

2023–2024

Graduate Student Handbook



DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

University of Oklahoma

biology.ou.edu

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I. THE FIRST ACADEMIC YEAR

A. Admission

1. Applicants for admission to one of the Department of Biology's graduate programs must [submit an online application](#), including a curriculum vitae, a personal statement, official copies of all college- or university-level transcripts, and three letters of recommendation. Applicants who are not U.S. citizens and not from [certain English-speaking countries](#) are also required to submit official [results of a test of English skills](#). The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Exam and the GRE Subject Test in Biology are optional.

The Graduate College considers the recommendation of the Department in arriving at its decision on the admissibility of an applicant. This recommendation is officially made by the Department's Graduate Liaison with direction from the Chair of the Department and Committee A, following review by the Department's Graduate Selections Committee.

2. Admission to the Department can be either "Admission in Full Standing" or "Conditional Admission."
 - a. Admission in Full Standing: the student's record is fully acceptable to the Graduate College and Department.
 - b. Conditional Admission: the student's record is deficient in some respect, (e.g., courses required for full graduate standing, low grades, or incomplete application materials). The conditions for admission are specified by the Department and approved by the Graduate College (see Section [I.C](#)).

B. Director of Graduate Studies/Graduate Liaison (GL) and Graduate Studies Committee

1. Both the M.S. and Ph.D. programs in the Department of Biology are administered by the Graduate Studies Committee. It shall function as follows:
 - a. The Graduate Studies Committee will consider all questions relative to the graduate programs and make recommendations on policy to the Department of Biology faculty for their approval.
 - b. The Graduate Studies Committee will be appointed by the Chair of the Department and shall consist of at least three faculty members and a graduate student representative.
2. The Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee will be the Director of Graduate Studies/Graduate Liaison (henceforth, just Graduate Liaison) and will administer all Departmental and Graduate College policies and regulations related to graduate students.
3. The Graduate Liaison serves as the official advisor for the student during the first year or prior to assignment of a Faculty Advisor and Advisory Committee.

C. Full Graduate Standing

Admitted students who have a baccalaureate degree in biological sciences or a related field are admitted with full graduate standing. For other admitted students, any missing background undergraduate coursework that would be required to reach full graduate standing will be determined on a case-by-case basis that takes into account the student's background and intended area of research and study. This determination will be made by the Graduate Selections Committee, in consultation with the proposed Faculty Advisor, before an offer of admission is made. Any such missing background undergraduate coursework can be completed concurrent with enrollment in one of our graduate programs.

D. Course Requirements and Recommendations

1. All graduate students are required to:
 - a. Complete an undergraduate or graduate statistics course broadly equivalent in content to BIOL 4913 (University of Oklahoma courses: BIOL 4913 or 5923; MATH 4753, 5793; Psychology 5003 or 5013). Equivalency for additional University of Oklahoma courses, or those taught at other institutions, is to be judged by the Graduate Liaison or Department Chair.
 - b. Complete the online [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative \(CITI Program\) training in responsible conduct of research](#), regardless of the source of funding. The CITI program is dedicated to serving research conduct training needs of colleges and universities and provides information on core topics to consider in efforts to conduct research in a responsible manner.
2. All graduate students are expected to attend the Department Seminar. This experience helps make students aware of and conversant in a wide array of biological research topics. A total of 2 or 4 credit hours (as BIOL 6970) may be counted on the M.S. or Ph.D. program of study, respectively.
3. Summer study at biological stations, research laboratories, or as a member of a field research party is strongly recommended.

E. Advisement

The Graduate Liaison is the official advisor of new graduate students until the student and a faculty member(s) complete the [Declaration of Faculty Advisor](#) form. This form must be completed by the end of the second Fall or Spring semester of residency (except as noted in Section I.F for some students in the Cellular & Behavioral Neurobiology Ph.D. program). Thereafter, advisement will be by the Faculty Advisor(s) (refer to Sections [III.D](#) or [IV.F](#)).

Prior to the first semester of residency, the Graduate Liaison and the prospective Faculty Advisor(s) will evaluate the student's strengths and weaknesses with respect to prior coursework and experience and determine, with the student, coursework for the first semester. Coursework for the second semester will also be determined by consultation of the student with the Graduate Liaison and the prospective Faculty Advisor(s). Subsequent coursework

will be determined by the student's committee at the initial committee meeting to be held no later than the second semester of enrollment (refer to Sections [III.D](#) or [IV.F](#)).

F. Required Performance and Achievements for the First Year

1. A student who was admitted conditionally due to low grades must achieve a "B" average at the completion of 12 credit hours of graduate coursework. Such work shall be completed in not more than two semesters or further enrollment will be denied.
2. A student who was admitted conditionally due to coursework deficiencies shall satisfy such deficiencies within a period specified by the Department, normally two semesters, and must earn at least a C in each of the courses and must have an overall B average in deficiency courses.
3. M.S. and Ph.D. students are required to select a Faculty Advisor, form an Advisory Committee, and meet with that Committee by the end of the second Fall or Spring semester after entering the graduate program (refer to Sections [III.D](#) or [IV.F](#)). The Department recommends that the Committee meeting occur before April 1 (see Section [II.H](#)). Failure to meet these requirements may result in the dismissal of the student.

A student in the Cellular & Behavioral Neurobiology (CBN) Ph.D. program who has not chosen a Faculty Advisor because of continuing lab rotations must nonetheless hold an committee meeting by the end of the second Fall or Spring semester. In such a case, the membership of this committee will not be the same as the Advisory Committee. Instead, this first-year advisory committee will consist of the CBN Director, the Biology Graduate Liaison, and all faculty members supervising this student's CBN rotations. This committee will be chaired by the CBN Director. This committee will meet with the student by the end of the second Fall or Spring semester of the student's first year in the program to review the student's progress and provide advice to the student, particularly regarding upcoming semesters and any courses the student should take in the third Fall or Spring semester. This committee will provide to the Biology Graduate Liaison a letter assessing the student's progress and signed by the committee members. This committee will not provide the official Advisory Conference Report because the Graduate College has requirements for the make-up of the Advisory Conference Committee that will not be met (e.g., a faculty member from outside the academic unit and program). The CBN student must then choose a Faculty Advisor and constitute a committee that meets Department, Graduate College, and CBN requirements and hold a meeting of this committee, resulting in the official Advisory Conference Report, as early as possible in the third Fall or Spring semester of enrollment.

II. POLICIES FOR ALL GRADUATE STUDENTS

A. Pass/No Pass Option

At the discretion of the student's Advisory Committee, the Pass/No Pass grading system may be used for undergraduate- and graduate-level courses that will not apply toward a graduate degree. Courses taken to fulfill the Department requirements for Full Graduate Standing may not be taken under the Pass/No Pass option.

B. Publication by Graduate Students

The Department of Biology strongly encourages students to publish the results of their thesis or dissertation investigations, as well as any investigations that are not formally part of the thesis or dissertation project. The Department and scientific community generally view publication of research, thesis/dissertation or not, as part of the student's educational experience and deserving of the same guidance and evaluation as the thesis or dissertation research. **If a student wishes to publish the results of thesis/dissertation research prior to the thesis or dissertation defense, they must submit the material to be published to their Advisory Committee for critical review and approval before submission to the publisher.**

C. Embargo of Thesis/Dissertation

The University of Oklahoma Graduate College is committed to making research available to the broadest possible community. Open access to research supports the values of learning, teaching, and peer review essential to our academic standing and integrity; it allows scholars to disseminate their work to the widest audience; and it supports the discovery and advancement of knowledge for all. Therefore, University of Oklahoma theses and dissertations are presented at open oral defenses and made globally accessible in digital form in the SHAREOK Repository, using the [*Approval for Thesis/Dissertation Submission to SHAREOK*](#) form.

However, in some situations and some disciplines, it may be advisable to delay immediate access to a thesis or dissertation to allow publication in a peer-reviewed journal first. Upon request, the Graduate College will approve embargo of a thesis or dissertation for a limited period. An embargo postpones the date on which a thesis or dissertation will become broadly accessible. However, an embargo does not waive the final deposit requirement—a student who receives approval for an embargo will still need to deposit the final thesis or dissertation to fulfill graduate degree requirements.

A student should discuss any potential need for an embargo with their committee as early as possible in the research process. The Department of Biology has pre-approved embargoes for digital theses and dissertations: 2 years for M.S. theses and 3 years for Ph.D. dissertations. Students who want to use the pre-approved departmental embargo will need to opt in by checking the appropriate box on the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form.

D. Completion of Degree during Summer session

The Department strongly encourages students to complete degree requirements and defend the thesis or dissertation during either the fall or spring semester. If the degree must be completed during the Summer session, these requirements are to be met:

1. Members of the Advisory Committee must agree to serve.
2. Replacement of Advisory Committee member(s) who cannot serve must be completed prior to the beginning of the Summer session.

E. Procedure for Changing Membership of Advisory Committee

It is sometimes necessary to alter the membership of an Advisory Committee. The prime consideration is that the new member serves the same purpose on the committee as the initial member. For example, if the initial member represented the supporting field (refer to Sections [III.E.2](#) or [IV.G.4d](#)) of ecology, then the new member should be an ecologist. Advisory Committee membership changes are initiated using the [Request for Change in Committee](#) form on the Graduate College website.

If a member of the student's Committee is on any type of leave for a period of one semester or more and will be unable to fulfill their responsibilities on that Committee during this time, the faculty member is required to inform the Graduate Dean in writing. The memorandum must contain the following information: 1) the name of the students who are likely to experience difficulties in their degree program because of the faculty member's absence; 2) the period involved (with specific starting and ending dates); 3) authorization for temporary changes on the Committees; and 4) approval by the Graduate Liaison.

When a temporary replacement is necessary, a student should request that their Faculty Advisor send the Graduate Dean a letter stating that a particular faculty member will be replacing the faculty member who is on leave for a particular period. This letter must be accompanied by an approval of the Graduate Liaison. If the Graduate Dean has received written authorization for such action from the faculty member on leave, and if the temporary change is appropriate, the request will be approved.

F. Maintenance of "B" Average

A graduate student must maintain at least an overall 3.0 grade point average (GPA). If a student's GPA is less than 3.0 for one semester and one of the two previous semesters, the [Graduate College will stop the student's enrollment](#), unless the Graduate Liaison recommends continuation and "[proposes a plan to remedy the academic situation](#)" that is approved by the Graduate Dean. The Graduate College will also dismiss a student who has "accumulated 9 or more credit hours of C, D, and/or F grades at any level in any combination as a doctoral student," though the student may then be considered for admission to an M.S. program if they do not already hold a Master's degree.

G. Enrollment: Full-time and Maximum (See also Section [II.I.9](#))

1. Full-time enrollment for students independently enrolled vs. enrolled while serving as a 0.5 FTE Graduate Teaching Assistant or Graduate Research Assistant is as follows:
 - a. Independently Enrolled: 9 or more credit hours during each Fall and Spring semester and 6 or more credit hours during the Summer session.
 - b. Graduate Teaching Assistants or Graduate Research Assistants: 5 or more credit hours during each Fall and Spring semester. Summer enrollment is not required.

During a student's final semester, they may be eligible to enroll in fewer than 5 credit hours and still be considered full-time for the purpose of maintaining eligibility for a tuition waiver and FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act) tax exemption. The Graduate College instituted this policy to help students avoid paying fees for coursework beyond the hours needed for completion of the degree. Students must declare their final semester with the Graduate College by completing the online [Graduate Assistant Final Semester Declaration form](#). This two-credit hour enrollment exception can only be used in one semester. The Graduate College will report to the Office of Financial Aid any students who have self-identified the current semester as their final semester. Students should contact the Office of Financial Aid for enrollment requirements with regard to financial aid eligibility and student loan deferment information. International students must also obtain separate approval for a reduced course load from International Student Services, by filling out the [Reduced Course Load](#) form.

2. A student may not enroll in more than 16 credit hours per Fall or Spring semester or 9 credit hours per Summer term without the permission of the Graduate Dean.
3. A graduate student who is gainfully employed, including those employed by the university, should expect to reduce course enrollment in reasonable proportion to the actual amount of outside work involved.
4. A graduate student who desires to obtain full subsistence payments from the Veterans Administration must enroll in a minimum of 9 hours of course work, which may include BIOL 5980 or 6980.

H. Annual Review of Progress

A student's progress is evaluated by the Graduate Liaison (GL) until that student's advisement is assumed by a Faculty Advisor and Advisory Committee. Thereafter, the Department and Graduate College require an annual report of progress.

1. The Advisory Committee will convene at least once annually for Ph.D. students (or may meet as many times as appropriate) to review and evaluate the student's professional growth, research competence, and progress towards the degree. The Department requires that this meeting occur by May 1. A formal annual committee meeting for M.S. students is at the discretion of the Faculty Advisor, although students are encouraged to take the initiative to schedule a meeting with their Committee. This review and evaluation will not be restricted to thesis research but will include the broader aspects of the student's progress towards becoming a professional biologist.

2. The student will participate in a portion of the meeting, generally giving a progress report and an estimate of future plans and objectives.
3. The Advisory Committee's evaluation will be summarized in the Department's *Graduate Student Annual Evaluation* form, signed by the Faculty Advisor and the graduate student, and provided to the Graduate Liaison and the other members of the Advisory Committee by the end of the Spring semester. In cases where the student is judged to be making unsatisfactory progress, deficient areas should be identified and remedial action specified on the form, including the date by which to resolve the deficiency. A second review at the end of the specified period must be reported to the Graduate College. Based on the second review and recommendation of the Department, the student will be either removed from probation or denied further enrollment. The [Graduate College specifies](#) that "enrollment will be stopped for a student who receives multiple unsatisfactory evaluations."

I. Graduate Assistants

The general title "Graduate Assistant" will be used here to refer to a Graduate Teaching Assistant, Graduate Teaching Associate, or Graduate Research Assistant.

1. Titles

Three titles will be used for graduate students receiving stipends. These titles and their definitions are:

- a. Graduate Teaching Assistant—any graduate student receiving a stipend whose responsibilities are in teaching- or instruction-related activities. This title would also indicate a stipend range lower than that of the Graduate Teaching Associate. Graduate Teaching Assistant assignments are made using the following criteria: departmental teaching needs, faculty preferences, graduate student preferences, and graduate student expertise.
- b. Graduate Teaching Associate—a competitively selected Teaching Assistant who assumes additional responsibilities of coordinating and overseeing the day-to-day operation of the assigned course under the guidance of the faculty member responsible for the course. Associates are compensated for this extra work with additional stipend. Teaching Associates are selected by Committee A. A student who seeks appointment to a Teaching Associateship should:
 - (1) have assisted in the course
 - (2) have demonstrated leadership ability
 - (3) be making satisfactory progress towards their degree (with corroboration by the Faculty Advisor if requested by Committee A)
 - (4) be recommended by the instructor involved
 - (5) prepare a statement regarding the value of the appointment in relation to enhancement of their career goals.
- c. Graduate Research Assistant—any graduate student receiving a stipend whose responsibilities are other than those of teaching or instruction-related activity. Research assistants will be employed to assist faculty members in their research and to assist

faculty and administrators in the development of programs, curricula, educational materials, tests, and other curriculum-related activities.

2. Graduate Teaching Assistant/Associate Duties

The standard Graduate Teaching Assistant/Associate appointment requires 20 hours per week (0.50 FTE). Graduate students are exempt from FICA withholding taxes provided they do not work over 30 hours per week (0.75 FTE). International students on F-1 visas may not work more than 20 hours a week (0.50 FTE) on campus, except during holidays and recesses. Assistants or Associates assigned to courses with laboratory sections that meet once a week will teach two sections in that course or will teach a single section in each of two different courses, as enrollment dictates. Assistants or Associates assigned to sections of courses that meet twice a week will teach one section. If enrollment or other circumstances allow the Associate's assigned teaching load to be reduced to one section, then the additional class time will be fulfilled by team teaching with less experienced Assistants. In addition to teaching, other duties of Assistants/Associates can include:

- a. Assisting the faculty in classes to which they are assigned. Teaching Assistants who have never taught the assigned courses should sit in on those courses prior to teaching them whenever circumstances warrant.
- b. Grading papers for assigned courses
- c. Preparing teaching aids (outlines, drawings, tests, etc.) for assigned courses
- d. Preparing for classes, consulting with students, course staff meetings, etc.
- e. Performing certain departmental duties in addition to those duties associated with courses to which they are assigned. These departmental duties include proctoring examinations for other courses, assisting with departmental seminars, etc.

3. Time Records

Weekly records of time spent working as a Graduate Assistant/Associate are to be kept by each student and submitted electronically at time.ou.edu. This is required to receive a stipend.

4. Graduate Assistant Teaching Evaluation

Near the end of the semester, a form for Graduate Teaching Assistant evaluation is to be distributed to, and completed by, the instructor of the course assisted. The Graduate Teaching Assistant's Faculty Advisor will be apprised of the results of this evaluation. Graduate Teaching Assistants will also be evaluated by their students in the regular student/teacher evaluation process.

5. Tenure

All Graduate Assistants must maintain a 3.0 GPA in conformity with the Graduate College regulations on academic standards and must perform assigned duties in a manner satisfactory to the Department. Extensions of maximum tenure (see below) will be made only by recommendation of the student's Advisory Committee and approval of Committee A; Graduate Assistants should not plan on receiving stipends beyond these maxima.

a. Graduate Assistantships

- (1) A student beginning graduate work on an M.S. can expect to be reappointed until the degree is completed or for 6 Fall and Spring semesters (not including Summer sessions), whichever is the shorter time, as long as the student is making satisfactory progress.
- (2) A student beginning graduate work on a Ph.D., can expect reappointment until the degree is completed or for 12 Fall and Spring semesters (not including Summer sessions), whichever is the shorter time, as long as they are making satisfactory progress.
- (3) All periods of university-administered funding (e.g., Graduate Teaching Assistantships, grant- or contract-funded Graduate Research Assistantships, special instructorships) will be included when semesters of support are counted.

b. General Considerations

- (1) If a student wishes to petition for additional support, the petition must be received by the Department Chair by the end of January in the year preceding the extended support. Approval of an extension will be based upon (1) evaluation of the student's progress towards completion of the degree as indicated by the Annual Review of Progress and (2) evaluation of the student's teaching as shown by the Graduate Teaching Assistant evaluations.
- (2) If an individual interrupts an assistantship at the request of the Department to assume other duties, the remainder of the assistantship time will not be affected.

6. Outside Employment

The policy of the Graduate College on outside employment is: "As professionals in training, graduate assistants have a professional obligation to their colleagues and to the university. They show due respect and civility to their associates. **They understand that any other employment or enterprise in which they engage for income is secondary to their university duties**, and they accept the judgment of their department regarding conflicts of interest, either real or apparent, that may be caused by such outside activities." Graduate assistantships are considered to be 0.5 FTE (20 hours per week) appointments. A graduate assistantship plus academic work toward a graduate degree is a full-time commitment and **is incompatible with external employment during the semesters of appointment. Graduate teaching assistants considering external employment during the period of the assistantship must obtain prior approval from their Faculty Advisor,**

the Graduate Liaison, and Committee A, using the [Request for Exception for Additional Employment While a Graduate Assistant](#) form.

7. Absence from Assisting Duties

In certain cases, it is essential that Graduate Assistants be absent from their assisting duties over extended periods of time to pursue research, etc. Such absences can be approved by the Department Chair. Except under unusual circumstances, approval will not be given for an absence of more than one week unless a satisfactory replacement can be employed. If a replacement must be hired, the absent Graduate Assistant will not be paid during the time they are gone. Absence from the job for one week or less will be approved without the employment of a replacement if it can be arranged for another Assistant to take over the duties.

8. Tuition

Graduate Assistants appointed to a 0.5 FTE assistantship for the entire semester pay the University fees, but receive a tuition waiver of resident and non-resident tuition. By state law, fees cannot be waived using state (University) funds.

9. Enrollment

The University requires that each Graduate Assistant must register for a minimum of 5 credit hours each Fall and Spring semester. This rule is strictly enforced.

Normally a Graduate Assistant working 20 hours per week will not enroll in more than 9 credit hours and is expected to reduce enrollment in reasonable proportion to the amount of work done.

10. International Students who are Teaching Assistants and for whom English is a Second Language

Before an international student (non-U.S. citizen) can be appointed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, they must pass an oral (English Communication Capacity or ECC) test administered by the Graduate College's [English Training and Certification Services \(ETCS\)](#), unless they are a citizen of one of [the English-speaking countries listed on that website](#). In the oral test, the student presents a 15-minute lecture on an assigned topic to a committee of English raters. Depending on their score on the written section of the English test submitted with their graduate application ([see ETCS website](#)), the student may also have to pass a written English proficiency examination administered by the ETCS. Students who pass the English tests with at least a [Level B certification](#) are allowed to serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants for lab sections. International students who do not display satisfactory English proficiency may not be appointed to teaching positions, but may be awarded Research Assistantships or other graduate appointments that do not involve direct instruction of students.

J. Biology Graduate Student Organization (BGSO)

This organization is comprised of graduate students in the Department and is recognized by the University as a constitutional student association. The organization elects two representatives each year to attend Department faculty meetings; these representatives have voting privileges in all except personnel matters.

K. Oklahoma Auto License Tags for Graduate Students

Full-time students who are not Oklahoma residents do not need an Oklahoma driver license or vehicle tag (license plate). If, however, a student is driving a vehicle that is owned by the student's partner or spouse, who is employed in Oklahoma and thus an Oklahoma resident, then the vehicle will require an Oklahoma tag. Both Oklahoma driver license and vehicle tags are now provided by [Service Oklahoma](http://ServiceOklahoma.com) (via licensed operators—formerly called tag agencies); their email is info@service.ok.gov and their phone number is (405) 522-7000.

L. Parking Permits

Graduate students may purchase Commuter parking permits and may park in designated commuter lots. A limited number of faculty/staff permits are available each semester and will be issued to Graduate Teaching Assistants/Associates via a lottery each semester.

M. Travel

Graduate students traveling to conferences, workshops, special courses, or for research or other professional purposes may request departmental funding via the [Travel Funding Request form](#), at least 30 days before the event, and approved before travel. Such travel funding is provided up to once per year, if the event would contribute substantially to the student's professional development. For travel to conferences, the student is expected to present their research.

[International travel](#) needs to be [pre-registered](#) (at least 30 days in advance)

N. Check-Out

When graduate students finish programs or enrollment with the Department, they must fill out the [Check Out](#) form, which covers all keys and Department property that might be in their possession. The form must be properly completed and returned to the Department office before the end of the semester. Bursar charges for missing keys or stockroom items must be paid before transcripts or diplomas can be issued.

O. Forms

**BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT
GRADUATE STUDENT ANNUAL EVALUATION**

Student Name: _____ Degree: M.S. _____ Ph.D. _____

Faculty Advisor: _____

This annual evaluation should incorporate the comments and opinions of all committee members received by the student at their annual committee meeting. This evaluation must be submitted to the Biology Advising Office **by the last day of classes in the spring semester**.

Date of annual committee meeting (or M.S. or Ph.D. oral exam) for the current academic year _____

Research Progress (Satisfactory) (Needs additional attention) (*Unsatisfactory) *Please indicate one*
Comments:

For M.S. students nearing their final year and Ph.D. students who have passed their General Exam:

Working thesis or dissertation title:

Chapter(s) and status:

* Should be reported as U for BIOL 5980/6980–Deficient areas must be specified and necessary corrective action must be outlined.

Coursework (Satisfactory) (Needs additional attention) (Unsatisfactory) *Please indicate one*
Comments:

Professional Development (Satisfactory) (Needs additional attention) (Unsatisfactory) (Not applicable) *Please indicate one*
Comments:

Milestones

Plan/timeline for addressing marginal or unsatisfactory performance
Attach additional sheet if more space is needed.

Signatures

Faculty Advisor _____

Student _____

Date _____

GRAD STUDENT CHECKLIST–Master’s Program

- () 1. Full Graduate Standing _____
- () 2. Teaching Assistant Training _____
- () 3. Responsible Conduct of Research online training _____
- () 4. Declare Faculty Advisor _____ Date _____
- () 5. Advisory Committee membership _____
- () 6. Advisory Conference _____
 - () a. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) (if applicable) _____
 - () b. Plan of Study _____
 - () c. Research Plan _____
- () 7. Annual Review of Progress () 1st Year () 2nd Year () 3rd Year
- () 8. Program of Study & Master’s Thesis Topic and Committee Membership forms _____
- () 9. Application for Graduation Form (semester before graduation) _____
- () 10. Degree Check with Graduate College (by end of 2nd week of semester of defense)
- () 11. Thesis reading copy to Committee (\geq two weeks before they need to sign the Request for Authority form to indicate the thesis is ready to defend; \geq three weeks before defense) _____
- () 12. Provide Graduate Liaison with information for defense announcement (two weeks before defense).
- () 13. Submit Request for Authority for Defense form (\geq two weeks before defense)
- () 14. Committee members sign form to indicate whether thesis is ready to defend (one week before defense) _____
- () 15. Final Oral Examination (open to the public) _____
- () 16. Report of Examination and Thesis to Graduate College. _____
- () 17. Deposit thesis in SHAREOK after any required revisions.
- () 18. Department Check-out form _____

GRAD STUDENT CHECKLIST–Doctoral Program

- () 1. Full Graduate Standing _____
- () 2. Teaching Assistant Training _____
- () 3. Responsible Conduct of Research online training _____
- () 4. Declare Faculty Advisor _____ Date _____
- () 5. Advisory Committee membership _____
- () 6. Advisory Conference _____
 - () a. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) (if applicable) _____
 - () b. Draft of Advisory Conference Report (Student) and Faculty Advisor _____
 - () c. Research Plan _____ (Student & Faculty Advisor)
 - () d. Proposed Reading List (Student & Committee) _____
 - () e. Academic Record Summary (Graduate Liaison) _____
- () 7. Advisory Conference Report submitted and approved
- () 8. Annual Review of Progress () 1st Year () 2nd Year () 3rd Year () 4th Year () 5th Year
- () 9. Authorization for General Exams _____
- () 10. General Exams (Written & Oral) _____
- () 11. Teaching Assistantship (2 semesters required)
- () 12. EEB and CBN students: present twice at Ecomunch or Neuromunch, respectively. _____
- () 13. Application for Graduation Form (semester before graduation) _____
- () 14. Degree Check with Graduate College (by end of 2nd week of semester of defense) _____
- () 15. Dissertation reading copy to review by Committee (\geq three weeks before they need to sign the Request for Authority form to indicate the dissertation is ready to defend; four weeks before defense) _____
- () 16. Provide Graduate Liaison with information for defense announcement (two weeks before defense).
- () 17. Submit Request for Authority for Defense form (\geq two weeks before defense) _____
- () 18. Committee members sign form to indicate whether dissertation is ready to defend (one week before defense) _____
- () 19. Final Oral Examination (open to the public) _____
- () 20. Report of Examination and Dissertation to Graduate College _____
- () 21. Deposit thesis in SHAREOK after any required revisions. _
- () 22. Departmental Check-out form _____

CHECK-OUT FORM

To be used when permanently leaving the Department of Biology

As stated in the Graduate Student Handbook, you are required to have this check-sheet initialed or signed by the appropriate individuals to assure the Department that you have returned all keys and Department property that you might have in your possession. When you have completed this sheet, bring it to the Biology Office. It will be the final item added to your file. Your bursar account may be billed for missing keys or stockroom items, and you will need to pay such charges before you can receive transcripts or your diploma.

Student Name _____

Student ID Number _____

All stockroom supplies and equipment signed out in my name have been returned.

Stockroom Supervisor

All keys checked out in my name have been returned to the Biology Department office, Richards Hall, Room 314

Assistant to the Chair

Office and/or lab space has been cleaned and cleared of all personal property.

Department Office Staff

I have left my forwarding address with the Biology Department office.

Department Office Staff

Forwarding Address:

E-Mail Address

Date _____

III. MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.S.) PROGRAM

A. Credit Requirements

1. The Master's degree requires the equivalent of not fewer than 2 semesters of satisfactory graduate work. The student must complete 30 credit hours of graduate courses beyond the undergraduate degree. No more than half of the coursework, excluding research for the thesis, may be S/U-graded. **No more than 6 credit hours of Research for Master's Thesis (BIOL 5980) may be included in the total. The tuition waiver will cover only 30 credit hours unless additional credit hours are granted by a successful petition from the Graduate Liaison and Faculty Advisor to the Graduate College.**
2. A student may apply no more than a total of 12 credit hours of G3000- and/or G4000-level courses toward a 30-36 credit-hour Master's degree. A maximum of three-fourths of the credit hours of G4000-level courses *permitted by this Graduate College regulation* may be from the department offering the degree (e.g., 9 credit hours of a 30-36 hour degree). No G3000-level courses from the department offering the degree may apply toward any of its graduate degrees. No more than 12 credit hours of Independent Study (BIOL 5990) may be applied to the degree.

B. Residence Credit

All residence credit (i.e., courses taken at the University of Oklahoma prior to admission to a University of Oklahoma graduate program) required for a Master's degree must have been taught by [members of the University of Oklahoma Graduate Faculty](#).

C. Time Limits for Completion of Master's Degree

The [Graduate College expects](#) a Master's degree to be completed within 5 calendar years of initial enrollment in graduate coursework at OU. Conditions for extensions of this limit are stated in the [Graduate College Bulletin](#).

D. Faculty Advisor and Advisory Committee

1. No later than the end of the second Fall or Spring semester after entering the graduate program, the student will seek the approval of a member of the Biology Department faculty who is a current member of [the Graduate Faculty](#) to become their Faculty Advisor. Earlier choice of the Faculty Advisor is encouraged. The Faculty Advisor will be the advisor, thesis director, and chair of the Examination Committee.
2. When the advisement of a student is transferred from the Graduate Liaison to a Faculty Advisor (documented on the [Declaration of Faculty Advisor](#) form), an M.S. Advisory Committee will be selected. Membership of the committee will be determined by the Faculty Advisor and the student in consultation with the Graduate Liaison. It shall consist of the Faculty Advisor as Chair and at least two other [members of the graduate faculty](#) representing the student's field of specialization and/or supporting field(s) (see below). This committee will normally become the thesis defense committee.

3. An Advisory Committee meeting will be conducted by the end of the second semester (the Department recommends by April 1) to review the research plan and discuss course work, which is a prerequisite to filling out the [Program of Study](#) form (see Section [III.F.](#)) Where research involves studies on vertebrates, a proposal for review by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) should be prepared as a component of the research plan (see <https://www.ou.edu/acup> for instructions on submitting a protocol) or the student should be added to the Faculty Advisor's IACUC protocol. Where research involves recombinant DNA, a proposal for review by the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) should be prepared as a component of the research plan (see <https://compliance.ouhsc.edu/IBC/Policies/Norman> for instructions on submitting a protocol).

Students admitted conditionally will have a Committee meeting before course work deficiencies are removed; progress toward removal of conditional status will be reviewed. The meeting will be conducted no later than the end of the second semester of enrollment. A report of this meeting will be provided to the Graduate Liaison; the report will include the items outlined above, including the discussion of conditional status, if applicable.

E. Field of Specialization and Supporting Field(s)

1. The student, in consultation with the Faculty Advisor, will determine an area, termed the Field of Specialization, that is of prime interest to the student and in which the student wishes to attain a high degree of expertise. The Faculty Advisor and perhaps one member of the Advisory Committee will represent this field.
2. At least one Supporting Field will be specified by the student and Faculty Advisor, and at least one member of the Advisory Committee will represent this field. A supporting field is one that relates to and supplements the field of specialization, such as biochemistry supporting physiology, or microbiology supporting genetics. The supporting field may or may not be within the immediate realm of biology (e.g., statistics, geology, etc.).

F. Admission to Candidacy & Thesis Topic and Committee Forms

Before completing 20 credit hours and by approximately the middle of the penultimate semester (see the [Graduate College Bulletin](#) for details), the student must file the [Program of Study](#) and [Master's Thesis Topic and Committee Membership](#) forms [with the Graduate College](#). The department prefers that students submit the forms by the end of the second semester of study. Please list on the *Program of Study* form only those courses needed to complete the M.S. If additional courses are listed, they will be considered as part of the degree program. All members of the student's thesis committee and the Graduate Liaison must sign the *Master's Thesis Topic and Committee Membership* form (the members of the Committee must be [members of the Graduate Faculty](#); see Section [IV.F.](#)).

If any change (addition/deletion) in coursework is needed at any time before graduation, the student must submit an updated *Program of Study* form to the Graduate College, which will be signed by the Graduate Liaison. Failure to make the appropriate addition/deletion may delay graduation.

If any change in the membership of the Thesis Committee becomes necessary, a *Request for Change in Committee* form must be filled out [on the Graduate College website](#), a new graduation application must be filed, and [a minimum waiting period of 14 calendar days](#) is required before the defense can be held; all members of the new Committee and all members of the previous Committee must sign the new form. A member who is removed from the Committee must sign the new form, indicating that they are willing to be deleted from the Committee. If the member is no longer an employee of the University of Oklahoma, their signature is not required. Minor changes in the thesis title can be made after the *Thesis Topic and Committee Membership* form is submitted.

G. Special Requirements for Enrolling in Research for Master's Thesis

The initial enrollment in BIOL 5980 (Research for the Master's Thesis) must be for at least 2 credit hours. Thereafter, each graduate student must maintain continuous enrollment during each Fall or Spring semester (not including Summer sessions) in at least 2 credit hours of BIOL 5980 until the requirements for the degree are completed or the degree candidacy is discontinued.

1. The continuous enrollment regulation will be waived for a student who is enrolled in at least 9 graduate credit hours per Fall or Spring semester and who is not working on the thesis during the semester. However, if thesis work is being done during a Fall or Spring semester or Summer session a student must enroll in BIOL 5980 regardless of the number of other enrolled credit hours. Other exceptions to the continuous enrollment regulation will be considered on an individual basis by petition to the Dean of the Graduate College.
2. The number of thesis credit hours for each enrollment will be determined by the Faculty Advisor “[on the basis of the amount of faculty and university services required by the student](#),” but each enrollment will not be fewer than 2 hours. Such enrollments must be completed during the regular enrollment period.
3. In the event that the graduate student does not comply with the above provision, the enrollment for the semester in which graduation is expected must include the exact number of hours of BIOL 5980 that would have been completed with continuous enrollment. In addition, a late enrollment fee must be paid for each of these semesters. The final determination of the number of hours of BIOL 5980 in which the student must enroll in the final semester of the degree program, along with the collection of the appropriate fees, is the responsibility of the Graduate College and Office of Admissions and Records.
4. When a student is in the final semester, they may enroll in only 2 credit hours (see Section [II.G.1](#)). Non-international students who have received financial aid loans for the degree should be aware that the repayment clock for loans may start the semester they are no longer considered full-time students (fewer than 5 hours enrollment).

H. Application for Graduation Form

The student should [Apply to Graduate](#) the semester before the intended semester of graduation. No later than the second week of the semester in which the student intends to defend the thesis, the student must complete the online [Request for Degree Check](#) form. The Registrar must be informed of the student's name exactly as it is to appear on the diploma and the exact degree for which the student was admitted to candidacy.

I. Thesis

Completion of the thesis provides evidence of the student's ability to develop and conduct an original investigation. The content and structure of the thesis is decided by the student's Faculty Advisor and Advisory Committee. The [Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet](#) from the Graduate College specifies formatting requirements for the thesis.

The Master's candidate should prepare and distribute a reading copy of the thesis to each Thesis Committee member. The reading copy will be reviewed by the Faculty Advisor and revised by the student as necessary before submitting to other Committee members. The reading copy should comply with Graduate College formatting requirements.

Deadlines to request authority to defend the thesis are indicated in the [Academic Calendar](#) for each semester or Summer session. The thesis reading copy must be submitted to the Committee at least three weeks before the scheduled defense and the [Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend](#) form at least two weeks before the defense. Committee members must sign the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form to indicate that the thesis is ready to defend at least 1 week before the defense. The Graduate Liaison will not sign this form until they have confirmation from the majority of Committee members that they have approved the reading copy as ready to defend.

The Graduate Liaison will prepare announcement flyers and notify the department of the defense; the student should provide information for this announcement to the Graduate Liaison at least two weeks before the defense, including title, abstract, date, time, and location.

J. Final Oral Examination

1. This examination covers the defense of the thesis and its broader context. It is administered by the Thesis Committee and may be held only when classes are in session, as indicated on the [Academic Calendar](#). The student presentation is open to the public.
2. The Thesis Committee will report its decision to the Graduate College on the *Authority Report Form for the Thesis Defense* within 72 hours after the examination. The Graduate Liaison should be notified of the results of the examination via a copy of the *Authority Report Form for the Thesis Defense*. A unanimous vote at the defense of the thesis is expected; however, [some dissenting reports are received](#). If one member dissents, the dissent is recognized as a minority report. If the committee consists of more than three members and two dissent, the Graduate Dean investigates and their decision will be final. If more than two members vote that the defense was unsatisfactory, the student has failed the defense. Only one attempt is afforded the candidate in defending the thesis.

K. Thesis Deposition

The final document must be digitally submitted to the SHAREOK Repository at <https://shareok.org/> according to the deadlines and policies explained in the [Graduate College Bulletin](#). The Department has standing embargo agreements with the Graduate College (2 years for a thesis) to allow students time to publish their work in journals that do not allow pre-publication. If the student wishes to have such an embargo, they must check the

appropriate box on the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form.

IV. DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D.) PROGRAM

A. Credit Requirements

The proportion of work toward the Ph.D. degree devoted to research for the dissertation (BIOL 6980) or to coursework will be determined by the Advisory Conference (see Section [IV.F.](#)).

1. A minimum of 90 graduate credit hours beyond the baccalaureate degree is required. **The tuition waiver will cover only 90 credit hours unless additional credit hours are granted by a successful petition from the Graduate Liaison and Faculty Advisor to the Graduate College.**
2. Of the 90 credit hours:
 - a. for the Biology Ph.D. program, ≥ 30 credit hours from classroom courses are required, **plus** graduate statistics (see Section [I.D.](#)), i.e., 33 credit hours total.
 - b. for the Cellular & Behavioral Neurobiology: Biology Ph.D. program (CBN), ≥ 30 credit hours of classroom courses are required, **plus** graduate statistics (see Section [I.D.](#)), Neurobiology (BIOL 5833), Current Topics in Neurobiology (BIOL 5871), and 2-3 lab rotations for Independent Study credit (2-3 credit hours each, ≥ 6 total), i.e., ≥ 43 credit hours total. At least 30 of these credit hours must be at the 5000- or 6000-level. Also, students must present twice in Current Topics in Neurobiology (once can be without enrolling).
 - c. for the Ecology & Evolutionary Biology: Biology Ph.D. program (EEB), there is no specification of minimum classroom coursework credit hours, but students must complete a graduate statistics course (see Section [I.D.](#)) and Advanced Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (BIOL 5453) and **twice** complete Seminar in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (BIOL 5471), also delivering a presentation in the latter venue **twice**.
 - d. a minimum of 30 credit hours must be BIOL 6980 (for all three Ph.D. programs).
 - e. no more than half of the coursework for a doctoral degree, excluding research for the dissertation, may be S/U-graded coursework.
3. Up to 44 credit hours of acceptable graduate work taken as a Master's student may be applied to the Ph.D. No more than 6 credit hours may be thesis research. At least half of the non-thesis credit hours must be letter-graded.

Graduate courses taken at the University of Oklahoma more than 5 years before admission or readmission to a doctoral program cannot be applied toward the doctoral degree unless the courses are part of a completed Master's degree, all of which is to be used toward satisfying the doctoral requirements. In special cases, graduate courses more than 5 years

old may be used if approved by the student's Advisory Committee, the Graduate Liaison, and the Graduate Dean.

4. A student may apply up to 16 credit hours of G3000- and/or G4000-level courses toward the 90 hours required for a doctoral degree. A maximum of 12 credit hours of the G4000-level courses may be from the department offering the degree; no G3000-level courses from the department offering the degree may apply toward the degree.
5. No more than 12 credit hours of Independent Study (BIOL 5990) may be applied to the degree.
6. Students who wish to switch among the three Ph.D. programs within the Department of Biology (Biology, CBN, and EEB) should [“Apply” for graduate admission online](#) and select *Add or Change Program.*

B. [Residency](#)

The student must be in residence at the University of Oklahoma for at least two consecutive 16-week semesters during the pursuit of the doctoral degree while enrolled and engaged in coursework or research activities as prescribed by the major academic unit.

C. Time Limit for Completion of Doctoral Degree

1. Ph.D. students are expected to take their General Examination no later than their fifth (5th) Fall or Spring semester in the program (see Section [IV.H](#)).
2. The [Graduate College expects](#) Ph.D. students to pass their General Examination within 5 calendar years of first enrollment in the program (4 calendar years if they already have a Master's degree). The [Graduate College also expects](#) Ph.D. students to complete their program within 5 calendar years of passing their General Examination.
3. Procedures for obtaining time extensions are given in the [Graduate College Bulletin](#).

D. Required Teaching Experience

The Department requires that all Ph.D. students serve as Graduate Teaching Assistants for at least 2 semesters while enrolled.

E. Selection of Faculty Advisor

Ph.D. students are required to select a Faculty Advisor(s), form an Advisory Committee, and meet with that committee no later than the end of the second Fall or Spring semester after entering the graduate program (see Section [IV.F](#)). Selection of the Faculty Advisor is initially indicated through the [Declaration of Faculty Advisor](#) departmental form. The Department recommends that annual committee meetings occur before April 1 (see Section [II.H.4](#)). Subsequent advising will be done by the Faculty Advisor who will be formally appointed at the Advisory Conference (which is typically the first meeting of the Advisory Committee).

F. Advisory Committee

The membership of the Advisory Committee will be determined by the Graduate Liaison in consultation with the student and Faculty Advisor. The Advisory Committee will consist of at least 4 members of the [University of Oklahoma graduate faculty](#) representing the field of specialization and supporting fields. For students in EEB or CBN, it is recommended (but not required) that there be 5 committee members, because a majority of committee members must be in Biology *and* a majority must be in the EEB or CBN Ph.D. program, respectively. One committee member must serve as the Graduate College Representative; this committee member must be a current (not retired) University of Oklahoma-Norman faculty member, holding an [M2, M3, RM3, or RM4 appointment](#), not in the College of Law, and *not* within the student's Ph.D. program. An Advisory Committee may, with approval of the Graduate Dean, include a special member (SM appointment) of the graduate faculty (e.g., adjunct faculty or faculty member from another institution who represents the field of specialization or a supporting field); note that the SM does *not* count toward the departmental majority. The Faculty Advisor will be Chair of the Advisory Committee.

Descriptions of graduate faculty status:

(Pre-2019 designations:)

SM: May perform the duties specified, except Graduate College Representative

M0: May teach graduate-level courses

M1: All M0 privileges and may serve on or chair Master's Committees

M2: All M1 privileges and may serve on Doctoral Committees

M3: All M2 privileges and may chair Doctoral Committees

(Post-2019 designations:)

SM: May perform the duties specified, except Graduate College Representative

RM0: May teach graduate-level courses

RM1: All RM0 privileges and may serve on Master's committees

RM2: All RM1 privileges and may chair non-thesis Master's committees

RM3: All RM2 privileges and may chair Master's committees and serve on doctoral committees

RM4: All RM3 privileges and may chair doctoral committees

G. Advisory Conference

The Advisory Conference will function as follows:

1. The student will consult with the Faculty Advisor and arrange a time for an Advisory Conference that is agreeable to all Advisory Committee members **and** the Graduate Liaison. A summary of the student's academic record should be prepared by the Graduate Liaison for each Committee member prior to the meeting.
2. The Graduate Student will notify all Committee members and the Graduate Liaison of the time and place of the meeting and at the same time provide each with a draft of the [Advisory Conference Report](#).
3. The Advisory Conference will decide the student's status:

- a. Prospective Candidate: The student will have fulfilled all requirements for Full Graduate Standing and have a reasonable expectation of success in a doctoral program. In this case, the Conference will plan the minimal program necessary to fulfill degree requirements.
- b. Conditional Candidate: The student has not met the requirements for Full Graduate Standing or the Committee may wish to reserve judgment for any other reason. The reservations should be explained in the Advisory Conference Report and conditions specified for achieving Prospective Candidacy. The Conference may or may not proceed to plan a provisional program.
- c. Candidacy Denied. The Committee may make this decision if it is apparent that the student could not succeed in a doctoral program. A report of this action should be prepared and submitted as the Advisory Conference Report.

4. During the Advisory Conference:

- a. the Graduate Liaison will present a report of the student's compliance with the Graduate College and departmental requirements for Full Graduate Standing, including the student's academic record and results of previous degree programs.
- b. the Committee will specify Research Skills (if required) courses and any other necessary preparations.
- c. the Committee may make recommendations of additional coursework and other preparation that would be desirable.
- d. the student and Committee will determine and designate at least one Specialty Field and *two* Supporting Fields in which the student will be examined during the General Examination and will specify requirements or recommendations for preparation in these fields. See Section [III.E](#) for definition of Specialty and Supporting Fields.
- e. the Committee will begin discussing the nature and extent of the General Examination.

[Note: The General Examination should be discussed in more detail during the second-year annual committee meeting or prior to scheduling the General Examination during the second year.]

- 5. Following the Advisory Conference, the student and Faculty Advisor will revise the [Advisory Conference Report](#), which officially creates the Advisory Committee, in accordance with the Committee's decisions during the Conference. After submission to the Graduate College, the document must be signed by all members of the Advisory Committee and the Graduate Liaison.
- 6. Change of Field of Specialization

If the student decides to change the field of specialization, the Graduate Liaison must be notified, and another Advisory Conference will be held.

7. Change in Membership of Advisory Committee

If a doctoral student decides it is appropriate to change the composition of the Advisory Committee, the student will seek counsel from the Graduate Liaison and the Faculty Advisor. If it is determined that a committee change is appropriate, the student must use the ([Request for Change in Committee](#) form). The Graduate Liaison may request a meeting with the student and the Faculty Advisor and they may seek advice from the Department Graduate Studies Committee. Changes to doctoral committee membership require the signatures of the current Committee members, the proposed Committee members, the Graduate Liaison, and the student. Signatures are not required of departing members who are no longer associated with the University of Oklahoma. No change in membership is permitted within 30 days of the General Examination or the dissertation defense.

8. The Graduate Dean normally appoints the members of the Advisory Committee to conduct the General Examination, read the dissertation, and conduct the Final Oral Examination.
9. The Faculty Advisor will direct the dissertation research and will advise the student at each enrollment consistent with the requirements set forth in the *Advisory Conference Report*. The Faculty Advisor will also inform other members of the Advisory Committee of the student's research and progress.
10. It is the responsibility of the Advisory Committee to determine that the requirements set forth in the *Advisory Conference Report* have been fulfilled. If the Committee decides that a change is necessary (e.g., in courses), then a new [Advisory Conference Report](#) must be submitted to the Graduate College and signed by the Committee members.
11. The Advisory Committee will conduct the annual review of progress (see Section [II.H](#)).

H. General Examination

The General Examination consists of both a written and an oral portion. It should be taken as early as possible in the doctoral program but not later than the fifth Fall or Spring semester after entering the doctoral program so that a substantial amount of time can be devoted solely to research and writing of the dissertation. Normally, the degree will not be conferred in less than 12 months after completion of the General Examination.

1. To take the General Examination, the student must:
 - a. have substantially fulfilled the course requirements specified in the *Advisory Conference Report* and have maintained at least a 3.0 grade point average in all graduate courses undertaken.
 - b. apply for authority to take the examination within the first two weeks of the semester in which the exam will be administered, using the [General Exam Application for the Doctoral Degree](#) form. The student, Faculty Advisor, and Graduate Liaison must sign the application.

- c. receive approval of the application from the Graduate College, in the form of the *Authority Report Form for the General Examination*. The Graduate College Dean formally appoints a General Examination Committee (usually the same as the Advisory Committee) to conduct the examination. The examination cannot begin without the dean's approval.

Note that the General Examination must be completed within the semester authorization is given.

2. Format of the General Examination

The General Examination will be prepared and administered by the General Examination Committee (usually the same as the Advisory Committee). In accordance with Graduate College requirements, the Examination is comprised of Written and Oral portions.

a. Written Portion

The written portion of the Examination consists of questions from General Examination Committee members that cover the student's field of specialization and supporting fields. The Committee should provide the student with a Reading List for the General Examination at least three months before the written portion of the examination. The Department recommends that the student communicate with Committee members at this time to find out the expected General Exam question(s) format and length of answer(s).

Committee members submit their questions to the student's Faculty Advisor prior to the examination. The Faculty Advisor will check for duplication. The exact format of the questions(s) is at the discretion of the individual Committee member, but should be communicated clearly to the student. The Department recommends allowing 6-12 hours for each Committee member's question(s). The Graduate College Representative is not required to submit written questions, but the Department of Biology encourages them to do so if they wish.

The entire Committee will receive copies of the student's answers to all the questions. Each Committee member contributing questions for the written portion of the examination will grade the student's answers to their questions as "pass," "marginal," or "fail." The Committee will then discuss the results of the written portion. If the Written portion of the examination is judged to have been satisfactorily completed, the student may proceed to the oral portion of the examination. If a student's performance is marginal, but not failing, and the Committee wishes the student to do further reading, coursework, etc., by a certain date, the results of the examination can be held in abeyance with the written approval of the Graduate Dean. If the student is judged to have failed the written portion of the examination, the student may apply to repeat the examination in a subsequent semester.

b. Oral Portion

The Department recommends that the oral portion of the examination be held at least two weeks after completion of the written portion. It should be conducted in the

presence of all Committee members. Generally, the oral portion of the General Examination is more free-ranging and covers broad aspects of the field of specialization and supporting areas. Within these broad constraints, individuals on the Committee may ask as many questions as necessary to thoroughly evaluate the student's performance.

A component of the oral portion of the examination must include defense of a dissertation research proposal. The Committee should specify when the dissertation research proposal should be submitted; the Department recommends that it be due at least three weeks before the written portion of the General Examination. The proposal should be developed in consultation with the student's Faculty Advisor and Advisory Committee and should reflect the scholarship of the student. The Department recommends that the proposal be a minimum of eight single-spaced pages in length, excluding references, with enough detail on planned dissertation chapters to allow the Committee to provide meaningful feedback to the student.

The written and/or oral components of the General Examination will also include the Reading List assignment set forth by the Advisory Committee.

3. Within 72 hours after the oral portion of the examination, the *Authority Report form for the General Examination* must be signed by all members of the Committee and submitted to the Graduate Dean. The report should indicate whether the student has passed or failed the examination.
 - a. If the student passes the examination, the Graduate Dean will admit the student to candidacy for the doctoral degree.
 - b. If all or any portion of the General Examination is failed, a report must be submitted to the Graduate Dean indicating a failure on the examination. The student, at the discretion of the Committee, may seek authority from the Graduate College to repeat those portions of the examination failed the first time. If a student fails any portion of the general examination on the second attempt, they will be terminated from the doctoral program. No portion of the examination may be taken a third time.
 - c. If a student's performance is marginal, but not failing, and the Committee wishes the student to do further reading, coursework, investigations, etc., by a certain date, the results of the examination can be held in abeyance with the written approval of the Graduate Dean. At the end of the time limit (usually no more than one semester) the Committee must file the report with the Graduate College.

I. Special Requirements for Enrolling in Doctoral Dissertation Research

The initial enrollment in BIOL 6980 (Doctoral Dissertation Research) must be for at least 2 credit hours. Thereafter, each Ph.D. student must maintain continuous enrollment during each Fall or Spring semester (not including Summer sessions) in at least 2 credit hours of BIOL 6980 until the requirements for the degree are completed or the degree candidacy is discontinued. It is recommended that students not begin enrolling in BIOL 6980 until the semester of the General Examination.

1. The continuous enrollment regulation will be waived for a student who is enrolled in at least 9 graduate credit hours per Fall or Spring semester and who is not working on the dissertation during the semester. However, if dissertation work is being done during a Fall or Spring semester or Summer session a student must enroll in BIOL 6980 regardless of the number of other credit hours of enrollment. Other exceptions to the continuous enrollment regulation will be considered on an individual basis by petition to the Dean of the Graduate College.
2. The number of dissertation credit hours for each enrollment will be determined by the Faculty Advisor “on the basis of the amount of faculty and university services required by the student during that enrollment” ([Graduate College Bulletin](#)), but each enrollment will not be fewer than 2 credit hours. Such enrollments must be completed during the regular enrollment period.
3. In the event that the graduate student does not comply with the above provision, the enrollment for the semester in which graduation is expected must include the exact number of credit hours of BIOL 6980 that would have been completed with continuous enrollment. In addition, a late enrollment fee must be paid for each of these semesters. The final determination of the number of credit hours of BIOL 6980 in which the student must enroll in the final semester of the degree program, along with the collection of the appropriate fees, is the responsibility of the Graduate College and Office of Admissions and Records. The maximum charge for noncompliance with the continuous enrollment requirement in BIOL 6980 is set at the cost of tuition for 24 6000-level credit hours at the time of graduation.
4. During a student's final semester, they may be eligible to enroll in fewer than five hours of coursework and still be considered full-time for the purpose of maintaining eligibility for a tuition waiver and FICA (Federal Insurance Contributions Act) tax exemption. See Section [II.G.](#) for details.

J. Application for Graduation Form

The student should [Apply to Graduate](#) the semester before the intended semester of graduation. No later than the second week of the semester in which the student intends to defend the dissertation, the student must complete the online [Request for Degree Check](#) form. The Registrar needs to be informed of the student's name exactly as it is to appear on the diploma and the degree for which the student was admitted to candidacy.

K. Dissertation

Completion of the dissertation provides evidence of the student's ability to develop and conduct an original investigation. The content and structure of the dissertation is decided by the student's Faculty Advisor and Advisory Committee. The [Thesis/Dissertation Instruction Packet](#) from the Graduate College specifies formatting requirements for the dissertation.

The doctoral candidate should provide a reading copy of the dissertation, following Graduate College formatting requirements, to the Faculty Advisor, who will ask for revisions as necessary. After the Faculty Advisor approves, the reading copy of the dissertation should be provided to each of the other members of the Advisory Committee.

Deadlines for the dissertation defense and each form are indicated on the [Academic Calendar](#) for each semester or summer session. The dissertation reading copy must be submitted to the Committee at least three weeks before the Committee needs to sign the [Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend](#) form to indicate that the dissertation is ready to defend (i.e., at least four weeks before the scheduled defense date). The student should then submit the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form to the Graduate College.

The members of the Committee must read and determine whether the dissertation demonstrates the student's ability to conduct original research and makes a significant contribution to the student's discipline. They may accept or reject it. If they reject it, the student will be given another opportunity to submit an acceptable dissertation to the Committee. If they accept it, they may require changes and corrections. Committee members must each indicate in writing whether or not the dissertation is ready to defend no later than one week before the scheduled defense. The Graduate Liaison will not sign the form until they have written confirmation from a majority of Committee members that they have approved the reading copy as ready to defend.

The Graduate Liaison will prepare announcement flyers and notify the Department of the defense; the student should provide information for this announcement to the Graduate Liaison at least two weeks before the defense, including title, abstract, date, time, and location.

L. Final Oral Examination

The Final Oral Examination, which covers a defense of the dissertation and its broader context, must be announced and open to the public. The defense must occur by the date specified on the [Academic Calendar](#). If any Committee member(s) must participate remotely, [Graduate College rules for remote participation](#) must be followed. The defense should be announced at least two weeks in advance.

The defense begins with a presentation by the student summarizing the dissertation. The general public will then have an opportunity to ask questions. After these questions are finished, the examination will continue in private, with only the student and Committee members present. When the additional questions are finished, the Committee members will confer in private to reach the Committee's decision regarding the outcome of the examination.

1. At least four members of the Dissertation Committee (normally the Advisory Committee) including the Graduate College Representative must be present at the examination. All substitutions must be approved by the Graduate Dean, and only those substitutions judged absolutely necessary will be permitted. Any changes in the committee must be approved by the Graduate College at least 30 days prior to the final oral examination.
2. The Dissertation Committee will report its decision to the Graduate College on the *Authority Report Form for the Dissertation Defense* within 72 hours after the examination. The Graduate Liaison should be notified of the results of the examination via a copy of the *Authority Report Form for the Dissertation Defense*.

A unanimous vote of the defense of the dissertation is expected. However, any Committee member who judges the candidate's performance to be unsatisfactory should not sign the

form and should instead provide a memo to the Graduate College explaining their rationale. If one of four or five members dissents, the dissent is recognized as a minority report. If two of four or five members dissent, the Graduate Dean will investigate and make the final decision. If more than two members dissent, the performance is judged to be unsatisfactory. Only one attempt is afforded the candidate in defending the dissertation. If the defense is determined to be unsatisfactory, the decision is final and the defense cannot be repeated.

M. Conferral of an M.S. Degree on Full Ph.D. Candidates

Students who do not hold a Master's degree in the same field and have been unsuccessful in one of the Ph.D. programs may apply to the M.S. program, provided they meet all academic unit requirements and have approval of the [Department and the Graduate Dean](#). [Credit from the Ph.D. program may be applied to the M.S. program](#). Because the Department of Biology does not offer a non-thesis Option, conferral of a Master's degree on a Ph.D. candidate can be accomplished only by using the thesis option.

N. Dissertation Deposition

The final version of the dissertation must be digitally submitted to the SHAREOK Repository at <https://shareok.org/> according to [Graduate College deadlines and policies](#). The Biology Department has standing embargo agreements with the Graduate College (3 years for a dissertation) to allow students time to publish their work in journals that do not allow pre-publication. If the student wishes to have such an embargo, they must check the appropriate box on the *Report of Reading Copy Submission and Request for Authority to Defend* form.

V. DEPARTMENTAL FACILITIES

A. Equipment and Supplies

1. Stockroom (Richards Hall, Room 4)

All equipment and supplies used by graduate students are to be checked out by the Coordinator of Materials Control in the stockroom. Materials that are routinely stocked either in the stockroom or office may be checked out at those locations. Unusual requests for routinely stored materials and for materials unique to a research problem should be made to the Chair by the student's Faculty Advisor.

Use of other equipment, such as refrigerators, ovens, incubators, centrifuges, balances, spectrophotometers, etc., located in various laboratories is contingent upon approval of the faculty member in charge of the respective item.

2. Vehicles

Individuals wishing to use departmental vehicles must fill out a [Vehicle Usage Request form](#). This form must then be presented to the Department Chair for consideration at least 2 weeks prior to the date the vehicle is needed. Fill out the form completely, adding any comments required for explanation. Questions concerning this procedure may be directed to the Assistant to the Chair or the Coordinator of Materials Control. Vehicles may also be

available through the Oklahoma Biological Survey and the Sam Noble Museum for students who are associated with those units.

A person must be an employee of the State of Oklahoma or a student at the University of Oklahoma and possess a valid driver's license to be allowed to operate these vehicles. This is necessary for insurance purposes.

3. Camping Equipment

The Department has various types of camping equipment available for short-term check-out using the [Camping Equipment Request](#) form. Lists of equipment and forms requesting usage may be obtained from the stockroom. Requests need to be turned in to and approved by the Coordinator of Materials Control at least one (1) week prior to usage date to facilitate scheduling.

4. Office Supplies

Office supplies (located in the stockroom in Richards Hall) will be provided to graduate students for the execution of departmental business.

Closely allied to the subject of office supplies is the question of postage. Postage will be paid by the department when it is for departmental business (including letters of recommendation and job applications when you are completing your degree). All packages must be submitted to the Biology Office for approval before mailing.

Copying of materials for courses a graduate student is teaching will be done at no charge.

5. Instructional Media

Microscopes, illuminators, AV equipment, and AV programs may be checked out from the Department by contacting the Coordinator of Materials Control, depending on the item. After teaching needs are satisfied, microscopes will be checked out to individual students on a first come-first served basis for up to one semester (or for the summer). In most cases, check-out can be extended if teaching needs permit. Every effort will be made to provide adequate equipment, subject only to limitations of the departmental inventory. It is expected that reasonable care will be given to all equipment and adequate security will be provided by the user. All equipment checked out to students should remain in their assigned location so that they can be located for inventory, maintenance, etc. Loss, damage, repair needs, and location changes should be reported immediately to the department. All equipment is subject to recall if teaching needs so require or if equipment is being abused.

A variety of AV equipment and software is available for use by faculty, staff, and graduate students for both research and teaching. In most cases, equipment is immediately available, but advance notice to the Department is requested. Under no circumstances should equipment be removed from classrooms without express departmental approval. Such equipment has been assigned for specific use in these rooms and is not generally available. Prompt return of items is expected after use.

Departmental AV equipment may be used for presentations off-campus with the completion and approval of a [Temporary Equipment Use](#) form. The user assumes full responsibility for breakage, loss, etc. Equipment may also be assigned for extended periods of time (up to one semester). All equipment so allocated must be returned promptly when no longer needed.

All losses, breakdowns and malfunctions of equipment should be reported immediately to the Department.

6. Facilities Maintenance and Utility Shop

(Richards Hall, Rooms 1 & 13). Maintenance is available for routine minor repairs of mechanical equipment, carpentry, furniture, etc. The Utility Shop is under the direct supervision of the Maintenance Supervisor. All tools must be used in the shop. All power tools are available for faculty and graduate student use, but only under supervision and with the special permission of the Maintenance Supervisor.

B. Laboratory Animal Resources

Facilities are available in the Laboratory Animal Resources (LAR) building to all faculty and graduate students for housing and care of laboratory or research animals. The LAR Director is in full charge of the animal facility. Discuss your animal needs with them. All normal care of the laboratory animals will be performed by the animal facility personnel. Any special feeding, breeding, or ongoing research will be handled by the Faculty Advisor or graduate student. No animals, cages or equipment are to be removed from the facility unless previously authorized.

1. Project Approval—Any faculty member or graduate student requiring live animals or space for live animals for research is required to supply a written description of the space needed, types and numbers of animals (wild or lab supplied), caging, and duration of the research project. Those faculty members or graduate students requiring animals for class use are required to give advance notice in writing to the Coordinator of Materials Control (Stockroom) with the annual classroom supply request. All projects, research or teaching, involving the use of vertebrates must also be approved by the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee \(IACUC\)](#), using forms found on their website, and all personnel working with vertebrates need to complete training that they coordinate. Projects involving use of biohazards also require approval from the [Institutional Biosafety Committee \(IBC\)](#).
2. Animal Waste Disposal—Carcasses and tissue from live or preserved animals used in class or research in which no radioactive or infective agents are involved must be wrapped tightly in plastic bags and brought to the animal facility freezer to be held for incineration. Any projects involving infectious animals must be approved by [the IBC](#).
3. Policy on Venomous Animals Use and Housing—Housing and use of dangerous animals (e.g., venomous animals) must be cleared by the Department Chair, Committee A, and LAR in advance of any use and may require posting of special instructions and emergency procedures appropriate to the type of animals used.

C. Keys to Departmental Buildings

Every graduate student who is currently enrolled in the Department is entitled to a key to their office/laboratory, the entrance to the building in which the office is located, and an entrance/mailroom/ seminar room (304) key for Richards Hall. Students will receive keys for the rooms for their assigned teaching areas each semester. Keys may be obtained from the Department office after submitting a Key Request form with the appropriate signatures.

D. Bulletin Boards, Mailboxes, and Email

Bulletin boards are located at various places in Sutton Hall and Richards Hall, and they usually carry announcements of seminars, research opportunities, etc. Mailboxes are located on the third floor of Richards Hall. Students should check their box regularly for mail, messages, etc.

OU email is the official means of communication, so OU email inboxes should be checked daily during the week.

E. Library

Graduate students have certain privileges not enjoyed by undergraduates. Please see the University of Oklahoma Libraries website for current policies.

F. Aquatic Research Facility (South Campus)

This facility is available to departmental personnel. All requests for use of ponds or for greenhouse space must be made through the Faculty Advisor or the Chair of the Department. Regulations for use of the facility established by the Chair must be followed.