University of Kentucky, Department of Biology
Guidelines on Graduate Student Advising

1. Preamble

The goal of graduate students is to obtain a Ph.D. (or M.S.) indicating that they are prepared for a professional career in science. A "professional career in science" can be a great many things, e.g., a professor in a research university, a professor in a small liberal arts college, a career in industry, a position in a non-governmental organization, government work or entrepreneurship. Anyone who has been admitted to the graduate program has demonstrated many of the individual skills sufficient to obtain a Ph.D./M.S. However, self-motivation, self-discipline, and the ability to tackle different kinds of tasks across an array of time frames will be necessary to succeed. Graduate training in Biology is very different from undergraduate education. In graduate school, you will become your own teacher and as you grow professionally, your own motivator. There are few formal courses; most training is done informally in laboratories and/or in the field rather than in the classroom. Not all skills that are needed will be explicitly discussed—you may often need to observe the practice of science and proactively ask questions. You will have few quantitative assessments of your performance (e.g., exam grades,course grades), however there are multiple other ways you will be assessed both within and outside the program. We are here to help. Your advisor and thesis committee want you to succeed and will provide advice on your project and your career aspirations. Depending on your project, early on your mentor may give feedback often, but as you progress, your success will depend largely on your own initiative and hard work, and we expect you to become more like a colleague and collaborator than an assistant. It is through this process that you gain the skills and wisdom necessary to become an independent scientist.

With the above in mind, the purpose of this document is to outline the general expectations for students, their mentors, their thesis committee, and the graduate program in the Department of Biology at the University of Kentucky. Our ultimate goal is to see all of our graduate students succeed.

2. Identifying an Advisor

General Philosophy: The Department of Biology at the University of Kentucky boasts faculty members with wide- ranging research interests. There are two general ways to access these research areas as an incoming graduate student and identify an advisor for their thesis research: (1) Recruitment through a *Direct Admit* or (2) Recruitment through a *Lab Rotation Program*. Both pathways have different strengths, and it is the responsibility of the incoming student to decide which is most appropriate for their needs.

A. Direct Admit

a. **Admissions and Application process:** Candidates admitted through direct admission do not participate in the Fall rotation program. However, apart from this, their path to a doctorate in the Department of Biology is similar to those who participate in lab rotations. Direct admission to our program is beneficial to those students who have a clear interest in the research conducted in a specific lab or research area within our department. In some cases, a student may have interacted with faculty members or have a prior understanding of the targeted lab's research environment. Typically, student(s) would initiate contact with the investigator(s) and engage in informal and formal interview processes to establish mutual interests and personal fit. All applications to our graduate program are evaluated based on academic achievements, letters of recommendation, and personal statements. In their personal statement, candidates interested in a direct admit would ideally specify, although not required, their chosen lab and reasons considering a direct admission to that lab.

b. **Timeline:** Candidates interested in direct admission should establish communication with their target PI/lab by late December to early January (at the latest). That allows enough time for exploration of the mutual interest between the faculty member and candidate. Invitations to formal admissions recruitment events are typically sent out by mid-to-late January, and the recruitment event is typically held during mid-February. Acceptance letters are sent out by the end of February, and candidates have until April 15th (typically) to accept the offer of admission.

c. **Interview Process:** Selected candidates are invited for a recruitment visit, during which time they will have an opportunity to interact with other faculty members, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and other staff members within the department. The recruitmentevents are multi-day events hosted either onsite or virtual. Faculty advisors will work with applicants to arrange for a meeting within the department. A direct admit student is encouraged to seek the opportunity to interact with as many faculty members and students in the department as their schedule permits. A student may or may not be able to change their mind about entering a rotation program or continue with direct admit. Full and open communication with PI and the graduate affairs committee is encouraged to switch to the rotation program.

B. Rotation:

Taking up graduate research is a monumental decision for one's scientific career. The rotation program is designed to allow candidates maximum flexibility in identifying research subject areas, investigator fit, and matching short-term and long-term career goals while selecting a lab for graduate studies. A well-balanced rotation program is an important means to attract many talented graduate students in many biological fields.

a. **Admission and Application Process:** A typical application process is not too dissimilar from direct recruitment. While it is not required for a candidate targeting the rotation program to establish a communication channel with faculty members interested, it is encouraged. At the least, a candidate will gather information pertinent to who is actively recruiting rotation students in their labs, and who prefers direct admits. Applicants interested in the rotation program typically provide several investigators' names whose work they are mostinterested in.

b. **Timeline and the Interview Process:** The timeline and interview process for rotation program applicants are the same as those coming in for direct admission. The only difference is that candidates will decide on their labs for rotations after an offer is sent out to them. The graduate affairs committee will make a recommendation based on faculty interests in their application. However, candidates can adjust that request when the time comes to cement the rotation plan. Rotations are typically capped at a maximum of 3 labs.
c. **Rotations:** Each rotation student will select between two to three labs for rotations and will work with the Direct of Graduate Studies to formulate a plan for the rotation period.
d. **Purpose of the Rotations:** The purpose of rotation is to familiarize candidates with the research area, investigator and mentor fit, scientific and personnel environment of the lab. During rotations, the emphasis is not to generate a body of work and data, but to understand major scientific questions being investigated in the lab. The following are the key aspects that determine a successful rotation:
    i. Maintain a regular lab schedule.
    ii. Attend and participate in lab meetings, journal clubs, and other scientific activities in the lab.
    iii. Interact broadly with lab members to understand their projects, their interactions, and their relationship with the advisor. Understand whether the advisor is effective, communicative, and attentive to their scientific needs, timeline to graduate, and supports their long and short-term career goals.
    iv. Set up time with the advisor to regularly discuss potential research areas for your thesis.
    v. Understand the mentoring style of the advisor and whether that suits your scientific needs.

3. Role of the Advisor

General Philosophy: It is the advisor's responsibility to mentor graduate students. The relationships between advisors and students are unique and complex, as they are mainly a professional relationship with specific academic and research goals but also tend to be formed when students (and younger faculty) are proceeding through very transitional times in their life. Particularly if all parties remain in academia, they are also relationships that will impact your career for decades. It is therefore essential that advisors establish appropriate expectations, boundaries, strategies for success, authorship policies, and review processes from the start. It is strongly recommended that the parameters of this relationship be formalized in a mentorship contract on which both parties work together to establish (see Appendix F for a sample template). Below we outline three broad areas in which the advisor should provide guidance.

A. Fulfilling the Degree Requirements:

a. Helping the student understand the program requirements for their specific degree (*i.e.*, MSA, MSB, or PhD) from the beginning. This includes coursework requirements, how to form a thesis committee, the format of their qualifying examination (PhD), and a tentative timeline for completion (see Appendix A: Timeline for Degree).
b. As PhD students are mandated to publish a paper as a requirement for graduation. The adviser should be mindful of this requirement, include it in the mentorship agreement, and create a tentative timeline for completion.
c. Having regular meetings and discussions with the student to discuss their degree requirements and timeline to be sure the student is making appropriate and timely progresstoward the degree (see Appendix A: Timeline for Degree).

B. Completing Thesis/Dissertation Research:

a. Advising students on the selection of a research topic that is reasonable to complete within the time frame appropriate for the degree (PhD or MSA) and that fits well with the student's evolving interests and career aspirations.
b. Advising students on how to form a thesis committee that will provide valuable and critical feedback (see section V on the Thesis Committee). Reminding students that they are required to meet with this committee at least once per year.
c. Taking notes during Thesis Committee meetings, discussing the suggestions of the Thesis Committee in detail to be sure they understand what they need to do to make forward progress, and complete their Committee Meeting Report (see Appendix E).
d. Advising PhD students to meet with their Thesis Committee and prepare for their qualifying exam, to be completed in year 3 (see Appendix A).
e. Providing regular and timely constructive feedback on students' progress, including constructive criticism on experimental approaches, analyses of results, and drafts of any manuscripts, proposals, or presentations.
f. Modeling and providing clear guidelines on the execution of research with integrity (including, but not limited to, lab safety protocols, responsible animal care, and the inclusion of proper experimental controls). Remember, many students will be new to laboratory research and likely new to our campus and department. It is the advisor's responsibility to teach them how to do science in accordance with university policies and standards.
g. Encouraging independent, original, and critical thinking by being open and receptive to student input. In parallel, the advisor should guide the student through important literature in their field so that the student is aware of how their research relates to that of others.
h. Discussing each student's research needs and providing them with necessary resources (including appropriate lab-specific funding for supplies and equipment) and/or help to obtain needed resources/expertise within the research community.
i. Assisting the student in finding and applying for funding to support their research, including external fellowships, etc.

j. Providing opportunities for the student to improve their scientific writing and presentation skills, *e.g.*, writing/revising manuscripts or presenting at group meetings.
k. Providing and discussing clear criteria for authorship on publications, including those to which a student contributes outside their major thesis project.

C. Professional Development:

a. Encouraging participation in scientific meetings, both locally and nationally/internationally.
b. Facilitating both practical and intellectual collaborations with other scientists, including those on campus and at other institutions.
c. Providing career guidance, including help writing a CV, preparing for job interviews, and writing letters of recommendation in a timely manner.
d. Helping students to explore various career options, directing them to available resources, and respecting their unique interests and priorities in pursuing their individual career path.

4. Role of the Student

General Philosophy: Graduate school is a time in which a student grows into an independent, free-thinking scientist. Throughout graduate school, students work closely with advisors, mentors, fellow graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, and staff in a collegial and collaborative environment. The graduate student role is to work towards becoming an independent scientist and develop skills to navigate a professional environment. Graduate students (advisees) are expected to play an active role in their growth, development, and education throughout their graduate program. To do so, advisees should:

A. Maintain consistent communication by:

a. Working with their advisor and committee to establish appropriate/preferred forms and timing of communication as well as minimum time frames for response.
b. Creating an agenda for recurring meetings which contains a brief recapitulation of prior meetings, work conducted since the last meeting, and work-related issues.
c. During meetings, the advisee is expected to take notes on feedback provided by the advisor and confirm goals set to accomplish for the next meeting.
d. Utilizing recurring meeting time to discuss any foreseeable or current changes to degree timelines and career goals.

B. Actively assess and tailor mentoring relationship by:

a. Discussing career development efforts and opportunities for the upcoming semester.
b. Completing a comprehensive annual review (See Section XI) which will be submitted to Committee Members and GAC.

C. Engage with department to maximize their graduate experience by:

a. Attending weekly department seminars
b. Supporting fellow graduate students at Tuesday 770 talks and EcoLunches
c. Conducting yourself in a respectful, professional manner
d. Actively participating in BGSA meetings, programs, and events

5. Role of the Thesis Committee

General Philosophy: The committee's job is to help the student become a professional scientist and gain the skills necessary to obtain the post-graduate positions the student aspires to. The thesis committee serves both a supportive and also an evaluative role.

In the life sciences, the role of a graduate student's dissertation committee is critical and vital to the long-term success of the student and as a future scientist. The committee should provide a diversity of make-up in scientific expertise to provide the student with effective breadth and depth of knowledge as well as advice and counsel for both the academic training of the student as well as guidance in the conducting of a cohesive and thorough research investigation. The combination of these factors are provided to ensure that the student will be fully prepared to succeed in a variety of different employment options at the conclusion of the graduate doctoral/masters degree. Students will work with their major advisors to identify faculty members with the correct expertise to serve on the student's committee. Standing Ph.D. committees include three faculty members (including the major advisor) from inside the department and one faculty member from outside of the department. Additional committee members can be added beyond the minimum, if their expertise will benefit the student and their thesis project. Furthermore, faculty members outside of the university who provide a unique expertise not found within the university can be temporarily added to the graduate training faculty in order to serve on a student's committee. Regular meetings with the thesis committee, either as a group or with individuals, is highly encouraged. However, at minimum a student needs to meet with their committee at least once per year. The thesis committee will provide the following:

A. **Academic Guidance:** The committee can provide suggestions about courses that will enhance the student's training. The student in consultation with their major advisor will then take these suggestions under consideration.

B. **Qualifying Exam:** The committee should agree upon and provide the student with a solid understanding of the *expectations* for both the written and oral portions of the qualifying exam at a committee meeting prior to starting preparations for the exam. Satisfactory completion of the oral exam will include passing (score 3-4) the Biology Department Learning Objectives outlined on the Graduate Student Achievement Assessment Form.

C. **Research Guidance:** Guidance in the completion of the student's research project is the major component and role of the committee. For the purpose of proper and effective mentoring, the committee must have a breadth of expertise and in some cases external counsel that will guide the student in multiple research directions. In this regard, the future growth and development of the student's career will also be shaped beyond that of the sole expertise of the major advisor. It is also critical that the committee fully understands that the research progress and growth of the student requires adequate funding, therefore required experiments must be financially feasible. The goal of the committee in guiding the research progress should assure that the student can encompass and complete the research program within an average of 3 years and ideally not more than 4 years following successful completion of the qualifying exam.

D. **Exit Exam:** The committee, in consult with the advisor, will determine when the student is ready to stand for their final exit exam. The committee should agree upon and provide the student with a solid understanding of the expectations for the written document of the dissertation, the public presentation of the dissertation research, and the defense of that to the committee at the exit exam. The thesis should be sent to the committee 4 weeks prior to the defense. After the public oral research presentation, the committee will conduct a closed-door examination on the research project and related field of research. Satisfactory completion of the oral exam will include passing (score 3-4) the Biology Department Learning Objectives outlined on the Graduate Student Achievement Assessment Form. The committee may require additional edits to the written thesis before satisfactory completion of the degree.

6. Annual Progress Report

Per the DGS Handbook *"The Graduate Faculty of each doctoral program is required to define good progress toward completion of the doctoral degree. This information should be included in the program's Graduate Student Handbook (it is recommended that the consequences of lack of good progress are also included in the handbook; for Biology please see our Rules, Regulations, and Policies for Good Progress towards completion of degree). Each doctoral student's progress toward the degree will be reviewed (at least) annually by either the Graduate Faculty in the program, the doctoral advisory committee, or the graduate education committee. Students will be informed in writing of the results of that meeting by the Director of Graduate Studies or the chair of the advisory committee, or their designee. These reports do not need to be forwarded to the Graduate School."*

General Philosophy: The annual progress report is beneficial to students because it helps to provide a clear and concise map of the student's growth and development during their graduate program. This documentation also provides the DGS and GAC with a continuum of the student's progress and allows early recognition of any issues that may hinder adequate progress (either individual or systemic) toward the degree and fosters an environment to collectively work towards addressing any hindrances in a timely manner.

Ideally, good progress towards a student's degree will be assessed in the student's annual thesis committee meeting. To safeguard the process, for example in cases where students have not met annually with their committee, all thesis based graduate students will complete an annual progress report (see Appendix B and C) which will be submitted to the GAC, their advisor, and their thesis committee on July 1 each year. The reporting period will cover the previous 12 calendar months. The GAC will review the progress reports during July and August and will identify students in good standing and those who's progress towards degree completion has been impeded. These difficulties may include (1) not having a committee meeting within the past 12 months, (2) not completing the qualifying exam by the completion of the third academic year (6 semesters in the graduate program), (3) enrolled beyond the 6th academic year in the program, (4) poor coursework performance, (5) other concerns voiced by the student, mentor, and/or thesis committee. Students in good standing will be notified early in the Fall Semester. See Appendix D for details regarding the evaluation of the annual progress report.

7. Student Mentors

General Philosophy: The goal of the peer mentoring program is to pair each first-year graduate student with an experienced graduate student that will provide guidance and advice on how to navigate the transition into our PhD program. This program is student initiated and run by the Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA). The Graduate Training Faculty and Graduate Affairs Committee of the Department of Biology will support the graduate students in providing this program, given sustained interest in student mentoring by the graduate students/BGSA.

A. Goals

a. *Mentor:* facilitate new student transition into the biology department by serving as an early point of contact, sharing experiences, providing resources within and outside of the department, and easing social integration into graduate student life.
b. *Mentee:* experience successful integration into the biology graduate program by communicating issues, concerns, successes, and goals.

B. BGSA Commitment

a. Host social gatherings for mentors/mentees.
b. In the case of an issue between mentor-mentee pairing, the VP of BGSA is tasked with finding a new match for the mentee.

C. Benefits of Peer Mentoring Program

a. Mentors receive invaluable experience in mentoring, a skill which is necessary for most PhD level positions.
b. Mentees receive guidance to facilitate transition to graduate school, integrate into the department by establishing relationships outside of their lab, and social support via participation in BGSA.
c. The peer mentoring program overall builds more cohesive relationships through increased inter-laboratory communication.

8. Switching Advisors and Committee Members

General Philosophy: Occasionally student's committee members or major advisor needs to be changed (for a variety of reasons). When reformatting a committee or choosing a new advisor, the ultimate goal is to identify what option is in the best interest of the student.

A. Revising thesis committee members after the qualifying exam and/or dissertation proposal occasionally happens. These situations include, but are not limited to, faculty members leaving the university and faculty members needing to excuse themselves due to time restraints. If a new committee member is added to the committee after the dissertation proposal has been approved, the student will convene a committee meeting as soon as possible, but at least within the semester the change occurs. During the initial meeting with the new thesis committee, the student will present the previously approved dissertation experiments, including detailed background information for each chapter, detailed methods for each chapter, and then a summary of the research completed to date. It is within the new committee's purview to recommend changes to the previously approved project at this time, but the committee needs to be cognizant of the time to degree completion. Ideally, prior to joining the committee, the student and their advisor should discuss with the (potentially) new committee member their expectations for the thesis.

B. In the rare cases where a faculty member leaves the university, the student will work with their advisor, committee and/or DGS to identify their path forward, although the burden should fall on the departing faculty member. The ultimate goal is to identify what option is in the best interest of the student. The student may choose to transfer to the new program (hence, move with their advisor). If the student chooses to remain in the program, the departed faculty member may choose to maintain graduate faculty status in the Biology Department and can continue to mentor the student, although a co-advisor will need to be identified. If the student chooses to not move with their advisor and a new mentor cannot be identified, leaving the program with an MSA or MSB (depending on progress in the program) may be necessary.

C. Switching major advisors, although disruptive to a student's academic progress, may be necessary in certain situations. These situations include, but are not limited to, changes in an advisor's ability to oversee a project, a student's redefinition of their area of interest, or irreconcilable differences between the student and their advisor. The DGS* should be notified immediately about these issues to ensure a solution is found as quickly as possible. If the student-advisor relationship is dissolved, the DGS* or another faculty member will act as a temporary academic advisor until the student is able to identify a new faculty member to serve as their major advisor. During this time, the student will work in consultation with the DGS* and their thesis committee to identify a new major advisor (or co-advisors) as quickly as possible. There are multiple options for identifying a new major advisor, with lots of flexibility, and it is the DGS's/committee's job to facilitate the best outcome for the student, although the student is expected to take an active role in finding a new advisor. In some cases, an appropriate advisor may be outside of the department (for example Entomology or Forestry), in which case the student will just need to identify a co-advisor from the Biology Department. If no faculty member (or co-advisor team) is found, the committee will help the student graduate with a MSA (or MSB depending on the status of the research project) and/or transfer to another program. The ultimate goal, again, is to figure out a path forward that is in the best interest of the student, which in some cases may unfortunately be to leave the program if no faculty member with the appropriate expertise can be identified.

*If the DGS has a conflict of interested, the student should find any member of the faculty they feel comfortable with in consultation with the department chair or associate chair.

Appendix A
Biology PhD Timeline

Year One
First Semester
- Take BIO 770 Seminar in BIO: Biology Graduate Student Orientation (2 credits) & other courses for a total of 9 credit hours.
- Take core and topical courses as appropriate.

Second Semester
- Students participating in the rotation program should formally decide upon an advisor.
- The advisory committee should be formally appointed by the Graduate School by the end of the first year in the program. This will require completion of the"Doctoral Advisory Committee Request" form.
- Continue to be enrolled in 9 credit hours.

Helpful Tips….
- Start Applying for fellowships now.
- Attend Departmental Seminars.
- Prepare for unpaid time in the summer, start an allotment to save money for 12 weeks of summer.

Year Two
- Schedule first committee meeting.
- Full-time course load (at least 9 hours)
- Attend Departmental Seminars

Year 3
Preparing for your Qualifying Exam
- At a minimum, you must complete the equivalent of two years of residency (36 graduate credit hours) to be eligible to sit for the qualifying examination
- At least 2 weeks before exam: Schedule exam with the Graduate School
- After successfully passing the qualifying exam register for BIO 767 – 2 credit hours counts as full-time.
- Attend Departmental Seminars

What if I don't pass the qualifying exam?
1. If your thesis committee allows it, you may retake the exam one time. The second exam must be scheduled no sooner than 4 months after and no later than one year after the date of thefirst examination.
2. Pursue an MSA (Thesis Master's) or an MSB (Coursework Master's). Contact the DGS as soon as you are considering either of these options.

Years 4-6
Dissertation Research and Preparing for your Final Defense
- Continue to register for 2 credits of BIO 767 each semester. REGISTER UNDER YOUR ADVISOR's SECTION.
- Attend Departmental Seminars.
- Schedule one committee meeting each year.
- Apply for degree via myUK
- Prepare for your exit seminar
- At least 8 weeks before exam: submit notification of intent with the Graduate School.

- At least 4 weeks before exam: Submit dissertation to committee for review and approval.
- At least 2 weeks before exam: Schedule exam with the Graduate School after committee approves dissertation.
- Submit the final copy of your dissertation to the Graduate School within 60 days of the exam

Appendix B
Annual Progress Report Form (PhD)

BIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
*****Accomplishments in 202_____-202_____*****
Due in the Biology Graduate Office July 1

ALL INFORMATION MUST BE COMPLETED. ALL INFORMATION COVERS THE PREVIOUS 12 CALENDAR MONTHS AND SHOULD BE PROVIDED AS AN ATTACHMENT. TYPED TEXT IS PREFERED, AS COPIES OF THIS INFORMATION WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR THEIR USE IN COMPILING VARIOUS REPORTS. Please be advised that the failure to submit this paperwork on time may jeopardize future TA funding.

Name: _____
Mentor: _____
Year Entered Program: _____
Dissertation Committee Members: _____

I. Annual Committee Meeting
ATTACH *COPY OF YOUR LAST COMMITTEE MEETING FORM*
a. Dates: _____
b. Outcome: _____
_____
_____

II. Prequalifying Exam Coursework
36 Credit Hours Required
a. BIO 795 Credit Hours: _____
Max 24 Credits Can Be Applied towards the required 36 Credits
b. BIO 770 Credit Hours (4 minimum): _____
c. Other Credit Hours: _____

III. Qualifying Exam
a. Taken
i. Date: _____
ii. Format: _____
iii. Outcome: _____
b. Not Taken
i. Anticipated Semester: _____
ii. Anticipated Format: _____

IV. 4th Year Talk (Check One)
a. _____ Not Yet Completed
b. _____ Completed on (Semester): _____

V. First Author Publication (Check One)
A first author publication from work from one of your dissertation chapters needs to be published or under review for completion of the degree.
a. _____ Manuscript in Preparation
b. _____ Manuscript submitted and under review
c. _____ Manuscript Published (Provide DOI:_____)

VI. Anticipated Semester for PhD Defense: _____

VII. Training Plan/Mentor-Mentee Contract (Check One)

a. _____ Available (**attached**)
b. _____ In progress

VIII. Research

*Provide as an **attachment** a brief summary of your research progress that includes:*

a. Results obtained over the past year and any problems you encountered and how these problems are being addressed.
b. Brief outline of your plans for the upcoming year.

IX. Grants

List the date, agency, purpose, and status of any extramural submissions for awards or funding (indicate funded proposals). If you contributed substantially to the submission of a lab grant, include that information.

X. Teaching

List the courses you taught during the past 12 months.

XI. Mentoring of Undergraduate Research Students

List names of any undergraduates you have supervised in their capacity as research assistants on your dissertation or other project.

XII. Attach Current CV and Transcript

*CV must include **(1)** presentations at professional meetings, **(2)** publications, **(3)** awards, **(4)** outreach activities.*

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Your signature: _____ Date: _____

Your advisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C
Annual Progress Report Form (MSA)

BIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
*****Accomplishments in 202_____-202_____*****
Due in the Biology Graduate Office July 1

ALL INFORMATION MUST BE COMPLETED. ALL INFORMATION COVERS THE PREVIOUS 12 CALENDAR MONTHS AND SHOULD BE PROVIDED AS AN ATTACHMENT. TYPED TEXT IS PREFERED, AS COPIES OF THIS INFORMATION WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR THEIR USE IN COMPILING VARIOUS REPORTS. Please be advised that the failure to submit this paperwork on time may jeopardize future TA funding.

Name: _____
Mentor: _____
Year Entered Program: _____
Thesis Committee Members: _____

I. Annual Committee Meeting
ATTACH *COPY OF YOUR LAST COMMITTEE MEETING FORM*
a. Dates: _____
b. Outcome: _____
_____
_____

II. Coursework
30 Credit Hours Required
a. 600-700 Credit Hours (15 minimum): _____
b. Regular (non-research) Credit Hours (20 minimum): _____
c. BIO Prefix Credit Hours (20 minimum): _____
d. 700 credit hours (3 minimum): _____
e. BIO 768 (6 credits):_____

III. Anticipated Semester for Thesis Defense: _____

IV. Training Plan/Mentor-Mentee Contract (Check One)
a. _____ Available (**attached**)
b. _____ In progress

V. Research
*Provide as an **attachment** a brief summary of your research progress that includes:*
a. Results obtained over the past year and any problems you encountered and how these problems are being addressed.
b. Brief outline of your plans for the upcoming year.

VI. Grants
List the date, agency, purpose, and status of any extramural submissions for awards or funding (indicate funded proposals). If you contributed substantially to the submission of a lab grant, include that information.

VII. Teaching

List the courses you taught during the past 12 months.

VIII. Mentoring of Undergraduate Research Students

List names of any undergraduates you have supervised in their capacity as research assistants on your dissertation or other project.

IX. Attach Current CV and Transcript

*CV must include **(1)** presentations at professional meetings, **(2)** publications, **(3)** awards, **(4)** outreach activities.*

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Your signature: _____ Date: _____

Your advisor's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D
Department of Biology Standard Operating Procedures for evaluating Annual Progress Reports
Last modified: 11/9/2021

Purpose of APRs

The purpose of student annual progress reports (APRs) is to enable the GAC to determine whether key milestones are being met that will ensure timely progress towards the doctoral or master's degree. The GAC is **NOT** responsible for evaluating research progress and quality. This is the responsibility of the student's advisor and thesis committee. Instead, evaluation of the APR is intended to determine whether a student is in good standing in progress towards degree and to identify other impediments to student progress, including administrative, academic, and advising issues.

Satisfactory progress towards degree (aka good standing) as determined by the APR is one component of being eligible for TA funding; the other component is successful completion of previous TA responsibilities, which is assessed by the Associate Chair for Education and **NOT** the GAC. Eligibility for RA support is determined by the individual faculty or staff serving as Principal Investigators for the research projects.

Evaluation of APRs

Each year, student progress reports are submitted by July 1st. Each progress report will be assigned to a minimum of two GAC members, who will check for indicators of dissertation/thesis progress (courses completed, evidence of research output such as conference presentations, publications, grants) and evaluate the following specific milestones:

PhD-specific milestones:

1. Pre-qualifying exam students:
    1. Is the student on track to complete required coursework prior to the qualifying exam?
        1. 12 credit hours of non-BIO 795 coursework
        2. 6 credit hours of BIO 770 (current requirement, may change)
        3. Is the student earning Bs or better?
    b. End of Year 1: has the student joined a lab and formed a dissertation committee?
    c. End of Year 2: has the student set a target qualifying exam date and format?
    d. End of Year 3: has the student passed their qualifying exam?
2. Post-qualifying exam students:
    a. End of Year 4:
        i. Did the student give their fourth-year presentation?
        ii. Has the student submitted a manuscript and/or do they have clear plans for manuscript submission?
        iii. Does the student have a target dissertation date?
    b. End of Year 5 +:
        i. Has the student submitted a manuscript and/or a manuscript in preparation?
        ii. Does the student have a target dissertation date sometime within the next year?
3. All students:
    a. Year 2+: Has the student had a committee meeting within the last year?
    b. All Years: Is the student maintaining a 3.0 GPA (required to be in good standing in the graduate school)?

MSA-specific milestones:

1. Is the student on track to complete required coursework (30 credit hours total)?

a. 3 credits of BIO 770
b. At least 15 credits must come from 600-700 level courses
c. At least 20 credits must come from regular (non-research or residency) courses
d. At least 20 credits must come from BIO prefix courses
e. 6 credits of BIO 768
f. Is the student earning Bs or better?

2. End of year 1: has the student formed a thesis committee?
3. End of year 2+: Was there a committee meeting within the past year and does the student have a target thesis defense date?

Possible outcomes of APR evaluation (see below for more details on each outcome):

1. **Satisfactory progress:** all milestones met.
2. **Satisfactory progress, with contingencies:** critical milestones met (or, if not, an explanation for the delay and a plan for meeting missed milestones is provided), but some deficiencies need to be addressed.
3. **Unsatisfactory progress**: critical milestones missed.

Definition of satisfactory progress (in good standing in progress towards degree):

PhD students:

Student progress is considered satisfactory when all milestones have been met, including:

1. A committee meeting within the last year (Year 2+).
2. Year 1: joined a lab and formed a committee (Note: for rotation students, this can be done by the end of the fall semester of Year 2).
3. Year 2: in consultation with the committee, have agreed on a format and semester for the qualifying exam.
4. Years 1 and 2: On track to complete coursework prior to qualifying exams.
5. Year 3: qualifying exam passed.
6. Year 4: 4th year presentation completed, manuscript submitted or in preparation.
7. Year 5+: target defense year, manuscript submitted.

MSA students:

Student progress is considered satisfactory when all milestones have been met, including:

1. Year 1: Formed a committee.
2. Year 1: On track to complete required coursework by end of year 2.
3. Year 2: Student has completed course work, had a committee meeting within the last year and has clear plans for completion of these items by the end of Year 3.

Satisfactory progress, with contingencies (in good standing in progress towards degree):
There can be various reasons as to why students do not meet particular milestones by a target date. If a student has not completed a milestone by the target date, the student's APR should include a brief explanation as to why this milestone has not been met and a specific plan for completing this milestone. This plan should be approved by the advisor and dissertation/thesis committee. With the GAC's approval, the student can still be considered in good standing contingent on completing this milestone before the next semester or the next APR. Specific deficiencies and contingencies may include:

PhD students:

1. Student did not have a committee meeting within the last year

    a. Must have a meeting within the semester.
2. By end of year 1, hasn't formed committee
    a. Must form a committee by the end of the fall semester.
3. By end of year 2, hasn't determined semester and format of quals
    b. Must decide on timing and format by the end of fall semester.
4. By end of year 4, hasn't given 4th year seminar
    a. Must give a seminar ASAP in the fall semester.
5. By end of year 5 and beyond (evaluated yearly), does not have a clear defense date target.
    a. Must have a committee meeting in fall of year 6 to lay out defense plans.
    b. Year 6 and beyond: Committee meeting each semester until the student defends.
6. If a student gets lower than a B in a graduate course, this puts them at risk of falling out of good standing with grad school (>3.0 for good standing)
    a. Must have a meeting with their advisor to identify problems with coursework and discuss resources available for improving study/writing/time management.

MSA students:

1. Student did not have a committee meeting within the last year if in year 2+.
    a. Must have a meeting within the semester.
2. By end of year 1, student hasn't formed committee.
    a. Must form a committee by the end of the fall semester.
3. By end of year 1, student has completed less than 10 credit hours of regular coursework *OR* by the end of year 2, student has not fulfilled all coursework requirements.
    b. Must describe how required coursework will be completed by the end of year 2 *OR* by the end of the target defense semester.
4. By end of year 2, student hasn't defended master's thesis
    a. Must have a committee meeting in fall of year 3 to lay out defense plans.
    b. Year 3 and beyond: Committee meeting each semester until the student defends.
5. If a student gets lower than a B in a graduate course, this puts them at risk of falling out of good standing with grad school (>3.0 for good standing)
    a. Must have a meeting with their advisor to identify problems with coursework and discuss resources available for improving study/writing/time management.

Unsatisfactory progress (NOT in good standing in progress towards degree):
Progress reports are deemed unsatisfactory when one or more of the following milestones are not met and GAC approval has not been given for the delay:

PhD students:

1. Student has not had a committee meeting within the last ***two*** years.
2. Student has not taken their qualifying exam by the end of the summer following Year 3 and has not received permission from the DGS to delay until Year 4.
3. Student has not given their 4th year seminar by the end of the fall semester of Year 5.
4. Student has not defended or does not have a clear defense plan by the end of Year 6.
5. Student is not in good standing with graduate school (GPA<3.0).
6. Student did not address contingencies to stay in good standing (see above).

MSA students:

1. Student has not had a committee meeting within the last ***two*** years.

2. Student has not completed required coursework by the end of Year 3.
3. Student has not defended or does not have a clear defense plan by the end of Year 3.
4. Student is not in good standing with the graduate school (GPA<3.0).
5. Student did not address contingencies to stay in good standing (see above).

Process for students making unsatisfactory progress:

Upon concluding that a student's progress is unsatisfactory, the GAC will contact the student and the student's advisor to address the situation. When a student's progress is considered unsatisfactory, they will be placed on probation until the issue is resolved, which includes the following conditions:

1. The student and advisor will be required to submit a plan to the GAC and the student's advisory committee for getting back on track within two weeks of receiving the progress report evaluation. The GAC will then schedule a meeting with the student and advisor to discuss this plan. Together, they will agree on a plan of action and target dates for completion of missed milestones.
2. While on probation, the student will be ineligible for department enrichment and fellowship support (including but not limited to Ribble mini-grants, department travel funds, and Merit/Morgan fellowships).
3. While on probation, the student will be required to submit a progress report *each semester*.
4. While on probation, the student will be required to meet with their committee *each semester*.
5. If a student does not meet the target dates outlined in their plan by **March 1st**, the student will become ineligible for TA funds for the following academic year. Students may still receive RA support at the discretion of their research supervisor.
6. If the student does not meet targeted milestones after 2 semesters on probation, they may be recommended for dismissal from the program.

Appendix E
COMMITTEE MEETING FORM

Committee Meeting Report – INSTRUCTIONS

After each graduate student committee meeting (students pursuing MSA or PhD), the student's advisor will fill out the report form (second page of this document) and **return it to Jacquie Burke**. Below are some instructions on how to complete the form.

- Purpose of Meeting: brief statement that summarizes the main purpose of the meeting. For example, "first committee meeting; student will provide overview of proposed project" or "Student will update committee members on their progress".
- Approved timeline/target completion date: it is recommended that the committee discuss a timeline for degree completion with the student, even early in the process. As the student progresses into their 4th year and beyond, this discussion should be more specific as to the target date of completion.
- Tentative/revised research topic approved: most appropriate for first meeting, but can also be used for recording significant changes in the student's research topic.
- Coursework approved, subject to completion of the following (note semester to be taken): Students should discuss their coursework with the committee and the adviser should note when the student has completed (or is near completion) of all coursework.
- (Ph.D. only) Approved to proceed with qualifying examination (note deadline/timeframe): If the committee has agreed that the student is ready to take their qualifying exam, a timeframe and/or deadline for completion should be set.
- (Ph.D. only) Format of qualifying exam: The adviser and committee will agree on a format for qualification, including all written and oral presentation components. The student should be given both details and a timeframe in which they will be completed (above).
- Approved to proceed with defense (note deadline/timeframe): If the committee has agreed that the student is ready to defend their thesis, a timeframe and/or deadline for completion should be set.
- Format of defense: The adviser and committee will agree on a format for the thesis defense, including all written and oral presentation components. The student should be given both details and a timeframe in which they will be completed (above).
- Research progress: Use this section to briefly summarize what was presented at the meeting, the feedback provided by the committee, and the expectations the committee set for the immediate future and/or next meeting. Questions to consider DURING the committee meeting and in filling out this section include: "What concrete progress did the student present? What is the research plan for the coming year? Are there any known risks or impediments to the completion of this plan? Is the candidate making satisfactory progress towards a Ph.D? What do they need to do to continue/improve on their progress?" Any additional qualifications or conditions to this approval should be noted in the "Comments" section.
- Approved to proceed with defense (note target timeframe): Student has been approved to set a date for their thesis defense and should provide this date to Jacquie Burke as soon as it has been agreed upon by their committee.
- Other (describe): Any actions not described above.
- Comments: Use this section to provide any additional information, concerns, etc. on the student's progress that was discussed in the meeting.

Committee Meeting Report – FORM (to be completed by Advisor and returned to Jacquie Burke)

Student's name: _____ M.S. / Ph.D.

Research Supervisor/Advisor:_____

Meeting Date: _____

Previous Meeting Date: _____

Members Present:

_____

_____

Members Absent:

_____

Purpose of Meeting:

_____

_____

Action Taken:

_____ Approved timeline/target completion date (recommended):

_____

_____ Tentative/revised research topic approved: _____

_____

_____ Coursework approved, subject to completion of the following (note semester to be taken):

_____

_____

_____ (Ph.D. only) Approved to proceed with qualifying examination (note deadline/timeframe:

_____

Format of exam: _____

_____ Approved to proceed with defense (note deadline/timeframe): _____

Format of exam: _____

Research progress (see above instructions for considerations when completing this section):

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE

EXPECTATIONS FOR NEXT MEETING

_____ Other (describe): _____

Comments:

Supervisor/Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

Sample Mentor-Mentee Contract

This contract is between the mentee and his/her mentors. The mentee and each mentor will complete the form together after meeting to discuss goals and expectations. The mentor and mentee are both responsible for keeping the contract and reviewing/updating it as necessary. At the end of each semester, a review regarding progress should occur and any necessary changes should be made.

1. What are the research goals of the mentee for the upcoming academic year?

2. What are the professional development goals of the mentee for the upcoming academic year?

3. What expectations do the mentors have of the mentee (research and professional development)?

4. What does the mentee expect from the mentors to reach these goals?

5. How often will you meet?

6. When and where will you meet?

7. Who will be responsible for scheduling the meetings?

8. Expectations regarding feedback timelines.

9. What will be the ground rules for discussions? (E.g., confidentiality, openness, candor, truthfulness, etc.)

10. If problems arise, how will they be resolved?

11. Any concerns the mentee wants discussed and resolved?

12. Any concerns the mentors want discussed and resolved?

13. How will you know when the mentoring relationship has served its purpose and needs to be terminated?

Mentee Signature: Date:

_____ _____

Mentor Signature Date

_____ _____