

Zoology Graduate Student Policy Handbook



**Department of Zoology
University of British Columbia
February
2020**

Zoology Graduate Program
University of British Columbia
Room 4200, 6270 University Blvd.
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Getting Started as a Graduate Student

Welcome to the Zoology department of UBC. This *Handbook* lays out the policies of the department that specifically affect graduate students. All students and all supervisors of graduate students should familiarize themselves with these procedures. Questions and suggestions about these procedures can be directed to the Graduate Program Coordinator or the Graduate Advisor.

For a wide variety of other information, please see the departmental web page at www.zoology.ubc.ca.

Who's who

Department Head

Prof. Vanessa Auld

Tel: (604) 827-3149 or email head@zoology.ubc.ca

If you have any questions or concerns that cannot be answered by Shandra Stephenson or Dolph Schluter, do not hesitate to contact the Head.

Zoology Admin Office (Bio Sci 4200)

Graduate Program Coordinator: Síle Maguire Conneely

Tel: (604) 822-5807 or email: coordinator@zoology.ubc.ca

The Graduate Program Coordinator is your resource person for all inquiries about graduate school - registration, awards, pay, TA assignments, and so on.

HR Manager: Edythe Grant

Tel: 822-6973 or email: grant@zoology.ubc.ca

Edythe deals with faculty appointments, faculty teaching evaluations, key requisitions, etc.

Administrator: Katie Pikor

Tel: 822-3384 or email: zadmin@zoology.ubc.ca

Contact Katie if there is some problem other than an academic one, e.g. office space, keys, the elevator not working, your lab has flooded, lights in the office are burned out, and so on.

Administrative Support:

Tel: 822-2131 or email: info@zoology.ubc.ca

Takes care of the mail and reception area, room bookings, TA evaluations, and postdoctoral appointments, etc.

Shipping and Receiving: 140 Bio Diversity or email shiprec@zoology.ubc.ca

Graduate Committee

Graduate Advisors: Dolph Schluter - Tel: 827-4854 or email schluter@zoology.ubc.ca

Mike Gordon - Email: gordon@zoology.ubc.ca

Graduate Committee members: Colin Brauner, Michael Gordon, Mary O'Connor, Dolph Schluter and the Grad Coordinator

This committee deals with all aspects of the Zoology graduate program, including admissions and awards. The sequence of enquiry for general information or problems is first the Graduate Program Coordinator, then the Graduate Advisor.

Finance Office (Bio Sci 4200)

Financial Specialist: Anashuya Kakati, Tel: 822-4265 or email: finance@zoology.ubc.ca

Senior Financial Specialist: Jackie Carpio, Tel: 822-0871 or email: finclerk@zoology.ubc.ca

Finance Manager: Olga Tosin, Tel: 822-6895 or email: tosin@zoology.ubc.ca

The financial specialist takes care of travel advances, reimbursements, and petty cash. Olga takes care of staff and undergraduate appointments. Graduate student appointments are taken care of by Gerard.

Others

Workshops: Pak Chan (Electronic) 1365 or Bruce Gillespie/Vince Grant (Mechanical) 1363

Biology Program Office: Tammy Tromba, Biosci 2521 (undergraduate level)

Zoology Graduate Student Association (ZGSA) - The ZGSA organize social events throughout the year, as well as the Graduate Student Symposium in April.

Zoology Computing Unit (ZCU) – www.zoology.ubc.ca/zcu

Graduate Student Society (GSS) - The GSS is an organization of graduate students dedicated to serving the academic, social and cultural interests of its over 10,000 members. Together with G+PS coordinates orientation sessions for new students during late August/early September.
gss.ubc.ca/main

Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) – Coordinates and maintains the quality of all Master's and Doctoral programs at the University. Administers awards and scholarships, as well as policies, procedures, and guidelines for graduate students across the campus. If you have policy questions, check with the Graduate Program Coordinator before heading to G+PS.
<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/>

Enrolment Services (Registrar's Office) – www.students.ubc.ca

Equity Office – equity.ubc.ca/

Student Health Services – www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/visit-a-doctor/

Disability Resource Centre – students.ubc.ca/campus/diversity/disability

UBC Counselling Services – www.students.ubc.ca/livewelllearnwell/counselling-services/

Before you arrive...

Campus Housing

There are four residences on campus designed to house grad students: Fairview Crescent, Thunderbird, Marine Drive Residence, and Acadia Park. Places are given out on a first-come, first served basis so apply early (before Feb 1). www.housing.ubc.ca/vancouver .

There are three residences run independently of UBC Housing.

- ✓ Green College – www.greencollege.ubc.ca
- ✓ St. John's College – www.stjohns.ubc.ca
- ✓ St. Andrew's Hall – www.standrews.edu

Off Campus Housing

Several resources are available to help find housing:

- ✓ Ask the Graduate Program Coordinator or your supervisor to send a notice out to the current grads asking if anyone has a room to rent.
- ✓ AMS Rentsline – www.amsrentsline.com
- ✓ Housing boards and notices around campus – Grad Student Centre, SUB, at the bus loop, department notice boards, etc.
- ✓ Vancouver Sun and Courier classified ads.
- ✓ Please also visit: www.housing.ubc.ca/off-campus-housing

Daycare and/or School for your child

UBC has an excellent day care system, as well as after school care and summer care for school age children. Note that waitlists are up to 2 1/2 years, so plan to make other arrangements. The UBC Child Care web page is: www.childcare.ubc.ca.

The Vancouver School Board Web page www.vsb.bc.ca provides enrollment details and deadlines.

How to register

Student Service Centre (SSC)

<http://www.students.ubc.ca/ssc>

This is where you register for courses, check fees, pay fees online, and keep your address and email information up to date. The address listed here is the one that the Faculty of Graduate Postdoctoral Studies and Enrolment Services (Registrar's Office) will use, so it is essential that you keep it updated.

Accessing the Student Service Centre requires the creation of a campus-wide log-in user ID. Please visit the Student Service Centre website at <http://www.students.ubc.ca/ssc> and click 'Create CWL Account' located at the bottom left-hand corner. Follow instructions on webpage.

UBC Payroll office does not have access to student information via the SSC, so it is important that you keep them updated of any address changes.

Registration

UBC has two academic sessions per year. Winter session runs from September 1-April 30, and the Spring/Summer session runs from May 1-August 31.

All students must register in their thesis courses two times per year — once in September for the winter term and again in April for the Spring/Summer term. Please make sure that you are registered in the thesis course each term.

For the Winter Term:

- ✓ The 18-credit MSc thesis course is Zool 549, Section 001
- ✓ PhD students should register in Zool 649, Section 001

For the Summer Term:

- ✓ The 18-credit MSc thesis course is Zool 549, Section 941
- ✓ PhD students should register in Zool 649, Section 941

If you have any problems with registering for courses check with the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Adding/dropping courses

You can add and/or drop courses via the SSC up until the second week of term. After that you must complete an add/drop form (with relevant signatures) and submit it to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Tuition Fees

Tuition Fees for graduate students are paid in three installments annually. If you do not pay the fees on time, your records will be placed on “financial hold”, all registration activities will be blocked, and you will be charged a penalty fee. Note that there are student fees in addition to tuition fees.

PhD students: Faculty of Science is currently covering tuition fees for students in their first four years of their PhD program. To be considered, tuition must not be funded from other sources.

MSc students: Currently, all Zoology Master's students will receive a partial tuition waiver of \$1,000 per year until the end of their second year of MSc studies. The award will be assigned in August of each year.

Tuition fees for Canadian students for 2019-20 are \$4,995.78

- ✓ Payable in three installments of \$1,665.26

Tuition fees for International students for 2019-20 are \$8,776.74*

- ✓ Payable in three installments of \$2,925.58

*Note: An international tuition award of up to \$3,200 is given to all International students who do not have an external scholarship that pays tuition.

In addition there are student fees, which cover AMS and GSS fees, Medical and Dental Extended Health Plans, Sports and Athletics, U-Pass/Compass Card, etc. Information can be found at www.grad.ubc.ca/prospective-students/tuition-fees-cost-living/graduate-student-fees

All fees for the year are subject to adjustment and UBC reserves the right at any time to change any fees without notice. This includes tuition and student fees.

Where is...?

Student card/Library card

Your UBC-card is also your library card. The UBC Card Office is located in the Bookstore. You must be registered to get your library card (register in the thesis course), and need to show a government-issued picture ID.

U-Pass/Compass Card

U-Pass/Compass Card: www.upass.ubc.ca

U-Pass has been integrated into the Translink's new Compass Card for UBC students. The U-Pass/Compass Card is an unlimited all-zone bus pass. Fees are \$152/term, assessed with your student fees. The initial Compass Card is issued at the UBC Card Office in the Bookstore. Make sure to bring your UBC Card to pick up the Compass Card. The UBC Card Office will have vending machines ready to issue the cards. Once you have the Compass Card, you must link it to your U-Pass account so that you can use the card as a monthly transit pass. Each month on or after the 16th to take transit in the following month, you must request your pass at upassbc.translink.ca.

Keys

To obtain keys, please check with your supervisor. Note that there is a \$20 key deposit required and you will need to show picture ID when picking up your keys. The deposit will be refunded when the key is returned to Parking and Access Control Services.

Mail

Mailboxes are located in Biosci 4213. Outgoing mail goes in the appropriate boxes – your supervisor's 4-letter speedchart code and name must be written on the top left corner. Stamped mail can go in the white box below the trays.

Pay

Pick up your first paycheque at the Payroll Office on the 5th floor of the TECHNOLOGY ENTERPRISE FACILITY 3 building (Tef3) on or after the 15th. You must arrange for direct-deposit by filling out a form at the Payroll Office. Download the form from www.finance.ubc.ca/sites/finance.ubc.ca/files/uploads/payroll/documents/dirdeposit.pdf. Pay dates are the 15th and last day of the month. Let the Graduate Program Coordinator know if you have any problems with your pay. You can access your appointment information on www.auth.cwl.ubc.ca/auth/login?serviceName=pssslogin.

Computer accounts, email, and audio-visual equipment

All grad students will need to get a UBC email account - usually in the format lastname@zoology.ubc.ca. To get a Zoology account, or for anything to do with ethernet and email services, contact the Zoology Computing Unit (ZCU) - Alistair Blachford (BDC 122, 822-2645, alistair@zoology.ubc.ca), Andy LeBlanc (BDC 123, 822-6527, andy@zoology.ubc.ca), or Richard Sullivan (BDC 121, 822-3882). ZCU will require the Application for Use of the Computing Unit, which can be found at <https://www.zoology.ubc.ca/files/applic.pdf>

The ZCU also handles computer, projector and other equipment loans – book ahead for important events (thesis defences, etc.). Make sure you are added to the grads-list and the grads-admin lists when you sign up for an email account.

Placing orders for lab supplies and equipment

Please consult with your supervisor when ordering supplies.

Seminars

Notices are distributed by email and posted on the Zoology website each week advertising upcoming seminars and lectures. Most research groups have their own seminar series on a regular date and time throughout the year.

Information for international students

A good source of information is International Student Development at International House (1783 West Mall). If you have any questions regarding visas, health care, etc., you can contact them. Check out their International Student Guide located at <http://students.ubc.ca/international> .

Also, please check out the UBC Pre-arrival checklist for International Students: students.ubc.ca/campus/prepare-to-arrive

Social Insurance Number

You must apply immediately for a Social Insurance Number (SIN) - UBC cannot pay you until you have one. Go www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/sin/index.shtml. This website will explain the application procedures. The closest Service Canada Centre is located at 1263 West Broadway, Vancouver, British Columbia. (Broadway and Birch Street).

Once you arrive to Vancouver, make sure to drop by Service Canada to apply for a social insurance number. You will have to take your study permit and passport with you. Service Canada will require these documents in order to issue you the number. Please forward a copy of

your study permit and SIN confirmation receipt to the Graduate Program Coordinator as soon as they are available – you cannot be paid without them.

Note that SIN's have expiry dates that correspond to the study permit expiry date – you must keep both up to date.

Study Permit or Visa

You must provide a copy of your study permit to the Graduate Program Coordinator as soon as possible – you cannot receive any form of payment from UBC until a copy of the study permit has been submitted. Study permit extensions take some time to process, so plan ahead. Citizen and Immigration Canada website: www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study.asp .

Health Insurance

You must apply for coverage for the Medical Services Plan as soon as you arrive in BC – there is a waiting period of 3 months from the date of entry to BC, before you are eligible for coverage. Check online for more information at www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/msp

All international students are enrolled in a mandatory medical coverage (iMed) for the first 3 months in the program – the \$180 fee is assessed as part of the student fees.

Note: MSP covers visits to doctors, hospitals and many medical specialists are free. Extended Health covers prescription drugs, dental visits, vision care, health practitioners, travel health coverage and more. www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=14,298,0,0

AMS/GSS Extended Health and Dental Plan

Graduate students are automatically enrolled in the AMS/GSS Extended Medical Plan – if you have other coverage you can opt out, but you must do it by the deadline - details from the Graduate Student Society at <http://gss.ubc.ca/main/services/health-dental/>. Fees are assessed with your student fees.

Funding options

Funding policy

The Department of Zoology has a minimum funding policy for all Graduate students, which guarantees a minimum salary plus tuition costs. Salary support will be in the form of a combination of teaching assistantships (TA) from the Department, awards/scholarships from various sources, or research assistantships (GRA) paid from the supervisor's research grants. The salary and amount of tuition support will depend on your degree program and nationality. Current funding levels for salary and tuition are posted at <https://www.zoology.ubc.ca/graduate-program/funding>.

All students making satisfactory progress will continue to be supported throughout their graduate degree at the minimum level or higher.

All financial support is contingent on satisfactory performance and subject to yearly review.

To achieve the minimum level of support a student may be required to TA up to two terms per year. Graduate students in Zoology are not permitted to TA more than two times in an academic year.

Students are personally responsible for paying their assessed tuition and student fees.

Teaching Assistantships

Prospective TAs will be assigned to an appropriate TA position in late summer for one or both terms. Students should contact the instructor directly regarding duties and scheduling issues and contact the Graduate Program Coordinator as soon as possible about any scheduling conflicts between assigned positions and courses. There is a preference system for hiring TAs, based on length in program and experience (see [CUPE Collective Agreement](#) article 13.03 for full

details).

The maximum time allowed for TA work is determined through the CUPE collective agreement. The current rules are that the total time commitment for an academic term cannot exceed 192 hours. The average number of hours per week is 12 and the maximum hours per week is 24. One day duties cannot exceed eight hours without the TAs consent.

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA)

Many students are paid Graduate Research Assistantships directly from their supervisor's research grant. This represents a major way in which a student's pay is brought from the amount given by teaching assistantships and awards to the total salary required by the department.

GRA's are given in support of the student's own research towards their degree. Satisfactory progress towards the student's research is expected for payment of a GRA, but work not related to the student's research program should not be required. Graduate students may be hired for additional wages for work unrelated to their degree, but these wages should not be counted towards their minimum level of support (unless both supervisor and student agree that extra work can be done in lieu of a TA-ship).

All students and other members of each lab, whether paid by GRA or not, are expected to contribute to the shared chores of a lab and to fulfil weekly requirements of the supervisor. The latter category can include lab meetings, one-on-one meetings, seminar attendance, etc. The total time for tasks required by the supervisor can be up to an average of five hours per week across the four academic terms in the year. Thus, because the two winter terms are 15 weeks each and the two summer terms are seven weeks each, supervisors can request a total of 210 hours (42 weeks x 5 hours) for shared lab chores, meetings, seminars, etc. over a 12-month period. Any additional work not directly related to a trainee's own research must be paid either through an hourly wage at the GTA1 marking rate or through an additional GRA.

Awards

All students are strongly encouraged to apply for all financial awards for which they are eligible. These may include NSERC Postgraduate Scholarships (for Canadians and permanent residents), Killam Doctoral Scholarships, and Affiliated Fellowships, all of which are administered through the same application process with a deadline in mid-September. In addition, Zoology will hold the Zoology Graduate Fellowships Competition in the winter.

Zoology Graduate Student Travel Award: In the spring, Zoology will give 10 to 15 travel awards of up to \$500 each to be used for expenses to attend a conference. To apply, students must have previously utilized the Graduate Student Travel Fund outlined below. Application deadline is in the spring.

Graduate Student Travel Fund: All graduate students are eligible for the Graduate Student Travel Fund, once per degree program. The Travel Fund provides one-time travel support to a maximum of \$500 per graduate student who presents a paper or poster at an official conference

or symposium. (Student workshops are ineligible). Full details at www.grad.ubc.ca/awards/graduate-student-travel-fund.

Duties of graduate students and supervisor

All students and supervisors should read the *Handbook of Graduate Supervision* provided by G+PS at www.grad.ubc.ca/handbook-graduate-supervision in particular the “The Supervisory Committee” section www.grad.ubc.ca/handbook-graduate-supervision/supervisory-committee and the “Roles and Responsibilities” section www.grad.ubc.ca/handbook-graduate-supervision/roles-responsibilities as well as the “The Graduate Thesis” section www.grad.ubc.ca/handbook-graduate-supervision/graduate-thesis

Also consult the *Intellectual Property Guide* at www.grad.ubc.ca/intellectual-property-guide for issues related to intellectual property, plagiarism, and publication.

In addition, the supervisor and students should discuss at the beginning of the term of study such things as

- ✓ Expected work hours, vacation times, etc.
- ✓ Frequency and scheduling of regular meetings between supervisor and student
- ✓ Lab policies and etiquette, sharing of resources, sharing of lab duties
- ✓ Expectations about lab meetings, departmental seminars, journal clubs, etc.
- ✓ Policies about opportunities to attend scientific meetings
- ✓ Policies about authorship on papers and intellectual property
- ✓ Policies about leave (illness, parental, etc.)

The supervisor is expected to advise on the research that will form the student’s thesis or dissertation. In the event of conflict over such policies, other members of the supervisory committee or the head of the Graduate Committee can be called on as mediators.

Supervisor and supervisory committee

All graduate students are required to have a Supervisory Committee. Supervisory committees are to be composed primarily of research faculty members from the Zoology graduate program who hold tenure stream professorial board appointments. Adding any committee member who does not have a research, tenure stream professorial board appointment at UBC requires the approval of the Graduate Advisor and G+PS. The proposed committee member must 1) provide expertise that is not already available from a UBC faculty member, 2) provide an independent voice from other committee members, and 3) have the qualifications to supervise graduate research at the standard of excellence at UBC. A memo from the supervisor, addressing all three criteria, is required for approval.

Zoology Master's students must have a minimum of three faculty members on their committee (including the supervisor). One committee member can be either an adjunct member of the Zoology graduate program or a non-Zoology UBC research faculty with a tenure stream professorial board appointment.

Zoology Doctoral students must have a minimum of four faculty members on their committee (including the supervisor). One committee member can be either an adjunct member of the Zoology graduate program or a non-Zoology UBC research faculty with a tenure stream professorial board appointment. Adding a second faculty member from outside of the graduate program to a PhD committee requires a formal request and written permission from the Graduate Advisor.

Supervisory committees must conform to the policies listed in this section and should be formed within the first academic term. Consult with your supervisor regarding faculty members suitable to act as members of your committee. Choice of members of the supervisory committee is a joint decision between the student and supervisor. Once your supervisory committee has been formed, you are required to fill out the Supervisory Committee Form, which must be signed by the student, the supervisor, and the Graduate Advisor. The same form must be used to indicate any change in the supervisory committee.

Annual Committee meetings

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requires that graduate students meet with their full committee at least once a year. Students who have not had a supervisory committee meeting within the previous 12 months are not eligible for awards, and their supervisors are not eligible to accept new graduate students. All new students are encouraged to meet with their committee within the first six months of starting the program.

Prior to the supervisory committee meeting, students will provide the members of the committee with a brief progress report of 1-2 pages. If the first meeting of the supervisory committee occurs within six months of the program start date, the student can provide a brief introduction and training history with a general plan for research. For PhD supervisory committee meetings that also serve as the proposal defence, the student will provide the full dissertation proposal instead of the brief progress report. For all other supervisory committee meetings, the short progress report should include the following content: (1) date the student started in the program, (2) list of course taken and grades, (3) summary of research conducted so far, (4) research plan for the future, (5) sources of funding, and (6) papers published or in preparation.

Supervisory committee meetings should normally last one hour in length. Students should prepare a brief presentation on research progress and future planning. Approximately half of the meeting time (~30 minutes) should be for open discussion.

After each supervisory committee meeting, the Committee Meeting Form and the Student Progress Report must be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Courses

The Zoology program offers nine one credit graduate modules. Three of the modules cover general skills in Zoology: Science Writing (BIOL 548I), Visual and Oral Presentations (BIOL 548L), and Dealing with Data (BIOL 548O). Three of the modules teach concept in Ecology: Community Ecology (BIOL 548G), Ecosystem Ecology (BIOL 548J), and Population Ecology (BIOL 548M). Three of the modules cover concepts in Comparative Physiology: Ethics in Animal Research (BIOL 548P), Metabolic rates and Measurements (BIOL 548Q), and Mass and Temperature Effects on Metabolic Rates (BIOL 548S).

The three credit course Quantitative Methods in Ecology and Evolution (BIOL 501) covers statistical analysis in the R scripting language. It is recommended for all Zoology students. Other three credit courses include Cell Biology and Population Genetics. A list of graduate courses relevant to Zoology students is available at <https://www.zoology.ubc.ca/graduate-program/courses-modules>

Master's Students

Master's students are required to complete a minimum of 30 credits, made up of 18 credits of thesis and 12 credits of coursework. At least nine of these 12 credits must be at the 500 level, but the remaining three credits can be at the 300-400 level. Course-work is initially set through consultation with the student's supervisor, but the supervisory committee may also have suggestions. Three credits of Directed Studies (ZOOL 500) may be taken.

A directed studies course must be approved by the Graduate Advisor. It is an ideal vehicle for students to study with different faculty and expand their knowledge into a specific area that is not covered by an existing course. The workload is similar to that in other courses, as is the expected grade. The grade assigned must be based, in part, on written work. Although this additional knowledge may inform the student's thesis work, it should not in any way form part of it. Students cannot enroll in ZOOL 500 with their supervisor.

A minimum of 68% must be obtained in any course taken by a student. However, up to 6 credits of coursework with grades of 60-67% may be counted towards a master's program without penalty.

For more information, visit: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program/satisfactory-progress-masters-students

Doctoral Students

Doctoral students who enter with a Master's degree are not required to take any courses. However, the supervisory committee may recommend that the student take courses relevant to his or her area of research.

Students entering directly from a bachelor's degree must, during the first year of study, complete 12 credits with a first class average of which at least nine credits must be at the 500-level, to maintain registration as a doctoral student. Master's students who wish to transfer to the PhD program must also, by G+PS rules, complete 12 credits of coursework.

Students are required to complete all courses with a passing grade of 68%. By G+PS policy, students failing a course require a departmental recommendation to continue. Students failing more than one course normally will be required to withdraw. A student who obtains more than one grade below 68% will normally be required to withdraw.

For more information, visit: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program/satisfactory-progress-doctoral-students

Leave, Parental Leave, and Extensions

Leave of Absence: Leave can be granted when a student is best advised for personal, health, or other reasons to have time completely away from her/his academic responsibilities. The leave period is not included in the time period for completion of the degree. Leave, not including parental leave or leave to pursue concurrent programs, is limited to one year. A leave will begin normally on the first day of term, for a period of four, eight or 12 months. A request for leave must be submitted to the department in writing and should have the written approval of the supervisor.

Parental Leave: A graduate student who is bearing a child or who has primary responsibility for the care of an infant or young child immediately following a birth or adoption of a child is eligible for parental leave. A request for parental leave should be made through the student's Department for a minimum leave of four months to a maximum leave of twelve months. The leave period is not included in the time period for completion of the degree.

Leave of Absence: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program/leave-absence

Extension: There is a five-year time limit for the completion of a Master's program and a six-year time limit for the completion of a Doctoral program. If an extension is needed, the research supervisor must make a request to the department Graduate Advisor. The request must explain the reasons for the extension and include a detailed timeline for completion. Extension requests will not be approved without a committee meeting in the prior 12 months and the timeline for completion must be approved by the supervisory committee. Extensions will not be granted beyond two years. www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/managing-your-program/program-extensions

Being a Master's student

Degree Requirements

A Master's degree is expected to take approximately two years, although faster progress is encouraged.

The M.Sc. degree requires a combination of course work and research for a total of 30 credits. Twelve (12) credits of courses are typically taken with the remaining 18 credits being thesis research. Single courses typically range from 1-3 credits each. Students have considerable flexibility in their choice of courses including graduate and senior undergraduate courses in Zoology, Botany, Microbiology, Cell and Developmental Biology, Fisheries, Genetics, Conservation, and Earth and Oceans Sciences, as well as several other departments.

M.Sc. students are also required to conduct research towards their degrees. Although research conceived independently of the student's supervisor is encouraged, the minimum requirement for the M.Sc. degree is to successfully complete directed research. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide a suitable project that can be completed within two years. The project should be of publishable quality, but not need extend beyond the equivalent of a single paper and may constitute part of a larger body of work.

Transferring to a PhD

To transfer to the PhD program without completing the MSc, a student needs to meet the following requirements:

- ✓ The student must have completed 12 credits of course-work with a First Class average (80%+) within the first 18 months of study.
- ✓ After completion of the required course-work, and within 18 months of starting date, the MSc supervisory committee (minimum three members) must recommend in writing to the Graduate Advisor that the student be transferred to the PhD program. The committee should discuss who to add to the committee (four total members required).
- ✓ A PhD thesis proposal must be approved at a meeting by the full four-person committee. The Department will then make a recommendation to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for this transfer. All transfers have to be approved by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
- ✓ Once the thesis proposal has been approved, the Comprehensive Exam can be scheduled to take place no sooner than two weeks from the date of approval. Note that the Comprehensive Exam must be taken within 18 months of starting graduate school at UBC, even for students transferring from the M.Sc. to Ph.D program.

Master's Thesis Defence

M.Sc. exams are scheduled by the Graduate Program Coordinator. After approval by the Supervisor, copies of the thesis must be distributed to the members of the student's Supervisory Committee for approval, with at least two weeks allowed for reading and comments. After the thesis has been approved by the committee the exam may be scheduled. One hard copy and one PDF copy of the thesis must be given to the Graduate Program Coordinator, together with the signed [Master's Thesis Approval Form](#). A minimum of two weeks must be allowed between submission of the thesis to the Graduate Program Coordinator and the examination.

The MSc Examining Committee will be Chaired by a faculty member who has not been directly associated with the preparation of the thesis. The examining committee will be comprised of the research supervisor, one committee member, a departmental examiner, and the Chairperson. The Chairperson is responsible to the Head of the Department and to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and acts as moderator of the exam.

The MSc examination serves as a departmental review of the candidate and his/her research. An audience is welcome and encouraged. It will proceed as follows:

1. The student will present a brief summary of the thesis (not to exceed 25 minutes in length).
2. Members of the audience should be asked if they have any questions for the candidate. Following these questions, a short break should be announced to allow any members of the audience to leave if they desire.
3. This will be followed by an oral examination in the general area of the thesis. Each examiner should ask questions for 15-20 min, with the option of a brief second round for follow-up questions. The Chairperson may ask a question or two out of interest or for purposes of clarification but is not normally expected to do so.
4. Following the examination, the candidate and audience members will be asked to leave the room and the Committee will hold an in camera session. The Chairperson will ask the Supervisor to give an opinion of the student and the student's performance during the examination.
5. At this time it will be at the Chairperson's discretion to ask the supervisor to submit either a pass or fail grade and leave the room. If the supervisor is asked to leave, the written grade will not be revealed to the other Committee Members but will be included in the final determination.
6. Each of the remaining members of the Committee will then assign either a pass or fail for the thesis. The Chairperson does not vote. The examining Committee may recommend that the thesis is acceptable in the form presented, or it may request changes be made to the thesis before the title page is signed. Responsibility for ensuring that such changes are made will lie with the Supervisor.

7. At this point if the thesis is deemed “outstanding” a note should be made in the chair report that the committee feels the thesis should be put forward for a thesis award and the rationale for doing so.
8. A fail will be assigned if at least two of the three examiners assign a failing grade and must be accompanied by a written summary outlining the reasons for this decision. There is no recourse for a student who fails the exam.
9. The Chairperson will then recall the student (and Supervisor) and announce the decision. The Chairperson may ask at this time that the Thesis Approval Form be signed by the Committee or may ask that the student first make required revisions.
10. The Chairperson will complete a M.Sc. Examination Report and submit it, with the supervisor’s signature, to the Graduate Secretary in a timely manner.

After members of the Examining Committee have signed the [Thesis Approval Form](#), the candidate will submit the thesis electronically as a single pdf file to Faculty of Graduate Studies through the UBC online information, cIRcle. In addition, one hard copy must be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator. The thesis grade will not be entered until the final copy of the thesis is received.

Dissertation & Thesis Preparation: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation

Final Dissertation & Thesis Submission: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-dissertation-thesis-submission

Being a PhD student

Degree Requirements

Original research supervised by a faculty member constitutes the major component of work toward the Ph.D. degree. Ph.D. students are not required to complete course work unless it is recommended by the thesis committee *or* unless the student has been admitted without a Master's degree, in which case 12 credits of coursework are required by G+PS rules. All Ph.D. students are required to present a research proposal and pass a comprehensive examination on their research area within 18 months of registering at the University.

Each Ph.D. student is expected to deliver a one-hour lecture on their completed doctoral research in one of the departmental lecture series before their doctoral dissertation examination. This must be *scheduled* before the department will forward the dissertation to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Proposal

Each Ph.D. student is required to submit to the department a research proposal that has been accepted by his/her supervisor and Supervisory Committee prior to scheduling the comprehensive exam. The comprehensive examination is separate and distinct from the evaluation of the thesis proposal.

Contents and Format

The candidate is expected to review the literature and develop the questions and methodologies to be used in the research carried out for the dissertation requirement of the Ph.D. degree. The proposal *should not* exceed 25 double-spaced pages in length, using a 12 point font size. The proposal might spend 5-10 pages on background and 3-4 pages on each of 3-4 projects, discussing research questions and methods.

Procedure

1. The student should discuss the contents of the proposal with his/her supervisor.
2. The supervisor should then approve a draft of the proposal before it is sent to the Supervisory Committee. This reading should be done in a timely fashion by the supervisor (within two weeks of receiving the draft). Committee members should be advised ahead of time that the proposal will be given to them on a particular date, so that time conflicts can be addressed.
3. The Supervisory Committee should be given hard copies of the proposal and allowed a minimum of two weeks for reading and comments.
4. The student and Supervisory Committee should meet to discuss the contents of the proposal and the proposed research. This meeting should be a discussion, not an

examination, but the committee must be able to make a decision about whether the proposed thesis is feasible for the student to do. At the end of this meeting, the committee should make a decision (*in camera* if requested by any member) about whether to approve the proposal. Until the proposal is accepted, the student may not proceed with the Comprehensive Exam. The Comprehensive Exam cannot be *officially* scheduled until the proposal is approved, although a projected time may be set to be left free in everyone's calendars.

To allow time for preparation for the Comprehensive Exam, the committee meeting to discuss the research proposal should be held no less than two weeks in advance of the Comprehensive Exam. Thus, the Supervisory committee should be given the proposal no less than four weeks prior to the expected date of the Comprehensive Exam. Many proposals require some re-writing before approval, so allowing even more time before the expected Comprehensive Exam date is recommended.

Comprehensive Exam

All PhD students are required to take an oral comprehensive exam given by members of their supervisory committee. To schedule a comprehensive exam, students must use the [Comprehensive Examination Checklist](#).

Purpose of the examination

The comprehensive exam serves two functions: (1) to create an opportunity for general learning in student's field of study and (2) to evaluate the preparation of the student for doctoral level study.

Scope of the examination

The comprehensive examination is intended to test the student's understanding of the chosen field of study as a whole and the student's preparation for the thesis research to follow. This examination is not a thesis defence and is not designed to query the specifics of the student's proposed research. The examination will cover the general area of the student's research. Each candidate is expected to be able to discuss any other areas that are closely related to their own research work.

Timing of the examination

This examination must be completed within eighteen months of initial registration. Thus, a M.Sc. student who transfers to the Ph.D. degree program after one year will have only six months after the date of transfer to complete the examination. Students are advised to complete the examination before becoming deeply involved in their research work.

Extensions beyond 18 months require the written approval of the Graduate Advisor. Students are expected to complete their comprehensive examination within 24 months from the date of initial registration. A student who is not admitted to candidacy within 36 months from date of initial registration must withdraw from the program.

Scheduling the Exam

[Comprehensive Examination Checklist \(see below under “ Examination Committee”\)](#). You must include the exam Chair (currently Eric Taylor, etaylor@zoology.ubc.ca) in the initially scheduling emails and polls. If you wait to contact the Chair until *after* you have scheduled your exam, you risk having to reschedule it if the Chair is not available. If the exam Chair is a member of your committee (and thus cannot chair the exam), you must contact and include in the scheduling emails and polls one of several alternate Chairs. Currently, alternate Chairs are Colin Brauner (brauner@zoology.ubc.ca), Linda Matsuuchi (matsuuchi@zoology.ubc.ca) and Michael Gordon (gordon@zoology.ubc.ca).

Requirements and preparation

Readings: Before taking the comprehensive exam, it is recommended that students contact all members of their committees *at least two to three months in advance of the expected exam date* for suggestions on readings and other preparation for the exam.

Proposal: Before taking the comprehensive exam, a student must submit to the department a written research proposal which has been approved by his/her supervisor and Supervisory Committee. See Page 21 ‘*Proposal*’ for details.

Presentation: At the beginning of the examination, the student will present a 15-20 minute talk on the background of the questions discussed in the proposals. This presentation should discuss the state of knowledge about the questions in the defence and defend the reasons for asking those questions. This presentation is not meant to be a discussion of the methodology in the proposal, which should be discussed in a normal committee meeting leading up to the exam.

Examination committee

The Examination Committee will consist of all members of the Supervisory committee (minimum of 4) plus the Chair. To schedule a Comprehensive Exam, please follow the instructions in the [Comprehensive Examination Checklist](#). If one member of the supervisory committee is not available because of leave, substitution may be made upon the advice of the Graduate Advisor or arrangements made for teleconferencing. Although the supervisory committee may include members who do not hold professional board appointment in the research stream, pass or fail decisions will be made by UBC research faculty members only.

Examination protocol

The exam will begin by a brief introduction by the Chair. The student will then present a 15-20 minute (or certainly no more than 30 min) discussion of the questions involved in his/her proposal (see above). Each member of the examination committee will then be given 15 minutes for questions assessing the student’s general knowledge of the subject area. The supervisor is the last one to ask questions and the Chair does not pose questions. Then each committee member will be given the opportunity for a second round of questions, not to exceed five minutes each. This second round is intended for clarification of issues previously raised and not for new lines of questioning except in unusual circumstances.

Results of the examination

Following the examination, the committee will hold an in-camera session and the candidate will be asked to retire from the room. The Supervisor will be asked to discuss the candidate in general, but will not register an opinion on pass or fail until after all other committee members have discussed the exam and registered an opinion. The Supervisor *may* then be asked to retire from the meeting. The remaining Committee members will discuss the candidate and then vote which, if necessary, may be by written secret ballot. The pass/fail decision made by the Supervisor will not be revealed to the Committee members until after completion of their discussion and vote.

The pass/fail decision will be by simple majority of the votes cast by members of the Examination Committee. In the event of a tie, the deciding vote will be cast by the Chair.

In the event of a marginal pass, the committee may apply conditions (e.g., course work, directed readings). The committee must then determine the arrangements for ensuring that the conditions are met. These should be included in the Chair's report.

The Chair will then recall the candidate and Supervisor to the meeting and announce the result of the vote. Written notification of the decision made by the Examination Committee will be sent to the Head of the Department.

The candidate will either pass or fail the examination. A candidate who fails the first attempt must pass a second examination that will be scheduled to take place within six months of the first examination. Failure to pass a second examination will result in the student being required to withdraw from the graduate program.

Dissertation and dissertation defence

Dissertation & Thesis Preparation: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation

Final Dissertation & Thesis Submission: www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-dissertation-thesis-submission

The Doctoral Dissertation exam is administered through the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Information about the deadlines and protocols for these examinations can be found at the G+PS website at www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/final-doctoral-examination Note that the deadlines for scheduling these exams are sometimes quite early in the term.

M.Sc. Timeline Checklist

First month

- Meet with supervisor to discuss expectations of both the student, and supervisor, degree requirements, policies and timelines. (*recommended*)
- Introductory meeting with supervisory committee (minimum attendance: supervisor and one committee member), to discuss coursework, composition of committee, research plan. (*recommended*)

First two terms

- Full committee established. Three faculty members including supervisor, at least two members from Zoology. Students **should check** with the Graduate Program Coordinator to determine if committee members fulfill the Zoology requirement.
- Begin coursework. 12 credits must be completed within the M.Sc. degree. Note 12 credits must be completed within the first 18 months if upgrading to PhD. (*G+PS/Zoology requirement*).
- Apply for scholarship funding, if necessary. (*recommended*)
- Identify research project. If this has not occurred within first 8 months, the supervisor must provide a project which can be completed in a reasonable (<18 months) time. (*Zoology requirement*).
- Convene committee meeting to discuss proposed research. (*G+PS requirement: at least one committee meeting every 12 months*).
- Begin research.

Second year

- If you and your supervisor wish you to upgrade to a PhD, ensure that you have completed the necessary requirements within first 18 months.
- Convene committee meeting to discuss research results from first year, possible further research, timeline to thesis completion (*G+PS requirement: at least one committee meeting every 12 months*).
- Complete research.
- The student will complete writing the thesis by the end of the second year.

Thesis submission.

- Approval by supervisor. This may be an iterative process.
- Submit to supervisory committee members, at least two weeks before approval required.

- Obtain approval by supervisory committee.
- Identify members of the examining committee with help from the Graduate Program Coordinator (supervisor, one other member from supervisory committee, and departmental examiner). Schedule thesis defence date and time.
- Submit approved version to members of the M.Sc. examining committee at least two weeks before defence date.
- Examination (see section in Zoology Graduate Student Policy Handbook).
- Submission of signed thesis approval form and final thesis (electronically as a single pdf file to Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies through the UBC online information, cIRcle, and one hard copy to the Zoology Graduate Program).

PhD. Timeline Checklist

First month

- Meet with supervisor to discuss expectations of both student and supervisor, degree requirements, policies and timelines. (*recommended*)
- Introductory meeting with committee (minimum attendance: supervisor and one committee member), to discuss coursework, composition of committee, research plan. (*recommended*)

First two terms

- Full committee established. Four faculty members including supervisor, where at least 2 must be from Zoology and at least 1 other must be a UBC Faculty member. Students **should check** with the Graduate Program Coordinator to determine if committee members fulfill the Zoology requirement.
- Begin any coursework the committee has recommended or required for students without Master's degrees. Must be completed with a passing grade (68%). (G+PS: *no formal course requirement, unless recommended by committee. If entering without MSc degree - 12 credits required, See Page 8 'Courses'*).
- Apply for scholarship funding, if necessary. NSERC, Affiliated Fellowships, and Killam scholarships have the same application process, with a deadline in mid-September. (*recommended*)
- Identify research project.
- Obtain reading list for comprehensive exam from each committee member. Begin preparations.
- Convene committee meeting to discuss proposed research. (G+PS requirement: *at least one committee meeting every 12 months*).
- Begin research.

By end of first 16 months

- Prepare the research proposal, obtain approval from supervisor. Give committee heads up that the proposal is coming their way at least a week in advance, to ensure that everyone is in town. Distribute to committee members at least two weeks in advance of committee meeting. (*Zoology requirement*)
- Convene committee meeting to discuss proposed research and the suitability of the research proposal. The committee must approve the research proposal at least two weeks before officially scheduling the comprehensive exam. (*Zoology requirement*)

By end of first 18 months

- Comprehensive exam within 18 months of starting PhD. (*G+PS/Zoology requirement*). To schedule a comprehensive exam, students must check with the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Following years.

- Convene regular committee meetings to discuss research results from first year, further research plans, coursework and timeline to thesis completion (*G+PS requirement: at least one committee meeting every 12 months*).
- Complete research.
- Ideally, the student will complete writing the thesis by the end of the fourth year.

Thesis submission.

- At least three months before completing the thesis, submit external examiner form to G+PS.
- Approval by supervisor. This may be an iterative process.
- Submit to supervisory committee members, at least two weeks before approval required.
- Obtain approval by supervisory committee.
- Identify members of the examining committee (supervisor, external examiner, university examiners, Two to three members of supervisory committee, chair). Schedule thesis defence date >8 weeks after submission of thesis to G+PS.
- Examination (*see G+PS regulations*).
- Submission of thesis approval form and final thesis (electronically as a single pdf file to Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies through the UBC online information, cIRcle, and one hard copy to the Zoology Graduate Program).

Forms

Supervisory Committee Form:

This form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator when you are creating or making changes to your supervisory committee.

Committee Meeting Form:

This form should be taken to your annual committee meetings and signed by your supervisor and each committee member. The form must then be returned to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Directed Studies (ZOOL 500) Approval Form:

Use this form to request enrollment in the Directed Studies courses. This form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

MSc Thesis Approval Form:

This form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator once your committee has approved your thesis for defence.

PhD Thesis Approval Form:

This form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator once your committee has approved your thesis for defence.

Comprehensive Examination Checklist:

This checklist should be followed when arranging and scheduling your research proposal and comprehensive exam.

All the above mentioned forms are located here: <https://www.zoology.ubc.ca/graduate-program/student-handbook-and-forms>