

**DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY**  
**GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**2017-2018**

<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	2
<b>Orientation</b> .....	2
<b>Accessible Education</b> .....	2
<b>Interim Advisory Committee</b> .....	3
<b>Course Requirements</b> .....	3
<b>Laboratory Rotations</b> .....	4
<b>Teaching Requirement</b> .....	6
<b>GE Procedures and Information</b> .....	7
<b>Quarterly Review</b> .....	7
<b>Quarterly Exams</b> .....	8
<b>IMB</b> .....	9
<b>IE<sup>2</sup></b> .....	9
<b>ION</b> .....	10
<b>OIMB</b> .....	11
<b>CDB</b> .....	12
<b>Selecting a Thesis Advisor</b> .....	12
<b>Dissertation Advisory Committee</b> .....	13
<b>Application for Training Grant Support</b> .....	15
<b>Required Clearance for Research</b> .....	15
<b>Proposal Exam</b> .....	16
<b>IE<sup>2</sup></b> .....	16
<b>IMB</b> .....	17
<b>ION</b> .....	20
<b>OIMB</b> .....	20
<b>Advancement to Candidacy</b> .....	21
<b>Evaluation of Progress</b> .....	22
<b>Dissertation Preparation &amp; Timetable</b> .....	23
<b>Final Oral Exam</b> .....	24
<b>Department and University Registration Policies</b> .....	25
<b>Guidelines for a Thesis Master's Degree</b> .....	27
<b>Appendix 1: Instructions for ION Proposal Exam</b> .....	32
<b>Appendix 2: Proposal Exam Report (IMB and ION)</b> .....	36

The following abbreviations are used in this handbook:

**CDB:** Center for Developmental Biology  
**DAC:** Dissertation Advisory Committee  
**GAC:** Graduate Affairs Committee  
**IE<sup>2</sup>:** Institute of Ecology and Evolution  
**IMB:** Institute of Molecular Biology  
**ION:** Institute of Neuroscience  
**OIMB:** Oregon Institute of Marine Biology  
**QE:** Quarterly Exam

Key Biology Department contacts (2017-2018):

Graduate Program Manager: Jessica Wilson (wilson21@uoregon.edu)  
 Graduate Program Assistant: Gabrielle Andrew (gandrew@uoregon.edu)  
 ION Graduate Affairs Rep: tbd  
 IMB Graduate Affairs Rep: tbd  
 OIMB Graduate Affairs Rep: tbd  
 IE<sup>2</sup> Graduate Affairs Rep: tbd

The majority of this handbook is applicable only to students entering the Ph.D. program. Students entering the MS program should refer to the [Guidelines for a Thesis Master's Degree](#) section of this handbook, as well as UO Master's Degree requirements on the Graduate School's website.

## **ORIENTATION**

A series of orientation activities for incoming graduate students will take place prior to the start of classes. All incoming students are expected to attend, although exceptions may be made for students at OIMB. The activities include required training in lab safety, CPR, first aid, teaching effectiveness, and workshops on topics relevant to life as a graduate student. In addition, social events, institute retreats, and meetings with Interim Advisory Committees are scheduled for this period. Incoming students will be notified of the orientation schedule during the summer prior to their arrival on campus.

## **ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION**

The University of Oregon is working to create an inclusive learning environment. If you have a disability that could impede your learning and research experience, please contact the Accessible Education Center for further information (164 Oregon Hall; 346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu)). They will work with you to help facilitate your learning experience.

## INTERIM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) will appoint an Interim Advisory Committee for each new Ph.D. student before the beginning of the first term in residence. The committee shall consist of two or three Biology Department faculty, including at least one faculty member who is familiar with the requirements of the student's intended area of study. Each student is affiliated with one of four research institutes (IE<sup>2</sup>, IMB, ION, OIMB), and the committee includes at least one faculty member from the student's admitting institute. At the discretion of the Graduate Affairs Committee, special committees can be assembled for students whose interests span institute boundaries (e.g., tracks within CDB including Evo-Devo, Neuro-Dev, etc). A meeting between the student and the Interim Advisory Committee will occur before registration for the first term. The student will be notified of the makeup of the committee and of the meeting arrangements as soon as possible after arrival on campus.

During this meeting:

- 1) The student's background, goals, and plans for a graduate program will be discussed. Recommendations will be given about course work for the first year in the program. Students must register for a minimum of 9 credits and a maximum of 16 credit hours each term of the academic year (fall, winter, spring). First-year students typically register for 16 credits. For guidance about summer registration, students should consult with their advisor and the Graduate Program Assistant.
- 2) Advice will be offered to help the student choose lab rotations. It is understood that students will make decisions about winter and spring rotations after starting the program (these rotations do not have to be arranged prior to starting in the fall). The student is responsible for making arrangements for rotations as described in the [Laboratory Rotation Program](#) section of this handbook.
- 3) The nature of graduate teaching assignments will be discussed and the student will be advised about the process of allocating teaching assignments. Three terms of teaching are required prior to advancing to candidacy. The teaching experience is intended to help the student develop teaching skills. For more information about teaching assignments and expectations, see the [Teaching Requirement](#) section of the handbook.

Unless the student or Interim Advisory Committee requests an additional meeting, this committee meets only once with the student. The student will subsequently meet with the GAC member from their home research institute at the end of each quarter (fall, winter, and spring) to discuss their progress in the program.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **BI610: Ethics in Life Sciences Research**

All Biology Ph.D. candidates on the main campus are required to take *Ethics in Life Sciences Research* during their SECOND year. This course is generally offered only one term each year.

### Journal Clubs

All IMB, OIMB, IE<sup>2</sup> and ION students are required to register for, and participate in, one Journal Club each term of each academic year. Students are required to make at least one journal club presentation each year, starting in Year 2. See the UO course catalog for current journal club offerings. Students who are off campus for research purposes or have conflicts with teaching assignments are exempt from this requirement. The exemption is given on a case-by-case basis. The student must email the Graduate Program Assistant to request an exemption.

### Seminars

Each research institute sponsors a series of research seminars during the academic year. The seminars are typically given by prominent scientists from other institutions. Students are required to register for and attend seminars in their research area each term that relevant seminars are offered. Students who are off campus for research purposes or have conflicts with teaching assignments are exempt from this requirement. The exemption is given on a case-by-case basis. The student must email the Graduate Program Assistant to request an exemption.

Other course requirements are set by the research institutes, the IAC, and DAC according to each student's interests and goals. Students who are selected to be supported by institutional NIH training grants may have additional course requirements.

### Policy on Registering for Supervised College Teaching

Graduate students do NOT register for Supervised College Teaching except in the very unusual circumstance that they are not being paid for teaching.

## **LABORATORY ROTATION PROGRAM**

Choosing an area of research for the Ph.D. dissertation and finding a faculty member to serve as dissertation advisor are crucial tasks that a beginning graduate student must complete during the first year. To aid students in this process, the Biology Department has a lab rotation program. This program exposes students to a variety of biological subdisciplines and research philosophies, and it helps students become integrated into our scientific community by introducing them to the personnel in different laboratories and, in some cases, different institutes. Through immersion in various lab groups during the first year, students gain a sound basis for choosing the lab best suited to their interests, personalities, and abilities and begin networking with faculty and other graduate students who will contribute to their research careers.

Doctoral students are required to rotate in three different labs during their first year in residence. Exceptions are rare, and must be approved by the GAC member from the student's home research institute as well as by the director of that institute. **As soon as it is practical (at least several weeks before the end of the term prior to the planned rotation), students should contact faculty member(s) whose labs they are considering for their next rotation to discuss possible rotation projects and to determine whether a rotation that term will be feasible.** Students are encouraged to use the rotation program to explore as wide a range of biological subdisciplines as their interests dictate. They are permitted to rotate in labs of any institute or department. Except in extraordinary circumstances, a student will go to a different lab each term.

Students typically choose a dissertation laboratory near the end of spring term and begin their dissertation research at the start of summer term following their first year. If a student has not selected a dissertation lab by the end of spring term, it may be possible for the student to arrange a fourth rotation in summer term, if approved by the GAC rep and the director of their home research institute. In some cases, a newly admitted student may start research during the summer before beginning the program, resulting in an extended fall rotation (interested students should contact faculty member(s) whose labs they are considering to see whether this is a possibility). For students who choose this option, the dissertation laboratory will still be selected at the end of spring term of the first year. For more information on choosing a dissertation advisor, see [Selecting a Thesis Advisor and Dissertation Advisory Committee](#). **Failure to identify a dissertation advisor (and have them agree to serve in this role) within the first year is regarded as insufficient progress and is grounds for termination** (see [Evaluation of Progress](#)).

The following guidelines for students and faculty member(s) are meant to prevent any misunderstandings about rotation expectations and evaluation:

- 1) At the beginning of each rotation, the student and faculty mentor meet to discuss expectations for the rotation. Expectations should be made as explicit as possible, including a description of what would be deemed passing work. Faculty members are reminded that students are typically teaching, taking courses, and taking quarterly exams at the same time they are rotating; thus, they cannot devote their entire effort to lab work. However, students should plan to immerse themselves in their rotation projects. While it is possible that a publication may result from a rotation, this should not be an expectation, nor should a positive scientific result from a project be required for a passing grade in a rotation. While students are expected to devote considerable time and attention to the rotation, a solid effort, not positive results, is the principal criterion for passing a rotation. Students should also get a clear understanding of the hours of effort expected from the faculty mentor before starting the rotation. This can vary substantially from lab to lab.
- 2) During the rotation, the faculty mentor and student should meet on a regular basis. During these meetings, the faculty member provides feedback about the student's performance and whether the rotation is meeting the agreed-upon expectations.
- 3) A rotation lasts only a single term. Thus, at the end of the term, a rotation is over even if the project has not been completed. The student is under no obligation to complete the project at a later time. Similarly, unless the student has made specific arrangements with the faculty mentor, the student should not expect the project to be "saved" in case he or she decides later to join that lab.
- 4) Students interested in joining a rotation lab should have a conversation with the faculty mentor at the end of the rotation to find out if this is an option.
- 5) At the end of the term, the faculty mentor must provide a written evaluation of the student's performance to the GAC member for the institute that admitted the student. If a student has not met the expectations for satisfactory progress, this should be reflected in the report. However, because they should have received previous feedback that their performance was inadequate, an unsatisfactory evaluation should

not come as a surprise to the student. A summary of the rotation report will be included in the [Quarterly Progress Report](#) prepared by the student's GAC rep.

### **Rotation Presentations**

During Finals Week of each term, students present their rotation projects in a symposium of short "rotation talks" scheduled by the Department of Biology. Students rotating in labs on the OIMB campus may present at an OIMB hosted symposium. It is expected that faculty mentors will assist students in preparing their rotation talks (e.g., by critiquing a practice talk). Each student will organize a ten- to twelve-minute talk that includes:

- 1) A brief introduction to the project, relevant background information, and how the project is related to the laboratory's goals.
- 2) Results obtained (if no results - explain problems encountered, etc.).
- 3) Description of the next steps to be taken if the project were to be continued. There will be up to five minutes of questions and discussion following the presentation. All faculty members and first-year students are expected to attend; others are also welcome.

### **TEACHING REQUIREMENT**

All candidates for the Ph.D. degree are required by the department to serve three terms as a Graduate Employee (GE) for courses within our program. First-year students normally serve as a GE for one course during each of the three quarters in the academic year. In special cases, teaching may be deferred if the student's home institute agrees and can demonstrate a workable plan that is consistent with the requirements of available funding sources. **A student cannot advance to candidacy until the teaching requirement has been fulfilled** (see [Advancement to Candidacy](#)). Students with a strong interest in teaching may serve as a GE for additional terms beyond the required three terms during their graduate career, but only with the consent of their dissertation advisor.

A written evaluation of the student's work as a teaching assistant will be completed at the end of the quarter by the faculty member with whom they have served as a Graduate Employee. This information will become part of the student's graduate file and a copy will be given to the student.

As of Fall term 2016, students with the required background and qualifications for teaching the course under consideration will be appointed in the following order:

1. Incoming PhD Biology students
2. Continuing PhD Biology students
3. PhD students from other departments/programs (e.g. Chemistry, ENVS) whose primary advisor is Biology faculty

4. Current and incoming Biology Master's students
5. Graduate students from other departments/programs whose primary advisor is not Biology faculty, but is a member of IE<sup>2</sup>, IMB, ION, or OIMB.
6. Graduate students from other departments.

This policy, as well as with other policies related to Graduate Employees, can be found at <https://gradschool.uoregon.edu/gtf/rights-and-responsibilities/gdrs>.

## GE PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION

**GE Workspace:** If a room is needed for office hours, review sessions, or a meeting, contact the Biology Department Secretary.

**Computers:** A desk equipped with a computer is available in the Biology Office for use by GEs, if needed.

**Office Supplies:** The Biology Office has supplies and equipment available for instructional purposes. Talk to the Department Secretary in Klamath 77 about supplies needed for your course.

**Photocopies and Printouts:** GEs are welcome to use the copier in the Biology Office: the required course codes are available from the Department Secretary.

**GE Office Manual:** An office manual, with more detailed information about resources and policies, is updated each year. The GE Manual can be found online at [biology.uoregon.edu](http://biology.uoregon.edu) under Graduate Studies.

## QUARTERLY REVIEW

The progress of each first-year Ph.D. student is monitored and reviewed by the GAC rep from their home research institute. The GAC rep meets with each first-year student shortly after the rotation presentations (Fall, Winter and Spring quarters of the first year) to discuss the student's progress and plans. The GAC rep then prepares a Quarterly Progress Report that summarizes the student's progress, including a summary of the rotation report, quarterly exam grade, teaching evaluation, plans for future rotations, coursework completed and pending, and any other relevant information. The Quarterly Progress Report will be sent to the student and included in the student's file. Feedback given at these meetings should be taken very seriously. **Failure to remedy deficiencies noted in the Quarterly Progress Report can be grounds for termination from the program due to unsatisfactory progress.**

Note: In the event that the student's rotation mentor is the GAC rep for the student's admitting institute, another faculty member will be assigned by the institute director to conduct the quarterly evaluation for the student during that particular term.

## QUARTERLY EXAMS

Students are required to take three quarterly exams (QEs), one each in the fall, winter and spring terms of their first year. Quarterly exams are designed to foster intellectual growth in four main respects: (i) breadth of biological knowledge, (ii) critical reading of the primary biological literature, (iii) identification of significant research questions, and (iv) experimental logic and design. Some QEs are knowledge-based, whereas others are in the format of a research proposal.

Quarterly exams are written by faculty members in each of the research units each term. The following students must take the QEs that are required by their research units or center: OIMB, IMB, ION's Neurons, Circuits & Cognition Program, and CDB. Other students are free to choose which QE they will take during fall and winter terms, but must take the QE in their research unit in the spring term.

### *Quarterly Exam Dates, Fall 2017 – Spring 2018*

Institute	Fall	Winter	Spring
IMB	Oct. 12	Jan. 18	Take home exam, due April 13
ION	Oct. 12	Jan 18	<i>Topic statement:</i> Mar. 16  <i>Specific Aims page:</i> Apr. 5  <i>Revised Specific Aims and Research Strategy:</i> May 7
IE <sup>2</sup>	Oct. 12	Jan. 18	<i>Abstract:</i> Apr. 5  <i>Revised Proposal:</i> May 7
OIMB	Week 10	Week 10	Week 10
CDB**	Oct. 12	Jan. 18	Exam of affiliated Institute

**\*\* CDB is a track of study for students that span institutes.**



Quarterly exams will be given letter grades. Consistent with Graduate School policy, a grade of **B or above is considered satisfactory**, a **B- is considered marginal**, and a **C+ or lower is considered unsatisfactory**. A total of three quarterly exams with a grade of B- or better are required. A student who earns a B- or lower on two exams must meet with their institute's GAC rep and Institute Director to discuss whether they should continue in the graduate program and, if so, under what conditions.

### Quarterly-exam specifics by Institute or Center

#### IMB

Preparatory information for the Fall and Winter QE's will be available one week before each exam (students will receive instructions by email). These exams may be in take-home format, or may be administered during a two-hour evening session, according to the preferences of the faculty member preparing the exam. The exams will be graded and returned to the students within two weeks. The examiner will then meet with the students, as a group or individually, to discuss the exam. Any student who receives a B- or below will meet individually with the examiner to review the results. A student who earns a C+ or lower on the fall or winter QE will need to make it up by taking the fall term quarterly exam during their second year.

The spring term exam will be a take-home exam. Students will be provided with a set of papers on a current topic and the examiner will suggest a hypothesis or alternative models that arise from these papers. Students will develop an outline of a research proposal to distinguish between the models or test the hypothesis. Materials and detailed guidelines will be provided by the end of Winter term. A student who earns a C+ or lower on the spring QE will need to make it up by working with the examiner to either revise their unsatisfactory exam or complete some alternative assignment, which may include writing a new proposal.

#### IE<sup>2</sup>

QE's in the fall and winter will be administered during a two-hour evening session. The exams will be graded by the faculty member who wrote the exam and returned to the students within two weeks. The examiner will then meet with the students, as a group or individually, to discuss the exam. Any student who receives a B- or below will meet individually with the examiner to review the results.

All students planning to carry out dissertation research in an IE<sup>2</sup> lab must take the IE<sup>2</sup> spring quarterly exam, which is administered and graded by an IE<sup>2</sup> faculty member. The basis of the exam is a research proposal on a topic of interest that is unrelated to the student's anticipated dissertation topic. The purpose of this exercise is to allow students to demonstrate that they can identify an important research topic, frame a testable hypothesis and design and interpret experiments to test the hypothesis. Most importantly, this activity provides students with the opportunity to practice formulating and communicating a feasible, logical, and hypothesis-driven set of research questions. In doing so, students should examine the relevant background literature on their topic and discuss the types of experiments and data that conceivably could be collected to test these hypotheses. While it is not necessary to present an explicit experimental plan that details an exact methodology, information on the types of experiments that would be conducted -

and their implications - is essential. In this light, the proposal is similar in format to the NSF preliminary proposals that are now required for the Division of Environmental Biology (DEB) and the Division of Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS). These are four page proposals (maximum), but should not include a Broader Impacts section. A commonly followed practice is to break the proposal into the following sections: Overview, Specific Aims/Objectives, Background/Preliminary Data, Experimental Plan.

To ensure that the topic is appropriate, the student must first submit an abstract to the administering faculty member by April 5. This abstract should identify the topic and general approach. Once the topic is approved by the administering faculty member (in writing or by email), the student must complete their proposal and submit it for grading within 30 days. No faculty input is allowed, but students are encouraged to consult with their peers during preparation of their proposals. The faculty member administering the exam is responsible for providing these instructions to the students at the beginning of the first week of spring term. Students who do not pass this exam will have the opportunity to retake it during the summer term either from the same and different examiner. The student may choose whether to take the exam from the same or different examiner, but, if from a different examiner, the new examiner is to be appointed by the Institute Director. A grade of C+ or lower on the retake will constitute unsatisfactory progress towards the degree.

## **ION**

QE's in the Fall and Winter, which are knowledge-based, will follow the same schedule and procedures as the IMB Fall and Winter exams. For students in ION's Neurons, Circuits & Cognition track the topics are:

Fall: Cellular neuroscience

Winter: Systems neuroscience

The spring term quarterly exam in ION will involve writing a research proposal. Although this exam, like any other, is partly evaluative in nature, its main objective is to provide training in identification of important research topics, framing of testable hypotheses, and design and interpretation of specific experiments to test the hypotheses. A second purpose of the exam is to familiarize the student with the content, structure, and format of an NIH NRSA application, for possible submission of a real NRSA proposal at the end of year three.

The subject of this proposal should fall within the general focus of the student's research unit, but it must be unrelated to the anticipated topic of the student's dissertation. Students unsure of the suitability of their topic should consult with the faculty member administering the exam. Students must develop the ideas and write these proposals independently. However, they are encouraged to discuss their work with other students and postdoctoral fellows. Discussions with faculty members are limited to advice on techniques; there shall be no discussion of experimental logic and design.

There are three phases to the exam (due dates appear in the table above):

(1) Submission of the Topic Statement (1 page maximum). This document must identify the topic of the proposal, including its significance and the general experimental approach. The document must also explain how the specific research question to be addressed differs from the likely subject area of the student's dissertation research. The Topic Statement will be evaluated in terms of the goals of the exam; resubmissions based on faculty feedback may be required.

(2) Submission of the Specific Aims page, written in the format of this component of an NRSA proposal.\*

(3) Submission of the revised Specific Aims page and the Research Strategy, written in the format of an NRSA proposal.\*

\* Follows the content, page limitations, and formatting guidelines of the National Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral Fellows (F31), as spelled out in [Appendix 1: Detailed Instructions for ION Proposal Examinations](#).

The proposal will be scored according to NIH's Criteria and Considerations for Research Project Grant [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/critiques/rpg.htm#rpg\\_01](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/critiques/rpg.htm#rpg_01). The categories to be scored are Significance, Approach, and Overall Impact. A student who earns a C+ or lower on the spring QE will need to make it up by working with the examiner to either revise their unsatisfactory exam or complete some alternative assignment, which may include writing a new proposal.

## **OIMB**

Ph.D. students in marine biology must take the OIMB quarterly exams during the three terms of their first year. Two of these exams will be comprehensive in nature and will test general knowledge of biology with the expectation that students demonstrate understanding at the level of a BS degree in biology. In the third quarter, Ph.D. students will write a mock proposal (described below).

During the Interim Advisory Committee meeting, the student will choose two quarters in which to take their knowledge-based quarterly examinations (generally Fall and Winter). During the quarter in which the student is not taking a knowledge-based quarterly examination, they will instead write a research proposal on a topic of their choice.

Grading of OIMB QE's and potential retakes will follow the same rules as the rest of the department, as described under IMB's quarterly exam.

### *OIMB knowledge-based quarterly examinations:*

The topics for the exams are listed below. The specific topic of the exam for a given quarter will depend upon the student, their academic background (possible gaps), and the faculty involved that quarter. At the beginning of each term in which a student will take one of these exams, the students will be given a reading list that may include readings in basic concepts, as well as some recent literature. The written exams will be given during the last week of the regular term (week 10) and will be evaluated by one or more marine biology faculty members with expertise in the areas that the respective exams cover.

Knowledge-based topics: Ecology, Physiology, Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Evolution, Genetics, Functional Morphology, Biological Oceanography, Development, Microbiology

*OIMB quarterly exam (the “mock proposal”):*

To ensure that the topic is appropriate, the student must first submit an abstract to the administering faculty member (to be selected by the student) prior to writing, within the first two weeks of the term. This abstract should identify the topic and general approach. Once the topic has been approved by the administering faculty member, the student can complete their proposal and submit it by the last week of the term. Criteria by which the proposals will be judged are the same as those outlined for the other second year [Proposal Examinations](#). This exam allows OIMB students to demonstrate ability to identify an important research topic, frame a testable hypothesis and design and interpret experiments to test the hypothesis. Students are encouraged to consult with their peers during preparation of their proposals.

Proposals should be written in the format for Graduate Research Fellowship Program applications submitted to the National Science Foundation or similar guidelines, subject to approval of the faculty in charge of the exam. The faculty member administering the exam is responsible for providing the guidelines to the students. As with the other exams, the proposal will be given a letter grade.

### **CDB**

QE’s in the Fall and Winter will follow the same schedule and procedures as the IMB Fall and Winter exams.

Fall: IMB’s QE

Winter: CDB QE

Spring: The spring term quarterly exam will be a proposal-style exam administered by the home institute of the student.

### **SELECTING A THESIS ADVISOR**

Before the end of spring term, students should speak with faculty members in whose laboratories they wish to do their dissertation research. The final decision is made by mutual agreement between student and dissertation advisor. They should discuss possible dissertation projects and determine whether dissertation work in that laboratory will be possible. The advisor, in agreeing to mentor a student, assumes responsibility to provide space, materials, and equipment for the student’s dissertation research. Students may choose to do a fourth rotation over the summer following the first year, if they can identify a lab to host them for such a rotation and receive approval from the GAC rep and institute director. **If a student is unable to secure a faculty advisor or a fourth rotation by the end of spring term, the student cannot continue in the program.** Likewise, students who do a fourth rotation must find a faculty advisor by the end of the summer if they are to continue in the program. Note: It is sometimes possible, although uncommon, for a student to change advisors, e.g. if research interests change, or if the arrangements turn out to be unsatisfactory to either the student or the advisor.

## **FORMATION OF THE DISSERTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Each student has a Dissertation Advisory Committee (DAC), which is responsible for seeing that progress is made toward satisfying all departmental, Graduate School, and University requirements for the Ph.D. degree. The DAC is also responsible for ensuring that students supported on institutional training grants fulfill the appropriate course requirements.

As soon as a student becomes associated with an advisor (no later than the beginning of the second year of study for the Ph.D.), the student and advisor should discuss the make-up of the DAC. The student must confirm that each potential member of the DAC is willing to serve on their committee and then send the names of all committee members to the Graduate Program Assistant by October 1. DAC membership policies are somewhat complicated, so the student may want to check with the Graduate Program Assistant or Graduate Program Manager to confirm that a faculty member can serve in a particular role before the October 1 deadline.

Detailed committee policies are on the Graduate School website. Students must meet all requirements set by the Graduate School and the Department.

### **DAC requirements for ION, IMB and IE<sup>2</sup> students**

1. The DAC consists of five members, one of whom is the student's dissertation advisor. At least four out of the five DAC members must be tenure-track faculty members .
2. At least three DAC members must be full or associate members of the student's institute.
3. At least two members must be in the Biology Department.
4. One member must be from outside the Biology Department, but on the UO campus (this is the Institutional Representative, also known as the “outside member”). The dissertation advisor cannot serve as the Institutional Rep. See “Dissertation Committee Policy” on the Graduate School website for the current policy on the Institutional Rep.
5. At least four members must be on the UO campus.
6. Any non-UO faculty member or non-faculty professional must be approved by the department, CAS, and the Graduate School before they can serve on the committee. The Graduate Program Assistant will submit the request.
7. The student will choose one member to chair the committee; the chair must be in the Biology Department and a full or associate member of the student's institute, but cannot be the dissertation advisor. Exceptions to the institute member requirement must be approved by the GAC rep for the student's institute. The chair will prepare reports of the annual DAC meetings.

### **DAC Requirements for OIMB students**

The DAC will include five members including at least two members of the OIMB faculty, an Institutional Representative (see “Dissertation Committee Policy” on the Graduate School website for the current policy on the Institutional Rep), and one member

of the Biology Department who is not resident at OIMB. That member will serve as the chair of the proposal exam committee and as the chair of the DAC.

### Annual DAC Meetings

Students are required to meet with the DAC at least once a year, beginning in year two. DAC meetings should be scheduled during the terms indicated in the table below, at least one week prior to the end of term. **It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Graduate Program Assistant** as soon as the meeting time is set so that reminders may be sent to the committee.

DAC meeting terms by Institute				
	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5+
<b>IE2</b>	S	S	W	F
<b>IMB</b>	F	W or S	W or S	W or S
<b>ION</b>	S <sup>1</sup>	S	S	S
<b>OIMB</b>	W <sup>2</sup>	W	W	W

**DAC meetings are to be held before the end of the indicated term.** <sup>1</sup>Second-year proposal exam replaces DAC meeting.

<sup>2</sup>After the qualifying exam and prior to the beginning of Spring term.

Note: It is the *student's responsibility* to schedule DAC meetings and to notify the Graduate Program Assistant of the meeting details (date, time, location) at least several weeks in advance. Failure to meet with the committee and file a progress report means that the student is not eligible for continued support from any university source in the following academic year.

Students may have their DAC meeting after the specified deadline if approved to do so in advance by the chair of their DAC and the GAC rep for the student's institute. The GAC rep should email the Graduate Program Assistant to confirm that they approve of the extension and specify a new deadline for the student's DAC meeting.

The following documents must be delivered to each DAC member and the Graduate Program Assistant at least three days before the DAC meeting: (i) progress report and (ii) a new or updated Individual Development Plan (IDP). A template for the progress report and detailed instructions for the IDP can be found online at [biology.uoregon.edu](http://biology.uoregon.edu) under Graduate Studies. There are two IDP documents – one for 2<sup>nd</sup> year students and one for students in years 3-5. OIMB students are not required to submit the IDP.

Following the meeting, the DAC chair will submit a report to the Graduate Program Assistant. Other members of the DAC must approve the report before it is submitted. One of three recommendations can be made:

- Continuation as a graduate student with support. (In extraordinary circumstances the DAC may recommend continuation without support.)
- Probationary continuation as a graduate student. This recommendation serves as a warning that the student is at risk for termination from the program. Areas of expected improvement must be clearly indicated, a timeline for remedying any deficiencies must be stated, and the means of communicating progress to the DAC (e.g. written report or DAC meeting) should be clearly outlined.
- Termination as a graduate student. This would normally be expected to occur in cases where the student has received a probationary continuation in a previous term, but has failed to adequately address one or more areas of expected improvement by the deadline stipulated by the DAC. Termination, including no further payment of stipend, tuition, and fees, is effective as early as the end of the term in which the student failed to meet the terms of the improvement plan.

The GAC cannot make a recommendation of continuation in the program unless the progress report, IDP, and the report of the DAC chair are on file by the end of the term specified in the table.

DAC recommendations are subject to review by the GAC. A student may appeal the recommendation; appeals are heard by the GAC.

A copy of the committee's report is to be placed in the student's file and a copy given to the student. The progress report will also become part of the student's permanent record.

### **APPLICATION FOR TRAINING GRANT SUPPORT**

Several training grants are available to support a subset of Ph.D. students in the Biology Department. An email soliciting applications to these training grants will be sent to all first year graduate students in early May. Each student should discuss with her/his prospective dissertation advisor which, if any, of these training grants is appropriate to apply for, taking into account the nature of the planned thesis project and whether the advisor is listed as a trainer on the grant.

### **REQUIRED RESEARCH CLEARANCE FOR MASTER'S THESIS/PROJECT OR DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

The Graduate School requires that all students using human or animal subjects in their research obtain permission (and a protocol number) from the Office for Protection of Human Subjects or the Office of Veterinary Services and Animal Care, respectively, before beginning data collection. **Failure to follow these procedures may result in a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School that the University not accept the student's thesis, project, or dissertation.** Protocol forms and a detailed explanation of procedures may be obtained from:

Research Compliance Services  
<http://orcr.uoregon.edu>  
(541) 346-2510

Animal Care Services  
<https://aws.uoregon.edu/>

## SECOND-YEAR PROPOSAL EXAMINATION

In the second year, all Ph.D. students will take the Second-Year Proposal Examination. Additional aspects of the Second-Year Proposal Examination that are specific to each research unit are discussed separately below.

### IE<sup>2</sup>

Students planning to carry out dissertation research in an IE<sup>2</sup> lab must take the IE<sup>2</sup> proposal exam. The exam will take place during the second half of winter term (weeks 6-10). The Graduate Program Assistant will schedule the examinations by the end of the first week of winter term. For this exam, students will write and defend a proposal on the research they intend to do for their dissertation. The proposal should be **no more** than 8 pages in length, including text and figures but excluding references. This is essentially the format for the NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant, but no Broader Impacts section is required. Page limits will be enforced by the proposal exam committee. The oral defense portion of this exam will also include a test of general knowledge in ecology and evolution.

The exam committee will be composed of four faculty members, at least two of whom are members of IE<sup>2</sup> familiar with the research being proposed. Insofar as possible, there should be significant overlap between the examination committee and the student's DAC. In the event that a DAC member is unable to sit on the proposal exam committee, the student, the IE<sup>2</sup> GAC representative, and the student's advisor will work together to find a suitable replacement. The proposal will be developed in consultation with the dissertation advisor and anyone else the student desires to consult. A major function of this exam is for students to develop a clear plan for their dissertation research and to present it publicly.

Although your major advisor cannot participate in the exam as an examiner, he/she is allowed to watch as a completely silent observer. The exam will begin with an oral presentation of the proposal; this will be open to all members of IE<sup>2</sup>, including students. The student's presentation will be followed by a public question and answer session. The remainder of the exam will be closed to all but the student, the examining committee, and the advisor (as a silent observer). The public portion of this exam will not exceed one hour; the closed portion will not exceed two hours. The written proposal must be given to all committee members, and to the Graduate Program Assistant, no later than two weeks prior to the scheduled exam date. This exam will be graded using the pass/revise/fail rubric, as described below.



## **Grading guidelines**

The exam will be graded based on the quality and scope of the written document as well as the student's proficiency in answering general questions about ecology/evolution during the oral portion of the exam. Three outcomes are possible:

*PASS* – Satisfactory performance as determined by the proposal exam committee

*REVISE* – Specific points brought up by the exam committee must be addressed within a set amount of time determined by the committee. The committee will evaluate whether the revision is adequate.

*FAIL* – An unsatisfactory exam will allow for an automatic retake within a time frame set by the exam committee. The exam committee will specify the basis for the retake and make suggestions for improving the proposal. Students may request that a specific faculty member be replaced on the retake exam committee. No more than one member of the committee can be replaced at the student's request, and the replacement must be approved by the GAC rep. This request should be submitted in writing to the IE2 GAC rep at least three weeks prior to the retake exam. Other members of the exam committee may also be changed, at the GAC rep's discretion. A student may call a meeting of their DAC to discuss options available to them if they feel they do not want to retake the proposal exam.

## **IMB**

The proposal exams for second-year Biology students in IMB will take place during the second half of winter term (weeks 6-10). The Graduate Program Assistant will schedule the examinations by the end of the first week of winter term. Students will write and defend a hypothesis-driven proposal on a topic that is the same as or is closely related to their thesis research.

The exam committee will consist of four tenure-track faculty members, at least two of whom are from the Biology Department. The dissertation advisor may not serve on the committee. Insofar as possible, there should be significant overlap between the exam committee and the student's DAC. In the event that a DAC member is unable to sit on the proposal exam committee, the student, the IMB GAC rep, and the student's advisor will work together to find a suitable replacement.

The purpose of the exam is to assess the student's background knowledge and ability to write and defend a hypothesis-driven research proposal on a topic that is the same as or is closely related to their thesis research. Some thesis projects, especially at the outset, are exploratory and do not involve testing a specific hypothesis. In this case, students should develop and test a compelling and substantive hypothesis that draws on similar background literature and methods as their thesis research. Students may discuss with their thesis advisors whether their thesis project is suitable for the proposal format and, if not, may get feedback from their thesis advisor on alternative hypotheses to use for this purpose. Note that students will also have the opportunity to submit an Abstract to the GAC rep for comments in early January (see below).

*Communication between the student and PI.* The advisor should mentor the student as they would if the proposal exam were separate from the thesis research. That is, the advisor and student should freely discuss questions, hypotheses, approaches, and literature relevant to the student's thesis research. However, the advisor may not see or comment on any draft of the written proposal or oral presentation, and may not suggest specific wording, diagrams, etc. for the written or oral parts of the exam.

### **Proposal Summary/Abstract**

Students who would like feedback on the general direction of their proposals may submit a Proposal Abstract to the IMB GAC rep no later than January 3. Abstracts received after that date will not be reviewed.

Abstracts should be no longer than one page and should:

- Summarize the key pieces of evidence that lead to the question/hypothesis, and then concisely state the question/hypothesis that the proposal will address.
- Break the large question down into several smaller questions that will be addressed by the proposed experiments.
- Provide a general and brief description of the approaches that might be taken to answer the questions that are posed.

Feedback will be provided by January 12, and will focus on whether the hypothesis being tested is justified based on prior observations noted in the Abstract, as well as whether the scope and significance of the plan are suitable for this exam.

### **Format of Written Proposal and Oral Presentation**

The proposal should be no longer than 5000 words (excluding references and figures). We encourage the use of diagrams as needed to summarize/explain the background and experimental plan.

The proposal must include:

- a title page that includes the time, date, and location of your exam, and the names of all committee members (and the chair).
- an introduction that clearly states the specific biological problem the proposal is addressing. A broad ("big picture") problem should be introduced, along with the more focused question the proposed research is designed to address. The significance of the research problem (i.e. how answering the focused question will contribute to the broader question) should be stated.

- an explicitly stated hypothesis or alternative models, along with a justification (i.e. a logical argument supporting the hypothesis based on what is already known – including the student’s own data or unpublished data from their lab)
- a specific aims page that outlines the experiments to be performed in the context of specific questions that, if answered, will allow the hypothesis to be evaluated
- a description of the experimental approach, including a discussion of how various possible results will be used to evaluate the hypothesis/models.
- clear figures that help convey the important points of the proposal. These are not counted toward the word limit.

The written proposal must be sent to all committee members, and to the Graduate Program Assistant, at least one week prior to the scheduled exam date.

For the oral part of the exam, the student should prepare a 30-minute presentation that includes the same key elements as the written form of the proposal. The oral presentation and defense is closed to the public, and the thesis advisor is not permitted to attend.

### **Grading guidelines**

The proposal and oral defense will be evaluated with the following criteria:

**Background knowledge.** Is the student knowledgeable about previous studies that are relevant to the project? This relevance is broadly defined – for example, if the project examines a process in *Drosophila*, is the student also familiar with relevant work done in other systems? Is the student well versed in the techniques required to complete the proposed research?

**Choice and statement of research question.** Is the research question clearly stated in both broad and specific terms? Is it a substantive question that, if answered, will move the field forward significantly? Is it of the appropriate scope (i.e. can it be answered by a single skilled researcher in a period of ~4 years)? Is a clear and logical connection made between the broad and specific question to establish the significance of the proposal?

**Hypothesis or alternative models.** Is a clear hypothesis, or alternative models, presented? Is the hypothesis tightly coupled to the specific research question? Is the hypothesis justified based on core knowledge and previous studies?

**Experimental approach.** Are experiments clearly described? Are experiments feasible? Do experiments clearly test the hypothesis (i.e., will the results support/refute the hypothesis or distinguish between models)? Are the most suitable approaches proposed? Are suitable controls included? Are limitations of the proposed approaches considered?

Passing the exam requires satisfactory completion of each of these key elements.

**The scoring sheet to be used by the Exam Committee can be found in Appendix 2.**

## **ION**

Students write, and defend in an oral presentation, a proposal on the research they intend to do for their dissertation. The written component shall follow the content, page limitations, and formatting guidelines of the National Research Service Awards for Individual Predoctoral Fellows (F31), as spelled out in the [Detailed Instructions for ION Proposal Examinations](#).

The examination will proceed in three phases according to the following schedule.

1. Nov 15: Submission of the Specific Aims page (emailed to ION GAC representative).
2. One week prior to defense date: Submission of the Research Plan and final Specific Aims page (email to ION GAC Representative and the student's DAC).
3. Mar 15: Last day for oral defense of the proposal.

The Graduate Program Assistant will schedule the examinations in consultation with the ION GAC rep. The exam committee will be composed of the student's DAC, minus the thesis advisor.

This proposal will be developed in consultation with the thesis advisor and anyone else the student wishes to consult. A major purpose of this exam is to help students develop a clear plan for their dissertation research and to improve their skills in oral presentations. Another purpose is to encourage submission of actual NRSA proposals.

The exam will begin with an oral presentation of the proposal (1 hour maximum), followed by a discussion period (1 additional hour maximum). The exam will be closed to the public and the thesis advisor is not permitted to attend. Faculty are encouraged to ask questions at any time during the presentation. However, it is the job of the Chair to ensure candidate has enough time to get through the presentation.

### **Grading guidelines**

The scoring sheet to be used by the Exam Committee can be found in Appendix 2.

## **OIMB**

Students planning to carry out dissertation research in a lab at OIMB must take the OIMB proposal exam. The student will prepare a dissertation proposal, describing the intended dissertation research, and encompassing the entire dissertation as envisioned at that time. The proposal should follow the NSF format and should not exceed 15 pages of text and figures.

The proposal must be submitted to the student's DAC members by the end of the first week in January in the student's second year. The oral exam will take place by the end of January, year two. The DAC will serve as the examining committee, and the chairperson of the DAC will also be the chair of the exam committee.

The exam will focus on the dissertation proposal, but may proceed with questioning that moves from the particular proposal to more general topics. The DAC, being familiar with the student's performance on the quarterly exams, will evaluate the student's background accordingly.

### **Grading guidelines**

The exam will be graded based on the quality and scope of the written document as well as the student's proficiency in answering general questions during the oral portion of the exam. Three outcomes are possible:

*PASS* – Satisfactory performance as determined by the proposal exam committee

*REVISE* – Specific points brought up by the exam committee must be addressed within a set amount of time determined by the committee. The committee will evaluate whether the revision is adequate.

*FAIL* – An unsatisfactory exam will allow for an automatic retake within a time frame set by the exam committee. The exam committee will specify the basis for the retake and make suggestions for improving the proposal. Students may request that a specific faculty member be replaced on the retake exam committee. No more than one member of the committee can be replaced at the student's request, and the replacement must be approved by the GAC rep. This request should be submitted in writing to the OIMB GAC rep at least three weeks prior to the retake exam. Other members of the exam committee may also be changed, at the GAC rep's discretion. A student may call a meeting of their DAC to discuss options available to them if they feel they do not want to retake the proposal exam.

### **Retaking the Proposal Exam (all institutes)**

Second-year proposal examinations may be retaken, but only once. If a student does not pass the retake, the student's DAC will review the student's file, and meet with the student soon after the second unsatisfactory proposal exam to discuss the situation and possible routes for the student. The student's performance in the laboratory, in courses, on quarterly exams, and in teaching will all be considered by the DAC in developing a recommendation. Unless performance outside of the exam context has been exceptional, it is likely that the DAC will recommend that the student leave the program. However, under some circumstances, the DAC could recommend that the student take the proposal exam again. Students who fail the proposal exam may be eligible to receive an M.S. degree upon recommendation of the exam committee and their DAC.

## **ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY**

Advancement to candidacy is a formal step that indicates that all requirements for the Ph.D. degree, except completion and defense of a dissertation, have been met. It typically occurs at the end of the second year, but will be delayed if teaching has been deferred or other requirements have not been fulfilled. The DAC will recommend that a student be advanced to candidacy when:

1. Three quarterly exams have been passed.
2. Three rotations have been completed with satisfactory evaluations.
3. The proposal exam has been passed.
4. The teaching requirement has been fulfilled. Evaluations from supervisors will be used, in part, to determine if this requirement has been met.
5. Courses required by institutes, training grant programs, and advisory committees (IAC and DAC) have been taken - or a plan for their completion has been approved by the DAC.
6. A GPA of 3.0 or better has been maintained for graded credits, with no incompletes. A grade of P is required in all required courses taken P/N.
7. The second year DAC meeting will focus on the student's ability to perform independent research. At this meeting, the DAC (including the advisor) will evaluate whether or not the student is motivated, working hard, reading the literature, thinking, and having some successes with research. In ION, IE<sup>2</sup>, and OIMB, the DAC will recommend advancement if this meeting is positive and the criteria above have been met. Because 2nd-year IMB DAC meetings occur in the fall, the GAC rep will consult with each IMB student's advisor and DAC chair in the spring to confirm their approval of advancement at that time.
8. The final decision to advance a student to candidacy will be made by the GAC and Graduate School after considering all seven criteria above.

Note: It is only after advancement to candidacy that a student may take dissertation credits (BI 603) – see 1C in the Summary of Departmental Regulations for Graduate Students on page 25.

### **EVALUATION OF PROGRESS**

**Regarding incomplete grades:** at any one time, a student may have no more than two incompletes. All incompletes shall be completed within one year of incurring them. No student can be advanced to candidacy until they have cleared all incompletes from their transcript. Only BI 603 Dissertation credits should show as incompletes on the transcript. The Graduate School will change BI 603 incompletes at the time of degree completion.

#### **First Year**

[Quarterly evaluation](#) of first year students is completed by the GAC rep from their home institute.

In addition, near the end of the first year (or possibly during summer term), the Graduate Program Assistant and the GAC review the files of each first year student to determine whether or not the student has made satisfactory progress. The criteria for satisfactory progress include:

1. Satisfactory quarterly reports by the GAC rep.
2. Three lab rotations have been completed with satisfactory evaluations.
3. Satisfactory teaching evaluations.
4. GPA  $\geq$  3.0 in graded coursework and no grades of N or I.
5. Grades of B- or better on 3 quarterly exams, with no more than one B-.
6. Identification of a thesis advisor by the end of the summer of year one.

Exceptions to these criteria may be made by the GAC if there are extenuating circumstances. Other issues might arise that are deemed unsatisfactory; if so, these will be documented in writing.

### **Second Year and Beyond**

In the second and subsequent years, the GAC and the Graduate Program Assistant review progress toward the Ph.D., and the GAC makes recommendations about continuation in the program. The responsibility for demonstrating satisfactory progress is primarily in each student's hands, and secondarily in those of the advisor and the DAC. The criteria for satisfactory progress for years two and beyond include:

- GPA  $\geq$  3.0
- Grades of Pass or higher on all examinations and pass-fail courses
- Satisfactory rates of data acquisition, analysis, and/or dissemination
- No unexplained absences
- Prompt responses to emails from the student's advisor and DAC
- Regular attendance at lab meetings
- Regular attendance at departmental seminars and journal clubs
- Giving at least 1 journal club presentation each year
- Meeting with DAC by deadline (unless extension has been approved)

Failure to meet these criteria for each year will trigger a detailed review by the Graduate Affairs Committee and may result in termination from the program.

### **DISSERTATION PREPARATION AND TIMETABLE**

Preparation of a written dissertation takes a considerable amount of time. It is strongly recommended that the student meet with the DAC before writing begins, but after all planned experiments are completed, to ensure that the committee agrees that the experimental work is complete. This meeting should take place three to four months prior to the planned defense. Writing should be done in conjunction with the dissertation advisor, and a polished, well-prepared version of the dissertation must be given to the members of the DAC at least three weeks prior to the scheduled defense.

The Graduate School provides a website to aid in the process of completing requirements for the dissertation defense. There the student will find instructions relating to the process of completing the degree (forms to use, etc.). Students wishing to include in their dissertation substantial portions of material that has been published with or without co-authors, or is intended to be published with co-authors, must seek permission from their

DAC and the Graduate School at least one term prior to scheduling their defense. If the student plans to submit a dissertation in journal format style, they must obtain approval from the Graduate School at least one term prior to the defense.

Students must register for a minimum of 3 credits of BI 603 Dissertation both the term before and the term of their defense (with a total of at least 18 credits). Once the student applies for their degree and then applies for their final oral defense online (through GradWeb), DAC committee members are automatically requested to indicate their agreement to attend. This process may take some time to complete, so begin the process as soon as possible. **It is *strongly recommended* that you meet with the Graduate Program Assistant, as soon as you have decided on a term for graduation, to make sure that everything is in order.**

Prior to scheduling, review the “Oral Defense Procedures” on the Graduate School website.

### FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

This shall consist of an open and public research seminar, followed by a private session of the candidate with members of the DAC. During the public presentation, the candidate should be prepared to defend the dissertation by responding to questions from the audience. The private session with the DAC will serve as the formal final examination. The time allotted for the defense varies by institute:

IMB – 1.5 hours

ION – 2 hours

OIMB – 1.5 hours

IE<sup>2</sup> – 3 hours

If more time will be needed, the student should discuss this with their committee and then make sure that the room is reserved for the correct amount of time. At least 15 minutes will automatically be added to this time for the student to set up and prepare for the defense before the scheduled start time (the student may request additional set up time). Rooms are reserved through the Department of Biology Secretary. For the best selection of rooms, contact the Department Secretary as soon as a date and time is selected.



## SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENTAL REGULATIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The following are additional requirements as stipulated by the Department of Biology, or are clarifications of Graduate School policies.

### 1) Course load

- a) Prior to advancement to candidacy, it is recommended that graduate students take a full course load (16 credit hours) during fall, winter and spring terms. These credits include the required Laboratory Rotation Program during the first year, dissertation research during subsequent years, seminars, journal clubs, and courses either required or recommended by the DAC. **Most students do not register for summer term.** If instructed to register for summer, students should check with their advisor and the Graduate Program Assistant BEFORE registering to determine many credits they should sign up for.
- b) After advancement to candidacy, all students must register for a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 16 credits each term unless they are advised to do otherwise by their advisor/DAC. Students in the Biology PhD program are required to register for one journal club each quarter, and for one or two seminars (depending on the research unit). Advanced students may also register for courses as needed to satisfy requirements imposed by training grants or the DAC. Registration for any additional courses will require approval of the advisor.
- c) Students working toward a Ph.D. must complete a minimum of 18 hours of Dissertation (BI 603) before their degree can be awarded. They may register for these hours after advancement to candidacy, but **MUST** be registered for a minimum of 3 credits of Dissertation (BI 603) both the term prior to and the term in which the student plans to defend. For a fall term graduation, the "term before" is spring (not summer).

### 2) Continuous enrollment

- a) A full-time graduate student is required to be enrolled during each term of the regular academic year from the time of first enrollment until the degree is awarded. A student is enrolled as either a student in residence or a student on leave of absence (no fees charged). A leave of absence must be approved by the department and the Graduate School.
- b) A student failing to maintain continuous enrollment will be considered as withdrawn. If such a student wishes to renew studies, he or she must reapply for admission.

### 3) Financial Support

- a) Financial support is guaranteed for five years provided the student is making "satisfactory progress" toward the Ph.D. degree. Progress is assessed by the GAC on an annual basis.
- b) The guarantee of financial support is limited to Ph.D. candidates.
- c) A student receiving financial support is:

- 1) expected to devote full time to his or her graduate studies and teaching or research duties,
- 2) not to be otherwise gainfully employed within or outside the university. In cases of financial hardship, the Graduate Affairs Committee should be consulted. It may waive this rule or make other arrangements.

## GUIDELINES FOR A THESIS MASTER'S DEGREE

The guidelines in this section are primarily for master's students in OIMB and IE<sup>2</sup>. However, the information about graduate school requirements, deadlines, scheduling, and the role of the advisor and committee apply to students in any of the other research units.

The thesis is the end result of independent research and must be written according to the UO Graduate School requirements as set forth in the *Style Manual for Theses and Dissertations*.

You should also familiarize yourself with the Graduate School requirements for a MS degree with thesis. These can be found on the Graduate School website.

To summarize these requirements, you need:

- 1) A total of 45 graduate level credits, 24 of which must be graded and taken while in residence at the UO. Graded credits do not have to be Biology credits.
- 2) At least 30 hours must be in graduate-level Biology courses.
- 3) Nine credits must be BI 503 thesis.
- 4) At least 9 credits must be 600-level.
- 5) Maintain a 3.00 GPA.

For a Master of Science, there is no language requirement.

You may be required to obtain a [protocol number](#) prior to conducting research.

### **IE<sup>2</sup> Master's with Thesis Track**

Students in the track should form a committee comprised of a tenure-track advisor and two other members holding a doctoral degree, at least one of whom must be a faculty member outside of the lab. They should meet with their committee at least a year in advance of their anticipated completion date to present their proposed research. At this meeting, members of the committee should contribute critical positive suggestions concerning the proposed research and also make clear their expectations for satisfactory completion of the degree.

Students should submit to their committee for preliminary approval a rough, but complete, draft of their thesis at least six weeks in advance of their defense. This timing will allow corrections to be made, if necessary. The formal, final version of the thesis must be sent to their committee at least one week in advance of their defense.

### **OIMB Master's Program Schedule**

Satisfactory performance is required for continuing participation in the Master's Program. The following outline is the ideal sequence of events for a MS student at OIMB. There will be exceptions to this sequence. Some students will need to have individualized programs based on this structure, but with a different timetable. Such students must discuss deviations from this outline with their advisor and formalize a specific timetable.

**Fall Term 1**

Coursework – Enroll in appropriate OIMB courses in consultation with the advisor.

Seminars – Attendance and participation in a graduate seminar is required during each term in which a student is registered unless field work requires that the student be away from OIMB. Students who are registered at the University solely for the purpose of defending their thesis, who are not living nearby, and who are not regularly working at OIMB, need not attend seminar during the quarter in which they defend. Attendance at the Marine Biology seminar on Friday afternoons is also very strongly encouraged.

**Winter Term 1**

Coursework – Possibly take courses in Eugene. If in Eugene, attendance and participation in a graduate seminar or journal club is required.

Research – Continue exploration of potential research topics. By the end of this term, students should have confirmed their research questions with their advisor.

**Spring Term 1**

Coursework – Possibly take courses in Eugene. If in Eugene, attendance and participation in a graduate seminar or journal club is required.

Research – Establish a thesis committee, prepare a thesis proposal (see below), and meet with committee regarding the planned research. **Deadlines: By May 15**, establish a 3-person committee, one of whom is the advisor. Also complete the research proposal and have it approved by the advisor. **By May 21**, the thesis advisory committee should have received a copy of the research proposal. **By June 1**, the student should meet with their committee to discuss the research proposal and their overall progress.

**Summer Term 1**

OIMB courses where appropriate, Marine Biology seminar.

Initiate research if not already started.

**Fall Term 2**

OIMB courses only if appropriate. Grad seminar and marine biology seminar.

Devote as much time as possible to research.

**Winter Term 2**

Grad seminar. Continue research.

**By January 15:** Submit a written progress report on research to the committee.

**By February 1:** The student should have met with their committee to discuss completion of their degree. At this meeting, research findings and plans for completion will be discussed. The student should outline a schedule for completing their research and writing their thesis.

It is imperative that the student establish a schedule agreed upon by their committee **by February 1**, as many deadlines for revisions, and for submitting documents to the Graduate School must be met in the final (spring) quarter.

## **Spring Term 2**

Grad seminar. Research.

Thesis preparation, defense, graduation.

### **Thesis Preparation**

This schedule applies for any quarter the student plans to graduate. The first drafts of the thesis should be given to the advisor on a schedule to be set up between the advisor and the student. After revisions have been incorporated and the draft approved by the advisor, the student needs to give this draft to the other members of their thesis committee for their feedback and comments. Upon receiving approval of this draft from each committee member, the student may schedule their thesis defense. A revised, penultimate draft of the thesis should be given to all committee members **one week** prior to defending. The public defense should be scheduled **no later than three weeks prior** to the Graduate School deadline for submission of thesis. **No later than one week after** the defense, the student should give the final version of their thesis to their advisor for final approval.

### **Writing a Thesis Proposal**

A proposal should consist of a coherent presentation that includes an Introduction, Statement of Questions or Hypotheses Addressed, Background (if necessary), Methods and Experiments, Expected and Possible Outcomes, Significance, Timetable, and Literature Cited.

- ✓ The Introduction should review the topic that will be addressed in the proposal and include a reasonably thorough literature review of prior studies. The goal of the Introduction is to set up a perspective from which to view the planned research work. Students should avoid discussing every approach or fact known about their planned topic.
- ✓ A Statement of Questions should concisely state the questions to be answered or hypotheses to be tested.
- ✓ Background can contain any additional information necessary to supplement the Introduction and which is necessary to introduce or justify the methods and experiments.
- ✓ Methods and Experiments should outline specific experiments or observations to test the hypothesis or hypotheses (or distinguish among alternative hypotheses) mentioned after the introduction. The materials to be used, the exact design of experiments, descriptions of the data to be collected, and methods of analyzing that data, including statistical tests, should all be covered in this section.
- ✓ Expected and Possible Outcomes should outline the possible outcomes of the planned experiments or observations. The relationship between these outcomes and rejection or confirmation of the hypotheses should be made explicitly.
- ✓ Significance of the proposed research should cover the uses of information gained in the research. The relevance of the research and the answer(s) it yields need to

be set into context of science in general and the specific areas of science that the thesis research addresses.

- ✓ Timetable should report the schedule to accomplish the experiments and analyze the results, and prepare a thesis. Give appropriate supporting information about start and end times, or how long an experiment is expected to run. Try to give realistic estimates of time to analyze results.
- ✓ Literature Cited should include complete references to all literature cited in the proposal -- see a journal or style manual for format.

When you prepare your proposal, consider whether the following are addressed, as these will be the criteria for evaluating your proposal:

- 1) Is the problem (or set of closely related problems) clearly and briefly stated?
- 2) Is there a clear, concise, and complete statement of the hypotheses or models?
- 3) Are the hypotheses or models reasonable? Does the proposal demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the area?
- 4) Is the general outline or plan of the experimental or observational approach clearly stated? What experiments or observations are planned, and what are the possible and expected outcomes?
- 5) What can be concluded about the hypotheses or models from the possible outcomes of the experiments? Are new hypotheses or experiments and observations necessary?
- 6) Are various details of the experiments or observations handled adequately (e.g., feasibility, statistical significance, controls, etc.)? Does the proposal demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the particular area?
- 7) The written proposal should not exceed 3,500 words.

### **Role of the Advisor**

The thesis advisor is the OIMB permanent faculty member most responsible for the oversight of research and preparation of the thesis. That person should be the mentor and should be very closely familiar with the work and research plan of each Master's student. Besides providing guidance and feedback in all aspects of the research plan and its execution, it is the responsibility of the advisor to establish with the student a reasonable timetable for obtaining a Master's degree.

### **Role of the Thesis Committee**

The 3-member committee (including the advisor) is responsible for evaluating the academic performance of the student, thesis proposal, and the thesis resulting from independent research conducted by the Master's student. The choice of members of the committee should be made according to the research and educational goals of a Master's student. Committee members should be viewed as important resources for proposal

execution and evaluation. It is up to the student to tap the resources. Membership on this committee should be discussed between the advisor and student prior to its appointment.

The thesis committee must approve the thesis proposal and the thesis. Each member of the committee is expected to actively participate in the project execution and evaluation, and should voice their opinions throughout thesis work.

Master's students may have more than one advisor but, if the student's degree is in Biology, at least one of the advisors who is a tenure-track faculty member in Biology, must sign official paperwork.

– APPENDIX 1 –

**Detailed Instructions for ION Proposal Examinations**

These instructions pertain to: (i) ION Spring Quarterly Examinations and (ii) ION Second Year Proposal Examinations.

**1. Specific Aims (1 page)**

State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved.

List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed. Most proposals have 2-3 distinct objectives.

Citations are not recommended, but a small number of essential citations may be included.

**2. Research Strategy (6 pages)**

Organize the Research Strategy in the specified order using the instructions provided below. Start each section with the appropriate section heading — Significance, Preliminary Studies, and Approach. Cite published experimental details in the Research Strategy section and provide the full reference in the Bibliography and References Cited section. Most successful NIH grants are driven by one or more specific hypotheses; state these here.

(a) Significance

Explain the importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress that the project addresses.

Explain how the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields.

Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

Describe the project's relevance to human health.

(b) Preliminary Studies

Provide a succinct account of published and unpublished results, including those that validate any of the strategies or methods used in the Approach. In the Second-Year Proposal Examination, it is expected that at least some of the preliminary findings will have been obtained by the student; clearly indicate the source of any unpublished findings.



**(c) Approach**

For each Specific Aim, describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted.

Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims. If the project is in the early stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high risk aspects of the proposed work.

If an applicant has multiple Specific Aims, then the applicant may address Significance, Preliminary Studies, and Approach for each Specific Aim individually, or may address Significance, Preliminary Studies, and Approach for all of the Specific Aims collectively.

**3. References Cited (not included in page limits)****Mandatory Formatting Instructions****Submission**

One week prior to the date of the examination, submit the Specific Aims, Research Strategy, and References Cited as a single PDF document. Documents that fail to follow NIH formatting instructions exactly will be returned and could lead to postponement of the examination.

**Font**

Use the Arial typeface, a black font color, and a font size of 11 points or larger. (A Symbol font may be used to insert Greek letters or special characters; the font size requirement still applies.)

Type density, including characters and spaces, must be no more than 15 characters per inch. Type may be no more than six lines per inch.

Recommended: Avoid use of justified right margins, which make word-processor text harder to read than non-justified right margins. Activate automatic hyphenation to save space.

**Paper Size and Page Margins**

Use standard paper size (8 1/2" x 11).

Use at least one-half inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) for all pages. No information should appear in the margins, except page numbers.

**Figures, Graphs, Diagrams, Charts, Tables, Figure Legends, and Footnotes**

You may use a smaller type size but it must be in a black font color, readily legible, and follow the font typeface requirement. Color can be used in figures; however, all text must be in a black font color, clear and legible.

## Grantsmanship

Use English and avoid jargon. Eschew all but the most familiar acronyms. Assume a familiarity with the literature at the level of an educated non-specialist. Obtain copies of successful proposals from students, and NIH grant applications from PIs to use as models. Pay attention to all details of execution including prose, spelling, layout, and graphics. Show the reviewers that you are a perfectionist.

Useful reference material:

*The Elements of Style*, by W. Strunk and E. B. White.

*Fowler's Modern English Usage*, by H. W. Fowler.

Writing the NIH Grant Proposal: A Step-by-Step Guide, by W. Gerin et al.

General advice on grant writing:

[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/funding/write\\_grant\\_doc.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/funding/write_grant_doc.htm)

Examples:

<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/researchfunding/grant/pages/appsamples.aspx#r01>

## Recommended template for Research Strategy

### (a) Significance

*Challenge.* Give the background needed to understand the nature and importance of the scientific questions you plan to address. State the issues or questions your experiments will address. Explain why your finding will be important to the field.

*Barriers to progress.* Describe the state of the field in your topic area with particular emphasis on the what has been holding the field back. Explain briefly in general terms how you propose to overcome these hurdles.

### (b) Preliminary studies

Provide a succinct account of published results. Include those findings that set up your questions. Also include results that prove the workability of any of the strategies or methods proposed in the Approach.

### (c) Approach

For each Specific Aim, include the following subsections:

*Rationale.* Explain why does this particular experiment need to be done. Describe the specific hypothesis you are testing if appropriate.

*Approach.* Describe the experiment you will perform. Include the materials, procedures (including statistics), methods, and manipulations that will be involved in the experiment.

*Interpretation.* Describe the range of results you expect, and how you will interpret the outcomes relative to your hypothesis.

*Limitations & alternatives.* Imagine 2-4 things that what could go wrong in the Approach, and what countermeasures are available in each case.

*What we will have learned.* At the end of the Approach, explain the broader impact of your findings if each Aim is successful.

## – APPENDIX 2 –

For students taking the IMB and ION second-year proposal exams, the Exam Committee Chair will report on the exam using the template below. This report will be distributed to the student, the home department, and the thesis advisor.

### Examination Report: Second-year proposal examination

**1. Statement of broad and specific questions (logic, clarity, etc.)**

Unsatisfactory                  Satisfactory                  Exceptional

**2. Statement of significance (logic, clarity, etc.)**

Unsatisfactory                  Satisfactory                  Exceptional

**3. Statement of hypothesis (logic, clarity, justification, etc.) -- The exam requires defining one or more **hypotheses**, which should be the most reasonable answer(s) to the proposal's specific question based on what is already known. Hypotheses must be justified by prior observations.**

Unsatisfactory                  Satisfactory                  Exceptional

**4. Experimental approach -- The exam requires development of an **experimental approach** that rigorously tests the hypothesis.**

Unsatisfactory                  Satisfactory                  Exceptional

**5. Knowledge of relevant background material -- The student should have a command of **background knowledge** relevant to their proposal, broadly defined.**

Unsatisfactory                  Satisfactory                  Exceptional

**6. Professional demeanor -- The student should be able to field questions calmly without being defensive or evasive.**

Unsatisfactory                  Satisfactory                  Exceptional

Provide comments addressing any issues for items 1-5 above, or other items that warrant mentioning (e.g. quality of writing, etc.).

Any aspect of the exam deemed “unsatisfactory” must be addressed through a remedy prescribed by the committee. For example, the student may be assigned a rewrite of the hypothesis to improve the justification. If a significant portion of the exam is unsatisfactory, a complete retake may be warranted.