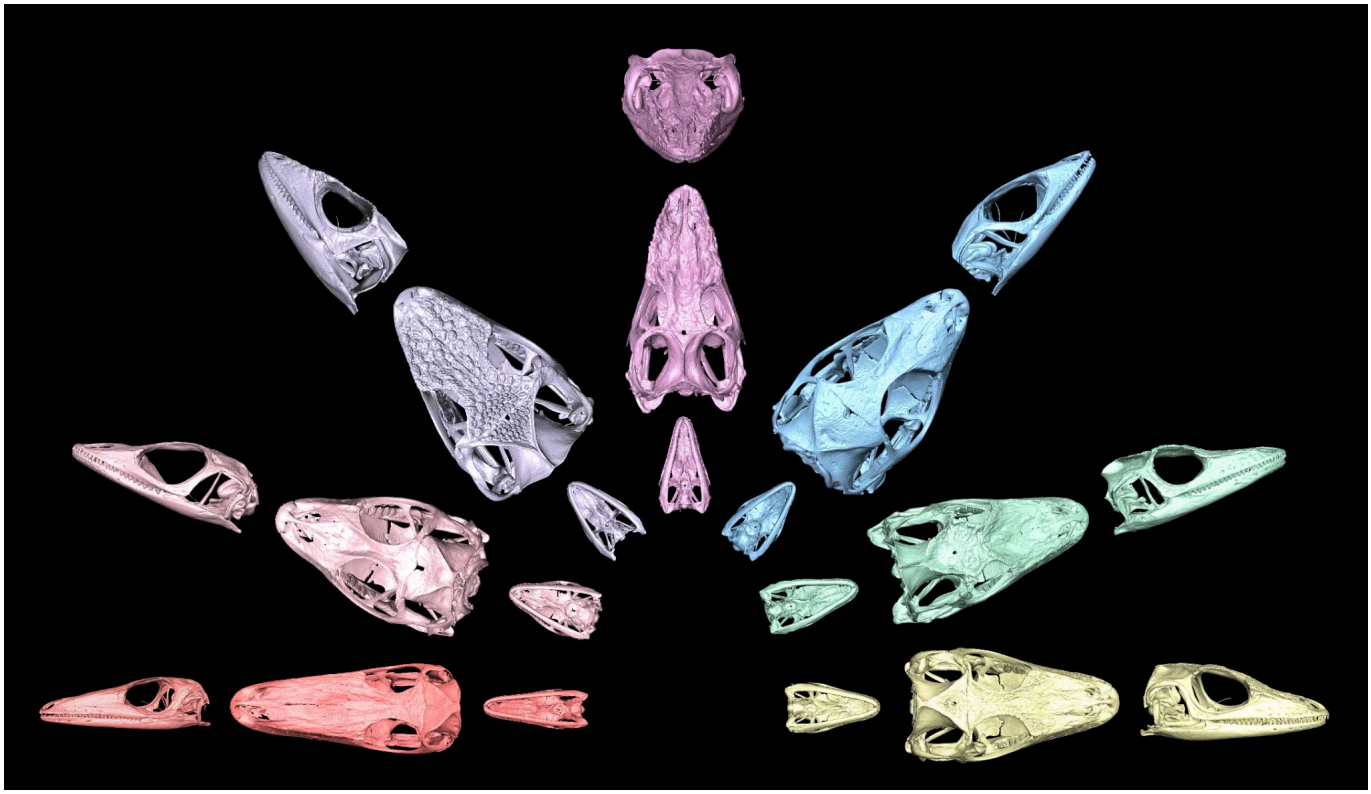
GRADUATE PROGRAM OF
ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION, AND BEHAVIOR
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN



"Anole Ecomorph Skull Visualization" by Tianyi Xu

2024-2025
Graduate Student Handbook
Doctoral and Master's Programs

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Welcome and Overview

The faculty and staff of the Ecology, Evolution and Behavior Graduate Studies Committee wish to welcome you to the EEB Graduate Program. We look forward to supporting your progress towards a graduate degree in EEB. We encourage you to use this handbook proactively throughout your studies as it is a summary of the university, department and graduate program policies and procedures. Additional information is on our website https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program.

Student Responsibilities

You are responsible for understanding the rules and policies that govern your academic degree. Use all resources available to you and plan well in advance to meet necessary deadlines. Please feel free to ask our Graduate Program Administrator about any deadlines, or issues you may have questions about.

The Graduate School website https://gradschool.utexas.edu/ is an excellent resource for information on degree requirements, as well as policies for applying to graduate and deadlines for thesis defenses and dissertation submissions. The Graduate School Handbook can be accessed at https://catalog.utexas.edu/graduate/

The College of Natural Sciences (CNS) website for Graduate Study is another great resource for graduate students (https://cns.utexas.edu/academics/graduate-study). This website covers college policies, graduate courses offered throughout all CNS graduate programs, professional development and career support options, Elective Specialty Areas (e.g., Science and Public Policy; Ethics and Social Responsibility; Concentration in Teaching and Mentoring; Concentration in Communicating Science; Data Analysis; Concentration in Leadership and Project Management), and additional Certificates that CNS students can complete in addition to their doctoral degree, such as Interdisciplinary Portfolio Options (e.g., Scientific Computation; Computational Medicine; or Applied Statistical Modeling).

This EEB Graduate Handbook is regularly updated and revised; please consult always the most current version of this Handbook posted at the EEB website listed above.

Finally, the most important source of information about the EEB Program will come directly from your graduate program coordinators, the graduate advisor, and the Associate Chair for Graduate Education. These are the people to communicate with about all the non-research aspects of your graduate degree, including funding, courses, requirements, fellowships, and others. Most of the communication from the EEB Program will be sent via email. It is your responsibility as an EEB student to stay on top of those communications, check your email daily, and respond promptly.

Graduate Students Bill of Rights

The IB Graduate Students Bill of Rights clarifies what graduate students can expect from their advisor(s) and the Department of Integrative Biology (IB). This Bill of Rights applies to all graduate students who are advised or co-advised by a faculty member with an IB affiliation. The IB Graduate Students Bill of Rights clarifies department-level rights not directly specified in the Graduate Students Bill of Rights & Responsibilities passed by the UT Graduate Student Assembly in 2015. The IB Graduate Students Bill of Rights is posted here:
https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/academics/graduate-program-resources/ib-graduate-students-bill-of-rights

Graduate Program and IB Administrative Structure

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

The Graduate Studies Committee consists of all faculty in the Department of Integrative Biology, plus faculty from other departments whose interests overlap with the EEB GSC. The GSC sets the policies of the graduate program curriculum and academic requirements within the guidelines of the Graduate School and the College of Natural Sciences.

Associate Chair for Graduate Education, IB (Dr. Kelly Zamudio, kelly.zamudio@austin.utexas.edu)

The Associate Chair for IB Graduate Programs administers overarching goals pertaining to the education and support of EEB, PB and IB-affiliated (students in IB labs, but not in the EEB or PB graduate programs) graduate students and is the liaison between these programs and the College of Natural Sciences.

EEB GSC Chair (Dr. Justin Havird, jhavird@utexas.edu)

The EEB GSC Chair is a faculty member who oversees EEB-GSC policies and EEB-GSC meetings, and serves as liaison to the Graduate School and the College of Natural Sciences.

EEB Graduate Advisor (Dr. Kelly Zamudio, kelly.zamudio@austin.utexas.edu)

The Graduate Advisor is a faculty member of the EEB GSC who advises graduate students, monitors their progress towards their degree, and serves as a liaison to the Graduate School and the College of Natural Sciences.

Graduate Program Administrators (Tamra Rogers, tamrabrogers@utexas.edu; Susan Stanford, susan.stanford@austin.utexas.edu)

The Graduate Program Administrators maintain student records, process, and monitor student funding, and ensure forms and procedures are processed in a correct and timely manner. Questions concerning procedures should be addressed with one of our Graduate Administrators who will consult with the Graduate Advisor, Associate Chair for Graduate Programs, The College of Natural Sciences, or the Graduate School, as necessary.

EEB Graduate Program Admissions Chair (Dr. Hans Hofmann, hans@utexas.edu)

The Admissions Chair oversees the process of recruiting, evaluating, and admitting applicants to the EEB graduate program.

EEB Graduate Program Minority/Minoritized & LGBTQ+ Officers (Dr. Shalene Jha, sjha@austin.utexas.edu

The Minority & LGBTQ+ Officer serve as liaison between the graduate students, the EEB GSC, the Department of Integrative Biology, and the College of Natural Sciences.

EEB GSC Faculty Members

Faculty members on the EEB Graduate Studies Committee can mentor EEB graduate students, advise and vote on EEB policies, and serve on EEB GSC sub-committees and dissertation committees. A list of current EEB GSC members is at https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/component/cobalt/items/1-directory?Itemid=1441.

Assistant Director for IB (Theresa Kelly, theresa.kelly@austin.utexas.edu)

The Assistant Director for Integrative Biology assists the Department Chair and is the office administrator for Integrative Biology. If you need a signature from the IB Department Chair, you should contact the Assistant Director for IB.

Graduate Student Representatives

EEB students can serve as representatives for the program. The representatives can attend IB departmental meetings as well as EEB program meetings. The positions are usually nominated and voted on amongst the graduate students every year at the beginning of the fall semester. Contact information for the current EEB Graduate Student Representative, the CNS Dean's Graduate Student Council Representatives, and the Graduate Student Assembly Representatives are listed here: https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/administrative-graduate-student-contacts

Student Advising

Each EEB student receives a personalized education, under the supervision of a faculty committee.

Major Professor(s)

Each EEB student has a faculty member appointed as major professor (principal investigator, PI) before arriving at UT. The major professor, or professors if co-advised, is responsible for providing the student with academic guidance regarding coursework, research, and the access needed to facilities and resources to conduct research. A major professor must be on the EEB GSC. If a student elects to be co-advised, the second co-advisor does not have to be an EEB-GSC member and does not have to be affiliated with the university, although in the latter case the co-advisor must be approved by the EEB Graduate Advisor and the Graduate School.

It is possible to add a co-advisor or to change major professor(s), if a student feels that additional expertise amongst advisors might be beneficial, or that another lab is better suited to serve the student's academic interests. This is not uncommon but can be a stressful decision in some cases. We advise you to consult with the EEB Graduate Advisor in these situations. If any changes are made regarding major professor(s), as well as the Dissertation Committee, the student needs to notify the Graduate Program Administrator about the change as soon as possible.

First-year students may opt to intern in two or three labs during their first year with approval of the relevant faculty. These internships ("rotations") are not required but are available on an opt-in basis. Internships allow the student to learn a variety of research perspectives and methods, and to ensure that they settle in a lab that best suits their academic interests. Internships may be as simple as attending lab meetings, completing a reading project under the guidance of a professor, or may entail field or lab work. If you and a professor(s) decide on this option, you must notify the Graduate Advisor and Graduate Program Administrator immediately.

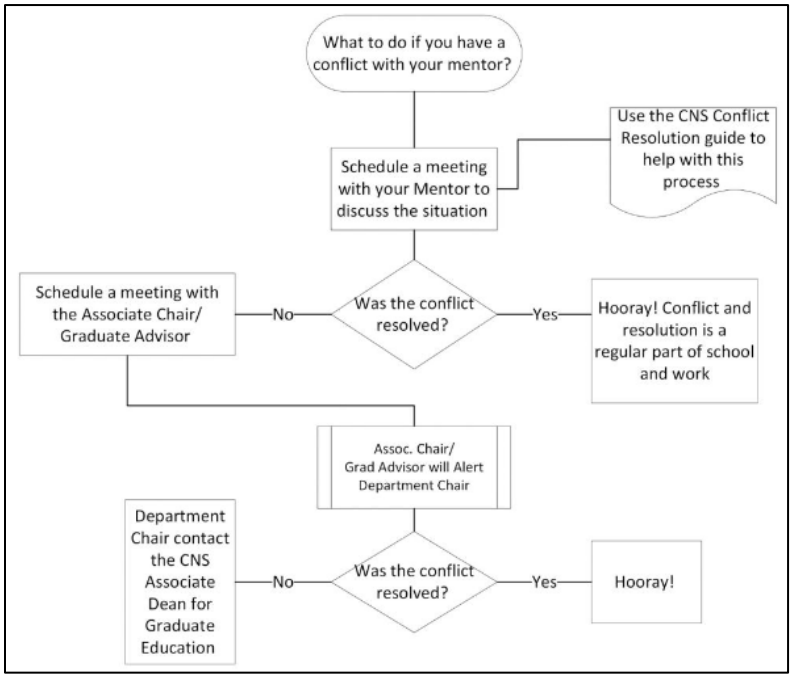
Mentorship, Accessibility, and Well-Being

The Mentorship Committee of the Department of Integrative Biology assists in the support of prospective, incoming, and current graduate students through mentorship and community-building; and addresses concerns or complaints about isolation, bias, harassment, mentor-student conflict, or any other well-being related challenges. All graduate students are encouraged to speak with one or more of the Committee members, the GSC Chair, the Graduate Advisor, the Associate Chair for Graduate Education, or the Graduate Program Administrator about any concerns they may have. We will coordinate with students on how to proceed. We will hold all student concerns in confidence, except in Title IX incidents (sexual assault, stalking, sexual harassment, sex discrimination); Texas state law requires that everyone

in the UT community is obligated to follow mandatory Title IX reporting to the University's Title IX Office (https://titleix.utexas.edu/). Further information, as well as a list of all current faculty, staff, and graduate student representatives serving on the IB Community, Accessibility and Well-Being Committee (CAW) are listed at https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/about/supporting-our-community.

Conflict Resolution

All students, faculty, researchers, and staff affiliated with the EEB GSC are expected to contribute to a work environment of cooperation, respect, and trust. If any conflicts develop (e.g., student-faculty or student-student conflicts), graduate students are encouraged to speak confidentially about any concerns they may have with their Graduate Advisor(s), one or more of their graduate committee members, the EEB GSC Chair, the Associate Chair for Graduate Education in Integrative Biology, or the Graduate Program Administrator. The flowchart to the right was adapted from a similar flowchart developed by the College of Natural Sciences to help navigate conflict-resolution procedures.



Course Advisory and Mentoring Plans

Mentoring Plan Part 1

During the fall semester of Year 1, each first-year student is required to complete Part 1 of a Mentoring Plan. Each first-year student develops this Plan in consultation with the student's Major Advisor, and the Plan is then approved by the Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Administrator will provide the form for the Mentoring Plan Part 1 at the beginning of the first semester, and the completed Mentoring Plan Part 1 is due 1st October.

Mentoring Plan Part 2

During spring semester of the first year of graduate studies, each first-year student is required to develop and complete Part 2 of their Mentoring Plan in consultation with the major professor and receive approval by the Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Administrator will provide the form for the Mentoring Plan Part 2 at the beginning of the second semester, and the completed Mentoring Plan Part 2 is due 1st February.

Amended Mentoring Plans

A student will need to submit an amended Mentoring Plan under the following two conditions:

- If a student decides to change the major advisor, it is a requirement for this student to develop a new mentoring plan with the new major advisor.
- If a student's research direction changes significantly, a student may benefit from a new mentoring plan, the student or the major professor can then request development of a new mentoring plan.

Annual Student Self-Assessment

All EEB students are expected to make reasonable progress toward completion of all degree requirements. Beginning with the student's second year, each student must meet with their major advisor(s) and complete a required Annual Student Self-Assessment of student accomplishments and progress towards completing degree requirements. It is the student's responsibility to set up this yearly meeting and complete the Annual Student Self-Assessment by November 1st each year. Once complete, the Self-Assessment must be routed through DocuSign for signature. [Note that the *Annual Student Self-Assessment* is different from the *Annual Committee Meeting Self-Report* that is discussed below. Both the *Self-Assessment* and the *Self-Report* are written by each student, but while the *Annual Student Self-Assessment* is written by a student to summarize the student's *own views* of accomplishments and progress towards completing degree requirements, the *Annual Committee Meeting Self-Report* summarizes the decisions and recommendations agreed upon during the annual meeting by the student's advisory Committee. Both the *Annual Student Self-Assessment* and the *Annual Committee Meeting Self-Report* are used by the EEB Graduate Student Evaluation Committee in its annual review of graduate student progress, and when the EEB Awards Committee awards merit fellowships, research and travel funds.] Flagrant or repeated violation of submitting the required Annual Student Self-Assessment in time may affect a student's eligibility for TA or GRA appointments or for fellowship support.

The form for the Annual Student Self-Assessment is available at https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/forms

Ph.D. Curriculum Requirements

The Graduate School requires 30 credit-hours of graduate-level coursework to complete a Ph.D. This includes classes, seminar courses, research and dissertation hours. The Graduate School policy is that students must receive a minimum grade of B- or higher to receive credit towards fulfilling degree requirements. EEB's policy is that students are required to fulfill the following coursework and training requirements:

BIO 389D – Subjects & Skills in Biological Sciences

This core course is required for all EEB graduate students during the fall semester of the student's first year. First-year EEB graduate students attend this course together with the first-year graduate students from the PB Graduate Program.

BIO 384L – Issues in Population Biology

Students must register for this seminar course for one semester.

Four Additional Lecture Courses

In addition to BIO 389D and BIO 384L listed above, each EEB student must take a minimum of four additional graduate-level lecture courses. Lecture courses are defined as courses that meet a minimum of two hours per week, including some instructor-led content (e.g., more than student-led discussion of readings), and involve both reading and graded assignments leading to a letter grade. Which courses count as lecture courses will be decided by the EEB Graduate Advisor, based on information provided in respective course syllabi. At least three of the four lecture courses must be graduate-level EEB courses that are taught by EEB GSC members. EEB students are required to take at least two of the three Fundamentals courses listed below (these are lecture courses taught by EEB GSC members, and count towards the above requirements):

BIO 390C – Fundamentals in Evolution
BIO 390D – Fundamentals in Integrative Animal Behavior
BIO 390E – Fundamentals in Ecology

Quantitative Skills Course

Each student must complete course work that emphasizes quantitative skills. Courses that satisfy this requirement may include non-EEB courses in areas such as mathematics, statistics, computer programming, bioinformatics, GIS, or EEB courses with heavy computational or mathematical training. The operational definition of a quantitative course, for the purpose of this requirement, is that the course should include multiple graded assignments in which students must apply learned quantitative skills to a task, including but not limited to mathematical operations and/or programming. Also, a majority (>50%) of class time should be devoted to teaching or exercising the quantitative skills. In order to qualify as part of a student's Program of Work, the course must be taken for a letter grade. Which courses count as quantitative skills courses will be decided by the EEB Graduate Advisor, based on information provided in respective course syllabi. A number of such courses taught recently are listed below.

Three Additional Seminar or Lecture Courses

This requirement can be fulfilled by registering for seminar, reading, or lecture courses. This is in addition to the BIO 389D, BIO 384L and four lecture course requirements (at least one of which is a quantitative course) listed above. The additional seminar courses have to be different courses with different course titles and topics (i.e., repeat enrollment in the same seminar course in different semesters, such as repeat enrollment in Bio 384K.45 Brain Behavior & Evolution Seminar, counts only as a single seminar course).

Department and Other Seminar Series

EEB expects that graduate students will regularly attend the seminar presentations given in departmental seminar series. EEB students should, at a minimum, regularly attend the:

- Population Biology **(BIO 384L)**. Lectures given by local faculty, students, postdocs, and visitors. All EEB student must register for Issues in Population Biology for one semester. Students are encouraged to enroll in this course in the spring of a student's first year.

- Integrative Biology and Plant Biology Seminar Series. Monday's 3-4 PM. Weekly departmental seminars during fall and spring semesters.

Additional seminar series with lecture presentations that may be of interest to EEB students include:

- Brain, Behavior, and Evolution Seminar **(BIO 384K.45)** Fridays 12-1. Lectures mostly given by local researchers, focusing on animal behavior, neurobiology, behavioral physiology, behavioral genomics, and related topics.

- Molecular Biological Sciences. Wednesdays 4-5 and Thursdays noon-1. Seminar series for the MBS Department.

Course Offerings

The 'Fundamentals' graduate lecture courses in Evolution and in Integrative Animal Behavior will be offered each year; the Fundamentals in Ecology course will be offered every other year. These classes provide graduate-level coverage of current knowledge in Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior. Each class is lecture-based and covers a diverse range of topics with heavy reliance on reading the primary literature to give students grounding in both classic publications and current research areas.

BIO 390C – Fundamentals in Evolution

BIO 390D – Fundamentals in Integrative Animal Behavior
BIO 390E – Fundamentals in Ecology

The following graduate lecture courses will be offered at least every few years, as faculty instructors are available. Students should feel free to contact the faculty listed with each course below to inquire about scheduling.

General Courses		
BIO 384K	Broader Impacts in STEM	Kemp
BIO 384L	Issues in Population Biology / Topics & Skills in Biological Sciences (spring only)	TBA, rotating faculty
BIO 389D	Subject/Skills Grad Students in Biology (fall only)	Jha, Mueller

Ecology Courses		
BIO 380C	Advanced Conservation Biology	Fowler
BIO 380E	Advanced Microbial Ecology	Baker
BIO 380T	Ecology Laboratory	Gilbert
BIO 381E	Ecology Seminar	Wolf
BIO 382K.4	Numerical Ecology in R	Matz
BIO 384K	Theoretical Ecology	Farrior
BIO 384K	Chemical Ecology	Sedio
BIO 384K.31	Recent Advances in Ecosystem Ecology	Jha
BIO 390E	Fundamentals of Ecology	Keitt, Sedio, Ostling. Farrior

Evolution Courses		
BIO 380G	Methods in Ecological Genomics	Matz
BIO 380P	Population Genetics	Kirkpatrick, Matz
BIO 384	Molecular Ecology	Havird
BIO 384K-39	Phylogenetic Perspectives in EEB	Hillis
BIO 384K-41	Fundamentals of Molecular & Genomic Evolution	Moran, Ochman
BIO 384K-43	Ancient & Environmental DNA	Kemp
BIO 384K	Mitonuclear Ecology	Havird
BIO 386K-3	Advances in Plant Systematics	Jansen
BIO 390C	Fundamentals of Evolution	Juenger, Kirkpatrick, Linder, Matz

Behavior Courses		
BIO 380F	Biology of Birds	Keitt
BIO 380T	Evolutionary Neurobiology	Zakon
BIO 384K	Biological Foundations of Decision Making	Hofmann
BIO 384K	Cognitive Ecology	TBA

BIO384K	Biology of Bonding	Phelps
BIO384K.45	Seminar in Brain, Behavior & Evolution	Phelps
BIO 390D	Fundamentals in Integrative Animal Behavior	Cummings, Ryan, Hofmann, Botero

Computational/Quantitative Courses		
ANT 388	Applied Data Analysis	Di Fiore
BCH 394P	Bioinformatics	Marcotte
BIO 380L	Advanced Systematics	Cannatella
BIO 382K	Python Programming for Biologists	Linder
BIO 382K.5	Meta-analysis	Havird
BIO 382K.6	Programming for Biology	Linder
BIO 382K.7	Ecological Theory and Modeling	Farrior
BIO 382K.8	Introduction to Biology for Data Science	Hofmann
BIO 384K	Quantitative and Population Genetics	Harpak
BIO 384K	Applied Data Analysis	Di Fiore
BIO 384K	Numerical Ecology in R	TBA
GEO 386G	GIS & GPS Applications in Earth Sciences	TBA
GEO 392P	Python for Geoscience Research	TBA
SDS 384	Data Visualization	Wilke
SDS 384-7	Bayesian Statistical Methods	TBA
SDS 385	Computational Biology & Bioinformatics	TBA
SDS 385	Stat Models for Big Data	TBA

Advanced Study and Research / Dissertation Hours

Students who have not yet advanced to candidacy must take BIO 182, 282, 382, 682 or 982 (Advanced Study and Research) as part of their course load (the first digit, such as 3, 6, or 9 of a course number, such as BIO 682, indicates the number of credit hours of a particular course). Enrollment in one of these courses provides credit in recognition of ongoing preparation to do research, but does not fulfill the lecture or seminar course requirements listed above. After admission to candidacy, students must register each semester for either BIO 399W, 699W, or 999W. Nine credit hours in the long semesters and 3 credits in the summer are required for full time status as graduate student. Please contact the Graduate Program Administrator if you need help deciding which of these courses is appropriate for you in a particular semester or summer.

Teaching Assistant Experience

EEB students are required to hold a Teaching Assistant (TA) position for a minimum of two long semesters (either fall or spring) during their time as a graduate student. Exceptions can be made for students who have served as a TA in a previous graduate program.

Oral Presentations

Beginning with their second year, all EEB graduate student are required to present a talk on their research at least once a year. Qualifying events include lectures in public venues such as the Population Biology Seminar Series; the Brain, Behavior & Evolution Seminar Series; the annual Integrative Biology Graduate Student Research Symposium (note that faculty do not participate in this student symposium, per wishes of the graduate students); seminar series at other universities, departments, or institutions; or oral presentations at conferences. Lab meeting presentations or poster presentations at conferences do not satisfy this requirement. Oral student presentations should be a minimum of 15 minutes to qualify. Students may split a one-hour seminar time-slot (e.g., in the Brain, Behavior, and Evolution Seminar Series) into two or three presentations by several EEB students.

Summary of Curriculum Requirements

Required Courses	Number of Semesters	When to Take
BIO 389D Subjects & Skills in Biology	1	Fall of first year
BIO 384L Issues in Population Biology	1	Spring of first Year
EEB Fundamentals	2	Take 2 of the 3 EEB Fundamentals course preferably before candidacy
Lecture course with quantitative requirement	1	Preferably before candidacy
At least 1additional lecture course	1	Preferably before candidacy
Research credit (BIO 382, 682, 982)	Ongoing	Every semester through admission to candidacy.
Dissertation credit (BIO 399W, 699W, 999W)	Ongoing	Every semester after admission to candidacy.
Seminar courses (or additional lecture courses)	3	Any semester before graduation
Teaching Assistant Experience	2	Any 2 semesters before graduation
Oral Presentation	Ongoing	Starting Year 2, give at least one presentation every year

Summary Timeline of Milestones

Time	Requirement
Year 1, fall	Complete **Mentoring Plan Part 1**, due Oct 1st of Year 1
Year 1, spring	Complete **Mentoring Plan Part 2**, due Feb 1st of Year 1
Year 1, spring	Form **Dissertation Committee** before end of the semester
Starting with Year 2, by Nov 1st	Complete **Annual Student Self-Assessment** form, due each year by Nov 1st
by end of Year 2	Present **Research Talk**, and continuing each subsequent year
Year 2	Complete **Qualifying Exam** before end of the summer, can petition to take Qualifying Exam in fall of Year 3
Post-Candidacy, by Nov 1st each year	**Annual Committee Meeting Self-Report**, each student summarizes in a report the Committee's recommendation after the annual Committee meeting, has this report approved by *each* Committee member, then files the fully approved report with the Graduate Program Administrator (see below).
Year 5	**Thesis Defense**, can petition for extension; celebrate Ph.D.!

Course work completed during Master's studies prior to EEB graduate studies

Students who already completed a Master's degree may appeal to the Graduate Advisor to waive a particular course requirement The operating principle is that we do not want our coursework to duplicate courses the student has already taken in a Master's program. The maximum number of courses that can be waived is two, and only one of the Fundamentals courses can be waived. Another lecture course or a seminar course in the EEB program can also be waived if it were redundant with a student's previous Master's program. The final decision on a waiver will be made by the Graduate Advisor in consultation with faculty who are experts in the field of a proposed course waiver. To justify the waiver request, the student must supply the Graduate Advisor with a copy of the syllabus of the relevant course/courses from their previous Master's program. Having a course waived does not reduce the number of courses that are required. For example, having one of the Fundamental courses waived does not change the requirement of four lecture courses; waivers do allow a student more flexibility in choosing coursework.

Qualifying Exam & Dissertation Proposal

In consultation with the Major Professor and with approval by the Graduate Advisor, each student chooses a committee that will administer the Qualifying Exam. This Qualifying-Exam Committee must be chosen during the second long semester (spring) of the first year. The student and Major Professor(s) propose a list of four or five faculty to serve on the committee, which will be approved by the EEB Graduate Advisor. The student's Major Professor is one of the 4-5 members of the Qualifying-Exam Committee. At least three Qualifying-Exam Committee members must be EEB GSC faculty members, and at least one member must be from outside the EEB GSC (this "outside" committee member cannot be a member of the EEB GSC). If the "outside" member is from UT-Austin, this outside member must be affiliated with another GSC at UT-Austin. If the outside committee member is from another university or is not an official member of a GSC recognized by the UT Graduate School, the outside member will be required to submit a CV to the Graduate Program Administrator for approval by the Graduate Advisor. One Senior Lecturer from UT-Austin can serve on the Qualifying-Exam committee with the approval of the Graduate Advisor.

A student who wishes to schedule a Qualifying Exam must complete the Qualifying Exam application form and prepare the Program of Work for Doctoral Degree. Both of these forms are available at https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/forms. The Program of Work includes an approximate thesis title (in order to give an indication of the student's research interests), but a research abstract is not required at this time. A draft of the Program of Work needs to be approved by the Graduate Advisor at least two weeks before the Qualifying Exam is scheduled to occur.

The Qualifying Exam Committee described above administers the exam. The EEB Graduate Advisor will choose the chairperson of the Qualifying Exam Committee from among the committee members who are not the student's major advisor(s).

Purpose

The purpose of the Qualifying Exam is to assess whether students have the intellectual capacity, maturity, and background knowledge to conduct research. Specifically, the exam is supposed to:

- evaluate student ability to identify and justify interesting research questions, including formulating appropriate hypotheses and predictions;
- assess student ability to place research questions into the context of current literature;
- assess student ability to plan strategies to answer research questions;
- evaluate the student's ability to communicate their questions and knowledge in written and oral form;
- identify gaps in student knowledge and recommend remedies; and

- provide an incentive for the student to hone the skills and knowledge necessary to proceed with research in their specific discipline. More general subject-matter knowledge is evaluated by grades from coursework completed by a student.

Prerequisites

Prior to taking the Qualifying Exam, students should have completed most of the required courses based on consultation with the major professor(s) and the newly selected Qualifying Exam Committee.

Scheduling

It is the student's responsibility to set up a date, place, and time for the exam when all committee members can meet. Students should schedule a three-hour time slot, however, if they would like extra time to prepare for or finish up the meeting, they can book additional time when reserving a room for the exam. Given University policy at the time of the exam, it is possible that the entire committee and the student can meet over Zoom. The student should check with the Graduate Program Administrator or the Graduate Advisor regarding these details.

The oral portion of the Qualifying Exam should take place no later than the end of the student's second year (fourth long semester or the subsequent summer). Students seeking to take their exam in their third year must petition the Graduate Advisor to approve the delay. Students who have not completed the Qualifying Exam before the end of their fifth long semester risk being re-routed by their Committee or by the GSC to the Master's degree track.

Qualifying Exam procedure

1) Students identify a Qualifying Exam Committee of four or five faculty in the spring of their first year, as described above. The Qualifying Exam committee membership can change up until the submission of the application form for the Qualifying Exam (see above, no later than two weeks before the Qualifying Exam is scheduled to occur). Many students choose members for the Qualifying-Exam Committee that later also become members of the Dissertation Committee that supervises student progress after a student passes the Qualifying Exam, but it is also possible to substitute or add committee members between the Qualifying Exam and the formation of the Dissertation Committee. Note that the members of the Qualifying Exam Committee require approval only by the EEB Graduate Advisor, whereas the members of the later Dissertation Committee (details below) also require approval by the Graduate School after a student has passed the Qualifying Exam.

2) To clarify expectations for the exam, in spring of their *first* year, each student will meet individually, one-on-one, with each Qualifying Exam committee member to discuss the student's research interests, possible research questions to be addressed, research strategies and techniques, relevant training, and funding. Each committee member should discuss with the student how the committee member's research expertise can help facilitate the student's training. Each committee member should also suggest and agree with the student on coursework, workshops, and independent reading assignments, to help train the student on agreed-upon topics relevant to the student's interests. Optimizing a training plan and research strategy may require follow-up meetings with each committee member or clarification/finalization of readings via email. The emerging recommendations represent a plan for the student's studies during their second year and define the topics that may be covered during the general knowledge portion of the Qualifying Exam. To formalize this plan, and to help prepare for the Qualifying Exam, each student should establish a cloud document (e.g., a Google Doc) where each faculty lists their assigned readings and expectations, and committee members can understand each other's expectations and assignments for the student, in preparation for the Qualifying Exam. The recommendations compiled in this document serve to define the scope of what is expected of the student in the general knowledge part (see below) of the Qualifying Exam.

3) Students are expected to take the Qualifying Exam by the end of their second year (by the end of the 4th long semester). In exceptional cases, a student may appeal with the Graduate Advisor to take the exam as late as the fall of their third year (5th semester).

4) At least 4 weeks before the Qualifying Exam, each student must submit a 10-15 page Dissertation Proposal to their committee, as the written portion of the Qualifying Exam. In the communication to the committee, the student must also indicate the due date for feedback (within 2 weeks of submission, see below). The students are highly advised to provide the Committee with at least one reminder in the interim, ideally 1 week after the Dissertation Proposal submission. The student *should work closely with the Major Professor(s)* to create this Dissertation Proposal, which will typically discuss:

   a. a succinct and clear summary of the existing literature on a topic the student aims to investigate;
   b. an overarching research question that a student plans to address in the dissertation research, and a clear explanation of why the question is worth answering;
   c. any preliminary data to motivate the question, as well as information or data that demonstrate that the planned work is feasible;
   d. a description of the research methods, planned data analyses, and possible interpretations of expected data;
   e. an explanation of how the research will be partitioned into dissertation chapters and eventual publications (at least three dissertation chapters, each corresponding to a journal article, is a common expectation);
   f. a time-line for completion of the research and all dissertation work;
   g. a description of the resources and funding required to complete the work, and how those resources and funding will be acquired or have already been acquired.

   The proposal should be in 11- or 12-point font with 1-inch margins. References do not count against the page limit of 10-15 pages.

   If the student does not submit the proposal on time to the committee (no later than 4 weeks before the scheduled Qualifying Exam), the Qualifying Exam must be rescheduled to allow the Committee sufficient time to give helpful feedback before the Qualifying Exam takes place.

5) No later than 2 weeks before the exam, each committee member must provide written feedback to the student and Major Professor on each of the projects and thesis chapters in the student's Dissertation Proposal. Committee members may provide individual comments as a written review of the student's Dissertation Proposal, or as track-changes or comments added to the student's word-document of the Dissertation Proposal. The comments accumulated from all committee members provide essential early feedback that student should use to adjust the proposed research plan *before the actual Qualifying Exam*. Students are encouraged to describe these changes to the research plan in their presentation within the *Dissertation Research part of the Qualifying Exam* (described below).

   In the same communication as the Dissertation Proposal written feedback, no later than 2 weeks before the scheduled Qualifying Exam, each committee member will make a recommendation on how to proceed with the Dissertation Proposal:

   a. **The Dissertation Proposal is ready** for discussion at the scheduled Qualifying Exam; no substantial revision of the Dissertation Proposal is necessary, but the student should consider the comments by all committee members and refine the student's presentation of the research at the Qualifying Exam accordingly.

   b. **The Dissertation Proposal needs minor revision**; the student should complete revisions no later than 3 days before the Qualifying Exam and send a revised version of the Dissertation Proposal to all committee members. The revised Dissertation Proposal should provide the committee with a written description of any minor or substantive changes to the original research plan.

c. **The Dissertation Proposal needs major revision**; the Qualifying Exam and defense of the Dissertation Proposal should be rescheduled for a later date so the student has time to complete these major revisions. The Major Professor must notify the committee if one committee member has made this particular recommendation so that a later date can be decided.

If Committee members disagree in their recommendations (e.g., some Committee members recommend minor revision, other members recommend major revision and therefore rescheduling of the Qualifying Exam), the entire committee should discuss their diverging recommendations expediently via Email or Zoom meeting to formulate a consensus recommendation.

6) A Committee member, someone other than the major professor(s), is assigned by the Graduate Advisor the responsibility as Chair of the Qualifying Exam. The Chair is responsible for strictly enforcing the exam rules, such as format and timing. The Chair should also communicate with the student during the week before the Qualifying Exam to clarify any questions that a student may have about format of the Qualifying Exam.

   a. The proceedings of the Qualifying Exam are initiated with a brief discussion among the Committee members (the student steps out of the room) about the student's progress and prospects for further work. At this stage the faculty mentor(s) should provide a brief summary of the student's accomplishments and performance as an EEB graduate student. The Chair should briefly summarize the format, rules, and goals of the Qualifying Exam as a reminder to all Committee members.
   b. General-knowledge part of the Qualifying Exam: The first portion of the exam (no longer than 1-hour duration is recommended, to leave sufficient time for the dissertation research part of the Qualifying Exam) addresses general knowledge questions about topics decided upon as described in point 2) above. The Major Advisor(s) do not ask questions or comment during this general-knowledge portion of the Qualifying Exam. Prior to the Qualifying Exam, the student may make a recommendation to the Chair of the Qualifying Exam which committee member should be first to ask questions during the general knowledge portion of the Qualifying Exam. At the end of the 1-hour general-knowledge portion of the Qualifying Exam, the committee will discuss these following options i.-v. (but will not share this discussion with the student until the end of the overall exam, except in the below cases iv. and v.):
      i. Pass general-knowledge part without conditions, and continue to discussion of the Dissertation Proposal.
      ii. Pass general-knowledge part with condition(s) to be recorded by the Chair of the Qualifying Exam, and continue to discussion of the Dissertation Proposal.
      iii. Fail the general-knowledge part for reasons to be recorded by the Chair of the Qualifying Exam, and continue to discussion of the Dissertation Proposal.
      iv. Reschedule the Qualifying Exam for a later date (e.g., if a student appears unusually nervous and the student would benefit from a fresh start with an Exam at a later date).
      v. Termination of the Ph.D. program.
   c. Dissertation Research part of the Qualifying Exam: In the second portion of the Qualifying Exam (minimum 1-hour duration, ideally 1-2 hours to allow sufficient discussion of the proposed research), committee members ask the student questions that address the specific research plan outlined in the Dissertation Proposal and submitted by the student 4 weeks before the Qualifying Exam (see points 4 & 5 above), and provide feedback on research feasibility. The Committee should determine through the questioning whether the student has sufficient knowledge and critical thinking skills to pursue the work effectively. To facilitate the research portion of the Qualifying Exam, *the student should prepare a brief power point presentation* (~15-20 minutes) given at the start of the research portion of the Exam to guide the discussion. In this presentation, a student should specify where the student has made changes based on feedback given earlier by the Committee. The Major Advisor(s) should take a back-seat to this discussion, but may contribute.
   d. The entire Qualifying Exam should not exceed 3 hours, with a short break between the general-knowledge and the research parts of the Qualifying Exam. Ideally, more time should be allocated

for discussion of the Dissertation Proposal (1-2 hours) than for assessment of general knowledge (no more than 1 hour).

e. At the end of the Qualifying Exam, the student leaves the room and the committee members consult about their decisions. Each committee member provides a separate evaluation for the student's written research proposal, general knowledge, and research plan of the Dissertation Proposal. By weighting these considerations, with feedback from the Major Advisor(s), the committee will decide between these options:
    i. Admit to Candidacy.
    ii. Pass with condition(s) recorded by the Chair of the Qualifying Exam; continue to Candidacy.
    iii. Pass with condition(s) recorded by the Chair of the Qualifying Exam; required rewrite of dissertation proposal, and/or required re-examination of general knowledge; do not admit to Candidacy.

In their deliberations following the Qualifying Exam, the Qualifying Exam Committee may consider not only responses to questions during the exam, but also the successful completion of formal coursework, prior research experience, and other evidence of academic achievement. When the committee has completed its deliberations on the student's performance and has decided on a recommendation, the student will be invited back before the committee to discuss the results of both parts of the examination. Approval of the dissertation proposal should occur no later than the end of fifth long semester in residence, with admission to Candidacy no later than the sixth long semester.

The Qualifying Examination Results form must be signed by all committee members. This form is completed through DocuSign and this process must be initiated by the graduate student after the Qualifying Exam. The student should go to the webpage with EEB forms, https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/forms and then to Qualifying Exam Results, which links to the relevant DocuSign portal. Once initiated by the student, the forms will be forwarded to each committee member for their signatures. If any additional coursework is required by the committee, the student and the Major Advisor(s) should make sure to add this coursework to the student's Program of Work for the Doctoral Degree.

Advance to Candidacy

When the student has passed the Qualifying Exam, the Dissertation Proposal has been accepted by the committee, and the Qualifying Examination Results form (see preceding paragraph) has been signed via DocuSign by all members of the student's committee, the student must return the signed form of the Qualifying Exam Results to the Graduate Program Administrator, who will then send the student the online form to apply for Candidacy with the Graduate School. In the application for Candidacy with the Graduate School, the student has to list all official members of the Dissertation Committee, which the student should discuss in advance with the Major Advisor(s) and the committee members. A student is not officially in Candidacy until the online form listing all members of the Dissertation Committee has been approved by the Graduate School.

After the Qualifying Exam, each student should check with the Graduate Program Administrator to be sure all the degree requirements (e.g., coursework) will be met well in advance of the Dissertation Defense.

All students are expected to make reasonable progress toward the degree. Once a student has been admitted to Candidacy for the Ph.D., the Dissertation Committee will meet with the student annually to review progress. It is the student's responsibility to set up these annual meetings. After each of the annual meetings, the student will prepare a written summary of recommendations that emerged from the meeting, the Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting Self-Report. See link to Forms at https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/annual-review-of-graduate-

student-progress. Each member of the committee will indicate approval by signing the Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting Self-Report, and the final signed document has to be submitted by the student to the Graduate Program Administrator to become part of the student's file. The Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting Self-Report must be submitted by November 1st of each year. Together with the Annual Student Self-Assessment (also due November 1st of each year), the Annual Dissertation Committee Meeting Self-Report is used by the EEB Graduate Student Evaluation Committee in its annual review of graduate student progress, and both reports are important evidence when the Committee awards merit fellowships and research and travel funds. Flagrant or repeated violation of filing the Student Self-Assessment and the Committee Meeting Self-Report may affect a students' eligibility for TA/RA appointments or fellowships. A formal meeting of the Dissertation Committee can be requested at any time by the student, or any member of the Dissertation Committee.

Dissertation Defense

During the semester the student intends to graduate and defend the Dissertation, a Graduate Application must be submitted online with the Graduate School: https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/doctoral-candidacy
This application is due early in the respective semester, so if you think you may defend, go ahead and submit the application. If by chance you don't defend that semester, or you are still revising the Dissertation when the deadline passes, you will just need to apply to graduate again the following semester. The Graduate Application is free, and a student can apply multiple times, if necessary.

Each student must meet with their Dissertation Committee on an annual basis once admitted to candidacy (see above). Critically, each student must meet within one year prior to the Dissertation Defense to review progress towards completion and obtain the Committee's approval of an approximate date for the exam.

When the Dissertation is essentially in its final form, it is circulated to the Dissertation Committee. When all members of the committee agree, the final oral exam needs to be scheduled with the Graduate School by completing the Request for Final Oral Exam form. This form is required by the Graduate School, and information how to prepare the digital submission of this form, deadlines, and submission instructions are here: https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations
At this point close to defending the Dissertation, all deadlines and required paperwork are prescribed by the Graduate School, not the EEB Graduate Program.

Following the procedures prescribed by the Graduate School, a student should give copies of the complete Dissertation to all committee members at least four weeks prior to the defense. The Request for Final Oral Examination must be signed by all members of the committee and the Graduate Advisor, then submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the exam. Submitting these forms is done through DocuSign; please ask the Graduate Program Administrator if you need help with that. No committee member is expected to sign the Request for Final Oral Examination until they have had sufficient time to examine the Dissertation.

The oral Dissertation Defense consists of two parts. The first part is a public seminar that is open to members of the University and the public at large. Immediately following that seminar, the student meets privately with the Dissertation Committee to answer any questions that the committee members may have, and to discuss possible corrections or amendments to the written Dissertation. Once all corrections have been made to the Dissertation and at least four members of the committee approve, the entire Dissertation Committee and then also the EEB GSC Chair or Graduate Advisor need to sign the Report of Dissertation Committee form (via DocuSign) to notify the Graduate School Dean of successful completion of the defense and all degree requirements. As with other procedures, this form can be accessed on the "Forms"

page of the EEB website and must be initiated by the graduate student:
https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/forms

Master of Arts Program

The Graduate School has two programs leading to a Master of Arts (MA) Degree that are applicable to Ecology, Evolution and Behavior and is expected to be completed within two to three years.

- *MA with Thesis*. This is the usual degree taken if a student decides to complete a Masters. A student needs to register for six hours of "Thesis" as part of the minimally 30 hours of required coursework. The student needs to write a Master's thesis that is read by two members of the faculty, the Major Advisor and one other member of the EEB GSC.
- *MA with Report*. A student needs to register for three hours of "Thesis" as part of the minimally 30 hours of required coursework. Instead of writing a thesis, the student writes a Report, which is based on work done in one of the courses completed by the student. The report is read and signed by two members of the faculty, the Major Advisor and one other Reader. The Reader does not have to be a member of the EEB GSC, and the Reader does not have to be a faculty member, but the Reader must have the Ph.D. credentials to evaluate the Master's Report properly. The Graduate Advisor has to approve the appointment of a Reader.

Course Requirements for completion of a Master of Arts

- For the Master's Thesis option, 24 hours of coursework, plus BIO 698A & 698B Thesis (taken sequentially), which counts for 6 hours for a total of 30 hours, are required. For the Master's Report option, BIO 398R must be taken and counting for 3 hours, in addition to 27 hours of coursework, for a total of 30 hours.
- Completion of a minimum of 15 hours of coursework in Ecology, Evolution and Behavior is required. EEB courses are defined as courses taught or co-taught by a member of the EEB GSC. In rare cases, a course taught by a faculty member who is not a member of the EEB GSC may be substituted, but this substitution must be approved by the Graduate Advisor. Research courses (BIO 182, 282, 382, etc.) cannot be used to fill this requirement. The student can use no more than one conference course (e.g., a non-lecture graduate course focused on discussion of readings) to fulfill the 15-hour requirement.
- As part of the 15 hours of coursework, the student must take three hours of BIO 389D Subjects & Skills in Biological Sciences. This is a core course for first-semester students in the EEB graduate program and is co-taught with the PB first year students (see above).
- An additional 6 hours of work acceptable for graduate credit must be outside the major area of EEB.
- No more than 9 hours of senior level college courses may be counted toward the Master's degree, and no more than 6 of these can be in EEB or the minor area. Courses with a middle digit of 8 or 9 should be chosen where possible.
- No more than six hours of Credit/No Credit courses can be counted. Approval of the Graduate Advisor is required prior to registration for a Credit/No Credit course.

Program of Work, Master of Arts

The semester the student intends to graduate, an online graduate application and Program of Work must be submitted (see above guidelines for online submission of a Program of Work for a Ph.D. Dissertation). Once complete, a student may then submit the graduation application.

Thesis Defense, Master of Arts

Your thesis must be read and approved by the Supervising Professor (Major Advisor) and one other Reader. The Reader does not have to be a member of the EEB GSC, and the Reader does not have to be a faculty member, but the Reader must have the PhD credentials to evaluate the Master Report properly. The Graduate Advisor has to approve the appointment of a Reader.

Registration

Students must be enrolled in classes whenever they are receiving services from UT- Austin, such as course instruction, faculty interaction, employment, fellowship or training grant stipends. Please read the following section carefully and check with the Graduate Program Administrator if you have any questions.

Full-Time Registration

In most cases, all EEB students must be enrolled full-time during the fall and spring semesters. Because the EEB program guarantees support for the first five years, students must be registered full-time, which is 9-hours in the long semester and 3-hours in summer. In some cases, students do not have to be registered in the summer. For these few exceptions, the Graduate Program Administrator will inform students beforehand if this is an option. Students need to register in time, to avoid registering late and incurring a late fee.

The University will not pay more than the full-time cost for registration. If you have more than 9 hours in the long semester, or 3 hours in the summer, contact your Graduate Program Administrator for advice in meeting the desired 9 credit hours (long semesters) and 3 credit hours (summer) goal.

Tuition Waiver

Employment as a teaching assistant (TA) or Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) qualifies non-Texas residents to receive resident tuition. The waiver has to be requested online and is applied directly to a student's fee bill. Each student needs to apply for a Tuition Waiver every semester when appointed as a TA or GRA.

For students who are supported by a fellowship, please DO NOT fill out the online Tuition Waiver. The Graduate Program Administrator will take care of submitting the forms for your Waiver, as those are processed differently for fellowship recipients. Please contact the Graduate Program Administrator if you are not sure which type of tuition waiver you need.

Tuition Bill

Between the University, CNS and the Department, tuition is covered in full for the first 5-years. Payments usually happen in stages, as different accounts and departments cover different parts of the tuition bill. If you owe additional fees that are not covered under the regular tuition and required fees, then you will need to pay the remaining balance once the University has applied all other payments. These fees include the $10 General Deposit for first-year students. Because students can request reimbursement for this fee after graduation, the University cannot cover it. Other examples of additional fees are sports packages (for use of sports facilities at UT that a student opts into) and possible late fees incurred by a student.

Confirming Registration

All students must confirm their tuition bill after all payments are applied or registration will be cancelled. To confirm your registration, go to the tuition payment website and click the "CONFIRM" button. The

Graduate Program Administrator will send you a notice when it is time to confirm, but if you happen to log on and read the prompt to "confirm", please go ahead and confirm. If your tuition bill is NOT confirmed by the 5:00 pm deadline, then your registration will be cancelled, and you will be charged a late fee when your re-register. In this case, the student is responsible for covering any late fees accrued.

Continuous Registration

The Graduate School requires all students to be continuously enrolled for at least 3 hours for all long semesters (Spring and Fall) until completion of the degree. Students must petition the Graduate School if they intend to take a medical leave of absence during a long semester. The Graduate Program Administrator will be able to help you with the petition.

Add/Drop or Credit/No Credit

Students may add and drop courses without penalty during the add/drop period, which ends on the 12th class day during long semesters and on the 4th class day in summer. After that date, students must petition the Graduate School for late add/drop, but such petitions are rarely approved. If a student must drop a course after the deadline and the petition is approved, the student will have to pay to add another course to maintain full-time status required for TA/GRA support or fellowship support. The cost to add a course is about the same cost as summer registration.

A student may change the grade status to CR/NC until about half-way through a long semester. Courses required in the Program of Work cannot be taken CR/NC.

Academic Appointments and University Fellowships

Support from the University is through an academic appointment, such as Teaching Assistantships (TAs), Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs), or various University fellowships. A student appointed as a 20-hour TA or GRA, or on a fellowship of at least a $1000, qualifies for resident tuition rates.

Teaching Assistantships

Prior to holding a Teaching Assistant (TA) position, the student must take a short training workshop offered prior to the start of their first semester during which a student serves as TA. The workshop is typically held the Friday during the week before classes start.

Students are considered for available TA positions by the request of each student. Students who serve as TA in one semester must reapply for the next long semester. Once a student accepts a TA position by signing the contract with the Biology Instructional Office, a student is obligated to serve for that teaching position and is not allowed to cancel the appointment ad hoc. A student is not allowed to opt out of a TA contract without finding someone else who is qualified to serve as TA as a replacement. Students should never anticipate they can cancel their TA appointment and find a replacement.

Graduate Research Assistantships

Many faculty members have research grants that allow them to appoint students as Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs). Students should check with their Major Advisor(s) concerning availability of such appointments before submitting a TA request. Once a student accepts to serve as a TA in a particular semester and signs the contract with the Biology Instructional Office, a student is not allowed to switch to GRA support if such support becomes available (e.g., if Major Advisor is awarded new research funds).

Pay Period for Teaching Assistants and Graduate Research Assistants

TA's and GRA's are paid in arrears, so September's paycheck will pay out on 1st October. Appointments are processed by semesters, which are broken down as:

- Fall semester - August 16 – December 31 (4.5 months)
- Spring semester - January 1 – May 15 (4.5 months)
- Summer semester - May 16 – August 15 (3 months)

Appointment as Grader

Each semester, a few grader appointments are available through the Biology Instructional Office. These appointments are made at the beginning of each semester, and all students have an opportunity to request a grader appointment in addition to TA or GRA support, as long as the student does not exceed the appointment limit. The maximum number of hours allowed for TA/GRA appointments is 30 hours. The two exceptions to this rule are:

1) First year students can only be appointed for a maximum of 20 hours per semester.
2) International students can only be appointed for a maximum of 20 hours per semester.

University Fellowships

Each year the Graduate School accepts nominations from each Graduate Program for UT Continuing Fellowships, which provide a year-long stipend. To qualify, a student must be in candidacy, or have passed the Qualifying Exam and be in the process of applying to candidacy. The Awards Committee determines whose name(s) will be submitted to the Graduate School for consideration of a Continuing Fellowship. The Awards Committee selects nominees based on the strength of their application and on their records of performance. The Graduate School makes the final selection of the Fellows.

Pay Period for Fellowships

Fellowships paid by the Graduate School are paid in advance (i.e., a student receiving a fellowship is paid September 1 for the month of September). These fellowships include some Recruitment Fellowships, Continuing Fellowships, NSF-GRFP support, and any other type of fellowship paid through the Graduate School. When your fellowship ends in August, you will receive your August check on August 1, but you will not receive your TA/GRA, and some fellowship checks forl September until October 1, so please budget for this extra month accordingly. There is a similar situation for those who serve as a TA or GRA in the spring semester and then are supported by a fellowship for only the summer; in such a case, you will receive two stipends on June 1, so hold funds from one of those checks until September 1.

- June 1 – receive Grad School fellowship for June
- June 1 – receive TA/GRA and some fellowships for May
- August 1 – receive Grad School fellowship for August
- October 1 – receive stipend for the month of September, leaving a two-month gap

Outside Employment

Additional Employment and Outside Employment

IB graduate students are not allowed to have outside employment (e.g., part-time positions in restaurants) or any type of job that interferes with the completion of coursework or research. On occasion, students may have 5-10 hours of additional University-related employment if the employment is related to their role as graduate students, such as paid grader positions for courses taught at the University, but such employment is possible only after the completion of the first year. International students are not eligible for additional employment beyond their current 20 hour/week GRA or TA appointment. Before accepting any additional employment, students should first consult with their supervising professor and inform the Graduate Program Administrator. Students are required to disclose all outside activity that may result in a

Conflict-of-Interest with student appointment at UT-Austin. Information about Outside Employment and Conflict-of-Interests can be found on the UT Human Resources website at https://hr.utexas.edu/current/compliance/outside-employment

Fellowships

Students with strong accomplishments in research and broader impacts should apply for federally funded fellowships, such as the NSF GRFP, NRSA fellowships from NIH, Howard Hughes Medical Institute International Student Pre-Doctoral Fellowship. We encourage all students to apply to such outside fellowships or international fellowships, and the required course BIO 389D Research Skills in Biological Sciences (required for all incoming graduate students in EEB) focuses on development and writing of effective fellowship and research-grant proposals. The most important internal, external, and international fellowships available are listed here: https://gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/fellowships

For those with prestigious fellowships, or looking to apply for a fellowship outside UT where the stipend is not as high as the typical stipend paid to EEB students, or the health insurance and/or tuition is not fully covered, please let the Graduate Program Administrator know as soon as possible, and payment of full stipend, health insurance, and tuition will be determined on a case-by-case basis with the Major Advisor.

Graduate School Fellowships & Fellowship Supplements

Each fall and spring semester the Graduate School and CNS hold competitions for various kinds of fellowships: https://gradschool.utexas.edu/finances/fellowships/graduate-school. Some of these fellowships require nomination by the EEB Graduate Program or by EEB faculty, and the Graduate School will notify eligible students by email in advance of application deadlines about these fellowship possibilities.

In contrast to a Graduate School Fellowship, a Fellowship Supplement is a one-time stipend of $1000 distributed around September 1st. With this supplement a student may qualify for in-state tuition rates for fall, spring and summer of that academic year. The student may apply for this fellowship each year they hold a qualifying fellowship. Please write to the Graduate Program Administrator about Fellowship Supplements available through the EEB program.

Department Fellowship Competition

Every fall and spring semester, the IB-Department provides funds that are allocated competitively to IB-affiliated graduate students to help them achieve their career goals. Students can apply for up to $12,000 during their time as a graduate student, for example to cover purchase of supplies, research-related travel, or workshop fees. Please note that these funds are not guaranteed but awarded by the discretion of the IB Awards Committee. Once funding is awarded to a student, the student has about 6 months to claim these funds, otherwise the funds are forfeited, and the student has to reapply during another competition. If the student does not claim all awarded funds, the funds will remain available to them to apply for in future competitions. The deadlines to claim awarded funds are October 1 and March 1 of each year.

Please note, all funds for research and travel awards are taxed (see below), as the funds are paid from endowments directly to a student, and these payments are considered student income.

Research and Travel Awards

Each EEB student may apply for up to $2500 research or travel funds each fall and spring semester to be used anytime through February for the research-award competition in fall, and through September for the research-award competition in spring. Once an award has been made, the student will receive a letter

from the Graduate Program Administrator stating the funds are awarded. The student and Major Advisor must then sign the form attached to the award letter certifying that the funds will be used for the intended purpose. Only after the Graduate Program Administrator receives this signed form will the fellowship funds be processed. Once funds are spent, the student awardee must email to the Graduate Program Administrator a single PDF document that includes (a) a budget table summarizing all expenses incurred (including the sum total), signed by the student and Major Advisor to confirm these expenses; and (b) e-copies of all receipts of the expenses listed in that budget table (all receipts have to be included in the single PDF rather than be sent separately). It is a student's responsibility to save all receipts, and document all expenditures listed in the budget table. If a student does not submit this budget table and corresponding receipts, no other funds will be distributed in future award competitions until received.

Funds for research are to be used for research expenditures such as equipment, supplies, microscopy time, DNA sequencing, travel to research field sites, or research-related workshops or training. Research awards cannot be used to cover salaries for undergraduate assistants. If purchases of supplies are made through UT Market, then those purchases will be charged a 5% fee to be reimbursed back to the University in an account for your use. If supplies are purchased through UT Market, then the purchase becomes property of the University. If you purchase outright yourself (i.e., not through UT Market), then the property is yours, since it is being purchased by a fellowship.

Like the research awards, travel awards are capped at a maximum of $2,500 per application. Travel awards are for students who (a) will present an oral talk or poster at a professional meeting, and (b) are approaching the end of their graduate career and thus need the opportunity to line up postdoctoral fellowships or other job opportunities. Cost-matching by the Major Advisor(s) is encouraged. A student may apply for several travel awards during the time as an EEB graduate student, but the total amount in funds received (travel wards *plus* research awards combined) cannot exceed the maximum of $12,000 of total funds potentially available for each student (see above).

Students who are near their thesis defense and who wish to self-support during their last semester may apply for a $1000 fellowship, which then gives them in-state tuition rates. The Major Advisor needs to provide a letter in support of this arrangement, and the $1000 fellowship must be used to help off-set the cost of tuition. This fellowship is available only to those students who still have unexpended funds available of the maximum of $12,000.

Fellowship Payments are Taxed

Because UT policy prohibits us from establishing a UT account with endowment funds, research and travel awards are paid directly to the student and therefore are considered taxable income. Payment for services within the University (e.g., DNA sequencing, microscopy time), must be paid from a departmental account, which the student then will need to reimburse from the Research Award. In most cases, the departmental account to be reimbursed will be Integrative Biology (IB) or Molecular Biosciences (MBS). We suggest that awardees create a separate personal bank account for fellowship money to avoid co-mingling personal funds and research-award funds and to facilitate auditing if that were to become necessary.

Health Insurance Benefits

All Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs), Teaching Assistants (TAs), and full Graduate Fellowship recipients are covered by an AcademicBlue℠ Student Health Plan through Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) of Texas and through Student Health Services: https://utaustin.myahpcare.com/. A student will be automatically enrolled in this Student Health Plan each semester when a student has an academic student employee appointment through Workday. If supported by a Fellowship during a given semester, a student must enroll personally (click *Begin Enrollment* at https://utaustin.myahpcare.com/).

The student health insurance offered by the University of Texas at Austin is considered a gold plan under the Affordable Care Act.

Required Student Training

The University of Texas at Austin requires all graduate students to take several trainings at the beginning of graduate studies. Some trainings have to be completed only once (e.g., training in the use of a fire extinguisher), but some are required every 2-3 years (e.g., Compliance Training, Responsible Conduct of Research, Laboratory Safety). Students will receive an email notification before the training is due.

The Graduate Program requires the below on-line training to be taken by all graduate students. This is not a complete list. Depending on your research (e.g., research on vertebrate animals or recombinant DNA), you may be required to take additional short training courses. You can find the link to online safety training under the Current Student tab at https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/safety-training.

Ethics and Compliance Training

Ethical conduct and compliance are personal responsibilities, and each student will be held accountable for own conduct and own decision making. The EEB Graduate Program has a **zero-tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty,** and students found to be participating in any form of academic dishonesty will face immediate dismissal from the program. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsification of data or records.

If a graduate students hold a position as a TA, GRA, or another position on any University campus or property, the State of Texas expects these students to uphold certain ethical behaviors. Graduate students must be aware of, and be in compliance with, State law and University policies related to sexual harassment, equal opportunity, human research, recombinant DNA, integrity, IT security, and other such policies. Online training regarding relevant laws, protocols, procedures, and resources is therefore required by the University. The specific training courses assigned to a student can be accessed through the UT Austin's employee training management system (UTLearn) at https://utlearn.utexas.edu/ (you need to login at link to UTLearn). Additional training courses are also available through UTLearn. Each student will receive annual email notifications for required training modules that have to be completed by a deadline at UTLearn.

Teaching Assistant Workshop

The Biology Instructional Office requires completion of a teaching assistant workshop prior to serving as a TA. The workshop is given typically on a Friday during the week before classes start each long semester.

Lab Safety Training

The university requires all laboratory personnel to have the following safety training courses. All courses except OH 205 are online at https://utlearn.utexas.edu/.

- OH 101 Hazard Communication – general
- OH 201 Laboratory Safety
- OH 202 Hazardous Waste Management
- OH 238 Laboratory Safety Refresher (required every 3 years after Lab Safety)

You may be notified to take other training by your lab or other university entities. When you receive such notifications, you must complete the training as soon as possible, but no later than the due date.

Crisis Procedures

The EEB Graduate Program strives to provide a highly supportive environment to aid students through difficulties in the event of crises such as assault, health problems (including mental health problems) or professional conflict (e.g., with the Major Advisor, or with other students or postdocs). Students in need of advice or help may contact any member of the faculty or staff with whom they feel comfortable, but may also contact the Graduate Advisor, the GSC Chair, the Associate Chair for Graduate Education in Integrative Biology, your Major Advisor, the Graduate Program Administrator, the IB Community, Accessibility and Well-Being Committee (CAW) or the Minority & LGBTQ+ Liaison Officers (see above). Such discussions will be held in complete confidence and nothing will be disclosed unless the student specifically requests disclosure, within the Title IX constraints that all UT employees are mandatory reporters (see above).

In the event of an urgent issue, students in need of assistance (especially those at risk to themselves) can use the contact list below to call for help immediately.

- Call 911 if you are hurt or in danger
- 24/7 UT Counseling and Mental Health Center Crisis Hot Line, 512-471-2255
- UT Counseling & Mental Health Center, Monday to Friday 8am-5pm, 512-471-3515
- Student Emergency Services, Monday to Friday 8 am-4 pm, 512-471-5017
- University Ombud's Office, Student Ombud's, 512-471-3825

For further information, please visit the EEB website under the Current Student tab.

Mental Health Resources (use Current Student tab)
https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/mental-health-resources

Campus Safety (use Current Student tab)
https://integrativebio.utexas.edu/eeb-graduate-program/current-students-eeb/campus-safety

Covid vaccinations & testing
https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu/coronavirus_vaccination.html

Covid Guidance, Center of Disease Control & Prevention
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html

Scholastic Probation and Dismissal

Every graduate student must make satisfactory progress toward their degree or risk scholastic probation or dismissal from the program. Satisfactory progress includes research progress, completion of coursework, and good performance in TA/GRA duties.

- To stay in good academic standing the student must have an overall GPA at or above 3.0.
- To stay in good standing with a GRA appointment the student must be making satisfactory progress in the project that is supporting the GRA.
- To stay in good standing (with or without GRA support) the student must be making satisfactory progress in thesis or dissertation research. Satisfactory research progress will be determined by

discussions between the student, the advisors, the student's committee, and the Graduate Program Advisor, including during the annual review process each year.

- To stay in good standing with a TA appointment the student must perform their duties as a TA satisfactorily in the classroom, lab and/or discussion sections, office hours, grading, and/or other TA duties. Satisfactory performance is determined by the instructor(s) of the course(s) and the Director of the Biology Instructional Office. Complaints will be communicated to the student as soon as possible following the report of poor performance.
- If the student's GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be given a full semester's notice to bring their GPA above 3.0.
- If the student is not making satisfactory progress in research or teaching, they will be notified of this by the GSC chair, and given explicit guidance on pathways to correct any deficiencies in performance. Students will have the opportunity to correct the inadequacies in their research progress or classroom during the following full semester.
- Failure to perform satisfactorily as a TA or GRA will likely result in the loss of further financial support of that type.
- Satisfactory performance also includes ongoing student engagement and communication with academic advisors, program advisors, or members of the GSC. Students should be pro-active in communicating any challenges that might be delaying progress in PhD and/or the need for accommodations for those challenges.

In the event that a student is not making satisfactory progress in the areas listed above, and does not correct the deficiencies within the semester assigned for improvement, the GSC, upon consultation with the academic advisor and graduate program advisor can begin the process of formal request for dismissal with the graduate school. The Graduate Program will follow all timelines and procedures outlined by the Graduate School for dismissal, including formal reporting, student grievances, and formal adjudication procedures.