be deemed to exist when, in the opinion of the Department Head; a member is unable to function effectively in that capacity; or
 - 2) To provide an expert for whom the need was not foreseen at the time the original Committee was appointed.
 - b. All changes in the membership of Supervisory Committees must be approved through the Graduate Programs Committee.

C. Graduate Credit Requirements, Restrictions, and Grading

- 1. Graduate Credit Requirements
 - a. The minimum requirement for a master's degree is 30 approved semester credits of which 6-15 of thesis research credits (BIOL 6970) are required.
 - b. The minimum requirement for a doctoral degree is 60 (BS) or 30 (MS) approved semester credits of which at least 18 (BS) or 12 (MS) dissertation research credits (BIOL 7970) are required.
- 2. Graduate Credit Restrictions
 - a. Continuing Graduate Advisement (BIOL 6990 or BIOL 7990), Continuing Registration credits, or Teaching Assistantship Workshop credits will not be used to fulfill any degree credit requirements. These credits are not to be listed on the Program of Study.
 - b. For a master's degree, no more than 15 credits of courses at the 3000-5990 level may be used. Of those 15 credits, no more than 3 credits can be 3000-4999 level courses. To be used they must not be Biology courses, prerequisites for Biology courses, or courses required for Biology B.S. degrees. No courses below 3000 can be used towards the MS degree.

- c. For doctoral students with a master's degree, no more than 15 credits of 5000-5990 level courses may be used. No courses below 5000 can be used for the PhD degree.
 - d. Audited courses may not be used for the degree program or towards status as a full-time student.
 - e. No more than the required number of graduate credits (see above) may be listed on the Program of Study.
 - f. After the completion of coursework on a student's Program of Study the [Full Time at 3 Credits](#) form can be submitted if the student needs to be considered full-time.
 - g. Course credits in modern languages that may be taken in preparation for a language requirement will not be used to meet minimum credit requirements for advanced degrees.
3. Graduate Credit Grading
- a. Graduate students are required to maintain at least a 3.0 GPA for courses on their Program of Study. Grades below a B will not be accepted for a graduate degree.
 - b. Thesis and Dissertation Research credits (6970 and 7970) will be graded as Pass (P) or Fail (F) each semester.
 - c. Continuing Graduate Advisement (BIOL 6990 and 7990) will be graded as Pass (P) or Fail (F) each semester.
 - d. A Pass (P) grade will only be accepted for seminars, special circumstances, interdisciplinary workshops, thesis or dissertation research, and continuing graduate advisement.

D. Foreign Language

1. The Department of Biology has no foreign language requirement; however, individual Supervisory Committees may require expertise in a language based on the research or personal objectives of the student.

E. Master's Degree Procedures

1. First Supervisory Committee Meeting

After the appointment of the Supervisory Committee, a meeting should be held to establish the required course work and consider the student's research program.

- a. The student will enter their proposed Program of Study plan in *DegreeWorks* through *Banner* by following the steps below:
 - 1) Prepare a proposed list of courses with the aid of your Major Professor for discussion at the first meeting.
 - 2) Once approved by the entire Supervisory Committee, complete a plan in [DegreeWorks](#)

- 3) Submit the approved course list with course titles to the GP Coordinator. [The Program of Study](#) form and *DegreeWorks* Plan will be forwarded to the Graduate Programs Committee for review. Following review, the Program of Study will be submitted to RGS for required approvals.
 - 4) Courses required for the degree must be listed on the Program of Study. Any changes in courses used for the degree requires approval of the Supervisory Committee, the GP Committee, and submission of the Program of Study Revision form to the GP Coordinator.
 - 5) All committee members must digitally sign the Program of Study. This is done via Service Now initiated by RGS. The approved Program of Study is ***due by the end of the second semester*** in the graduate program.
- b. A formal **research proposal** is submitted to the committee at this time, which forms the basis for most of the discussion of this meeting. A formal research proposal is typically a document including a title page, hypotheses, objectives, background, methods, and references following the format of a standard grant proposal chosen at the discretion of the student and their Major Professor. A copy of the [Master's Proposal Approval](#) form must accompany the completed Program of Study form when it is submitted to the GP Coordinator for the Department Head's signature and RGS approval.
 - c. The comprehensive examination schedule and Committee Member's responsibilities are determined at this meeting.
2. Comprehensive Examination—MS
- a. All MS candidates are required to take a comprehensive examination. The exam may be written, oral, or both at the discretion of the Supervisory Committee. The exam will be administered by the student's Supervisory Committee and should be completed within the first year-and-a-half of study, and at least one semester before defense of the thesis. The oral exam cannot be part of the thesis defense.
 - b. The examination should assess the breadth and depth of the student's knowledge requisite to the student's professional goals. The maximum time for the written portion of the examination may not exceed four hours per committee member.
 - c. If two exams are given, a written and an oral, they must be given within two weeks of each other. A majority vote by the committee is necessary for passage of the comprehensive examination.
 - d. The Graduate Programs Committee should be notified immediately by the Major Professor, in writing, if a student fails the comprehensive examination. The student may elect to retake the examination within six months. Failure to retake the test within the specified time period, or a second failure, results in a recommendation for dismissal of the student from the graduate program.

- e. Obtain a Record of Comprehensive Examination form from the GP Coordinator. Return it to the GP Coordinator after the Supervisory Committee signs it.

3. The MS Thesis

The following procedures are required by both the School of Graduate Studies and the Department of Biology:

- a. The student should refer to the [Thesis/Dissertation Requirements](#) section of the RGS website for standards of writing.
- b. The thesis may be prepared in a format that is suitable for publication in a referred journal, but the suitability of the thesis for the degree is judged by the Supervisory Committee without considering if it has been submitted or reviewed by a journal. The format must meet the criteria of the Supervisory Committee and the School of Graduate Studies.
- c. Drafts of thesis sections should be submitted to the Major Professor and, if applicable, Research Director for critiquing while the research is in progress. Primary responsibility for the thesis resides with the student and the Major Professor, but other committee members should be consulted on sections involving their special expertise.
- d. When the completed thesis has been approved by the Major Professor, the Supervisory Committee members may request up to four weeks to review it prior to the final oral defense.
- e. Committee members who believe the thesis is not ready for defense will notify the student and Major Professor prior to the oral defense. The defense may be postponed in order to make revisions in the thesis.
- f. The oral examination is a defense of the thesis document. Only minor, usually editorial, changes may be made following the defense. If major changes are needed, another defense will be scheduled.
- g. If the student fails to complete all degree requirements (e.g., submission of the thesis to Digital Commons) within two years of the successful defense, the student will be required to re-defend.

4. Oral Thesis Defense—MS

The oral defense of the thesis will usually concern thesis-centered topics. At the examination, the student answers questions about the area of specialization. Advanced notice must be given if topics outside the thesis are to be included. The results of the defense and any additional requirements are recorded on the [Record of Examination](#) form, which is submitted to the GP Coordinator for submission to the School of Graduate Studies.

- a. The oral defense should be scheduled at least eight weeks prior to the expected date of graduation. It should ordinarily be held during the fall or spring semester.
- b. Obtain an [Appointment for Examination](#) form from the RGS website. Submit this

form to the GP Coordinator for the required signatures at least two weeks before the scheduled defense.

- c. The oral defense will consist of two separate parts, one immediately following the other.
 - 1) A formal Department seminar is required immediately preceding the defense before the Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee is expected to attend this seminar as part of the defense. Announcement as to time, place, and topic must be made through department communication channels (typically an e-mail announcement sent by Department Administrative staff) the week preceding the seminar. It is the student's responsibility to see that the seminar is publicized.
 - 2) The formal oral defense before the Supervisory Committee immediately follows the seminar. A unanimous vote of the committee is required to pass the defense. If a vote is contested, the Graduate Programs Committee will meet to discuss a recommended procedure for action to the Department Head.
- d. A recommendation regarding the Committee's evaluation of the student's potential to continue work toward a MS will be made at this meeting.
- e. Examination documents should be given to the GP Coordinator by the Major Professor for recording. These forms will be submitted to RGS.
- f. The student will receive an email from the RGS Thesis Reviewer announcing the creation of the student's thesis folder. In this email there will be specific instructions on the process of submitting forms and the thesis. Since the student does not have editing access to this folder, all forms should be submitted to the GP Coordinator. The thesis will not be accepted until all required forms are complete and in the student's, RGS Thesis folder.
- g. The Major Professor will serve as the Departmental Thesis Reviewer. The student should work with their Major Professor to ensure that the thesis format conforms to RGS requirements. Once the thesis is ready for submission it will be forwarded by the GP Coordinator to the RGS Thesis Reviewer for approval.

F. PhD Degree Procedures

1. First Supervisory Committee Meeting

After the appointment of the Supervisory Committee, a meeting should be held to establish the required course work and consider the student's research program.

- a. The student will enter their proposed Program of Study plan in *DegreeWorks* through Banner. Follow the steps below:
 - 1) Prepare a proposed list of courses with the aid of your Major Professor for discussion at the first meeting.
 - 2) Once approved by the entire Supervisory Committee, complete a Plan in

[DegreeWorks](#).

- 3) Submit the approved course list with course titles to the GP Coordinator. [The Program of Study](#) form and *DegreeWorks* Plan will be forwarded to the Graduate Programs Committee for review. Following review, the Program of Study will be submitted to RGS for required approvals.
- 4) Courses required for the degree must be listed on the Program of Study. Any changes in courses used for the degree requires approval of the Supervisory Committee, the GP Committee, and submission of the Program of Study Revision form to the GP Coordinator.
- 5) All committee members must digitally sign the Program of Study. This is done via Service Now initiated by RGS. The approved Program of Study is ***due by the end of the second*** semester in the graduate program.

- b. The comprehensive examination schedule and Committee Member's responsibilities are determined at this meeting.

2. Comprehensive Examination—PhD

- a. A comprehensive examination consisting of written and oral parts is required for all PhD candidates.
 - 1) The comprehensive examination(s) will be required no later than two (2) years after beginning the program.
 - 2) The examinations will be used to probe the breadth and depth of the student's knowledge of his/her area of specialization and of designated areas of knowledge that are requisite to the student's professional goals.
 - 3) Examinations will contain questions of a broad, synthetic nature and those more specific in design.
- b. The maximum time for the written portions of the examination may not exceed eight hours per committee member.
- c. The oral examination is required and must be completed within one month after the student is notified of the results of the written examination.
 - 1) The oral examination may cover any subject deemed appropriate by the committee.
 - 2) Obtain a Record of Comprehensive Examination form from the GP Coordinator. Return it to the GP Coordinator after the Supervisory Committee signs it.
 - 3) The student should obtain the Dissertation [Authorship and Copyright](#) forms from the RGS website. Students should discuss ownership of their research and copyright information with their committee and any co-authors.

- d. After completion of the oral examination, the Committee will vote on the student's performance on the entire comprehensive (written and oral) examination. Two or more dissenting votes results in a failure of the oral exam.
- e. The Graduate Programs Committee should be notified, in writing, immediately by the Major Professor, if a student fails the comprehensive examination. The student may elect to retake the examination within six months. Failure to retake the test within the specified time period, or a second failure, results in a recommendation for dismissal of the student from the graduate program.
- f. After completion of both parts of the comprehensive exam, the Record of Comprehensive Exam form must be filed with the GPCoordinator
- g. A formal **research proposal** is submitted to the Committee at this time. A formal research proposal is typically a document including a title page, hypotheses, objectives, background, and references following the format of a standard grant proposal chosen at the discretion of the student and their Major Professor.
- h. The student should obtain the [Application for Candidacy](#) form from the RGS website and submit it with a copy of the formal research proposal to the GP Coordinator to be submitted for review. This form must be submitted no later than three months prior to the final defense.

3. The PhD dissertation

The following procedures are required by School of Graduate Studies and the Department of Biology:

- a. The student should refer to the [Thesis/Dissertation Requirements](#) section of the RGS website for standards of writing.
- b. The dissertation may be prepared in a format that is suitable for publication in a referred journal, but the suitability of the dissertation for the degree is judged by the Supervisory Committee without considering if it has been submitted or reviewed by a journal. The format must meet the criteria of the Supervisory Committee and the School of Graduate Studies.
- c. Drafts of dissertation sections should be submitted to the Major Professor and, if applicable, Research Director for critiquing while the research is in progress. Primary responsibility for the dissertation resides with the student and the Major Professor, but other committee members should be consulted on sections involving their special expertise.
- d. When the completed dissertation has been approved by the Major Professor, the Supervisory Committee members may request up to four weeks to review it prior to the final oral defense.
- e. Committee members who believe the dissertation is not ready for defense will notify the student and Major Professor prior to the oral defense. The defense may be postponed in order to make revisions in the dissertation.
- f. The oral examination is a defense of the dissertation document. Only minor,

usually editorial, changes may be made following the defense. If major changes are needed, another defense will be scheduled.

- g. If the student fails to complete all degree requirements (e.g., submission of the dissertation to Digital Commons) within two years of the successful defense, the student will be required to redefend.

4. Oral Dissertation Defense—PhD

The oral defense of the dissertation will usually concern dissertation-centered topics. At the examination, the student answers questions about the area of specialization. Advanced notice must be given if topics outside the dissertation are to be included. The results of the defense and any additional requirements are recorded on the [Record of Examination](#) form, which is submitted to the GP Coordinator for recording of results and submission to the School of Graduate Studies.

- a. The oral defense should be scheduled at least eight weeks prior to the expected date of graduation. It should ordinarily be held during the fall or spring semester.
- b. Obtain an [Appointment for Examination](#) form from the RGS website. Submit this form to the GP Coordinator for the required signatures at least two weeks before the scheduled defense.
- c. The oral defense will consist of two separate parts, one immediately following the other.
 - 1) A formal Department seminar is required immediately preceding the defense before the Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee is expected to attend this seminar as part of the defense. Announcement as to time, place, and topic must be made through department communication channels (typically an e-mail announcement sent by Department Administrative staff) the week preceding the seminar. It is the student's responsibility to see that the seminar is publicized.
 - 2) The formal oral defense before the Supervisory Committee immediately follows the seminar. A unanimous vote of the committee is required to pass the defense. If a vote is contested, the Graduate Programs Committee will meet to discuss a recommended procedure for action to the Department Head.
- d. A recommendation regarding the Committee's evaluation of the student's potential to continue work toward a PhD will be made at this meeting.
- e. Examination documents should be given to the GP Coordinator by the Major Professor for recording. These forms will be forwarded to RGS.
- f. The student will receive an email from the RGS Dissertation Reviewer announcing the creation of the student's dissertation folder. In this email there will be specific instructions on the process of submitting forms and the dissertation. Since the student does not have editing access to this folder, all forms should be submitted to the GP Coordinator. The dissertation will not be

accepted until all required forms are complete and in the student's RGS Dissertation folder.

- g. The Major Professor will serve as the Departmental Dissertation Reviewer. The student should work with their Major Professor to ensure that the dissertation format conforms to RGS requirements. Once the dissertation is ready for submission it will be forwarded by the GP Coordinator to the RGS Dissertation Reviewer for approval.

G. Teaching Experience

1. Teaching is considered to be an important part of the education of a graduate student. For this reason, each candidate in the Department of Biology is advised to gain some teaching experience.
 - a. MS program—at least one semester of relevant experience is advised.
 - b. PhD program—at least two semesters of relevant experience are advised.
 - c. This experience may be obtained as an annual teaching assistant or by paid or unpaid assistance in an assigned class.
 - d.

H. Annual Professional Development Plan

The Annual Professional Development Plan (APDP) documents a review of the student's progress, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and sets goals for the coming year. This review must be completed yearly by the end of Spring Semester. The [APDP](#) form accompanies the Annual Professional Development Meeting (APDM). The APDP form must be filled out by the student and the Advisory Committee members. Students who are in their first year and have not yet formed a committee will complete the form with their major advisor only. Tuition waivers will only be applied once the form is submitted to the GPC staff assistant.

To complete the process:

The student's responsibility:

- a) The student must first complete the [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) and submit the certificate of completion to the GPC staff assistant
- b) The student completes the student portion of the APDP. The student should use the IDP to guide the completion of the form
- c) The student submits the APDP to the major advisor prior to the APDM

The Meeting:

- a) The student arranges the APDM with the committee
- b) During the APDM the student and committee should discuss the student's progress, the student portion of the APDP, and facilitate the identification and completion of goals

The committee's responsibility:

- a) After the meeting the committee completes the committee portion of the APDP
- b) The Major Advisor sends the form to the GPC staff assistant, who routes the form for signatures
- c) The GPC staff assistant forwards the completed form to the student

Tuition Waivers will only be applied once this process has been completed.

I. Duration of Degree Program

1. Graduate study must be completed in a reasonable time. Students may use this section to guide their progress in the Department of Biology.
 - a. Under normal circumstances, a student entering the graduate program with a BS degree should complete a MS degree in two to three years of full-time study, or a PhD in four to six years of full-time study.
 - b. A master's degree must be completed within six years of matriculation. A doctorate must be completed within eight years of matriculation. Coursework for a graduate degree undertaken at USU or transferred to USU must be completed within eight years. Credit will be lost (if not revalidated) for work older than eight years.
 - 1) To revalidate coursework over eight years old, the Supervisory Committee must develop a plan for revalidation with approval by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. Procedures used may be:
 - a) Testing
 - b) Requiring the course work to be repeated, and/or
 - c) Other (must be clearly defined by the Supervisory Committee and is subject to approval by the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs, Department Head, and the Graduate Dean).
2. The results must be verified in writing to the Graduate Dean, the Department Head and the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs by the student's Major Professor or other person(s) responsible for the testing. Work experience cannot be substituted for out-of-date coursework or used for revalidation.

SECTION VI

FINANCIAL AWARD

Students accepted into the Biology graduate program and who remain in good standing will be guaranteed stipend support up to 6 years for PhD students and 3 years for MS students.

Support may take the form of Fellowships, Scholarships, Teaching Assistantships (TA), or Research Assistantships (RA). All award and employment procedures will conform to affirmative action policies. Additional support may take the form of non-resident Tuition Waivers and/or in-state Tuition Awards for both MS and PhD Students.

A. Application for Financial Award

1. All applications to the graduate program in the Department of Biology are considered for financial awards (fellowships and assistantships). For priority consideration for financial support and an invitation to the Graduate Student Recruitment Weekend (typically held in mid to late February), applications should be submitted by 1 December, however, applications will be considered year-round when funds are available (e.g., research grant funding for assistantships).
2. Only matriculated students may be employed as full-time or part-time TAs or receive fellowships. Teaching Assistantships are assigned to students according to the needs of the Department. Research Assistantships may be available from individual faculty members. A full-time assistantship implies 20 hours per week of assigned duties, but on occasion may require more or fewer hours per week.
3. International students whose native language is not English usually will not be awarded a TA unless they have been in residence at USU for at least one year and have demonstrated acceptable English skills.
4. Students employed as TAs and RAs are governed by regulations in the [University Code of Policies and Procedures](#).
5. Graduate students on a fellowship or employed as a TA or RA must be registered as full-time matriculated graduate students.

B. Teaching Assistantships

1. TA positions are limited in number and are awarded competitively. All students admitted under matriculated status will be considered for a TA.
2. See Section [VII](#) regarding selection and assignments of TAs.

C. Research Assistantships

1. The Department does not award RAs directly. Students who request an RA will normally already be in contact with a faculty member. Conditions of employment of an RA will be negotiated with the faculty member within the limits established by University Policy.

E. Fellowships

1. All applications to the graduate program in the Department of Biology are considered for a fellowship. Application to the program should be complete by 1 December for consideration; however, applications will be considered year-round when fellowships are available.
2. The Graduate Programs Committee meets to recommend awards and forward recommendations to the Department Head. Criteria for selection and authority for decisions vary by award.

F. Non-resident (Out-of-State) Tuition Waivers for MS and PhD Students

Students accepted into the Biology graduate program and who remain in good standing will be guaranteed to have their out-of-state tuition waived for the first academic year either by the Department, their Major Professor or their Research Advisor.

To qualify for a non-resident tuition waiver, the student must:

1. Be a full-time matriculated MS or PhD student in good standing; and
2. Receive a graduate assistantship or fellowship from the University of at least \$800/month throughout the semester of the waiver; and
3. Have an approved Program of Study on file **by the end of the second semester**; and
4. Be registered for the approved number of credits and courses each semester. Students must register and pay fees and tuition prior to the deadline or the waiver may be canceled.

Non-resident tuition waivers are not offered during summer semester.

It is required that students who are U.S. citizens establish [Utah residency](#) by the end of the first academic year. If a student does not establish residency after their first academic year, they will be responsible to pay non-resident tuition.

International students may receive waivers for an unlimited time as long as all other requirements are met.

G. Resident (In-State) MS and PhD Tuition Award

Funds for tuition awards are limited. Tuition awards beyond 30 credits (MS) or 60 credits (PhD) are subject to available funds; therefore, students should choose courses wisely.

To qualify for the in-state tuition award, the student must:

1. Be a full-time matriculated student in good standing; and
2. Receive a graduate assistantship or fellowship from the University of at least \$800/month throughout the semester of the award; and
3. Have an approved Program of Study on file **by the end of the second semester**; and
4. Have submitted the APDP form by the end of each spring semester (See section V.H) and;
5. Be registered for the approved number of credits and courses each semester. Students must register and pay fees and tuition prior to the deadline or the award may be cancelled.
 - a. Students are normally expected to register for 6 credits per semester.

- b. Students who are required to register for more than 6 credits (e.g., fellowship requirements, enrollment in Introduction to Graduate Programs in Biology, a desire to expedite degree completion in a short time or other similar requirements) will need approval from the Graduate Programs Committee for coverage of those extra credits.
- c. The Department has finite tuition award funds available, and must fairly balance disbursement of tuition funds across current GTAs. If not approved, responsibility for tuition coverage of extra credits may fall to the Major Professor or to the student.

H. Major Professors and Research Advisors

Grant proposals that allow tuition costs must include requests for those costs; if tuition costs are not allowed, GRA stipend rates should be increased to enable students to pay tuition from the extra salary. Faculty are encouraged to use grant funds to cover tuition costs beyond the normal credit limits. Faculty who have existing resources to cover tuition costs are strongly encouraged to do so, as this releases Department funds to assist other students in need.

SECTION VII

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Teaching Assistantships (TAs) are limited and are awarded competitively

A. Teaching Assistant Selection and Requirements

1. All Biology Graduate Programs applicants will be considered for a TA, if needed. Biology graduate students already matriculated at USU will also be considered and must be making satisfactory progress toward their degree.
2. TA award recommendations are made by the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs. Recommendations will represent the Graduate Programs Committee's view of the best balance of teaching needs, student quality, and fair distribution of Department-supported students among the faculty. Final appointment is made by the Department Head.
3. TA contracts are applicable for one year only and require reappointment each year. Students who are making satisfactory progress towards their degree will be guaranteed support for up to 3 years for a MS and up to 6 years for a PhD student.
4. TAs will be required to sign and return a contract upon acceptance of the position by the deadline indicated.
5. TA contracts are normally for fall and/or spring semester. Students who will not be available to commit to the terms of their contract must submit a written request to amend the contract to the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs in a timely manner. Failure to comply with this provision may result in loss of the award.
6. A limited number of summer term TA positions may be available. Students should contact the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs if they are interested in a summer TA.
7. Graduate Students are required to complete a one-time RGS TA Workshop- USU7920 (there is no credit or cost, but the workshop is recorded on the student's transcript). Students who do not successfully complete the workshop will not be allowed to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants.

B. Teaching Assistant Assignment

1. The primary function of TAs is to provide instructional support in laboratory and large lecture courses in the Department of Biology. TA assignments will be based on the needs of the Department. Financial support of graduate students is a secondary function of TAs. Refusal of a teaching assignment may result in the loss of the TA.
2. When accepting a teaching appointment, it is understood that the student is making a commitment to teach the assigned course for the semester(s) as stated in the TA contract. It is recommended that other obligations be scheduled outside of class time. Individual course instructors may impose their own restrictions on absences, but in general, no more than two planned absences per semester are allowed. It is the TA's responsibility to make accommodations to cover absences, such as make arrangements with the course instructor or another TA to cover their lab as needed.

3. A student should communicate their interests and preferences regarding the teaching assignment to the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs. Assignments will be made to accommodate both the student's interest and the needs of the Department when possible.
4. Students who are supported by an RA or fellowship, and who are interested in teaching experience, may submit a request to the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs. The student should submit a request indicating course preferences at least one semester prior to the beginning of the semester they wish to teach.
5. The Co-Directors of Graduate Programs will make course assignments according to the needs of the Department and with approval from the Department Head.
 - a. Requests for reassignment may be submitted by the Teaching Assistant and/or the Instructor to the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs.
 - b. Although efforts will be made to meet the preferences of each TA and instructor, course requirements and needs, as well as availability of other TAs will be considered when making TA assignments.

C. Teaching Assistant Evaluation

Near the end of each semester, TA performance and course evaluations will be conducted by the supervising professor/instructor and students in the class. This will help assess total teaching experience as well as provide the opportunity to make positive adjustments as needed. TAs are also encouraged to evaluate courses and give input for improvement. Forms (Instructor's Evaluation of Teaching Assistant, Student Evaluation of Teaching Assistant, and Course Evaluation by Teaching Assistant) to evaluate the course and instructor are available from the Department office. Students should contact the GP Coordinator to review their evaluations.

In the event that evaluations or information from the instructor during the course indicate a problem, the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs will discuss the situation with the TA. A plan to correct the situation will be coordinated with the TA, instructor, and the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs. Failure to comply with the plan may result in loss of pay and position.

SECTION VIII

TERMINATING GRADUATE STUDENTS

Graduate students who are not completing their program requirements in a timely manner or without the research and scholarship standards required, will be recommended for termination from the Department's Graduate Programs Committee. The student has the right of appeal as described in Section IX and expanded here. The following procedures will be adhered to.

A. Initiation of Termination

1. The student's Major Professor or Supervisory Committee may initiate termination by presenting specific reasons, in writing, to the Graduate Programs Committee with a copy to the student. The Graduate Programs Committee may also initiate termination. Termination may be recommended for any of the following reasons:
 - a. Failure to complete program requirements in a timely manner.
 - b. Failure to maintain satisfactory scholarship.
 - c. Failure to develop a quality thesis or dissertation proposal in a timely manner.
 - d. Failure to obtain a new Major Professor within a period of three months after termination of a former Major Professor-Student arrangement.
 - e. Inadequate performance on the comprehensive examination or oral defense.
 - f. Failure to meet special program requirements.
 - g. Violation of other [University standards and policies](#).
2. The Graduate Programs Committee will examine the documents and reasons for the proposed termination and will recommend action to the Department Head.

B. Recommendation for Termination

1. The Department Head makes a decision based on the Graduate Programs Committee's recommendation, and a letter is sent to the graduate student, the Major Professor, and the School of Graduate Studies. The letter will include the following:
 - a. Specific reasons for the proposed action; and
 - b. Citation of Departmental and School of Graduate Studies policies that apply; and
 - c. The offer of a Departmental hearing for the student to appeal the decision; and
 - d. A deadline for initiating the appeal.

C. Appeals

1. Appeal to the proposed termination action must be initiated within the time specified in the letter to the student.
2. The appeals procedure in the Department should follow the guidelines in Section IX.
3. If the appeal fails or if no appeal is made, the Department Head will submit a letter to the

School of Graduate Studies recommending termination. Copies of all correspondences to the student must be attached.

4. If the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies concurs, the student will receive a letter of termination with information of a further appeals process.

SECTION IX

APPEALS PROCEDURES

A. Procedures

1. Graduate students or faculty with a grievance relating to an academic matter may appeal to the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs, Graduate Programs Committee, Department Head, and ultimately to the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies by the appeals procedures described here.
 - a. First consult with the Department of Biology Co-Directors of Graduate Programs for an evaluation of the problem and suggestions for its resolution.
 - b. A grievance relating to the Graduate Program Policy may be made to the Graduate Programs Committee through the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs.
 - c. Appeals of the decisions of the Graduate Programs Committee or grievances not within the charge of that committee may be made to the Department Head.
 - d. If the grievance has not been satisfied by the above procedures, an appeal can be made to the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies. The appropriate steps and procedures for such appeals are detailed in the [Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University](#).

SECTION X

GRADUATE PROGRAM FORMS AND ONLINE RESOURCES

Graduate Program Standard Forms:

[Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(SCAF\)](#)

[Program of Study Form \(POS\)](#)

[Master's Thesis/Project Approval Form \(TPA\)](#)

[Application for Candidacy for a Doctoral Degree \(ACDD\)](#)

[Appointment for Exam Form \(AFE\)](#)

[Record of Examination Form \(ROE\)](#)

[Comprehensive Examination Form \(COMP\)](#)

Thesis/Dissertation Forms:

[Authorship and Copyright Form](#)

[Format and Style Form \(FS\)](#)

[Electronic Thesis/Dissertation Form \(ETD\)](#)

Other Useful Forms:

[Full time at 3 Credits Form \(FT3C\)](#)

[Leave of Absence / Continuous Registration Form](#)

Online Resources:

[Apply for Residency](#)

[USU Division of Student Affairs](#)

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

[School of Graduate Studies](#)

[Graduate Catalog](#)

[RGS Academic Forms](#) (All)

[USU Academic Policies and Procedures](#)



UtahStateUniversity
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Fall 2023

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

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LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT HEAD



Dear Incoming Graduate Student:

Welcome to the Department of Biology at Utah State University! The Department takes great pride in our graduate programs, and we seek to provide our students with a challenging and fulfilling graduate experience. Our outstanding faculty and staff, together with your fellow graduate students, provide a supportive and collegial environment in which you can gain new skills and pursue your own discoveries. I encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities that the Department of Biology, Utah State University, and Cache Valley have to offer.

Your primary source of information and advice will, of course, be your major professor, assisted by the other members of your advisory committee. However, you will also benefit from the valuable assistance of the Graduate Programs Staff Assistant, the Co-Directors of Graduate Programs, and the other members of our Graduate Programs Committee. In addition, I am always pleased to meet with graduate students, whether to resolve a lingering issue or simply to discuss your research, your broader interests, or your career plans.

This handbook and policy is intended to serve as a guide to the procedures and resources that all of our graduate students follow. Here you will find helpful information on course requirements, deadlines, milestones, assistantships, required forms, and much more. We hope you find this information beneficial, and I remind you that your major professor and our Graduate Programs staff are all available to assist you with success in your graduate training experience.

Finally, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of all the opportunities available to our graduate students, including departmental activities such as seminars and coffee hours, as well as our very active Biology Graduate Student Association and Entomology Club. Expand your professional associations and establish collaborations with faculty and students in other labs, departments, and colleges.

Graduate school is a time not only to pursue your own interests in greater depth, but also to broaden your experience and gain a greater appreciation for where your own work fits within the wider biological context. Again, welcome to our Department. We look forward to working with you, and anticipate that we will maintain our collegial association long after you graduate from Utah State University.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane G. Alston". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Diane G. Alston, Professor and Head

OUTLINE of BIOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

NOTE: Meet with your Major Professor each semester to finalize coursework prior to registration

- A. [Supervisory Committee Approval Form \(SCAF\)](#)
 - 1. Meet with Major Professor to determine appropriate supervisory committee
 - 2. Submit to GP Coordinator **by the end of your second semester.** (Summer does count)
 - 3. Submit with a 1-2 page outline of your research proposal
- B. [Program of Study Form \(POS\)](#)
 - 1. Meet with Major Professor and Supervisory Committee to determine appropriate coursework
 - 2. Create Plan in DegreeWorks
 - 3. Submit to GP Coordinator **by the end of your second semester.**
- C. [Master's Thesis/Project Approval Form \(TPA\)](#)
 - 1. MS Students only—Submit to GP Coordinator with POS **by the end of your second semester.**
- D. [Comprehensive Exams \(COMP\)](#)
 - 1. MS - within your first 1 ½ years
 - 2. PhD – within your first 2 years
- E. [Application for Candidacy \(Doctoral Degree\) Form \(ACDD\)](#)
 - 1. PhD Students only—Submit to GP Coordinator
 - 2. include a 1-2 page outline of your research proposal
- F. Thesis/Dissertation [Authorship and Copyright](#) Forms
 - 1. MS - Submit with TPA form
 - 2. PhD - Submit with ACDD form
- G. [Appointment for Examination Form \(AFE\)](#)
 - 1. Schedule location, date, and time with Biology Administrative Staff—A poster will be created and circulated on your behalf
 - 2. Provide final thesis/dissertation to Supervisory Committee at least 4 weeks prior to your scheduled defense
 - 3. Submit AFE form to GP Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to your scheduled defense
- H. [Record of Examination Form \(ROE\)](#)
 - 1. Print and have available for signatures at your final defense
 - 2. Student is not to handle this form once it is signed—Major Professor submits to GP Coordinator.
- I. Thesis/Dissertation Review
 - 1. [Format and Style Form \(FS\)](#)
 - 2. [Electronic Dissertation Form \(ETD\)](#)
 - 3. Title Page—may be physically signed by your committee OR electronically signed, but not a combination of both
 - 4. IF APPLICABLE—a target journal example
- J. [Individual Development Plan](#)
 - 1. MS and PhD – Annually submitted Fall-Spring
- K. [Annual Professional Development Form](#)
 - 1. MS and PhD – Annually submitted Spring

BASIC GRADUATE STUDENT INFORMATION

Graduate Program Coordinator

Graduate Program Coordinators (GPCs) play a key role in supporting the success of graduate students as they earn their degree. GPCs are a critical link between the School of Graduate Studies (RGS), departments, and graduate students. GPCs assist graduate students with deadlines, degree completion, and thesis/dissertation requirements. GPCs should be a student's first contact when they have questions or concerns. [Find Your GPC](#)

Housing

Logan and the surrounding communities (Cache Valley) offer moderately priced housing opportunities. On-campus housing is available. You can visit the [USU Housing](#) website for additional information. If you choose on-campus housing and are required to be on campus before your dorm/apartment is available, you can contact the [University Inn](#) for a discounted student rate. There are numerous options for apartments or renting/buying homes in the valley. Many apartments and houses where rent is shared are also available in close proximity to campus.

Parking

Parking is limited on and around campus. Reasonably priced parking passes can be purchased for student and economy lots. Visit the [USU parking](#) website for details on parking terraces and lots around campus and parking permit fees. The University does offer a free shuttle service to/from parking lots and satellite campus buildings in the area.

Transportation Options

The campus and community is amenable to bike and pedestrian traffic. Many faculty, staff, and students choose one of these [transportation options](#) over driving to campus. Also, the [Cache Valley Transit District \(CVTD\)](#) offers fare-free bus transportation throughout the valley and provides service to the USU campus.

Dining

There are multiple [dining options](#) on campus as well as many local restaurants and grocery stores in close proximity to campus. There are also meal plan options that are available to students.

Student ID card

After you have completed registration, you must apply for a USU card in the Student Center. This card will allow you access to the libraries, computer rooms, health facilities, and most sporting events on campus. You can set up and manage your [USU card](#) online. It can be used as a debit card for purchases at the bookstore and restaurants on campus. Your ID card may also provide you with student discounts at restaurants and merchants in the local community.

Health Insurance

[Health insurance](#) coverage is required for all USU graduate students on an assistantship and for all international graduate students. If you wish not to enroll in this insurance, you must [waive](#) it each fall and spring semester. Important: If you do not waive coverage by the deadline, you will be automatically enrolled in the school sponsored plan and charged the applicable premium. Absolutely NO waivers will be approved or refunds for the student premium will be issued after the deadline has passed. You may also contact the Student Health and Wellness Center at 435.797.1660.

Mailboxes

Graduate Student mailboxes are located in BNR 119, next to the Biology main office. You will have a mailbox assigned to you prior to your arrival. Please do not use your department mailbox for personal mail delivery. Mail related to your research (catalogs, correspondence, publications, etc.) is accepted; bank statements, bills, personal catalogs, and magazines, etc. are not.

Photos

The Department of Biology has an electronic photo board for faculty, staff, and graduate students located outside the Biology main office, BNR 121. Please contact the staff in the main office to arrange to have your photo taken for the board.

Website

Graduate students may have personal pages on the [Biology website](#). Contact the Staff Assistant for the Graduate Programs Committee for information on setting up and making changes to your webpage.

Department Seminars

The Department hosts a seminar series during fall and spring semesters. Seminars are normally scheduled on Tuesdays at 3:30pm in BNR 202a. Seminars are not offered for credit and may not occur weekly throughout the entire semester. Seminar announcements will be disseminated through email and posted on Department bulletin boards and electronic displays. Graduate students are encouraged to nominate guest speakers to the Seminar Committee. If you would like to nominate a seminar speaker, contact the current Chair of the Seminar Committee.

Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA)

As a graduate student in the department of Biology you are considered a member of the BGSA and are encouraged to participate in their meetings, fundraisers, and activities. The graduate students in Biology are a diverse and friendly group. Your contribution to the group is valuable to the Department and may benefit you as well. Many of the committees in the Department include a graduate student representative. Nominations are held each year for these positions and for officers in the association. Information on the [BGSA](#) is provided on the departmental website. Contact the president of the BGSA for additional information. There are also opportunities to represent the Department and the College of Science in the Graduate Student Senate ([GSS](#)).

Biology Coffee Hour

The Department hosts a coffee hour to encourage discussion and socializing among faculty, staff, and graduate students. Each coffee hour is hosted by a lab/group who volunteer to provide refreshments, prepare coffee, etc. Please Contact the BGSA if you would like to schedule a coffee hour.

GLOSSARY of TERMS / ACRONYMS

ACDD—Application for Candidacy of a Doctoral Degree

AFE—Appointment for Exam

APDP — Annual Professional Development Plan

BANNER—Banner is the student's online portal to USU. It is the system where students register for classes, update personal information, etc.

CGA—Continued Graduate Advisement

COMMITTEE—Depending on the context, could refer to the student's Supervisory Committee or the Graduate Programs Committee

COMP(s)—Comprehensive Examination(s)

CR—Continued Registration

DEGREEWORKS—USU Degree planning tool

DIGITAL COMMONS—governing body of library digital submissions

DOCUSIGN—Signature verification program

EHS—Environmental Health and Safety

EPAF—Electronic Personnel Action Form

ETD—Electronic Thesis or Dissertation **FS**—

Thesis or Dissertation Format and Style **FT3C**

—Full-time at 3 Credits

GPC—Depending on the context, could refer to Graduate Programs Coordinator or Graduate Programs Committee

GRS—Graduate Research Symposium

GRTS—Graduate Student Research Training Series

GSS—Graduate Student Senate

IACUC—Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

IDP — Individual Development Plan

IRB—Institutional Review Board

LOA—Leave of Absence

PDRF—Presidential Doctoral Research Fellowship

POS—Program of Study

ROE—Record of Examination

SCAF—Supervisory Committee Approval Form

SGS—School of Graduate Studies

TPA—Thesis Project/Proposal Approval

TR—Transfer Request

USTAR—Utah Science Technology and Research Initiative

USURF—Utah State University Research Foundation



BIOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAMS CHECKLIST

NAME _____

DEGREE: _____

A# _____

BASIC FORMS:**APPROVAL DATE:**

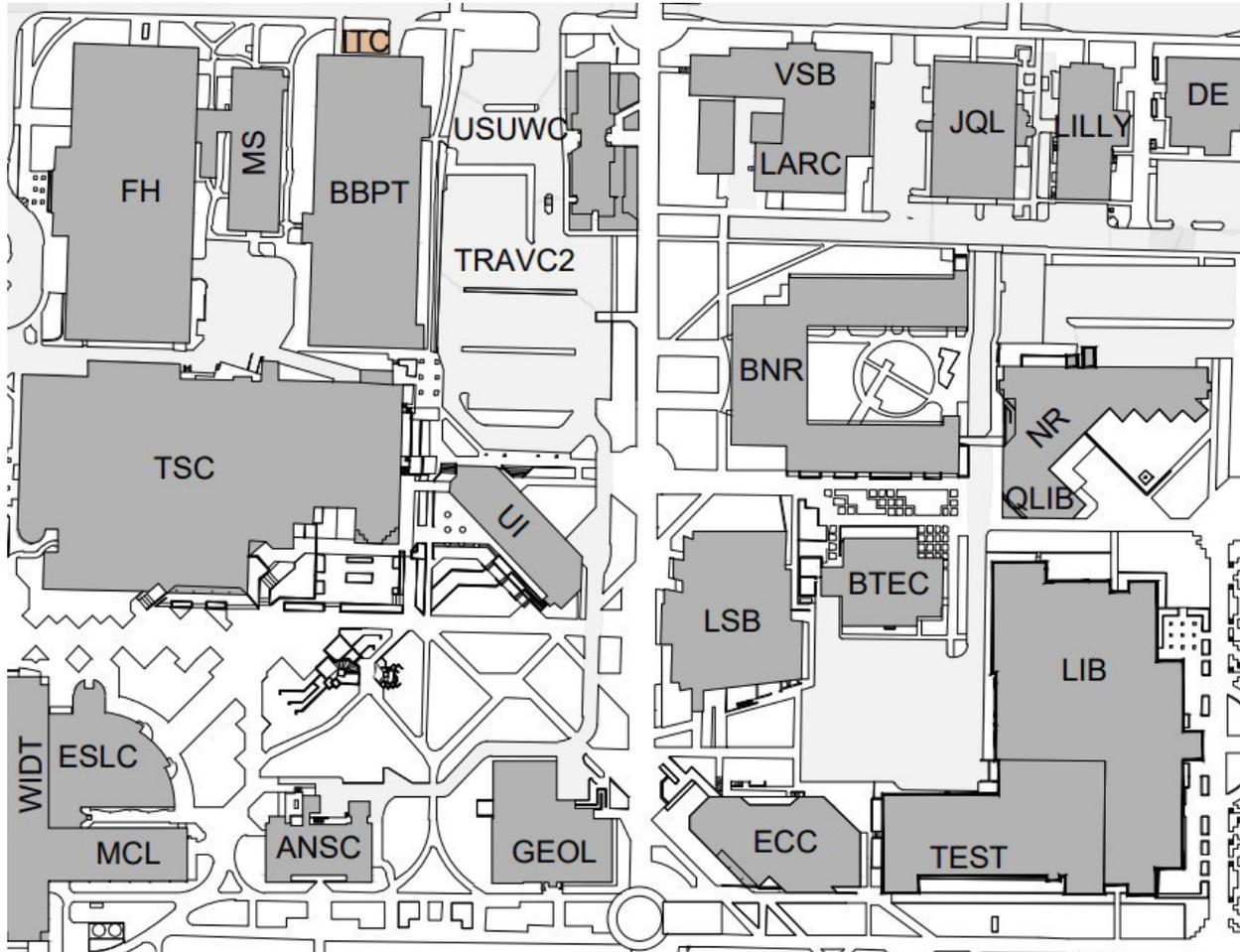
			ORIGINAL	REVISION 1	REVISION 2
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCAF	SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE FORM DUE BY END OF TERM 2	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	POS	PROGRAM OF STUDY FORM DUE BY END OF TERM 2	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	TPA	THESIS PROPOSAL APPROVAL [MS] DUE BY END OF TERM 2	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	ACDD	APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY [PhD] DUE AFTER COMP EXAMS	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	COMP	MS-COMPREHENSIVE EXAM(S) DUE WITHIN FIRST 1.5YR	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	COMP	PhD-COMPREHENSIVE EXAM(S) DUE WITHIN FIRST 2YRS	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	AFE	APPOINTMENT FOR EXAM DUE 2WKS BEFORE FINAL DEFENSE	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	ROE	RECORD OF EXAM DUE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING DEFENSE	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	APDP	ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN DUE ANNUALLY SPRING SEMESTER	_____	_____	_____

DISSERTATION/THESIS SUBMISSION:

<input type="checkbox"/>	COPYRIGHT	COPYRIGHT FORM REQUIRED PRIOR TO DISSERTATION/THESIS REVIEW	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	AUTHORSHIP	AUTHORSHIP FORM REQUIRED PRIOR TO DISSERTATION/THESIS REVIEW	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	FS	FORMAT AND STYLE FORM REQUIRED PRIOR TO DISSERTATION/THESIS REVIEW	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	JOURNAL	JOURNAL SAMPLE REQUIRED PRIOR TO DISSERTATION/THESIS REVIEW	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	ETD	ETD FORM REQUIRED PRIOR TO DISSERTATION/THESIS REVIEW	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	TP	TITLE PAGE (SIGNED BY COMMITTEE) REQUIRED PRIOR TO DISSERTATION/THESIS REVIEW	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	SUBMISSION	ADOBE .PDF OF DISSERTATION/THESIS MUST BE IN ADOBE PDF FORMAT ONLY	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	BINDING	SUBMITTED FOR BINDING \$20 PER COPY	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	PICK-UP	PICKED UP FROM LIBRARY AVAILABILITY FOR PICK-UP IS DETERMINED BY BINDING RUN DATES	_____

CAMPUS MAP

Click [here](#) for full campus map



ANSC Animal Science

BBPT Big Blue Parking Terrace

BNR Biology-Natural Resources

FH Fieldhouse (Nelson Recreation Center)

GEOL Geology

ITC Information/Traffic Control

JQL Janet Quinney Lawson

LIB Merrill-Cazier Library

LILLY Lillywhite (Communicative Disorders)

LSB Life Sciences Building

MCL Maeser Chemistry Laboratory

BTEC Biotechnology Center

ECC Eccles Conference Center

ESLC Eccles Science Learning Center

MS Military Science

NR Natural Resources

TSC Taggart Student Center

UI University Inn



UtahState
University

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY