

## EEOB GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

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## **Introduction**

This handbook is designed to guide your progression as a graduate student in the Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology graduate program (EEOB) at the University of California, Riverside. The principal objective of the program is to train scientists with the broad perspectives, technical skills, initiative, and imagination that lead to productive independent research careers in academic, industrial, governmental, or non-profit settings.

## **EEOB Roles**

Chair of the Department: Dr. Joel Sachs

Vice Chair of the Department and TAAC Coordinator: Dr. Wendy Saltzman

Graduate Advisor of Continuing Students: Dr. David Reznick

Graduate Advisor of Admissions: Dr. Tim Higham

EEOB Graduate Student Affairs Officer: Evelyn Sullivan

## **Standing committees of the EEOB Graduate Program**

All affairs related to the EEOB graduate program are administered by the Department Chair/Program Director, the Graduate Advisor for Admissions, the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students, and the following standing committees:

Executive Committee:

Dr. Joel Sachs, Chair - Biology Dept. Chair and Program Director

Dr. Tim Higham - Graduate Advisor for Admissions

Dr. David Reznick - Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students, EEOB & JDEB

Dr. Wendy Saltzman - TAAC Coordinator

TBD Continuing Students Committee Representative

TBD Graduate Admissions Committee Representative

TBD Teaching and Program Committee Representative

Committee for Continuing Students:

Dr. David Reznick, Chair - Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students

Dr. Tim Higham - Graduate Advisor for Admissions, ex officio

Graduate Admissions Committee:

Dr. Tim Higham, Chair - Graduate Advisor for Admissions

One Senior Faculty and one Junior Faculty

One Cooperating Faculty member

Evelyn Sullivan (non-voting member)

Written Exam Committee: Made up of EEOB faculty and Cooperating Faculty members

## **The Academic Program - PhD**

The PhD degree in EEOB requires demonstration of broad knowledge of Evolutionary Biology, Ecology, and Organismal Biology and substantive ability in original research. The general EEOB Graduate Program requirements are the same regardless of individual students' research specializations and include:

- completion of basic coursework
- completion and presentation of a first-year research project
- completion of three quarters of teaching
- passing the Historical and Conceptual Review
- passing the Oral Qualifying Examination
- completion of research and preparation of the PhD Dissertation
- successful defense of the Dissertation through a final Oral Defense

Students are strongly encouraged to complete their degree in the five years that a financial package is offered. During the first two to three years, emphasis is on coursework, initiating research, reading in preparation for exams, and completion of qualifying examinations. The remaining years are devoted primarily to research and the completion of the Dissertation, although students continue to participate in graduate seminars and may take additional coursework during this period. The sections below provide guidance and further details on EEOB Graduate Program requirements. Additional requirements and information are provided by UCR Graduate Division, <https://graduate.ucr.edu/>, and in the General Catalog, <https://registrar.ucr.edu/registering/catalog>.

### **Initial Guidance Committee**

Students are required to form and meet with their Initial Guidance Committee as soon as possible in the first quarter of study. The Initial Guidance Committee consists of the student's Major Professor and at least two additional faculty in the EEOB Graduate Program. The committee is selected by the graduate student in collaboration with their Major Professor and approved by the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students. The committee works with the student to design a plan for an appropriate academic course of study and provides guidance on other issues, including initiation of first year research. The Initial Guidance Committee also reviews the student's Historical and Conceptual Review (see Historical and Conceptual Review Section below for additional detail). This committee will complete the Annual Progress Review at the end of the Spring quarter, a requirement of Graduate Division. There is a form to fill out once you have determined the Initial Guidance Committee:

<https://ucrbsgsac.wufoo.com/forms/rvsxcqp1vefuux/>

### **First-year Research Project**

Students are required to complete a research project over the course of their first year and present results in the subsequent Fall Quarter (i.e., the Fall Quarter in their second year) during the EEOB 265 "Lunch Bunch" seminar. The final results of the research are presented to the EEOB program in the format of a 'contributed presentation' (e.g. in the style of a national professional society meeting presentation) ~12 minutes of presentation followed by ~3 minutes

of questions.

Students in different laboratories will complete the research experience in different ways depending upon the project, the type of research, and when and where the actual research can be accomplished. It is not necessary that the research lead directly into the student's dissertation project. Some projects may lead to a publication, but this is not a required outcome. Students develop a research topic in consultation with their Major Professor and Initial Guidance Committee, who also serve to assess the final results and presentation of the research project. Students use research units (e.g., EEOB 297) during their first year to account for the time required to plan, execute, and prepare the results of their research.

## **Course Requirements**

Students are required to complete a suite of courses for the EEOB Graduate Program. Below is the general guideline for course requirements of the program.

**Biology 400** - This course is a course for new graduate students that introduces the program and issues in graduate research. Students are required to take this course in Fall Quarter of their first year.

**EEOB Core** - Students are required to take the EEOB core sequence, EEOB 210 (Organismal Biology), EEOB 216 (The Theory of Evolution), and EEOB 211 (Foundations of Ecology). The aim of these courses is to provide students with a broad education in the historical development and modern state of the fields of evolution, ecology, and organismal biology. Emphasis is on reading, analyzing, and discussing the primary literature. Students will also receive training in oral and written presentation of scientific ideas. It is expected that students will take the core as a sequence in their first year. If unusual circumstances make this timing infeasible, a student may petition the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students and a request for exception be made.

**Colloquia** - Students must attend a colloquium in the department or program of the student's choice for a minimum of 5 quarters prior to advancement and for a minimum of 12 quarters prior to degree completion. It is typically assumed that this colloquium will be the EEOB Department colloquium, BIOL 252. However, students may attend another colloquium that more closely matches the student's research interests. Students should inform the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students and the Graduate Student Service Advisor if they wish to substitute another colloquium for BIOL 252.

Students must also attend the EEOB Graduate Program "Lunch Bunch" colloquium, EEOB 265, for a minimum of 5 quarters prior to advancement and a minimum of 12 quarters prior to degree completion. EEOB 265 is offered as a weekly course in Fall and Spring Quarters. Students receive course credit for EEOB 265 during Winter Quarter by attending and participating in all events related to Gradfest. Specific expectations for Gradfest participation will be provided by the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students.

Students in the PhD program generally have completed a bachelor's degree in the biological

sciences or related field, with a preparation deemed equivalent to that required for the bachelor's degree from UCR. Students who are admitted to graduate standing with deficiencies in preparation may be required to take appropriate undergraduate courses in addition to the requirements above.

Students may take other courses at the direction of their Major Professor and committee, or as requirements for other programs that the student participates in at UCR.

## **Teaching Requirement**

A minimum of three quarters of employment as a Teaching Assistant is required for the PhD degree. Students will need to complete the Teaching Assistant Development Program Orientation during their first quarter of TA. While not an EEOB Graduate Program requirement, students teaching in the Biology major will be required to take BIOL 301, Teaching of Biology at the College Level.

## **Advancing to Candidacy**

Advancing to candidacy is a key step towards completion of the Doctoral Degree. According to Graduate Division rules, students must complete all University and program requirements and then pass an Oral Qualifying Examination. Complete requirements for advancing to candidacy are found here: <https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#advancement-to-candidacy>

Preparation for the Oral Qualifying Examination consists of two phases. The first phase involves submission and revision of a Historical and Conceptual Review of the overarching conceptual framework of the dissertation. The second phase involves submission of a Doctoral Dissertation Proposal that details the dissertation research to be conducted.

## **Historical and Conceptual Review**

Fundamental to all research is the ability to synthesize scientific literature to identify meaningful and novel research questions. The purpose of the Historical and Conceptual Review is to evaluate if a student has the background knowledge and ability to synthesize relevant scientific literature, which are important prerequisites to conducting meaningful dissertation research. The Historical and Conceptual Review consists of a synthetic review that details how the conceptual framework for the student's dissertation topic has developed and changed over time, paying attention to both the historical background and the current state of the research area. The synthetic review is not merely a summary of papers, but a focused synthesis and critical review of the accomplishments in the area that emphasizes unanswered questions and thus defines the area of dissertation research. The review should be understandable by scientists in all fields of evolution, ecology, and organismal biology, as would be expected for many grant proposals. The review should explicitly address the following questions:

1. *What is the overarching conceptual framework of the dissertation?* This introductory section describes the conceptual/theoretical framework that justifies and informs the big questions being

asked in the dissertation. (~1.0-1.5 pages)

2. *How has the conceptual framework developed over time?* This should emphasize the historical development of the conceptual framework focusing on how the framework was initially conceived, citing original references that have been read by the student, and how the major empirical, observational, mathematical, and/or theoretical studies have advanced the conceptual framework over time. Key controversies, debates, and syntheses should be explored. A synthesis of the development of the framework must connect historical developments with the current state of the field. (~5 pages)

3. *What gaps in knowledge need to be addressed to advance the conceptual framework?* This should consist of a critical review of the accomplishments in the area of research and should emphasize unanswered questions. (~2-3 pages)

4. *How will the student's dissertation advance the conceptual framework?* This section should include a discussion of the overarching research question(s) that will be addressed by the dissertation, with an explicit connection to the current status of the field and the gaps in knowledge addressed above. Detailed methods are not needed. (~1.0-1.5 pages)

The review should explicitly address these four questions, and students are strongly encouraged to use them as the major section headings. Do not include detailed methods or preliminary results (these will be included in the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal). The review does not need to outline the chapters of the dissertation but must connect the current status of the field with the broad research questions being asked by the student. For students whose research areas span multiple disciplines, the scope of the review should be discussed with the Initial Guidance Committee.

#### Formatting:

The Historical and Conceptual Review will be no more than 10 pages, double-spaced, excluding tables, figures, and reference list, and should be prepared in Times New Roman 12-point font, left-justified, with 1" margins all around. Give citations in the text by name and date (i.e., Jekyll and Hyde 2015), not by number. The document file should be in a common file format (e.g. Word or Google doc), which should be agreed upon by the student and their Initial Guidance Committee.

#### Submission:

The Historical and Conceptual Review must be submitted no later than the end of the tenth week of the Winter Quarter of the second year in the Ph.D. program (due Friday, 11:59 PM). Missing this strict deadline without prior approval of both the student's Initial Guidance Committee and the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students will be considered "Unsatisfactory Progress" in the student's annual progress report. Although the final deadline is strict, students may submit the exam earlier, at any point during the Winter Quarter of the second year in the Ph.D. program. Students submit the exam by emailing it to their Initial Guidance Committee and must copy the EEOB Graduate Advisor of Continuing Students and

the EEOB Graduate Student Affairs Officer. Students must inform their Initial Guidance Committee, the EEOB Graduate Advisor of Continuing Students, and the Graduate Student Affairs Officer of their intention to submit their synthetic review during Winter Quarter; this communication must occur during Week 1 of Winter Quarter.

### Evaluation:

The Historical and Conceptual Review is evaluated by the student's Initial Guidance Committee, including their Major Professor, and will be based on how successfully the review addresses the four questions delineated above. The writing of the first submission of the synthetic review must be primarily in the hands of the student, without the benefit of editing by faculty or other students. Thus, faculty (including the advisor) should not edit the *initial* submission of the written review or closely associated student writing, including a written outline. This restriction is intended to provide the Initial Guidance Committee with a clear perspective on the student's understanding of their field of research and their writing ability. However, oral discussion of ideas or concept maps are acceptable. In fact, the student is encouraged to discuss and develop their ideas in consultation with faculty (including their advisor) and with other students. It is also acceptable for the student to obtain writing assistance from the UCR Graduate Writing Center at any point.

Once the student has provided the initial submission, the Initial Guidance Committee will provide written feedback on all aspects of the review, including conceptual and historical background, proposed research directions, and writing. This feedback should occur within 2-3 weeks of the student's initial submission. The student can also meet with members of the Initial Guidance Committee to get clarification on the written feedback if they so choose. The student will then edit and resubmit the review in response to the comments, again within 2-3 weeks of receiving feedback, or as agreed upon by the student and the committee. This process is both an evaluation and a training exercise, and is expected to be iterative, collaborative, and instructive. Only in exceptional circumstances should the student or the Guidance Committee take more than 2-3 weeks to return expected items to the other party, and these circumstances should be agreed upon beforehand. Once the Initial Guidance Committee is satisfied with the Historical and Conceptual Review document, they will inform the EEOB Graduate Advisor of Continuing Students and the EEOB Graduate Student Affairs Officer. This notification will serve as a note of "pass" under the "Written Exam" requirement as listed in the UCR General Catalog. Once the student receives a formal "pass" for the Written Exam, there is a petition in R'Grad under "Report of Exam or Degree Requirement" that needs to be filled out and approved by all your Initial Guidance Committee. This process must be concluded by the end of Spring Quarter. If a majority of the Guidance Committee determines at the end of Spring Quarter that the student was unable to meet the expectations of the committee, then this will count as a "fail" and unsatisfactory progress towards the Written Examination will be noted on the student's Annual Progress Report. The student will then be allowed to repeat this process over the course of the following Fall Quarter. At the end of the Fall Quarter, the Initial Guidance Committee will either determine that the student has satisfied the committee's expectations and the student passes or, if a second "fail" is noted, the student will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

## Oral Qualifying Examination

Once all course requirements are complete and the Historical and Conceptual Review has been approved by the Initial Guidance Committee, students are ready to move to the next phase of preparation for the Oral Qualifying Examination, and then to the exam itself.

Many rules for the Oral Qualifying Examination are determined by the Graduate Division. For more information on committee composition, remote participation, and participation of non-UC Academic Senate members, please contact the EEOB Graduate Student Affairs Officer and consult the Graduate Division Regulations and Procedures:

<https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#nomination-for-qualifying-exam>

### Preparing for the Oral Qualifying Examination:

When the student begins preparing for the Oral Qualifying Examination, the first step should be to discuss the procedures with the EEOB Graduate Student Affairs Officer. The Student Affairs Officer will help the student with navigating the rules of the exam, as well as prepare the appropriate paperwork for committee approval and the exam itself. Next, the student will need to work with their Major Professor to identify an Oral Qualifying Exam Committee (see below). Once committee members have been asked by the student and have agreed to participate, the student will fill out the Nomination for Oral Qualifying Exam Committee petition – (Access via R'Grad), which will forward the information to the EEOB Graduate Student Services Advisor and the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students for review. The EEOB Graduate Advisor will then formally nominate the committee to Graduate Division. The Oral Exam Qualifying Committee should be appointed as soon as is reasonably possible after passing the Historical and Conceptual review, and the committee **must be appointed no later than 2 weeks prior to the start of the exam**; otherwise, the student risks having their exam results rendered void by Graduate Division. The student will also need to identify the time and date of the exam, reserve a room, and ensure all technical (audio and visual) aspects of the exam work ahead of time.

Oral Exam Qualifying Committee. The exam is administered by the Oral Exam Qualifying Committee, whose makeup must conform to Graduate Division Regulations. Per these regulations, the committee typically has five members, the majority of which must be members from within the EEOB Graduate Program (both EEOB Departmental members and EEOB Cooperating Faculty Members are eligible). This includes the Committee Chair, who must be an EEOB Graduate Program member, and an outside member, who must be a UC Academic Senate member that is not part of the EEOB Graduate Program and does not have any formal affiliation with EEOB. The Committee Chair is responsible for working with the student to set and communicate expectations for the Oral Exam. The Chair is also responsible for “running” the exam, which includes ensuring that questions are kept within order and time and that the student is being treated in a fair and respectful manner. The primary role of the outside member is to act as a “third party ensuring fairness,” according to Graduate Division

Regulations. Special expertise in the area of the student's dissertation is not required of the outside member; however, nominating an outside member who brings expertise not normally available in the EEOB program is encouraged. Exceptions to the membership requirements above can be granted if compelling needs arise; these exceptions are granted by the Graduate Division. The student should meet with individual members of the Oral Exam Committee beforehand to make sure they understand examiner expectations.

The Major Professor of the student does **not** serve on the Oral Exam Qualifying Committee. To avoid actual and perceived conflicts of interest, spouses or domestic partners may not make up the majority of any committee. For the Oral Exam, this means that only one pair of spouses or domestic partners may be included in the committee, and any member of the committee being a spouse or domestic partner of the student's major advisor counts toward this total.

The Oral Qualifying Exam Committee **MUST BE APPROVED** by Graduate Division before the exam takes place or the exam will be deemed void. Any changes to the make up of the committee must also be approved for the exam results to be valid.

#### Doctoral Dissertation Proposal:

As part of the Oral Qualifying Exam, the student will submit a Doctoral Dissertation Proposal to the Oral Qualifying Exam Committee that outlines the chapters of the student's proposed dissertation. The Proposed Dissertation Research should include the hypotheses or central questions, predictions, and methods for each chapter as appropriate for the discipline. Unlike the Historical and Conceptual Review, preliminary results are strongly encouraged, although not required. The outline of the chapters should be 15-20 pages (double spaced), including tables and figures but excluding references, and must follow the same formatting as the Historical and Conceptual Review. The Historical and Conceptual Review will also be provided to the Oral Qualifying Exam Committee for reference. The number of chapters to be described and content of the description will be variable depending on the student's research area and should be agreed upon based on discussion between the student, their Major advisor, and the Oral Qualifying Exam Committee. The Doctoral Dissertation Proposal should be submitted directly to the Oral Qualifying Exam Committee **no less than 4 weeks before the exam is to take place**. The student is strongly encouraged to submit the proposal before this deadline to allow more time to prepare for the exam.

#### Oral Qualifying Exam Procedures:

The Oral Exam Qualifying Committee is charged by UCR's Graduate Division with examining the student's knowledge of the general field of study as well as the related fields and areas of special interest, and with substantiating the adequacy of the student's preparation and qualifications to be advanced to candidacy for the doctorate. Thus, questioning should test the candidate's knowledge and ability to successfully complete the proposed research. This includes questions on the details of the student's proposed dissertation research as well as questions on the relevant conceptual background, history of the field, and the broader relevance of the proposed work.

The student and committee convene for the exam at the agreed time, date, and location. At this point, the oral exam has begun and must be completed on that date and cannot exceed three hours from start to finish.

The student may be asked at the beginning of the exam to leave the room for a brief period so that the Oral Exam Committee can discuss areas and order of questioning, as well as the student's background and training. The student then returns and gives a presentation to the committee, normally lasting 15-20 minutes. The content of the presentation should be a brief summary of the conceptual justification and design of the dissertation research that is described in the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal document. The committee should allow the student to present uninterrupted except for brief questions of clarification.

Following the presentation, the exam committee will ask the student questions. The length of time allocated to questions from each committee member and their order are to be agreed upon by the Oral Exam Committee, subject to Graduate Division Policies and Procedures.

#### Outcomes of the Oral Qualifying Exam and Retakes:

Upon evaluating the student, the Oral Exam Qualifying Committee must vote to determine whether or not the student has passed the exam. One negative vote is deemed a pass, two or more negative votes is a failure. If the student does not pass the qualifying examination, then the committee should recommend whether or not the student should be allowed to retake the exam on a second date. If a second exam is not allowed, the EEOB Graduate Program will request the student be dismissed from the program. The rationale for either retaking the exam or dismissal must be clearly communicated to the student, the student's Major Professor, and the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students. The results of the exam must be reported via the Report of the Results of the Oral Qualifying Exam petition in R'Grad within 48 hours of the conclusion of the exam. If the student passes the exam, they will need to nominate their dissertation committee on the Report of the Results of the Oral Qualifying Exam petition (see Dissertation Committee below). Registration holds will be placed upon the student's account if this is not done in a timely manner. The student will likely also be charged a fee by the Office of the Registrar when the Dissertation Committee is approved and the student officially advances to candidacy.

The exam retake must take place as a meeting between the student and the Oral Exam Qualifying Committee, although the content and focus of the second exam will be flexible to fit the needs of the particular situation. The form of the second exam should be agreed upon by the student and Oral Exam Qualifying Committee and does not need to follow the procedures for the first exam, save for those required by Graduate Division. The Oral Exam Qualifying Committee should clearly explain to the student the exam structure and expectations and rationale for the retake, including additional written material if needed. These expectations must clearly be communicated to the student in writing by the Oral Exam Committee Chair, with the agreement of the rest committee. Expectations must also be communicated to the student's major advisor and the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students. In accordance with Graduate Division regulations, a second examination should ordinarily not be given until at least

three months have elapsed. The date of the second oral examination should be communicated to the Graduate Division in writing at least two weeks prior to its occurrence. A student is encouraged to follow up with the chair of the Qualifying Committee and individual members as they prepare for the second examination. A third examination is not permitted; if the student does not pass the second examination the EEOB Graduate Program will request that the student be dismissed from the program. The rationale for dismissal must be clearly communicated to the student, the student's Major Professor, and the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students.

Details on Graduate Division Regulations and Procedures are found here: <https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#report-on-qualifying-examinati>

Note that Historical and Conceptual Review and Oral Qualifying Exam results may be appealed in a limited set of circumstances; for details see the Appeals Procedures at the end of the handbook.

#### Timeline:

US Students: The oral examination should be completed by the end of the seventh quarter of residence (normally Fall quarter of the third year) and no later than the end of the ninth quarter of residence (normally Spring quarter of the third year).

International Students: International students MUST advance to candidacy by the end of the seventh quarter of residence (normally Fall quarter of the third year). Failure to do so could jeopardize the student's visa status. Therefore, international students should schedule their oral exam well in advance of this deadline in case a re-take is warranted.

## **Completing the Dissertation**

Following successful completion of the Oral Qualifying Examination, the student is advanced to candidacy for the PhD and the dissertation committee is formally appointed on form 3. The Graduate Student Services Officer and the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students will review the requested Dissertation Committee membership, and the EEOB Graduate Advisor will then formally nominate the committee to Graduate Division. The dissertation committee consists of the Major Professor and a minimum of two other faculty members selected on the basis of their ability to guide the research and writing of the dissertation. While these two members are typically members of the EEOB Graduate Program, they may be from Departments other than EEOB, or even from another institution, with the approval of the Graduate Dean. If two of the dissertation committee members are spouses or domestic partners, a fourth committee member must be added to avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. It is the responsibility of the dissertation committee to decide when data of sufficient quality and quantity have been gathered, analyzed, and interpreted competently, thus demonstrating proficiency in independent research.

Students must meet at least once annually with their Dissertation Committee to discuss research progress and to redefine the goals and expectations necessary to complete the dissertation. This committee replaces the Initial Guidance Committee for the Annual Progress Report. The format of the dissertation is somewhat flexible but must be approved by the Dissertation Committee and should conform to the formatting requirements of the Graduate Division. Formatting and other requirements for submission of the dissertation are found at <https://graduate.ucr.edu/dissertation-and-thesis-submission>.

A minimum of 30 days is required between submission of the written dissertation (including the abstract, introduction, all data chapters, and summary/conclusions) to the dissertation committee and the scheduling of the final defense. The purpose of the thirty-day period is to provide the committee sufficient time to read and provide comments on the dissertation, and for the student to complete major revisions. Upon returning the revised dissertation to the Dissertation Committee, the student schedules the final defense. The student is required to confirm in writing that each committee member has reviewed the dissertation and agrees the defense can be scheduled. In the event of a disagreement between the student and their committee concerning the scheduling of the dissertation defense, the student may appeal in writing to the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students.

A formal seminar, open to the academic community, is required as part of the final defense. The student is responsible for notifying the EEOB Graduate Student Services Officer of the time and location of the defense so that an announcement can be sent to the program faculty and students. The student is responsible for filling out the "Final Defense Ph.D." petition in R'Grad and bringing the signature page to the defense. The "Signature Approval Page (Dissertation or Thesis)" petition in R'Grad also needs to be filled out by the student. Please be mindful of [Graduate Divisions' deadlines](#) for graduation. In a public seminar, the candidate defends the dissertation in response to questions from the dissertation committee, other faculty, and students. Following the seminar and question period, the candidate meets with the dissertation committee to answer additional questions and to receive the dissertation committee's decision on the exam (fail, accepted as is, or accepted pending major revisions). The committee provides the student with written comments on the dissertation draft or other detailed instructions as to which parts of the dissertation require revision and how the revision should be accomplished. Revision must be completed within 120 days of the final defense. Once the student has made the appropriate revisions and the committee is satisfied with the dissertation, it is filed with the Graduate Division.

## **Academic Progress**

Because the PhD is a research degree, the University gives programs considerable latitude in establishing degree requirements. As stated above, in the EEOB Program the individual student's program of study is planned in consultation with her or his guidance committee, which supervises the student's progress prior to the appointment of the dissertation committee. After the student advances to candidacy, the dissertation committee oversees the student's progress in the final stages of his or her degree program.

Annual evaluations of progress are carried out each spring by the student's major professor and guidance committee or dissertation committee, depending upon whether or not the student has advanced to candidacy. All evaluations are reviewed by the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students, who is responsible for making specific recommendations to the Graduate Division concerning the student's progress. There is a petition called the "Annual Mentoring and Evaluation" that needs to be filled out by the student in R'Grad (<https://rgrad.ucr.edu/>) with either their guidance committee or dissertation committee. The Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students may also approve exceptions to the normative time schedule due to unusual circumstances.

Students are notified in writing of the results of the annual evaluation, and copies are forwarded to the Graduate Division.

It is hoped that students will make good progress in the degree program. Failing to do so will have serious consequences for the student's career in graduate school. If deadlines such as qualifying exams are not met in a timely fashion, if the student's GPA drops below the minimum level of 3.0, if the student has 12 or more units of incomplete ("I") grades, or if the Major Professor feels that the student is not making good progress in their research, the Graduate Division will put a hold on registration. Students who fail to make satisfactory academic progress may also be dismissed from the program. In addition, opportunities for receiving funding through the department become severely limited. A full description of factors that can contribute to a judgement of unsatisfactory progress can be found at the Graduate Division website: <https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#timetable>

## **The Academic Program - MS**

The MS is a research degree that requires completion of a thesis. MS students generally concentrate on formal coursework during the first year and on research in the second Year.

### **Initial Guidance Committee**

Students are required to form and meet with their Initial Guidance Committee as soon as possible in the first quarter of study. The Initial Guidance Committee consists of the student's Major Professor and at least two additional faculty in the EEOB Graduate Program. The committee is selected by the graduate student in collaboration with their Major Professor and approved by the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students. The committee works with the student to design a plan for an appropriate academic course of study and provides guidance on other issues, including initiation of first year research. This committee will complete the Annual Progress Review at the end of the Spring quarter, a requirement of Graduate Division. There is a form to fill out once you have determined the Initial Guidance Committee: <https://ucrbsgsac.wufoo.com/forms/rvsxcqp1vefuux/>

### **Coursework**

The MS degree requires completion of 36 units. Twenty-four units must be in graduate courses

(200 series) in biological sciences, with no more than 12 units in 290-299 courses. The remaining 12 units can be in the 100 or 200 series. In the first year, MS students should take basic coursework in Evolutionary Biology, Ecology, and Organismal Biology. It is highly encouraged for MS students to take the EEOB Core (EEOB 210, 211, and 216) and EEOB 400. Students who are admitted to graduate standing with deficiencies in preparation may be required to take appropriate undergraduate courses.

## **Completing the Thesis**

### **Thesis Committee:**

The thesis committee should be nominated by the end of the third quarter. The thesis committee is formally appointed on "The Application for Candidacy for Master's Degree" petition (found in R'Grad <https://rgrad.ucr.edu/>). The Graduate Student Services Advisor and the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students will review the requested Thesis Committee membership, and the EEOB Graduate Advisor will then formally nominate the committee to Graduate Division. The dissertation committee consists of the Major Professor and a minimum of two other faculty members selected on the basis of their ability to guide the research and writing of the dissertation. While these two members are typically members of the EEOB Graduate Program, they may be from Departments other than EEOB, or even from another institution, with the approval of the Graduate Dean. If two of the thesis committee members are spouses or domestic partners, a fourth committee member must be added to avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. It is the responsibility of the dissertation committee to decide when data of sufficient quality and quantity have been gathered, analyzed, and interpreted competently, thus demonstrating proficiency in independent research.

### **Thesis Format:**

Students should confer with their Major Professor regarding the format of the thesis. The format is somewhat flexible but must meet with the approval of the Thesis Committee and the Graduate Division.

### **Defending the Thesis:**

Students are required to undergo a final oral examination in defense of the thesis. Once the student has formally passed the oral thesis defense, there is a petition called "Final Defense Master's" in R'Grad (<https://rgrad.ucr.edu/>). The student needs to fill out the "Signature Approval Page (Dissertation or Thesis) in R'Grad. Advancement paperwork must be filed prior to the first day of the quarter in which you intend to graduate. Please contact the Graduate Student Services Officer for additional information on how to apply.

## **Academic Progress**

In the EEOB program, the individual student's program of study is planned in consultation with their Thesis Committee, which supervises the student's progress. Graduate Division mandates that all graduate students must be formally evaluated each spring, culminating in submission of a formal, written evaluation containing specific recommendations concerning

the student's progress. To initiate this process, each student is expected to meet with his or

her advisory committee to review progress over the past year and set appropriate goals for the coming year. The initial Guidance Committee serves as the advisory committee for the student prior to advancement. Following this meeting, the advisory committee prepares an evaluation report for the Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students. The report serves as an evaluation of each student's success in the program and provides recommendations to ensure timely and successful completion of the program requirements. There is a petition called the "Annual Mentoring and Evaluation" that needs to be filled out by the student in R'Grad (<https://rgrad.ucr.edu/>) with either their guidance committee or dissertation committee. A copy of this report is distributed to the student, the student's major advisor, the student's permanent file, and Graduate Division.

It is hoped that the student will make good progress in your degree program. Failing to do so will have serious consequences for the student's career in graduate school. If deadlines such as qualifying exams are not met in a timely fashion, if the student's GPA drops below the minimum level of 3.0, if the student has 12 or more units of incomplete ("I") grades, or if the Major Professor feels that the student is not making good progress in their research, the Graduate Division will put a hold on registration. Students who fail to make satisfactory academic progress may also be dismissed from the program. In addition, opportunities for receiving funding through the department become severely limited. A full description of factors that can contribute to a judgement of unsatisfactory progress can be found at the Graduate Division website: <https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#timetable>

## **Continuing from the MS to the PhD**

Students who are enrolled in the MS program may petition to pursue the PhD degree. To do so, they must have the recommendation of the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students. Approval is not automatic; the committee determines on a case-by-case basis whether a student has the academic potential to succeed in the PhD program. Students should contact the EEOB Graduate Student Services Officer for the Change of Degree Objective petition.

## **The EEOB Graduate Student Association (EEOB-GSA)**

All EEOB graduate students are members of the EEOB Graduate Student Association (EEOB GSA). The EEOB-GSA serves several purposes, including promoting interactions among EEOB graduate students, providing information about the department and the university to the students, and representing EEOB graduate student concerns to the faculty and other campus organizations. The EEOB-GSA president serves as a liaison between the faculty and the graduate students, disseminating information to the students and soliciting student opinions regarding departmental issues and policies. The EEOB-GSA facilitates the unified action of the graduate students regarding issues that affect them. Issues are discussed during meetings held at least once per quarter, and these concerns are brought to the attention of the department faculty when appropriate. The EEOB-GSA also sends representatives to UCR Graduate

Student Council meetings, who report back to the other members. The EEOB-GSA president is elected each spring quarter by ballot, and other officers are elected at the first meeting in the Fall. Please visit the website for additional information <http://gsa.ucr.edu/>.

## **Financial Support**

The main sources of graduate student support in the EEOB program are Teaching Assistantships and Graduate Student Research Assistantships obtained through research grants awarded to the faculty. Students are encouraged to apply for National Science Foundation, Howard Hughes Medical Institute fellowships, and other outside fellowships. Students who have advanced to candidacy are encouraged to pursue funding in the form of training grants or fellowships. Other support is available through a variety of fellowships and grants from a number of university, state, and federal sources. Funding sources can be identified through searches in databases compiled by graduate division: <https://graduate.ucr.edu/resources-finding-external-funding>.

Departmental grants and funding opportunities are announced when available. Additional details regarding funding is found in the section compiled by the Graduate Student Affairs Center below.

<https://graduate.ucr.edu/funding>

## **Campus Resources for Graduate Students**

The UCR Graduate Division runs the GradSuccess program. The purpose of Grad Success and the Graduate Student Resource Center (GSRC) is to develop and coordinate various opportunities and events with one goal in mind: to help students succeed both in their studies and on the job market. They help UCR graduate students to not only become outstanding, well rounded, and healthy scholars, but also become confident and informed professionals who are prepared for beginning rewarding careers.

The GSRC has an extensive list of campus resources related to all aspects of student life, academics, and well-being, at <https://graduate.ucr.edu/gradsuccess>. Additional resources that help with complaints, reports of misconduct, and resources for safety, health, and well-being can be found at the help@UCR website: <https://help.ucr.edu/>.

## **EEOB Graduate Program Academic Appeals Procedures**

1. Purpose and Scope: This procedure enables current and former graduate students to appeal academic decisions including outcomes of comprehensive written and qualifying exams. Applicants denied admission to a program may not use this procedure and instead will be referred to the admissions office of the Graduate Division. This procedure excludes complaints regarding grades, academic integrity and discipline, employment, benefits, and auxiliary student

services (such as housing and child care). In some circumstances, this procedure may be used to address complaints regarding violations of campus non-discrimination policies, to the extent that a documented discriminatory act has affected a student's academic progress (for details, see [https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#dispute\\_resolution\\_](https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#dispute_resolution_)).

a. Grade disputes must be appealed under the Academic Senate Bylaw R5, Procedures for the Appeal of Grades

[https://senate.ucr.edu/bylaws?action=read\\_bylaws&code=r&section=05](https://senate.ucr.edu/bylaws?action=read_bylaws&code=r&section=05)

b. For academic integrity disputes involving graduate students, see the Academic Senate Bylaw 6

[https://senate.ucr.edu/bylaws?action=read\\_bylaws&code=r&section=06](https://senate.ucr.edu/bylaws?action=read_bylaws&code=r&section=06)

c. For disputes involving graduate student academic employment, see the "Employment Issues" section of

<https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#integrity>

d. For other non-academic issues, or to discuss issues in a confidential setting before proceeding with more formal channels, the student may be referred to the campus Ombuds (<https://ombudsperson.ucr.edu/>) and/or the Office of Administrative Resolution <http://conflictresolution.ucr.edu/>.

**2. Access to Academic Records:** Pursuant to FERPA requirements, students are entitled to access to academic records stored in his or her academic file. Students also are entitled to a review of faculty evaluations of their work, such as faculty comments on qualifying exams, and to have those actions explained to them by the relevant faculty.

**3. Informal and Formal Resolution:** As a first step in an appeals procedure, students are strongly encouraged to pursue informal resolution of disputes over academic decisions before resorting to a formal appeal. Informal resolution involves further oral communication among the affected parties (e.g., a student and the chair of his/her exam committee), perhaps in the presence of a third party if desired. Absent an informal resolution, a formal complaint must be initiated in writing.

**4. Formal Appeal Initiation:** The formal appeals procedure defines what constitutes a valid appeal.

a. Only current and former graduate students and faculty members in the program may use this procedure.

b. The formal appeal must be addressed in writing to the EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students. If the student perceives a conflict of interest with the Graduate Advisor, the appeal may be addressed instead to the EEOB Director. The appeal must be addressed to one or the other of these program officers.

- c. The appeal must include a written statement that lays out the grounds for the appeal, and any supporting documentation.
- d. The appeal must be initiated within 30 calendar days from the day the student knew or reasonably should have known about the action generating the complaint, excluding campus holidays, intersession periods, and summer session.
- e. The valid grounds on which a student may base an appeal are confined to three areas: (1) evidence of procedural error and/or (2) evidence of non-academic criteria being used to evaluate academic work, including personal bias and violations of the campus nondiscrimination policy and/or (3) special mitigating circumstances beyond the student's control not properly taken into account in a decision affecting the student's academic progress.

#### 5. Investigation and Record Keeping:

- a. Appeals will be heard by a hearing panel. The EEOB Graduate Advisor for Continuing Students or the EEOB Director (see 4.b. above) will chair the hearing panel and will appoint two additional members to the panel from the EEOB Committee for Continuing Students. Only faculty who were not involved in making the decision under appeal may sit on this panel. The hearing panel will first determine the validity of the appeal (under section 4) and if the appeal is valid, will make a decision on the merits of the appeal as well as any remedy.
- b. The faculty hearing panel will review the written complaint and submitted materials, afford the opportunity for the affected parties to meet separately with the hearing panel, and make any appropriate efforts to interview witnesses or other parties and discover information relevant to the decisions.
- c. The panel may not change an exam result, though it may be allowed to deem the result invalid, which means that a "fail" grade cannot be turned into a "pass" grade by the hearing panel (or vice versa). The hearing panel may only determine that the exam was invalid, and the student will be allowed to retake the exam at a future date.
- d. The panel will make a decision and notify the appellant of the outcome within 60 days of the initiation of the formal complaint.
- e. A written summary of the investigation and the conclusion reached pursuant to the investigation will be kept in the student's academic file. If the appeal is supported, prompt corrective action will be taken.

6. Notice to Parties: The complainant and any parties complained of will be promptly informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation and any corrective action taken.

7. Appeal Procedure: All affected parties have the opportunity to appeal academic decisions

made at the program level (including appeals decisions) to the Graduate Dean ([https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#dispute\\_resolution\\_](https://graduate.ucr.edu/regulations-and-procedures#dispute_resolution_)).

**8. Timeframes:** All timeframes are defined in terms of calendar days, excluding campus holidays, inter-session, and summer session, starting on the day the student either knew or reasonably should have known of the actions leading to the complaint.

## **Further Resources for Graduate Students**

1. **Incoming Student Checklist:** [Incoming Student Information | CNAS Graduate Student Affairs Center \(ucr.edu\)](#)
2. **Graduate Division:** Advancement and Graduation Procedures and Forms: [Graduate Division | Promoting Graduate Education \(ucr.edu\)](#)
3. **Registrar:** Academic Calendar and Registration Information: [The Office of the Registrar | UC Riverside](#)
4. **Establishing Residency:** For Domestic students not already declared as California Residents: [Residency for Tuition Purposes | The Office of the Registrar | UCR](#)

## **TAX INFORMATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

Teaching Assistantships, Research Assistantships, and Fellowships are considered taxable income. Refer to the UCR Graduate Student Handbook for more information. Each year the Rivera Library and the Graduate Division have IRS publication materials available to students.

International students should visit the International Education Center website for information about tax workshops and filing help.