University of Nevada, Las Vegas
School of Life Sciences
Graduate Program Handbook

Prepared by the School of Life Sciences
Graduate Operations Committee
Revised: Spring 2021 (March 31st)

- Providing new or revised materials for the Graduate Catalog and SoLS Graduate Handbook,
- Instructing students on policies of the graduate programs,
- Periodically reviewing SoLS existing graduate programs and when needed preparing revisions, modifications, and/or new programs to SoLS for approval,

student will have to file the appropriate forms to alter the composition of the Research Advisory Committee. The GOC recommends that the student meet with the committee to discuss the timeline for this transition. GO will aid in this transition and will give guidance to the student and new research mentor as appropriate.

8. Research (Dissertation/Thesis) Advisory Committees & Structure

Committee. This
program of study. In addition, the committee must approve the thesis or dissertation and evaluate the comprehensive and/or final examination results.

During the course of the degree, the student must meet with the Research Advisory Committee at least once every calendar year (between January 1st and October 31st) to review progress and to organize a time and place for a committee meeting and to organize a time and place. Committee meetings are usually held in either the faculty lounge (WHI 101), WHI 111, or the various seminar and breakout rooms in SEB. Room bookings can be made through the appropriate offices in WHI 101 or SEB 2.

Students should consult with their interim advisors or mentors for suggestions about the faculty members most appropriate for their specific Research Advising ookings cae fins BT l(e)4(fortur)3(e)4(t)-3fty

8b. Ph.D. students: Dissertation Advisory Committee

The Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC) for Ph.D. students will be composed of five members with valid UNLV Graduate Faculty Status: the research mentor, two or three SoLS graduate faculty (at least two must be tenure-track faculty), a Graduate College (GC) Representative (see below), and optional External Advisory Committee Member (if only two SoLS grad faculty are designated). Having an External Member is optional, but if included they must be an expert in the field of study and they must have a primary affiliation outside UNLV (see below). To be a formal member of the DAC, the External Member must also apply for and be granted Graduate Faculty Status by the GC. In addition, if a student wishes to have two adjunct, affiliate, emeritus members, or FIR members on their committee, they must add those individuals as extra members wh

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to identify suitable committee members, and after consultation with their mentor, to approach them about serving on the committee.

FIR, adjunct, or affiliate faculty member of SoLS. With committee approval, this faculty member may direct th

this case, one of the faculty members with a primary, tenure-track appointment within SoLS must act as chair of

co-chairs who share advising responsibilities of Doctoral students, this is not an option for students receiving

of recommendation for the next stage in their career.

Frequently, new graduate students may not be familiar with qualified and appropriate External Advisory Committee Members. Consequently, at the first Advisory Committee Meeting the student should consult with their research mentor and committee members about suitable candidates.

Once a potential External Advisory Committee Member has been identified, either the student or, in

Advisory Committee. If an appropriate person agrees to serve in this capacity, an application for Graduate Faculty Status must be submitted to and accepted by SoLS and the Graduate College. Students should conta the current COS Grad Affairs Coordinator for this application and any assistance they may need with its

The External Advisory Committee member must agree to participate in the comprehensive exam (for cases where the DAC is the comprehensive examination committee) and dissertation defense. This participation can either be in person or via audio/vide conference. Beyond this minimal expectation, each DAC can decide the timing and level of involvement of an External Advisory Committee member for annual evaluations. Typically, the outside member also participates in annual committee meetings often by video or teleconference, or the student may speak with th by phone or e-mail after the meeting. All External Advisory Members are asked to acknowledge the final annual committee report by signing it electronically or sending an e-mail acknowledgment that can be attached to the committee report that is filed with GOC. SoLS does not finance travel for the External Advisory Committee member to participate in the activities of the student.

10. Program of Study and First Advisory Committee Meeting

The first Advisory Committee meeting (held before October 31st of the first semester program) is for the purpose of identifying and outlining a project and determining the appropriate coursework. A major goal of this meeting is for the student to share their previous academic training and research interests with their committee, so that recommendations about appropriate course work and the official program of study can be discussed with the student early in their graduate career. This meeting is particularly important for post-Ph.D. students, who must meet the course requirements of their subprogram with a combination of selected courses from their SM program, and new courses taken at UNLV.

The program of study, which outlines the courses the student will complete for their degree, should

receiving financial support from SoLS in the form of a Graduate Assistantship (GA), Research Assistantship (RA), or outside fellowship. M.S. students are expected to be full-time students; however, in rare cases, a student may be enrolled in a SoLS M.S. program on a part-time basis. If no financial support is provided, students working on their thesis/dissertation must still register for at least 3 credits in their graduating semester.

Unless approved for a leave of absence, students must enroll in and complete a minimum of six graduate credits in a rolling three-semester period. So, students must register for a minimum of three thesis/dissertation or non-thesis/dissertation in their graduating semester and meet the requirement of completing a total of at least six graduate credits that span the current semester plus the two prior semesters (including summers). Students must adhere to this policy until their thesis is completed and given final approval.

BIOL 701 Ethics in Scientific Research (1-2 credits) is required for all students. Biol 701 also satisfies or all federally funded research.

BIOL 702 Biology Graduate Core (3 credits) is optional for all M.S. students. The course is designed to provide information and foster skills needed for success in graduate school. It is best taken during the first year of the program. B

Life Sciences Graduate Student Resources. The student and committee chair should follow the instructions on the form carefully and fill out those sections specified prior to the meeting. The chair and the committee should

adequate or not. This information can be recorded during or after the meeting. If a committee member is absent at the time of the meeting (including an external member if applicable), the meeting may proceed but the student must meet separately with this member to review the report and obtain their signature before it can be submitted. In the case where an outside member is not present, the student may obtain the signature by faxing e-mailing the signature page.

For Ph.D. students in some subplans (EEB, IP), the comprehensive exam committee is the same as the rcumstances, the meeting held that year to examine the student may count as an

form is also completed, signed, and filed with the GOC.

All committee members must sign the completed form before it can be submitted to indicate their agreement with the information discussed and to concur with the progress status of the student. Students sho sign the form last and submit it by October 31. If the GOC does not receive a completed and signed form by October 31, the student will be recommended for academic probation.

responsibility to submit it to the GOC. A scanned PDF file of the form is e-mailed to the SoLS Administrative

copy for their files.

nd is not filed with the Graduate College. It is used by the GOC to determine whether students are making satisfactory progress tow their degrees. Failure to submit this form before the annual evaluation period will be considered as evidence unsatisfactory progress and will be used as grounds for probation and/or separation from the SoLS Graduate Program (see below).

the cumulative GOC file for each student on or after October 31st each year.

13. Criteria Leading to Academic Probation and/or Separation

It is expected that students will progress satisfactorily throughout their academic life within the School of Life Sciences. Students that are not making satisfactory progress towards their degree, or within their academic program will, however, be recommended to the Graduate College to be placed on academic proba Situations leading to academic probation may include, but are not limited to:

1. No current affiliation with a research (thesis/dissertation) mentor.
2. Advisory Committee during the annual evaluation period (Jan. 1 through Oct. 31).
3. aluation at an annual Advisory Committee Meeting.
4. Failure to present at colloquium on the assigned date, or failure to attend the appropriate number of colloquium meetings without a release from the Graduate Operations Committee

7. Failure of Ph.D. students to take the comprehensive exam by the first day of the 6th semester in their graduate program.
8. Failure of the Ph.D. comprehensive exam for the first time.
9. [illegible] prehensive exam within the period stipulated (1 year) by the examination committee.
10. Failure to enroll in at least six credits (for full-time students) within one calendar year (three credits each semester). Failure to re-enroll in coursework after a leave of absence has expired.

Students switching research mentors must also maintain the same timeline as full-time students. For example, changing mentors at the end of the second year does not reset the requirement for the comprehensive exam by the beginning of the sixth semester from the time the student matriculated.

When necessary, a student may take a Leave of Absence (LOA) from a degree program. Students should consult with the current COS Graduate Affairs Coordinator for the application process. [illegible] to file an [illegible] During the leave of absence, the student should remain in contact with the department about their return plans. If a student does not return by the end of an approved LOA, they must apply for an additional LOA using the form above or they will be separated from their graduate program. One year is the standard leave period. Please see the Graduate Catalog for LOA policies.

Military leave is the exception, orders must be attached to the form at the time of submission. Details can be found in the Graduate Catalog.

13a. Student probations

There are two types of probation; Student Conduct Probation and Student Academic Probation. A Conduct Probation is assessed and administered at the University level by the Office of Student Conduct. An Academic Probation is assessed and administered by the GOC of the School of Life Sciences, who makes a recommendation to the Graduate College.

13b. Process of academic probation

A student will be recommended for academic probation by the GOC as soon as it receives notification that one of the 11 offenses listed above has occurred. In other circumstances where probation is recommended [illegible] a special session to discuss the circumstances of the recommendation. A majority vote, the GOC determines that a student

15c. Written component

The exam committee will implement the written exam by following one of the models outlined below.

1. Committee members provide questions that require library research and synthesis of ideas. The student has from one to four weeks (determined in advance) to complete the questions. The written answers may be framed as short research proposals.
2. Committee members provide questions that require limited library research and synthesis of ideas. The student has one or two days to answer each of the questions, which may total approximately one week. The questions may be handed out one at a time with a designated time period for answering each. Committee members provide questions that require library research. This closed book exam may be conducted over several days.
3. The committee (with or without student input) provides a topic for a grant proposal that requires library research. For CMB, the background for the grant proposal comes from a journal article selected by the committee. For EEB and IP, a grant proposal topic proposed by the student is approved by the committee. The student typically has four weeks to write the grant proposal. The proposal is to be submitted to the committee for review several days prior to the oral exam.

15d. Oral component

Oral exams occur within 4 weeks following the submission of the written component, even in cases where the work submitted for the written portion is poorly done. The oral exam is scheduled prior to the onset of the comprehensive examination, either by the student or the Examination Committee Chair (as stated in 15c & b). Depending on the format, the student may be asked ahead of time to prepare a presentation on the related to the written part of the exam. The protocol described below must be followed during the oral exam.

1. After the examining committee is convened by the Chair, the student is asked to leave the room while the written questions and/or the order of questioning. If any member was dissatisfied with the answers to the written exam, the student may be asked questions related to the areas of weakness.
2. When the student returns, the presentation, if required, will be heard and the questioning commences. The questions may concern the clarification of answers to the written exams. Students are often asked about the major fields of biology that are directly relevant to their area of study, but questions may also be drawn from any area of biology. Each member of the committee is given the opportunity to ask questions with no explicit time restrictions, but in general, all members should have approximately equivalent amounts of time.
3. There is no set time limit for the examination. When the examining committee is also the student's DAC (EEB and IP), the oral examination consists of research specific as well as additional questions on topics deemed relevant by each member of the DAC. The examination will continue until committee members agree that they have sufficient information to end the exam.
4. After the committee is satisfied, the Chair will ask the student to leave the room with instructions on when to return while the committee deliberates the outcome of the exam. Before the committee discusses the performance of the student, it is recommended that each committee member write on a piece of paper a non-binding vote of pass, fail, or remediate. All members of the committee must vote and not abstain. The Chair can then announce the tally as a straw poll to initiate discussion. At this point individuals can discuss their reasons for proposing a pass, fail, or remediate. The resulting dialog should continue until all members agree that it is time to vote. The outcome of this vote is binding. In cases where a separate Examination Committee is employed for a cohort of examinees (CMB and MB for example), a decision on the exam result may be deferred until all the candidates are heard, at which time the individual students will be evaluated as described above.

16a. M.S. students

in the SoLS Graduate Program. The student and their Research Advisor must complete the Change of Degree Form A, which consists of three parts: student petition, advisor endorsement, and signature page. The petition change degree programs is then forwarded to the Graduate College in the form of an official appeal. Students can be assisted in the appeal process by the COS Grad Affairs Coordinator or the SoLS Graduate Coordinator. Once approved, the Graduate Operations Committee should be informed of the change.

21b. Application to the M.S. program for students admitted to the Ph.D. program

A student admitted to the SoLS Ph.D. program who subsequently wants to enter the SoLS M.S. program without completing their Ph.D. must, in consultation with their Research Mentor solicit the Change of Degree Form B from the Graduate Coordinator. The student and their Research Advisor must complete the Change of Degree Form B, which consists of three parts: student petition, advisor endorsement, and signature page. The petition to change degree programs is then forwarded to the Graduate College in the form of an official appeal. Students can be assisted in the appeal process by the COS Grad Affairs Coordinator or the SoLS Graduate Coordinator. Once approved, the Graduate Operations Committee should be informed of the change.

21c. Student stipends and financial support

Most students who matriculate into the M.S. or Ph.D. program are offered fellowship or assistantship funding, from one of three sources, or a combination thereof: 1) A state-funded Graduate Assistantship (GA), with the primary responsibility to instruct undergraduate laboratory or discussion sections. 2) A Research Assistantship (RA) awarded to the student or their mentor, from extramural grants. 3) A university-awarded fellowship. To be eligible for a university merit-based award, students must submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form for domestic students or the Alternate Need Form for DACA, Immigrant, or international students. In rare cases, a student may choose to be self-funded, however, the rules governing the

In cases where a student is placed on probation, the reason for that action is clear, and the requirements are stated and within the stude student disagrees with the GOC recommendation to place the student on academic probation, the student may choose to file a formal appeal with the Graduate College. The guidelines for that appeal can be found at in the Graduate Gateway system. If the dean of the Graduate College accepts the appeal, then the dean will refer the case to the university Graduate Appeals and Legal Issues Committee, for a final binding resolution.

21i. Unresponsive Advisory Committee Members

If a committee member fails to reply to a reasonable number of student emails (e.g., 3) over a reasona time period (e.g., one week), the student is encouraged to contact their advisor or a member of GOC for advi and assistance.

21j. Other student resources

Students and their mentors are recommended to consult the applicable university policies on the following topics by accessing information found at the websites listed below:

Graduate College Catalog

Information for Current SoLS Graduate Students

Human Resources (for issues of discrimination, sexual harassment, nepotism, etc

Office of Student Conduct

Useful information for International Graduate Students and their advisors

22. University Resources

22a. The Graduate Academy: Innovation Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions, and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

22b. Academic Success Center

The goal of the Academic Success Center is to help students do well academically and complete the studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing career exploration, and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

22c. Alumni Association

With an alumni base 40,000 strong, the UNLV Alumni Association offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

22d. Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the commencement office is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and y diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the student responsibility to ensure they apply for graduation on time and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College Student Services

Team and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College Team.

22e. Office of Diversity Initiatives

The vision of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leaders to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

22f. Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The DRC is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and act The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

22g. Office of International Student and Scholars

International Students and Scholars (ISS) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchang Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

22h. Jean Nidetch Women's Center

provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

22l. Office of Student Conduct

The Office of Student Conduct is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the UNLV Student Code of Conduct by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

22m. Military and Veteran Services Center

The Military and Veteran Service Center is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

22n. Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the online reporting form at Title IX Reporting Form.