



PhD Student Checklist

1st Year

Selection of Major Professor

All students choose or are matched with a major professor and, with the assistance of their major professor, select additional faculty to serve on an advisory or doctoral committee (year 2).

Qualifying Exam

All students take a qualifying exam consisting of a brief written research plan developed with the assistance of their major professor or rotation supervisor and orally presented to and evaluated by a departmental committee appointed by the chair of either the ecology and evolution group or molecular, cellular and developmental biology group. Students engaged in the rotation option will base their qualifying exam proposal upon the results of their rotation and the research they may wish to pursue in the laboratory they intend to join.

2nd Year

Advisory Committee Selection/Appointment

A committee of five faculty members (one from outside the Biology Department) that mentors the student and approves all subsequent academic and research activities by the student.

Program of Study

All students develop a program of study or curriculum plan with the assistance of their major professor and their advisory committee. The program of study is approved by the student's major advisor and the graduate director. Ph.D. students must submit their program of study no later than the end of their second year. The Program of Study should broadly reflect the student's educational needs in the context of their training and research goals. 60 total credits are required (30 if one has a MS degree). The bulk will be research (BIOL 798) and 12 cr must be BIOL 899 (Dissertation Prep).

Admission To Candidacy

Ph.D. students are required to be “admitted to candidacy” by the Graduate School, which indicates they have completed the prerequisites established by the graduate school before proceeding with the development of their dissertation. The prerequisites are the Qualifying Exam and the Program of Study. Once completed the Candidacy is automatically approved by the Graduate School.

Towards the end of 2nd Year – no later than 1st semester of 3rd year

Research Proposal

A Ph.D. candidate must write, present, and defend a plan of his/her doctoral research to their Ph.D. advisory committee. The format of the research proposal is determined by the student’s committee. The chair of the student’s committee must inform the graduate coordinator that the research proposal has been approved and must also submit a biology graduate student assessment form assessing the student’s written and oral presentation of the proposal.

By the end of 3rd Year

Comprehensive Exam

A written, followed by an oral, comprehensive examination in a field of study relevant to the student’s interests. The format of the comprehensive exam is determined by the student’s doctoral committee; however the examination must include both a written document and an oral presentation/defense of that document. A common format is a written NIH or NSF-style research proposal dealing with a topic of interest. Alternative formats, such as the researching of specific questions provided by the committee, are also used. The chair of the student’s committee must submit a biology graduate student assessment form assessing the student’s written and oral presentation of the proposal.

4th-6th Year

Dissertation & Defense

During this period there should be major attempts to write and submit manuscripts for publication and attend at least one conference. Funds are available through the graduate school and the department to support attendance at meetings.

All students must write and orally present and defend a research-based dissertation; the dissertation is presented to the doctoral committee which determines whether or not the student has sufficient accomplishments to receive the appropriate degree. Ph.D. students must present their research to a general audience. The chair of the student’s committee must submit a biology graduate student assessment form assessing the student’s written and oral presentation of the proposal.

Provide an updated CV and future plans form to the Graduate Director

Complete Survey of Earned Doctorates