

# **PH.D. GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**In**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION  
AND MARINE BIOLOGY**

**2023-2024**



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## EEMB Graduate Student Handbook: Ph.D. Degrees

These guidelines incorporate both University and Department regulations, and are designed to help ensure that students finish their Ph.D. degrees successfully and in a reasonable amount of time. They are not designed to tie the Department's, or the student's hands. Thus, there can be exceptions to many of the rules below if asked of the Graduate Committee. If there is a reason to alter timetables, take leaves, or otherwise act outside of these guidelines, it may be possible with appropriate petitions. To prepare such petitions, it is important that the student work with their major professor, the Departmental Faculty Graduate Advisor, the Graduate Program Advisor, and possibly Graduate Division.

### 1. Ph.D. Committees:

Students are encouraged to begin forming a Ph.D. committee during their first year. A Ph.D. committee is required to be established before the written qualifying exams, which should occur by the end of year two. Students are encouraged to form their committee at least 6 months before written exams are to take place. Students should consult with their major professor in determining who would be the most appropriate committee members. They may also want to consult with the Departmental Faculty Graduate Advisor. The primary role of a student's committee is to act as a support system and resource, provide multiple perspectives, and broaden the expertise beyond that which a single major professor could offer. The committee will work with the major professor on advising the student on classes, qualifying exams, and on the student's specific research. Once formed, the committee will meet at least once a year. The committee will also review the student's progress and identify any problems that may arise. The student and committee will file a "Progress Report and Study Plan" form every year. This serves not only as a record of progress but should also identify the student's plans for the next year. This ensures that the student and committee agree as to where a student is in their program, and what is planned for the future. These procedures ensure communication between the student and their committee to facilitate consensus on how the student can best make progress.

At a minimum, the committee will consist of the major professor and two other UC ladder faculty members, one of whom must be from EEMB. The third member can come from another department or even another UC campus if appropriate. Professional researchers, adjunct faculty, or scientists who are not associated with UC may be added to the committee either: (1) in addition to the three core UC members or (2) instead of one of the three core UC members but only with petition and approval by Graduate Division (contact the Graduate Program Advisor for the details of this process). If any of the committee members are away on sabbatical, or other leave, a temporary member may replace them during that time. The membership of the thesis committee may change as a student's interests and directions shift. The committee is established within the Department and the official committee forms are filed with the UCSB Graduate Division (See Graduate Program Advisor for forms).

### 2. Ph.D. Qualifying Exam Structure & Schedule:

Ph.D. examinations will consist of two written examinations and one oral examination.

**Written exams:** Students are required to complete both written examinations *within two years* after enrolling in the Ph.D. program.

**What to expect:** The written exam consists of two days of questions both occurring within the same week (though days do not need to be consecutive), that are devised by the student's dissertation committee. Each day consists of 3-4 questions. Each day of questions would have themes that relate to the student's field of interest (e.g., Day 1 Community Ecology/Day 2 Physiological Ecology or Day 1 Phylogenetic Evolution/Day 2 Population Genetics). Students have 8 hours to answer the questions each day (accommodations can be made via consultation with the Disabled Students Program). Questions are open notes/resources/internet. The

student should prepare for the written exam by getting commitments from the committee as to what topics would be covered on each day. The student and committee members should work together to develop a suggested reading list for that topic. These are not directed readings, but a reading list that would help the student navigate the literature that will be relevant to each day's question topics.

Upon completion of the exam, all committee members will read all questions and come to a consensus on grades (Pass or No Pass) to each question (Conditional Passes will not be given). A student must pass all questions but one per day of the written exam (e.g., 3 out of 4). If the student does not pass more than one question on either day of the exam, they must retake the written exam on that day's topic by the end of the following quarter. If the student does not pass all but one question per day on the second try of their written exam, the student does not pass their written exam and the student will be given the option to complete a Master's thesis or leave the program.

***Penalties for falling off schedule:*** If written exams are not completed within 2 years, the student will receive a reminder from the Faculty Graduate Advisor that they are falling off schedule. After 3 years, the student will receive a warning that they are off schedule and are at risk of going on academic probation by the Graduate Division, which restricts access to departmental funding such as Teaching Assistantships, if they do not complete the exams within the next year. Students failing to successfully complete their written examinations within 4 years after enrolling in the Ph.D. program may be dropped from the program.

**Oral exams:** The oral examination is to be completed within three years after enrolling in the Ph.D. program. Students must pass their written qualifying exams before taking their oral exams.

***What to expect:*** The oral exam is usually a broad-based exam testing a student's knowledge and ability to work with material in the basic science areas relevant to their research. The oral exam committee is conducted by the student's dissertation committee. The oral exam revolves around the student's dissertation proposal. This proposal should have a format similar to that outlined by the National Science Foundation for several of their postdoctoral fellowships (i.e., a limit of 10 single-spaced pages including text, figures, tables, footnotes, etc. but not including references). Proposals are expected to give a broad introduction to the field of study, provide rationale for the proposed research, outline the specific questions/hypotheses to be addressed with the dissertation, provide detailed methods that will be used to test hypotheses to be conducted, and include sections outlining the Intellectual Merit of the science as well as including conceptual diagrams and preliminary data (preliminary data from the literature is acceptable as motivation for the dissertation). The dissertation committee is free to give feedback on the ideas, methods, etc. However, the proposal should not undergo extensive review by the committee/major advisor as the proposal is supposed to be the student's work and represents an important milestone in the Ph.D. process. Students should have a completed proposal turned in to the committee at least 2 weeks before the proposal defense.

The student would be expected to give a presentation on their proposal that sparks discussion of the ideas, hypotheses, and methods presented in the proposal in order to shape the direction and focus of the dissertation. The student should be prepared to answer specific questions about the proposal as well as general knowledge questions about their field. Students should expect to find themselves questioned about things that they may not know the answer to, possibly including issues where no one knows the answer. Evaluating how a student handles uncertainty is an important part of evaluating whether they are ready to be advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D.

The committee decides on a consensus grade for the proposal defense (Pass, No Pass). A Conditional Pass is possible if the committee agrees that the science presented will result in a defensible dissertation but would like to see written clarification of experimental design, statistical analyses, etc. This would require revision of the written document that meets the Pass criteria of the committee but does not require another oral examination. If the student does not pass the proposal defense, they must defend their revised proposal no later than the end of the following quarter. If the student does not pass the proposal defense a second time, the student will be given

the option to complete a Master's thesis or leave the program.

**Passing & advancing to candidacy:** After passing the oral exam, a student will be "Advanced to Candidacy". That has two possible effects on a student's life. First, a student becomes eligible for doctoral candidate borrowing privileges at the Davidson Library. It also means that fees may be reduced. Since EEMB students generally don't pay their own fees, this may not seem important, but whatever source is supporting them (departmental funds, grants, etc.) may benefit, by allowing resources to be used to support other students. *Note, to advance to candidacy officially, you must file a form with the University and pay a fee (currently \$50).*

After advancing to candidacy by passing their written and oral exams, a student on the Ph.D. track may apply for a MS degree from the department, with approval from their Ph.D. committee, as they would have passed all necessary departmental requirements for a non-thesis MS degree. Applying for this degree only requires a few signatures and a fee of \$20 to Graduate Division. Please see this link for more details

<https://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/academic/forms-petitions/degree-change>

**Penalties for falling off schedule:** If the oral exam is not completed within 3 years, the student will receive a warning that they are falling off schedule, and that the exam must be completed within the next year or they may be placed on academic probation by Graduate Division.

Students failing to successfully complete their oral examinations and advance to candidacy within 4 years will be placed on academic probation unless the Department petitions Graduate Division not to do so. This requires a solid justification.

Students who have not completed their oral exam and advanced to candidacy within 5 years after enrolling in the Ph.D. program may be dropped from the program.

**Public dissertation preview:** Once passing the oral exam, the student is required to give a public talk to the department on their dissertation proposal. This talk is not a pass/fail element of the qualifying process but is designed to help integrate early career graduate students into the department and help build community. For these talks, EEMB will set aside 2-3 Departmental Seminar dates towards the end of Winter and Spring quarters for graduate students to give a 15-20 min presentation on their proposed dissertation. This public presentation would happen after passing the oral exam. The presentation would likely be similar to that given to the committee during the proposal defense.

### 3. Completing the Ph.D. Degree:

After advancing to candidacy, the final hurdle for graduate students is to finish their dissertation. The official guidelines for format and filing requirements are available in the "*Guide to Formatting & Filing Theses & Dissertations*" (<http://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/academic/preparing-filing.aspx>). During the time a student is focusing on their research and writing, it is important that they stay in touch with their committee. The worst thing that a student can hear when they think they are finished with their research is "You need to have done..." The only way to ensure this does not happen is through regular interaction with the dissertation committee.

**Normative Time:** This is the length that the Department believes is a reasonable amount of time for a student to complete a Ph.D. In EEMB, *normative time is 6 years* following enrollment as an EEMB graduate student (in either a M.A. or Ph.D. track). If a student hasn't completed their Ph.D. within normative time, they lose the reduced fee benefit they may have received when they advanced to candidacy.

**Maximum time:** In accordance with university policy, students who have not completed their degree *within 7 years* of enrolling in the program must petition the Graduate Committee and the Graduate Dean to remain in the program. The petition must outline reasons for not completing the degree and an acceptable alternate completion schedule.

Students failing to complete their degree *in 8 years* from the time of their enrollment must retake their written examinations or prove in some equivalent way that they are fully up to date in their major field of interest. Simply completing the dissertation is **not** considered such proof, as a dissertation may be narrowly focused.

Students failing to complete the degree *in 10 years* from the time of their enrollment will be dropped from the program.

**Exit Seminar:** A final public seminar of a student's dissertation will be made after the written dissertation is completed. This final seminar may only be waived under extraordinary circumstances requiring unanimous consent of the dissertation committee and the Graduate Committee as outlined by the UCSB Academic Senate [https://senate.ucsb.edu/manual/regulations/Chapter\\_III/Section\\_4/](https://senate.ucsb.edu/manual/regulations/Chapter_III/Section_4/)

#### **4. Course Curriculum:**

EEMB 500: Campus Orientation (1 credit): This is a currently offered one-day seminar offered as part of new student orientation.

EEMB 502: Teaching Techniques (2 credits): This is a currently required course offered by MCDB in Fall and EEMB in Winter. This course may be taken in Winter of the student's first year, rather than Fall, even if TAing for the first time in the Fall of that year.

EEMB 290: Seminar for New Graduate Students (2 credits): This course provides a series of seminars from EEMB faculty, introducing their research and helping to build community with the new cohort of graduate students. This course will be taught by the current Faculty Graduate Advisor.

EEMB 507: Introduction to Graduate Research (2 credits): This course serves as an onramp for graduate school covering topics such as: succeeding at UCSB/EEMB, building a professional network, publishing, funding, ethics in science, data sharing/open data.

EEMB 508: Biological Levels of Organization I (4 credits): This course focuses on topics such as adaptation and organismal function, micro/macroeolution, origins of diversity, evolution of behavior, etc.

EEMB 509: Biological Levels of Organization II (4 credits): This course focuses on topics such as ecophysiology, species interactions and coexistence, the causes and consequences of food web complexity, and ecosystem-level processes.

**TA requirement:** All Ph.D. students are required to spend at least two quarters as a teaching assistant. However, self-supported students, students on fellowships, or students working as a Graduate Student Researcher can petition the Graduate Committee to waive this requirement.

Additionally, a student may receive course credits for TAing. To get this credit a student must register for EEMB 501. This has a variable number of units (1-4), depending on the time commitment of the TAs. A 50% time TAs is worth 4 units.

**Minimum GPA:** Students must maintain a minimum GPA of at least 3.0 *at all times*. Graduate Division will automatically place students who fall below this on academic probation. Students who fail to bring their GPA up to 3.0 may become subject to being dropped from the program. Students **must** register for at least one class with a letter grade during their first year to establish a GPA.

**Carrying too many I, NG, or NR grades:** These are Incomplete, No Grade, or No Record, and are for unfinished courses. Students may not carry more than 12 units of such grades. The first quarter this occurs, a student will receive an advisory from the Graduate Division. The second quarter, they will be placed on academic probation. After 3 quarters without clearing up the incomplete courses, a student may be dropped from the program.



## 5. Administrative Issues:

FAFSA forms: All students are expected to file the “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” form *every* year. The form is available at: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. This may seem like a nuisance, but there are fellowships available through UCSB (e.g. fee fellowships) that are *not* available if you have not filed a FAFSA. The FAFSA for the following school year is usually due by early March. Make it a habit to fill this form out at the beginning of each year.

Registration: Students are expected to remain registered every quarter they are in the program, unless they are on approved leave.

Credit requirements: All students must register for at least 12 units each quarter to maintain their status as full time students.

Petitions: In cases where a student needs to act outside the guidelines, it likely takes a petition to either the Department or to Graduate Division. For petitions for leaves etc. the forms are available at Graduate Division. All petitions will need either the Departmental Faculty Graduate Advisor or Department Chair’s signature. Please work with the Graduate Program Advisor to organize all petitions.

## 6. Graduate Student Advisory Committee

The Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC) meets monthly with the EEMB Chair, Vice-Chair, and Chair of the Graduate Affairs Committee. This committee has been formed to discuss and obtain advice on departmental and campus issues, and to engender and develop new ideas. Graduate students should feel free to meet with the Vice Chairs or Chair to discuss their concerns or departmental issues through the members of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee

## 7. Other places to go for information, advice, and help:

In general, your major professor is the best starting point for questions and problems, but there is a variety of other people and places to go for information and advice.

Graduate Program Advisor <i>Mengshu Ye</i>	Go to the Graduate Program Advisor (GPA) for technical information about administrative issues such as timetables, forms, requirements, petitions, etc. If the GPA doesn't have the answer, they will know where to direct you.
Faculty Graduate Advisor <i>Hillary Young</i>	This is a rotating faculty position. Go to the Faculty Graduate Advisor for signatures on petitions, and if you have more "academic" questions than you could ask the GPA. For example, if you want to talk about issues relating to your studies, your relationship with your major professor, etc.
Departmental Graduate Committee	This group is comprised of the Faculty Graduate Advisor and three other faculty members. They are responsible for overseeing the EEMB graduate program as a whole. When the advisor is unavailable, the other members can sign petitions and similar things.
Department Chair	The Department Chair is available if you have problems that the Faculty Graduate Advisor is not able to handle satisfactorily.
Graduate Division	Graduate Division is the administrative branch of UCSB that oversees all things relating to graduate programs. They have a lot of useful information at <a href="http://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu">http://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu</a> .



	<p>A particularly useful document is the "<i>Graduate Student Handbook</i>" (<a href="https://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/handbook/index.aspx">https://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/handbook/index.aspx</a>). They also have a lot of good people who can provide you with advice on problems you may have, if you can't get the answer from the Graduate Program Advisor or Faculty Graduate Advisor.</p> <p>For financial issues, please contact Mengshu Ye or Hillary Young</p> <p>For academic issues, Rickie Smith (Director of Academic Services; <a href="mailto:rickie.smith@graddiv.ucsb.edu">rickie.smith@graddiv.ucsb.edu</a> or (805) 893-5485) is probably the right person.</p> <p>The main number of the Graduate Division is (805) 893-2277.</p>
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## 8: Financial Support:

The general EEMB philosophy is that students should be properly supported so that they can focus on their academic program. This support may be in the form of teaching assistantships (TA), University fellowships, departmental fellowship support, graduate student research (GSR) positions, extramural funding, or some combination of these. In EEMB, most sources of support are coordinated through the student's major professor.

**Teaching assistantships:** The major professor will make requests to the Department for teaching assistantships for their students. Each professor can generally count on TA support for one student per year (three quarters total support). How they allocate this among their students is up to them. Faculty requests for TA support are then balanced against the courses that need TAs and the particular expertise needed for those courses. The balancing of requests and needs is done by the Staff Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Committee. Other programs also occasionally have TAs available that are open to students from other departments. The Environmental Studies program is one such program, and takes applications during winter quarter. A student may TA up to a maximum of 18 quarters during their graduate tenure. This cap is set by the University of California system.

**Departmental funds:** The Department receives a modest sum of money every year to use for supporting graduate students. Most of that money is used to pay out-of-state tuition and first year fellowship packages for incoming students. Typically, there is enough money to only support several quarters' worth of continuing graduate students. These funds generally are used to help advanced Ph.D. students get their research done and finish their dissertations. Individual faculty members are responsible for nominating students for departmental graduate support funds, which are then allocated based on a combination of merit, need, and the student's past history of receiving these funds.

**Graduate student researcher positions:** Individual faculty may have research grants with graduate student support incorporated into them. They are entirely responsible for allocating these funds among graduate students.

**Fee fellowships:** Each year the Department is allocated a small amount of money to use to help students cover fees. These fellowships may only be awarded to students who are considered "financially needy" (which includes most students). This *requires* that students have filed the FAFSA form. Students can apply directly to the Department for these funds. Calls for requests will go out each spring quarter.

**Extramural funding:** There is a wide range of fellowships that students may apply for. Students are encouraged to visit Graduate Division's on-line newsletter, at <https://www.graddiv.ucsb.edu/our-services/extramural-funding>. This has good records of programs, requirements, deadlines, etc.

## **Recommended Schedule:**

*There is some flexibility in a Ph.D. degree schedule, but keeping close to this will help ensure finishing in a reasonable amount of time.*

### **Year 1**

Before Fall Quarter: Meet with major professor and plan fall classes, discuss ideas for beginning research, etc.

Fall quarter: Meet with major professor to discuss course plan for the first year or two, research ideas and plans, and potential future committee members.

Winter quarter: File FAFSA form in January.

Spring quarter: File progress report. Establish first committee member in addition to major professor

### **Year 2**

Fall quarter: Establish second committee member.

Winter quarter: File FAFSA form in January. Get commitments and reading lists from committee on topics for written exams.

Spring quarter: Finish up course work. Take written qualifying exams. Meet with committee; discuss written exams, preliminary research done so far, and dissertation plans. File progress report.

### **Year 3**

Fall quarter: Continue research and develop dissertation plan. Meet with committee members regularly to get their advice and input on the plan.

Winter quarter: File FAFSA form in January. Continue developing research plan.

Spring quarter: Complete oral exams and advance to candidacy\*. File progress report.

**\*The Graduate Division will place you on monitoring status if you exceed the four-year deadline to advance to doctoral candidacy set by Graduate Council.**

### **Year 4**

All year: Focus on dissertation research.

Winter quarter: File FAFSA form in January.

Spring quarter: Meet with whole committee. Discuss research progress to date and last studies that are needed to complete the research program. File progress report.

### **Years 5 & 6**

All year: Complete research, write dissertation.

Winter quarter: File FAFSA form in January

Spring quarter: Either file the dissertation or file a progress report.

## Progress Report and Study Plan for Ph.D. Students in EEMB

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Year Began: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Exams: *(fill out when exams are to be taken or when they were passed)*

Written # 1:      Date:                      Topic/Examiner:

Written # 2:      Date:                      Topic/Examiner:

Orals:              Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance to date:

**On track**      **some problems**      **Unsatisfactory**

*If there have been problems, note below what they are and what will be done to solve them.*

Progress & Accomplishments this year:

Expectations for next year:

Committee Signatures

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Member #3 \_\_\_\_\_

Member #2 \_\_\_\_\_ Member #4 \_\_\_\_\_