

**Guidelines for the Graduate Program  
in Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior**

**2020-2021**

**(New Version to apply to students entering in Fall 2020)**

## **Overview:**

The Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior (EEB) offers graduate work leading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) and Masters (MS) degree in Biology. Due to the breadth of modern biological research, students are expected to become proficient in three of six areas:

1. Ecology
2. Evolution
3. Behavior
4. Genetics/Genomics
5. Physiology & Morphology
6. Conservation

Within the first three months of entering the graduate program, the student and his/her advisor will meet to discuss which three areas are most appropriate for that student. The student is expected to complete advanced coursework in those three areas. Additional courses are chosen by the student in consultation with the student's advisor and advisory committee. The number and nature of these courses will vary with the research interest and background of the individual. Previous graduate-level coursework can be applied. Although there are no required courses, students are expected to take whatever courses are deemed necessary for the successful completion of oral and written examinations.

All graduate students are required to hold an annual committee meeting. Failure to complete this requirement can result in denial of future teaching or research appointments. Students need to submit any written material (thesis proposal, thesis, etc.) to their committee members at least one week prior to a scheduled meeting, unless other arrangements have been made with an individual committee member.

Students are encouraged to begin research as soon as possible.

Student progress will be monitored in a variety of ways. All students in the program will receive a graduate student handbook outlining the expectations via e-mail. Included in the handbook will be information concerning the requirements for coursework, written and oral exams, proposal defense, teaching requirement, and final defense. In addition, students must fill out an Annual Survey each Spring. This annual survey is mandated by the Graduate College and consists of: (1) A student self-report and assessment of academic progress; (2) A statement prepared by the adviser and at least one other faculty member that assesses student progress, strengths and weaknesses; (3) An opportunity for the student to discuss this review in person. One faculty meeting each year will be devoted to monitoring the progress of all students in the program. Students failing to make adequate progress (not taking exams, not conducting research, low GPA, no committee, etc.) may be dismissed from the program.

### ***PhD Students***

Courses and Credits. - Doctoral degrees require successful completion of a minimum of 96 semester hours of graduate credit (i.e., credit at the 400- or 500-level). This includes credits received from courses, seminars, reading groups, and research credit. EEB is very flexible in its

course requirements. Students should work with their advisor and graduate committee to develop a coursework plan that prepares the student to take their preliminary exams and provides the student with the knowledge and tools needed to complete their research.

**Preliminary Exam.** - Following completion of coursework, students will take a preliminary examination to be completed by no later than the fifth semester of study. If students fail to meet this deadline, they will be on academic probation. The examination will consist of both written and oral questions and will test the student's general knowledge in the three areas they have declared as being most relevant to their research (see list of topics) as well as their preparation for thesis research. The written portion of the examination is to be completed within a one-week period and will cover general knowledge. The format is to be determined by the graduate committee, but students are encouraged to devote one day each to the questions proposed by each committee member. During the examination, the student can use whatever literature is necessary to address the question, unless committee members wish to assess general background knowledge without students having access to the literature. Following the written exam, the student will meet with each committee member to discuss the strengths and weaknesses revealed by the written exam. Within two weeks of the written exam, the student will complete an oral exam. The oral exam will pertain to their responses to the previous written questions and questions about general knowledge in the student's three areas. A realistic timeline for preparing would be studying and writing approximately 6 months prior to the expected prelim date. Examples of common prelim questions are available.

**Proposal Defense.** - Students must also submit and defend a thesis proposal by no later than the end of year 3 of their studies. The general format of the proposal is listed below. The purpose of the thesis proposal defense is twofold. First, the proposal should provide the thesis committee with enough information to determine whether or not successful completion of the proposed research would be sufficient for a PhD in EEB. Second, the proposal should be written in such a way that it demonstrates that the student is proficient in scientific writing. A passing grade qualifies the student as a PhD candidate. The proposal defense will be approximately one and a half hours.

**Recommended Proposal Format for Ph.D. proposals:** Students may use a different format provided that this has been approved by the advisor and advisory committee. Note that a Ph.D. thesis is expected to have a *minimum* of 3 original data/theory chapters.

Up to 8 pages single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins. References and Figures not included

1. Introduction of broad area of interest (knowledge gaps) leading into aims/objectives 1-2 pgs. This section is intended to explain to your committee the basic biology and theory grounding your proposal and the areas your work will address.

2. Study system

3. A series of aims and objectives. For each aim and objective:

Introduction to specific aim 1-2 paragraphs

Hypotheses

Data to be collected

Preliminary results (if applicable)

Methodology and Analysis- detailing how you will accomplish aims

### Expected Results

4. Synthesis and Significance of Proposed Work  
Students should write a paragraph or two of how these chapters will address knowledge gaps and the overall significance of the work.
5. Broader Impacts. - Students should write a paragraph on how the work will benefit society. This includes knowledge related to health, teaching materials, mentorship, improvements for industry or environmental concerns/regulation.
6. Timeline for completion - short but detailed tables are encouraged
7. References – This must have uniform format of your choosing.

*Advisory Committee Requirements.* - By policy of the Graduate College, the dissertation committee must be composed of at least four voting members, at least three of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty; at least two members must be tenured. The student's advisor is also a member of the dissertation committee. Students should assemble committees based on the three areas in which they have chosen to specialize. At least two members of the committee must be faculty members in EEB, and at least one member must hold an appointment in a department other than EEB. Students are strongly encouraged to form their committee by the end of their 1<sup>st</sup> year. Students must have a committee meeting by the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of their 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

*Teaching Requirements.* - Ph.D. students are required to serve as teaching assistants in undergraduate courses for at least two semesters. If a student has 5+ years of funding from sources other than teaching assistantships (e.g. RA or Fellowship), they can petition the Graduate Admissions Committee to waive this requirement.

*Thesis Defense.* - Finally, students must present a public seminar summarizing the results of their dissertation research. A thesis based on original work demonstrating a thorough knowledge of theory and techniques must be defended at the final examination. A successful dissertation will be sufficient in quantity and quality of the original research performed and be written in such a way as to suggest a strong likelihood of publication in scientific journals. Prior to setting the date of the thesis defense, Ph.D. students are required to have submitted, with approval of their advisor and/or committee, at least one chapter of their dissertation for publication. Students should aim to complete their PhD in five years.

### ***MS Students***

*Course Work Requirements.* - By the end of the second year, students must complete 32 hours of course work in their three core areas with grades no lower than B or S. Course work can be at the 400- or 500- level. 12 credits of 500-level are required. No more than 12 hours of research can be counted towards the 12 credits of 500-level credit. In other words, students should take 20 or more hours of graduate course credit at either the 400 or 500 level. This includes courses, seminars, and reading groups. Students must also have a minimum of 12 hours of 500-level credit. The 12 hours of 500-level credit may be all graduate research credits (i.e., IB 599).

In addition to course work, graduate requirements include completion of a thesis (599) that is defended. Student research will be guided and approved by an Advisory Committee of three faculty, including the Major Advisor who will serve as chair. Membership of the Advisory

Committee must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies for EEB. At least one member of the Advisory Committee must be a faculty member within EEB.

Beyond these requirements, the particular courses recommended by the advisor will depend on the individual student's previous training, experience, and knowledge of the subject matter. All students will be required to develop strong quantitative skills, which may require advanced course work in statistics or other analytical methods.

Each student is expected to make satisfactory progress towards the M.S. degree. Satisfactory progress is defined as meeting all degree requirements, including satisfactory grades in coursework, participation in seminars, performance in teaching and research, and passing examinations on or before their scheduled dates. A finding of unsatisfactory progress can be made at any time during the student's participation in the program and will be reported by the Graduate Committee to the student, the major advisor, and the director and result in the student being placed upon probation. A second finding of unsatisfactory progress will be cause for dismissal from the program. Masters students are typically expected to complete their degree within two years, depending upon their prior experience. One (or more) high-quality data chapter(s) is considered sufficient for a M.S. degree.

### ***Transitioning from a M.S. to a Ph.D.***

Occasionally, students are enrolled in the M.S. program and subsequently decide that they would like to pursue a Ph.D. This can be accomplished through one of two different mechanisms requiring either reapplying to the graduate program as a Ph.D. student or petitioning and getting approval from the Graduate Admissions Committee.

Mechanism #1: After completing their M.S., the student can reapply for the Ph.D. program. The student is considered for admission along with other new applicants. If accepted to the Ph.D. program, they are guaranteed five years of funding (as if they were entering the program anew). The data submitted as a part of the M.S. thesis may not be used for the Ph.D.

Mechanism #2: A currently enrolled M.S. student in good standing may petition to be reclassified as a Ph.D. student. In this scenario, the student does not necessarily complete a M.S. but petitions to transition to the Ph.D. program. As with all Ph.D. students, the student is guaranteed five years of funding, but the years already spent in the program count towards that total. For example, a M.S. student who has been in EEB for 2 years and is reclassified as a Ph.D. student will be guaranteed 3 years additional funding. Here, the data collected during the first two years may be used for the Ph.D.

### **Sample Exam Questions:**

The faculty are currently updating the list of sample exam questions. These will be distributed later. There will be sample exam questions for each of the six areas of study (evolution, ecology, conservation, behavior, physiology/morphology, and genetics/genomics). Students are expected to be proficient in three of the six areas. Students should keep in mind that the questions listed below are only examples and exams will not necessarily be limited to the questions listed here

(nor will students be expected to know all of these topics). Also, students should keep in mind that there is often overlap between the areas and are advised to read through all sections for relevant questions.

Students are required to meet with all committee members prior to their exams to discuss expectations. The last page of this section contains a form that you should take to your meeting with each committee member. Please bring the signed form with you to the prelim.

**EEB Annual Assessment of Graduate Program Learning Outcomes**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members – Print names and Each Committee Member will initial beside their name

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** At each annual committee meeting, as a committee, please come to a consensus and indicate the level of performance the student has demonstrated for each of the following learning outcomes; then, each committee member please sign the form.

<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Initiated</b>	<b>Attained</b>	<b>Reinforced</b>	<b>Mastered</b>
Student can design and implement independent research which integrates and applies core knowledge related to their specific field.				
Student can apply rigorous statistics/analytical methods that typify their area of study.				
Student demonstrates effective written and oral communication skills that are typical for the field. Evidence for this can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations</li> <li>• Publications</li> <li>• Proposal writing</li> </ul>				
Student is developing professional skills typical for academic researchers. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data management</li> <li>• Citation management</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Ethical conduct of research</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>				
Student has gained teaching experience.				
Student has developed proficiency and familiarity with grant and fellowship application.				

**Initiated:** Student has begun to develop this skill or is current taking coursework that supports this goal.

**Attained:** Student has developed skills or completed a course in this area, but has not yet begun to extensively demonstrate this skill.

**Reinforced:** Student has completed additional coursework, experience, or training in this area, and is demonstrating advanced performance in this area.

**Mastered:** Student has achieved a high level of performance in this area.

**Specific recommendations for continued development:**

*Please complete this form with your advisory committee and submit it annually to the Program secretary*

**EEB Pre-prelim Form**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Each student should meet briefly with each committee member prior to the exams. During this meeting, expectations for both the oral and written exam should be discussed. For each committee member, please indicate which of the six areas (Ecology, Evolution, Behavior, Genetics, Physiology, and Conservation) s/he will cover. All committees should have representation from at least three areas.

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Committee member Date	Area(s) to be examined	Signature
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Additional Comments:

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Committee member Date	Area(s) to be examined	Signature
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Additional Comments:

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Committee member Date	Area(s) to be examined	Signature
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Additional Comments:

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Committee member Date	Area(s) to be examined	Signature
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Additional Comments:



## **Graduate College Requirements:**

The following material lists the requirements of graduate students as stipulated by the Graduate College.

<http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/>

<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook>

## **Graduate Degree Requirements**

### **Registration Requirements:**

In order to receive a graduate degree a student must be admitted to the degree program and enrolled in the program for at least one term after admission, which could be spring, summer or fall. To be counted toward the graduate degree, hours must be at the 400-level or greater and approved for graduate credit.

### **Residence Credit:**

University of Illinois rules prescribe that a certain amount of credit hours for each degree received from this campus be taken as residence credit. Residence credit includes:

- graduate credit earned through an on-campus course at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,
- graduate credit earned through an Urbana-Champaign off-campus course or program,
- graduate credit transferred from the University of Illinois at Chicago or from the University of Illinois at Springfield,
- graduate credit earned through the BTAA Traveling Scholar Program, and
- credit earned in the College of Medicine that is approved for application to the student's graduate program for students in the Medical Scholars Program.

Residence requirements are outlined in [Rule 3-801 of the Student Code](#).

### **Research Credit and 599:**

A student cannot deposit a thesis without record of registration in research credit courses. Likewise, students with a record of registration in research credit will be required to deposit a thesis to complete their degree. Most departments use the course designation "599" to indicate research registration for both master's and doctoral students. Graduate students should register for research credit during semesters when they are working on the thesis.

Departments may set criteria that determine at what point in the program students may begin registering for research credit (599). Registration in research credit must always be done with the approval of the student's adviser.

The grade of DFR (deferred) is reported for research credit until the thesis has been completed, successfully defended if required, and deposited in the Graduate College. When a thesis is successfully defended and deposited, the DFR grades will be changed to S (satisfactory). If the student fails the final defense, the grade becomes U (unsatisfactory), and the thesis cannot be deposited.

If research credit is taken but thesis work is not completed, the 599 registration cannot be removed from the record. If the work will not be completed, the student must successfully [petition](#) for grades to permanently remain as deferred (DFR) in order to receive a degree. Students will not be certified for a degree with any grades of DFR in their academic record unless a [petition](#) has been approved.

### **Graduation Requirements**

**1. Degree Conferral (Graduation Date):**

Graduate degrees are conferred in May, August, and December.

**2. Applying for Graduation (Adding Your Name to the Degree List):**

In order to receive a degree, a student must apply to be on the degree list for the appropriate graduation date. Students should apply for graduation using the UI-Integrate Self-Service system. Deadlines for applying to be on the list for each graduation date are noted on the [Graduate College Academic Calendar](#). Applying for graduation is not the same as applying to participate in departmental or campus commencement ceremonies.

A student may not receive a degree with a grade of I, NR, or DFR in any course except thesis research, on their graduate record.

**3. Theses and Dissertations:**

A thesis or dissertation is an original, significant contribution to the scholarly literature of an academic discipline. In this section, “thesis” refers to both master’s theses and doctoral dissertations.

All University of Illinois graduate students whose programs require the completion of a thesis must deposit their manuscript electronically in the Graduate College. Department approval and review of the thesis is required before it can be deposited.

- a. **Deposit.** The Graduate College does not require students to be registered at the time of deposit, but some departments may, so students should consult with their department before depositing. A thesis will not be accepted for deposit until all required materials have been submitted and all corrections requested by the Graduate College Thesis Office have been made. Deposit must be made by the appropriate master’s or doctoral [deposit deadlines](#) set for each term. There are no exceptions. Upon deposit, the thesis becomes part of the student’s academic record. No changes may be made to a thesis after it has been deposited at the Graduate College.

- b. **Format.** The Graduate College will only accept theses that meet the formatting requirements set forth in the [Thesis Requirements](#). Many departments have additional, discipline specific format requirements, and the Graduate College requires that all students secure format approval from their department prior to format review in the Graduate College Thesis Office.
- c. **Dissemination.** Theses that are deposited as a requirement for the awarding of a degree are considered to be publications. Copyrightable works prepared by students as part of the requirements for a University degree program are deemed to be the property of the student.

As a condition of degree award, the University has the royalty-free right to retain, use and distribute a limited number of copies of the thesis, together with the right to require its publication for archival use (see [University of Illinois Board of Trustees' General Rules](#)).

In order to best disseminate and archive the significant work of University of Illinois graduates, the Graduate College requires that every thesis and the abstract be published. The Graduate College will determine the method of publication that most effectively secures the existence of the thesis in perpetuity. The theses will be available to the public through the University Library.

- d. **Permissions for previously published work included in the thesis.** Prior publication of parts of the thesis is increasingly common. If the copyright to the published work has been transferred to the publisher (or to any other party), the student should secure written permission from the current owner of the copyright to include the previously published material in the thesis to be submitted for deposit. Two copies of these copyright permissions should be included with the student's deposit materials.
- e. **Patent review.** If a student's thesis contains potentially patentable information, a student may wish to have the thesis held by the Thesis Office while patentability is assessed. Holding a thesis does not postpone degree conferral or graduation. A student wishing to have a thesis held during the patent review process must contact the [Office of Technology Management](#) (OTM) prior to deposit. OTM will review the student's request and notify the Graduate College if a thesis is to be held. Intellectual property is an important aspect of thesis research. See [chapter I.C](#) for more information.

#### 4. **Request for Certification of Degree Letter:**

A student who has fulfilled all of the degree requirements before the next conferral date may need certification for employment or to meet visa requirements. To request a degree certification letter, the student should use the [Degree Certification Letter Request form](#). A student who has not deposited the thesis with the Graduate College (when deposit is required), who owes money to the University, or who is enrolled in any course other than

research credit cannot receive a degree certification letter.

**5. Commencement:**

Commencement is a celebratory event, not a degree requirement. For details about participation, see the [Commencement Office](#) website.

**Requirements and Policies for Master's Degrees**

**1. Credit Hour Requirements:**

The Graduate College requires a minimum of 32 semester hours of graduate credit for the master's degree, although a number of programs require more. [The Graduate College requires that at least 12 hours be at the 500-level or greater and approved for graduate credit \(including thesis, research or independent study credit\), and that 8 of these 12 hours be in the major.](#) Half or more of the hours applied to a master's degree must be earned in courses counted for [residence credit](#). See the [Graduate College Policy for the Approval of New and Revised Graduate Degree Programs](#) for more details.

**2. Examinations:**

The Graduate College does not require a final examination or thesis committee for the master's degree. Departments that have such requirements determine their own rules for committee membership and administration of the examination. Master's students are not required by the Graduate College to be registered during the term in which they take their final exam, but some departments may.

**3. Completion of Theses:**

When a thesis is required for the master's degree, it must be deposited with the Graduate College. The Graduate College requires that master's theses be approved by a member of the [Graduate Faculty](#). In programs requiring a thesis deposit, the Graduate College does not require master's students to be registered during the term in which they deposit, but some departments may.

**4. Time Limits:**

A master's degree candidate is expected to complete all degree requirements within five years of first registering as a degree-seeking student in the master's degree program, unless the student is enrolled in a program with a different time limit that has been approved by the Graduate College. Students who have not completed the degree by this time will be put on academic probation. When supporting petitions for extensions of time to degree, it is the program's responsibility to determine whether old coursework is still relevant to the current degree.

## **Requirements and Policies for Doctoral Degrees**

Students are bound by the program and degree requirements in effect at their term of admission and are expected to be aware of these requirements. Students are not obligated to follow any subsequent changes to degree requirements unless the student has been Absent without Leave from the program (see [Leave of Absence policy](#) for details). Doctoral students should also review [chapter 4](#) for more information about degree requirements.

### **A. Credit Hour Requirements**

Doctoral degrees require successful completion of a minimum of 96 semester hours of graduate credit (see [section C](#) of this chapter for doctoral degree stages), except for those programs approved otherwise. Doctoral degrees also require successful completion of the preliminary and final examinations.

Doctoral degree candidates, regardless of transfer credits or a master's degree completed elsewhere, must complete at least 64 hours of residence credit ([4.A.4](#)) out of the total of 96 hours required for the doctoral degree, and should also see [chapter 3](#) for information about transfer credit. Thesis hours count toward residence credit.

### **B. Registration Requirements**

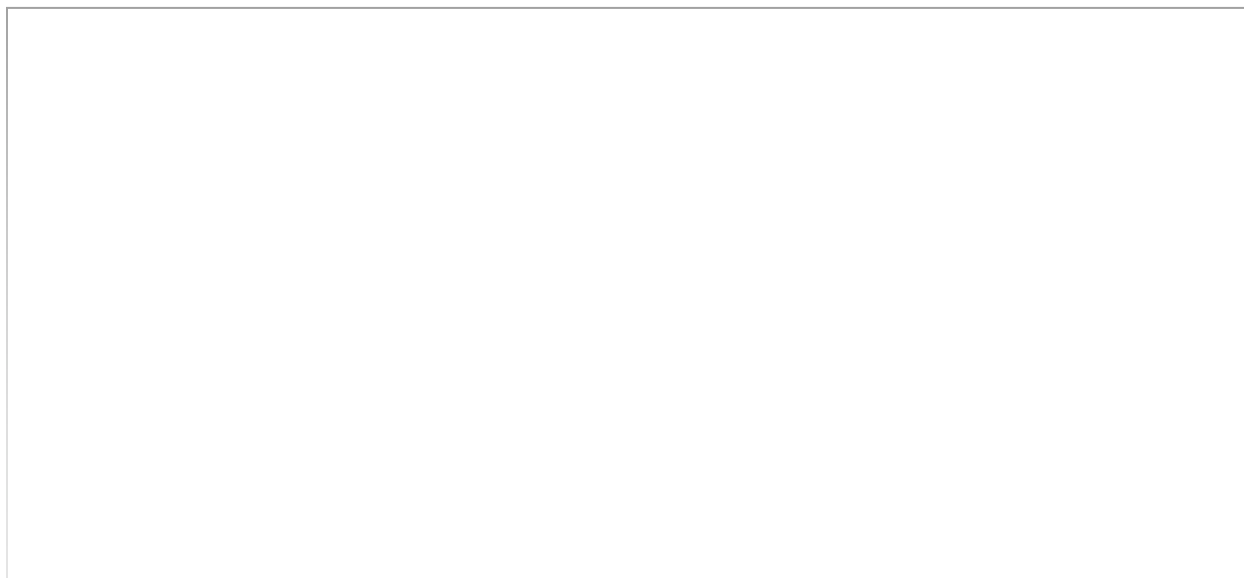
The Graduate College does not require that students be registered at the time of deposit. However, individual departments may have other registration requirements, so students should check with their department for details. The Graduate College does require that all doctoral candidates be registered for the entire academic term during which they take the preliminary examination and the term during which they take the final examination, regardless of when the dissertation will be deposited or when the degree will be conferred. For this purpose only, "academic term" is defined as extending to and including the day before the first day of the following academic term. If enough thesis credits have been accumulated, registration for zero hours is acceptable. See [chapter 2.B.4.](#) for more information about enrollment in GC 599 for loan deferral. For students in approved joint degree programs and in the [Medical Scholars Program](#), registration in either program during the academic term in which they defend meets the enrollment requirement

### **C. Directors of Research**

The research nature of doctoral degrees requires a student to work closely with the director(s) of research who oversees the graduate student's research project and dissertation. The director of research is often the student's adviser and is normally a member of the Graduate Faculty. It is the student's responsibility to find the director of research. Students are encouraged to establish this relationship early, and departments may have expectations about when this occurs. Doctoral students in [Stage III](#) must have a director of research in order to be in good standing.

## D. Doctoral Committees and Examinations

1. [Qualifying Examination and Qualifying Examination Committee](#)
2. [Preliminary Examination and Preliminary Examination Committee](#)
3. [Dissertation Committee](#)
4. [Final Examination and Final Examination Committee](#)
5. [Preliminary and Final Exam Result Forms \(PER/FER\)](#)



Committees may be formed and examinations given at various stages of graduate study in order to monitor and ensure the quality of graduate work. This chart provides an overview of committee structure and rules. For complete information and further details, see the relevant sections below.

### Overview

	Graduate College appointment & approval required	Student must be registered	Minimum number of voting members required	Minimum number of Graduate Faculty members required	Minimum number of UIUC tenured faculty members required
Qualifying Examination Committee*	not required by the Graduate College				
Preliminary Examination Committee	Yes	Yes**	4	3 (the chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty)	2
Doctoral Committee	not required by the Graduate College				
Final Examination (Defense) Committee	Yes	Yes**	4	3 (the chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty)	2

\* Note: Committee nomenclature may vary by department; for example, the qualifying exam is sometimes called a "comprehensive" exam.

\*\* See VI.B Registration Requirements.

**1. Qualifying Examination and Qualifying Examination Committee:**

The Graduate College does not require qualifying examinations, but departments may. Qualifying exams, usually given at the end of Stage I of the doctoral work (see [chapter 6.C](#)), evaluate the student's knowledge in the field and preparation for the doctoral program. The format of these examinations may be written, oral, or both, as determined by the program. The program must clearly communicate information about the format and rules (i.e. closed-book) to all students in advance. Departments may internally appoint committees to conduct these examinations.

**2. Preliminary Examination and Preliminary Examination Committee:**

The preliminary examination is one of the Graduate College requirements for completion of [Stage II](#) of graduate study.

**Format:**

- Preliminary examinations may be oral or written or both, depending on the unit's policy, and generally evaluate the student's overall and specific knowledge in the field. Preliminary examinations also usually include an oral presentation to review the feasibility and appropriateness of a student's dissertation research proposal.
- The doctoral degree program prescribes the scope, format and procedures associated with the examination, including the composition of the committee. The program must clearly communicate information about the format and rules (e.g., closed-book) to all students in advance. The student must be promptly notified of the examination result.
- All voting members of the committee must participate in the oral examination, the deliberation and determination of the results of the oral examination.
- Remote participation of the student or committee member(s) is permitted under the following conditions:
  - Technology must allow all participants to communicate throughout the examination and to access all materials presented. Video technology is encouraged for remote committee members and required for a student participating remotely.
  - The chair (or co-chair) and at least one additional voting member must be physically present in the examination room on campus. The chair is responsible for coordinating the use of any technology and for recessing the examination if technical problems prevent full participation and making arrangements to resume the examination promptly.
  - In extraordinary circumstances, the student can petition to participate remotely. Approval must be received from all members of the committee. The Graduate College strongly encourages the student to participate in person.

- Students in fully online doctoral programs can participate remotely without a petition.

**Registration:** Students must be enrolled for the entire academic term in which the preliminary exam occurs. See [chapter 6. B.](#) for details.

**Committee Appointment Process:** The preliminary examination is conducted by a committee appointed by the dean of the Graduate College upon recommendation of the executive officer of the unit. Persons authorized by the department to submit committee requests (as assigned in the [Graduate College Roles & Access Manager](#)) may make requests on behalf of the executive officer. The committee must be appointed before the exam takes place, and the Graduate College strongly recommends submission of the Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee form at least three weeks in advance of the exam date.

Once a committee has been appointed it remains active for 180 days or until a Pass or Fail result is submitted to the Graduate College, except in the case of a Defer result, [see below](#). Any revisions to the membership of an active committee must be approved by the Graduate College in advance of the examination.

If the examination did not take place within 180 calendar days after the date on which the Graduate College appointed the committee, the committee is dissolved and a new committee must be appointed before the examination occurs. The newly appointed committee may, but is not required to, consist of the same members as the dissolved committee.

### **3. Membership Requirements:**

- The preliminary examination committee must include at least four voting members, at least three of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty, and at least two of whom must also be tenured at the Urbana-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois.
  - Departments may request the inclusion of non-Graduate Faculty members who make a significant contribution as voting members of the committee. The dean of the Graduate College must approve, in advance, individuals who are not members of the Graduate Faculty who will serve as voting members of the committee. To request the approval of a non-Graduate Faculty member to vote, a curriculum vitae for the individual and a justification from the chair of the committee must accompany the request for appointment of the doctoral committee. Voting members, must have earned a terminal degree in their field of study and must have demonstrated expertise that qualifies them to judge the quality of the student's research and its contribution to the field. Each voting member must be well-positioned to vote independently and must be free from conflicts of interest. Additional guidance for nominating external members is available at <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/exams-committees>.



- The tenure requirement can be met by term members of the Graduate Faculty who retired or resigned with tenure for a period following their resignation or retirement, according to the Policy on Graduate Faculty Membership.
- The chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. At the department's discretion, a co-chair may be appointed. If appointed, a co-chair must meet all the requirements that apply to the chair.
- If there are more than four voting members on the committee, at least half of the voting members must be members of the Graduate Faculty.
- Non-voting members may be appointed but are rare on preliminary examination committees.

**Role of the Committee Chair:** The chair of the preliminary examination committee must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. The committee chair is responsible for convening the committee, conducting the examination, and submitting the Preliminary Exam Result form to the unit in which the student is enrolled and to the Graduate College. If appointed, a co-chair must meet all the requirements that apply to the chair.

**Results:** Decisions of the preliminary examination committee must be unanimous and are recorded on the Preliminary Exam Result form. The committee may make one of three decisions:

- Pass the candidate.
- Fail the candidate. A program may, but is not required to, grant the student another opportunity to take the examination after completing additional course work, independent study, or research, as recommended by the committee. However, if a second attempt is given, a new committee must be appointed by the Graduate College. The new committee may, but does not have to, consist of the same members as the original committee.
- Defer the decision. If this option is chosen:
  1. the same committee must re-examine the student,
  2. the second exam *must* occur within 180 calendar days of the date of first exam, and
  3. the outcome of the second exam must be pass or fail.

**Number of Attempts:** After a fail result, a student will only be allowed to take the preliminary examination one additional time while working toward the completion of any one program of study.

**Preliminary Exam Result Form:** All results must be recorded with the Graduate College on the Preliminary Exam Result form. See [Chapter 6.D.5](#) for additional details.

4. **Dissertation Committee:**

The dissertation committee does not need to be formally appointed or approved. The purpose of this committee is to advise the student with dissertation research and effectively monitor the student's progress, often before the student is ready to form the final examination committee. The Graduate College encourages formation of a dissertation committee as early as possible after the successful completion of the preliminary examination. In units with preliminary examinations that include the presentation of a proposal for the doctoral research, the dissertation committee membership may be substantially the same as the preliminary examination committee. The dissertation committee membership may also be the same or essentially the same as the final examination committee. There is no time limit on the duration of service of the dissertation committee, other than the length of time that the student is allowed to complete the degree.

5. **Final Examination and Final Examination Committee:**

**Format:**

- The examination consists of a public, oral examination followed by a closed-door deliberation of the committee. The student is informed of the result immediately following the deliberation.
- All voting members of the committee must participate in the entire duration of the final examination, and the deliberation and determination of the result.
- Remote participation of the student or committee member(s) is permitted under the following conditions:
  - Technology must allow all participants to communicate through the examination and to access all materials presented. Video technology is encouraged for remote committee members and required for a student participating remotely.
  - The chair (or a co-chair) and at least one additional voting member must be physically present in the examination room on campus. The chair is responsible for coordinating the use of any technology and for recessing the examination of technical problems prevent full participation and making arrangements to resume the examination promptly.
  - In extraordinary circumstances, the student can petition to participate remotely. Approval must be received from all members of the committee. The Graduate College strongly encourages the student to participate in person.
  - Students in fully online doctoral programs can participate remotely without a petition.

- Students must adhere to departmental procedures or requirements. These procedures and requirements must be clearly communicated to all students in advance of the exam.

**Registration:** Students must be enrolled for the entire academic term in which the final exam occurs. See [chapter 6.B.](#) for details.

**Second Preliminary Exam:** If more than five years elapse between a doctoral student's preliminary and final examinations, the student is required to demonstrate that his or her broad knowledge of the field is current by passing a second preliminary examination (see Time Limits in [chapter 6.E.](#) for details).

**Committee Appointment Process:** The final examination committee is appointed by the dean of the Graduate College, upon recommendation of the unit executive officer. Persons authorized by the department to submit committee requests (as recorded on the Authorized Signatures Form filed with the Graduate College) may make requests on behalf of the executive officer. The committee must be appointed before the exam takes place, and the Graduate College strongly recommends submission of the Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee form at least three weeks in advance of the exam date. As a matter of professional courtesy, the Graduate College recommends that individuals who served on a student's preliminary examination committee and who are not being appointed to the final exam committee be notified as part of the committee appointment process.

Once a committee has been appointed, it remains active for 180 days or until a Pass or Fail result is submitted to the Graduate College. Any revisions to the committee membership must be approved by the Graduate College in advance of the examination.

If the examination did not take place within 180 calendar days after the date on which the Graduate College appointed the committee, the committee is dissolved and a new committee must be appointed before the examination occurs. The newly appointed committee may, but is not required to, consist of the same members as the dissolved committee.

### **Membership Requirements:**

- The final examination committee must include at least four voting members, at least three of whom must be members of the Graduate Faculty, and at least two of whom must also be tenured at the Urbana-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois.
  - Departments may request the inclusion of non-Graduate Faculty members who make a significant contribution as voting members of the committee. The dean of the Graduate College must approve, in advance, individuals who are not members of the Graduate Faculty who will serve as voting members of the committee. To request the approval of a non-Graduate Faculty member to vote, a curriculum vitae for the individual and a justification from the chair of the committee must accompany the request for appointment of the doctoral committee. Voting members, must have

earned a terminal degree in their field of study and must have demonstrated expertise that qualifies them to judge the quality of the student's research and its contribution to the field. Each voting member must be well-positioned to vote independently and must be free from conflicts of interest. Additional guidance for nominating external members is available at <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/exams-committees>.

- The tenure requirement can be met by term members of the Graduate Faculty who retired or resigned with tenure for a period following their resignation or retirement, according to the Policy on Graduate Faculty Membership.
- If there are more than four voting members on the committee, at least half of the voting members must be members of the Graduate Faculty. The chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. At the department's discretion a co-chair may be appointed. If appointed, a co-chair must meet all the requirements that apply to the chair.  
Committee members should be chosen for their expertise in the student's research area, but may also be chosen to give diversity in viewpoint, methodology, or academic discipline. The faculty of a department may establish procedures or requirements for introducing diversity in the membership of the final examination committee (e.g., by including members from more than one sub-discipline within the department, from other departments, or from other institutions).
- Upon departmental request, the dean of the Graduate College may also appoint non-voting members to doctoral committees. Non-voting members do not need to be present at the final examination.
- The student's dissertation adviser (i.e., director of research) need not be the chair of the committee. Co-directors of research are acceptable.
- The chair must be a member of the Graduate Faculty. At the department's discretion, a co-chair may be appointed. If appointed, a co-chair must meet all the requirements that apply to the chair.
- Committee members should be chosen for their expertise in the student's research area, but may also be chosen to give diversity in viewpoint, methodology, or academic discipline. The faculty of a department may establish procedures or requirements for introducing diversity in the membership of the final examination committee (e.g., by including members from more than one sub-discipline within the department, from other departments, or from other institutions).

**Role of the Committee Chair:** The chair, and co-chair if appointed, of the final examination committee must each be a member of the Graduate Faculty. The final examination committee chair is responsible for convening the committee, conducting the examination, communicating any required revisions to the student, and submitting the Final Exam Result form to the department in which the student is enrolled and to the Graduate College. The Committee Chair may designate another voting member of the Committee to communicate the required revisions.

**Results:** Decisions of the Committee for the Final Examination are recorded on the Final Exam Result form. The voting members of the committee must make one of two decisions:

- **Pass the candidate.** The candidate passes the final exam if the Director(s) of Research vote Pass and no more than one of the remaining Committee members votes Fail. The Committee will indicate on the Final Exam Result form if revisions are required. The Committee will sign the Thesis/Dissertation Approval form after the completion of the examination and the completion of any required revisions.
- **Fail the candidate.** The candidate fails the Final Exam if a Director of Research votes Fail or if two or more Committee members vote Fail. A program may, but is not required to, grant the student another opportunity to take the examination after completing additional research or writing, as recommended by the committee. However, a new committee must be appointed by the Graduate College. The new committee may, but does not have to, consist of the same members as the original committee.

**Number of Attempts:** After a fail result a student will only be allowed to take the final examination one additional time while working toward the completion of any one program of study.

**Final Exam Result Form:** All committee member votes and the examination result must be recorded with the Graduate College on the same Final Exam Result form. See Chapter [6.D.5](#) for additional details.

**6. Preliminary and Final Exam Result Forms (PER/FER):**

The Preliminary Exam Result (PER) form and the Final Exam Result form (FER) verify that the student has completed the examination, regardless of the outcome. All voting members must record their vote. The department head (or authorized person) must affirm the accuracy of the result. The result of the examination is communicated to the student and to the Graduate College as soon as possible after the conclusion of the exam. The result must be received by the Graduate College no later than 180 days after the appointment of the committee. Examination result decisions are maintained by the Graduate College.

**E. Time Limits**

A doctoral student is required to graduate within **seven years** of first registering as a degree-seeking student in a graduate program. A student who enters the graduate program with an approved previous Master's degree that would satisfy Stage I of the doctoral program is considered entering at Stage II and is required graduate within **six years** of first registering as a degree seeking student in a graduate program. Stages of a doctoral program are described below.

Time extensions can be made under extenuating circumstance, as described below.

**Expected Graduation Date Calculation**

- Admitted to doctoral program as Stage I (No approved Master's): 7 years
- Admitted to doctoral program as Stage II (With approved Master's): 6 years
- Admitted to University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Master's program and continuation into UIUC doctoral program: Time limit will be calculated using admission term of the Master's program

## **Doctoral Stages and Time Limits**

**Stage I (Should be completed within 2 years of first registration in the graduate program):** A student is considered to be in Stage I from initial enrollment in the graduate program to completion of a master's degree or its equivalent. Each department should have a procedure for evaluating a student's progress at this first stage of doctoral work. Elements of this evaluation will include GPA, along with other factors related to good academic standing and satisfactory progress. In some departments, this evaluation may take the form of a qualifying examination, or other examination or series of examinations, which a student must pass before entering Stage II of the doctoral degree program. Evaluation of progress in Stage I, whether by examination or other formal review, should take place no later than the end of the second year after a student enters the doctoral program. The evaluation results should be communicated in writing to the student. Students who apply to a doctoral program having already completed a master's degree equivalent to that awarded by the University of Illinois are generally considered to have completed Stage I of the program unless the department deems otherwise, in which case the department must notify the student of the stage in which they are entering the program.

**Stage II (Must be completed by end of year 4 or 5 depending on admission stage):** A doctoral student is considered to be in Stage II from completion of the master's degree or equivalent to completion of all departmental requirements (except the defense and deposit of the dissertation), including passing the preliminary examination. In some programs, doctoral students entering with a master's degree will take a qualifying examination early in Stage II. Stage II usually consists of one or more years devoted to course work and research in preparation for the preliminary examination. Stage II must be completed no later than year 5 for a student entering in Stage I and year 4 for a student entering in Stage II and ends with the successful passing of the preliminary examination. Students who have not successfully passed their preliminary examination at the end of year 4 or 5 (as determined by their admission stage) of their graduate program will be put on academic probation.

**Stage III (Must be completed by end of year 6 or 7 depending on admission stage):** Stage III is the time from the completion of Stage II to graduation. Stage III consists of the student conducting research and writing their dissertation, successful passing of their final examination (defense) and deposit of their dissertation. Students in Stage III must have a director of research (who is often the student's adviser) who oversees the dissertation research (See Chapter 6.C.). Stage III must be completed by the end of year 7 of a doctoral program if the student entered as Stage I or by the end of year 6 if the student entered at Stage II. Students who have not completed Stage III by this time will be put on academic probation.

## **Leaves and Changing Programs**

- Degree time limits are not automatically extended for students who transfer from one doctoral program to another doctoral program within the Graduate College.
- Degree time limits are not automatically extended for students who do not register or who are on an approved leave of absence.
- The process to request extensions is described below.

### Re-Entering

In some unusual scenarios after review by the graduate department and Graduate College, it may be appropriate to restart the time limit for an individual student. Things to be considered would include the amount of time spent in the previous program and the amount of time away from the program. In these cases where the time limit is restarted, the student would follow the degree requirements for the new term of admission. This is documented through the re-entry process.

### Time Extensions

Exceptions to the above time limits are reviewed on a case-by-case basis through the Graduate College petition process.

### Use of Old Coursework

When supporting petitions for extensions of time to degree, it is the program’s responsibility to determine whether old coursework is still relevant to the current degree.

### Exceptions:

Program	Effective Term	Time to Degree
All College of Education Doctoral Programs	Fall 2000	7 years from first enrollment in doctoral program, after completing the Master's degree
Anthropology PhD	Fall 1999	10 years from enrollment in doctoral program, if no master's was earned previously

### Second Preliminary Examination:

If **more than five years elapse** between a doctoral student's preliminary and final examinations, the student is required to demonstrate that his or her broad knowledge of the field is current by passing a second preliminary examination. It is not adequate that the student has sufficient current knowledge in the area of the dissertation. The form of the second preliminary examination need not be identical to that of the first. Scholarly publications and college-level teaching assignments may be used as partial evidence of the student's current knowledge of his or her field, but a preliminary examination committee must be appointed by the Graduate College, an examination given, and its result reported to the Graduate College.

### **Dissertation Deposit:**

Students are expected to deposit their dissertation promptly following their final exam to preserve the currency of the research and the integrity of the document approved by the committee. Students must deposit their dissertation within three semesters (including the current semester). The deposit must be made by the published deadline for that semester. After this time, a new final examination may need to be conducted.

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### **F. Doctoral Exit Surveys**

Doctoral students at Illinois complete two exit surveys.

The [Doctoral Exit Survey](#) allows Illinois to compare students' experiences in its doctoral programs with those of students from peer institutions. Data from this survey helps improve doctoral programs on our campus. De-identified data from this survey are forwarded to the Association of American Universities (AAU) Data Exchange. Data compiled by AAU from member institutions facilitates the sharing of information nationally and provides a data pool that is used to shape graduate education at the national level.

The Survey of Earned Doctorates is conducted by the RTI International for the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and other supporting institutions. For more information about the Survey of Earned Doctorates, visit [their website](#).

All doctoral students are required to [complete](#) both the Survey of Earned Doctorates and the Doctoral Exit Survey at the time of final deposit. Students may decline to answer any or all of the questions.

### **Course Loads**

1. [Full-time Enrollment](#)
2. [Minimum Enrollment](#)
3. [Maximum Enrollment](#)
4. [Definition of a Credit Hour](#)

#### **1. Full-time Enrollment:**

Graduate students may be required to maintain “full-time enrollment,” and what constitutes full-time enrollment can vary. For example, departmental requirements, eligibility for student loans or other financial aid, fellowships, certain types of non-University insurance policies, or tax requirements may use different definitions of full-time enrollment. Students are responsible for understanding what requirements apply to them.

##### **a. For all students.**

- i. The Student Code contains the University definition of full-time status for students.



- ii. Simultaneous enrollment at another institution may not be added to hours enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in order to determine full-time status.
  - iii. For the Graduate College, enrollment in off-campus or online courses offered through the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign counts toward full-time enrollment.
  - iv. Audited courses do not count as any hours toward load.
  - v. For purposes of loan deferral only, zero credit registration in GC 599 will count as full time registration.
  - vi. Graduate student employees with assistantship appointments who are not registered for at least a half-time load in a particular term will be subject to Social Security and Medicare deductions from the assistantship pay for that term.
  - vii. Verification of full-time enrollment may be ordered from the Office of the Registrar's Transcript Section.
- b. **International students.** International students are considered by the Graduate College to be enrolled full-time when they meet the requirements as follows: International students with questions about full-time enrollment should see <http://iss.illinois.edu/students/flj1/> and contact the [Office of International Student and Scholar Services](#) for more details.
- i. International students on an F-1 or J-1 visa are required to maintain full-time enrollment for purposes of Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS) reporting. Students who are required to take ESL classes as a result of the English Placement Test (EPT) or because of teaching assistantship obligations, may reduce their course load by four credit hours for each ESL course taken. If the ESL class is recommended, not required, and you are having difficulty with English, you may ask for a reduction based on academic reasons.
  - ii. International students whose first term of study is the summer term must carry a full course load.
  - iii. Continuing international students are not required by the campus to enroll for the summer terms, although their departments may require enrollment. Those who do enroll do not need to carry a full course load for SEVIS purposes.
  - iv. International graduate students who have completed all credit requirements (course work and thesis research) for their degree programs may register for zero hours of 599 until completion of study. This registration will be considered full-time for purposes of SEVIS reporting. International students seeking this exception to the full-time credit requirements should contact [Office of International Student and Scholar Services](#) before registering for the reduced credit load.
- c. **Fellows and Trainees.** Fellows and Trainees with waiver-generating appointments are required to register during each semester of the appointment. It is important to note that some funding agencies may have a specific enrollment requirement. Please verify this information with your funding agency or by

contacting the Graduate College Fellowship office.

- d. **Assistants.** Assistants with [waiver-generating appointments](#) are considered by the Graduate College to be enrolled full-time when they meet the requirements as follows:

- i. Fall and/or spring term appointments: a minimum of 8 hours; individual programs may set higher requirements.
- ii. Summer term appointment: a minimum of 4 hours for at least the eight week portion of the summer term (enrollment during the four-week portion of the summer term will not qualify as full-time registration) [Please note that the University does not require summer registration to be eligible to hold a summer assistantship.

- e. **Students without appointments.** Students without [waiver-generating appointments](#) are considered by the Graduate College to be enrolled full-time when they meet the requirements as follows:

- i. Fall and spring terms: a minimum of 12 hours
- ii. Summer term: a minimum of 6 hours for at least the eight week portion of the summer term (enrollment in only the four-week portion of the summer term will not qualify as full-time registration)

- f. **Students with questions.**

- i. about registration load and loan deferment should consult their lenders (school, bank, or loan agency). Students may also contact the [Office of Student Financial Aid](#), or [finaid@illinois.edu](mailto:finaid@illinois.edu), for advice or referral to the appropriate office or agency.
- ii. about certification of full-time status should contact the Office of the Registrar.
- iii. about the requirements of specific academic programs should be directed to the graduate office for that program.
- iv. about their fellowships or traineeships should consult the Graduate College Fellowship Office or the funding agency.
- v. about full-time enrollment for international students on visas should contact the [Office of International Student and Scholar Services](#).

2. **Minimum Enrollment:**

- i. All students should keep in mind that enrollment below a full-time course of study may jeopardize progress toward a degree, financial aid, fellowship, loan deferment, or the visa status of an international student (see Full-time Enrollment above).
- ii. Some departments have established a minimum amount of credit for which their students must register.

3. **Maximum Enrollment:**

The maximum amount of credit in which a graduate student may enroll is 20 hours in fall and spring terms and 12 hours in the summer term. Students in non-degree status have other restrictions, and can see [chapter 2.A.2](#) for more information.

4. **Definition of a Credit Hour**

A credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates not less than:

(1) one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. It is customary for graduate courses that carry either 3 or 4 hours of credit to meet in organized instruction for 43 to 58 contact hours per term (3 to 4 contact hours per week in fall or spring) including examinations.