

Guide to Graduate Studies

Department of Biology

Texas State University

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Guide to Graduate Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to graduate study in the Department of Biology at Texas State University. Graduate school is an exciting, fun, and challenging experience. For most of your time in our graduate program, you will be busy, learn a tremendous amount, and (hopefully!) have a great time working with your supervising professor and fellow students.

Individual graduate student experiences can vary tremendously, depending upon the university, college, department, and major professor or advisor chosen. That said, there are a few pieces of advice that are likely to be helpful when it comes to making the most of your graduate school experience and maintaining your happiness and well-being:

Have open, honest communication with your advisor on a regular basis.

The graduate student–advisor relationship is a two-way street. Your major professor will likely have expectations for you while you are in their lab, just as you have expectations for your major professor while you are in graduate school. You should have a conversation with your major professor at the *beginning* of graduate school to clearly define the expectations for both supervisor and student. Be sure to communicate frequently with your advisor to make certain that both of you are meeting those expectations. Many students set up a regular meeting time with their advisor every one or two weeks to just touch base and make sure things are moving along productively. At the same time, be sure to recognize that faculty members, like graduate students, have many responsibilities and may not be immediately available if the situation is not urgent. When it comes time to review drafts of your thesis or dissertation, grant proposals, or manuscripts in preparation, be sure to allow your supervisor sufficient time to complete their review.

Learn how to manage your time effectively.

You are going to be busy in graduate school, learning how to balance research, teaching, taking classes, and everyday life activities. It may take a bit of practice, but coming up with a method that works for you is critical. There are many websites that lay out strategies for time management and your advisor and fellow graduate students will also likely have advice. Having good time management skills will benefit you in graduate school and beyond.

Be organized and prepared.

Plan and have things ready for meetings with your advisor, other professors, and fellow graduate students. It will make things go more smoothly, you will know where things are located, and you will know your timelines and due dates. Spend the time to keep your computer files organized and have your field and/or lab materials prepped and in good condition. Checklists are always helpful. Being organized will help you to accomplish your goals in a timely manner.

Recognize that “Imposter Syndrome” is real and try not to judge yourself in comparison to others.

“Imposter Syndrome” refers to a situation in which a driven, high achieving person has an inability to fully recognize the merits of their own accomplishments and instead considers themselves to be an “imposter” or “fraud” among peers and colleagues. Situations and feelings of Imposter Syndrome are especially common for women and/or individuals from under-represented groups. Graduate school can be the type of environment that is conducive to feelings of lowered self-esteem. Always remember that having such feelings is common (everyone has them, including professors!) and remind yourself that you deserve to be in your graduate program—you’ve earned your spot, and you are just as capable as everyone else.

There may be times when you will question yourself or your research based on what others are doing or accomplishing. Constantly comparing yourself to other students can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. It is okay if you feel a little jealous that another student just published a paper or received a prestigious fellowship, but learn how to acknowledge those feelings and then channel them into recognizing that the accomplishments of others are not a commentary on your own work. Be happy and congratulatory towards fellow students who have successes. At the end of the day, it is *your* graduate degree and *your* research. If you have put in the effort and it has been to the best of your ability, then comparison to others is not a fruitful or helpful path.

Set goals and manage your expectations.

Make short- and long-term goals for your graduate experience. Try to have goals for each day, week, month, semester, and year. You may not be able to accomplish everything you set out for yourself over a given time interval, but realize it is okay if that happens. Keep your expectations reasonable, be aware of your strengths and limitations, and get to know how quickly you can proceed through tasks.

It can be helpful to be thinking beyond the next few years of graduate work: what do you want to do *after* graduate school? Having an idea about this will help you come up with a plan and goals to set for yourself while you are in school. Lastly, it is common for your goals to change while in graduate school. We all learn from life experiences and that may lead to changes in what we wish to accomplish or where we want to end up after school.

Be sure to practice self-care and make time to have fun outside your school work.

Although you will be very busy teaching, performing research, and taking classes, remember that non-academic aspects of life are just as important. Be sure to set aside time for yourself and practice some self-care. Learning to set appropriate limits for work and non-work life interactions can be challenging, but having boundaries is important for your well-being. Learn how to say “no” to additional and unnecessary work items, eat a well-balanced diet, get regular exercise, and try to keep to a regular and adequate sleep schedule. It is helpful to look to your peers (i.e., other graduate students) to talk to about problems and successes. It is important to remember that your research activities and what you study does not define you as a person.

Graduate school can be challenging, and you can sometimes experience negative feelings and thoughts. Feeling unhappy and experiencing frustrating situations is natural and you will likely have such moments in graduate school. If you feel depressed, or if you feel that your mental health is suffering, be aware that there are resources on campus to help. The university has a diversity of on-campus resources for self-care, including clubs, social groups, and mental health support. The website of The Graduate College provides links to a variety of student support services that are available at the University:

<https://www.gradcollege.txst.edu/students/student-support.html>

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

All graduate programs, and all graduate students, reside within The Graduate College at Texas State University. The department chair represents The Graduate College within the Biology Department. The department’s Graduate Committee oversees and coordinates the individual departmental graduate programs. Each of these programs has a faculty member assigned as graduate program advisor who is responsible for various administrative tasks, such as coordinating admissions to the program, preparing degree audits, monitoring student progress, etc. The Graduate Committee is chaired by the Biology Department’s Associate Chair for Graduate Programs and includes the advisors of each of the graduate programs and other faculty selected by the department chair.

Each graduate student must select a supervising or major professor, who will become the student’s mentor and advise the student on a day-to-day basis and who will also supervise the progress and completion of the student’s thesis or dissertation work.

Graduate Faculty Categories

Faculty members must be appointed as Graduate Faculty by The Graduate College in order to teach graduate level courses and to chair or serve as a member of a thesis or dissertation committee. All tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the Department of Biology are expected to maintain either Regular Doctoral, Associate Doctoral or Regular graduate faculty status.

Regular doctoral faculty may supervise dissertation research and serve as either chair or a member of dissertation committees. Core doctoral faculty also may supervise master’s theses and serve on master’s committees and may teach 7000-level and 5000-level courses. All tenure-track faculty members are expected to maintain Regular Doctoral status. Regular Doctoral faculty will:

- allocate a minimum of 50 percent work effort for merit consideration to scholarly activity;
- maintain an active research program typically involving two or more graduate students (MS and/or Ph.D. seeking);
- for tenured faculty, author or coauthor an average of five peer-reviewed research articles in national- or international-level journals during the five years immediately prior to application for initial appointment or reappointment;
- for tenure-track faculty, author or coauthor an average of one peer-reviewed research article in a national- or international-level journal for each year they are on the tenure-track;
- present papers/posters at international, national, and regional professional meetings;
- assure that active graduate students also attend and present at meetings;
- actively seek and successfully procure extramural funding from appropriate sources sufficient to provide necessary equipment, M&O, and student wages for RA support (It is expected that the financial support of doctoral students beyond the successful completion of their candidacy exam will normally be the responsibility of their dissertation supervisor).

Associate Doctoral faculty may not serve as chair, but may serve as a member of dissertation committees. Associate Doctoral faculty may serve as chairs or members of master's committees and may teach 7000-level and 5000-level courses. Associate doctoral faculty will:

- maintain an active research program typically involving one or more graduate students (MS and/or Ph.D. seeking);
- author or coauthor at least ten peer-reviewed research articles prior to application for initial appointment or reappointment;
- present papers/posters at international, national, and regional professional meetings;
- assure that active graduate students also attend and present at meetings.

Regular graduate faculty may serve as either chair or a member of thesis committees and may teach 5000-level courses. Regular graduate faculty will:

- author or coauthor at least five peer-reviewed research journal articles prior to application for initial appointment or reappointment;
- demonstrate continuing professional development by attending international, national, and regional professional meetings;

For the purposes of determining eligibility for graduate faculty status, research is defined as the creation of new knowledge, and/or the development of new insights into existing knowledge using quantitative methods. A national- or international-level journal is defined as a journal that publishes original research of wide interest to people throughout a country or the world, has an editorial board consisting of scientists from throughout a country or the world, and contains articles submitted by scientists from throughout a country or the world. Determination of the national or international status of a journal will be made by a subcommittee of the Graduate Committee appointed by the Chair of Biology upon the request of a faculty member. It is recognized that faculty working in the area of aquatic resources policy often publish in outlets other than professional journals; these faculty may petition the Graduate Committee to substitute other peer-reviewed scholarly works for journal articles.

Graduate Faculty Membership

To apply for graduate faculty status or to apply for a change in status, or to renew a current appointment, faculty members should send a request and a current copy of their curriculum vitae to the chair of the Biology Graduate Committee. Applications will be forwarded to all members of the Graduate Committee for consideration and must be approved by a majority of the committee. Upon committee approval, the application is sent forward to the Biology Chair, College of Science and Engineering Dean, and then to The Graduate College for final approval. Initial appointments to the Graduate Faculty are for 3 years, with subsequent 5 year renewals.

Individuals from outside the department may be nominated for a graduate faculty appointment to allow service on thesis or dissertation committees; such individuals are expected to have professional credentials comparable to those of Texas State faculty. Information regarding the nomination of outside committee members can be obtained from the chair of the department's Graduate Committee.

MASTER'S PROGRAMS

The Department of Biology offers several degree options for students wishing to pursue graduate study at the master's level. Incoming students must select one of six degrees: the Master of Science with a major in Biology (thesis or non-thesis), the Master of Arts with a major in Biology (thesis), the Master of Science with a major in Aquatic Resources (thesis), the Master of Science with a major in Population and Conservation Biology (thesis), or the Master of Science with a major in Wildlife Ecology (thesis). Thesis-based degrees are usually chosen as preparation for professional careers or advanced graduate work and by students seeking advanced training for technology-related industries. The non-thesis degree may be chosen by students preferring broad training in biology without a formal research experience; this plan is often chosen by secondary science teachers wishing to broaden their content training without taking additional education courses or by individuals seeking additional preparation for application to professional schools.

Admission

The requirements set forth below are the minimum for admission to the master's programs in the Department of Biology; however, meeting these requirements does not necessarily ensure acceptance into a program. Applicants must receive departmental recommendation for admission after the application files are completed in the Office of The Graduate College. The Dean of the Graduate College grants final admission approval. The University reserves the right to deny admission to any prospective or former students who have criminal records, including any conviction of a felony, offenses involving moral turpitude, or other offenses of a serious nature.

Applicants to any of the master's programs in Biology should have a bachelor's degree in biology or a related discipline with a comparable program of course work. All applicants must complete the online application for admission, and provide the required application fee and copies of official transcripts from each university or college attended. Scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) are no longer a required component of the application.

Each applicant must also provide a current curriculum vitae, a statement of purpose that describes his or her professional aspirations and rationale for pursuing graduate study in biology, and three letters of recommendation. Applicants for any thesis degree must also provide an "Intent to Mentor" letter from a Biology Department faculty member. In this letter, the faculty member must agree to serve as the student's initial thesis advisor. The purpose of the mentor requirement is to help ensure that students have a successful start to their graduate careers. A current listing of faculty and their research interests and contact information can be accessed on the department's website:

<https://www.bio.txst.edu/Graduate-Programs/Graduate-Faculty.html>

The Department of Biology requires that a student have a minimum GPA of 3.0 on the last 60 undergraduate semester hours taken before receipt of the bachelor's degree for unconditional admission to be considered. Students with grade-point averages below 3.0 may petition the department for conditional admission. Admission in these cases will be decided by the appropriate graduate advisor based on interviews, letters of recommendation, research experience or other considerations that indicate the student's ability to complete the graduate degree requirements. The graduate advisors will determine if any background deficiencies exist and may require course work in addition to that necessary for a graduate degree to correct these deficiencies.

To receive full consideration, complete applications should be received by June 15 for admission the following fall semester, October 15 for admission the following spring semester, and April 15 for admission the following summer session. The Graduate College will continue to process applications received after these deadlines; however, such applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis, with no guarantees of admission for those who apply after the deadline.

International applicants to any of the master's programs in the Department of Biology must submit all required materials outlined above as well as meet other specific Graduate College admission requirements outlined later in this document. To receive full consideration, complete applications from international students should be received by June 01 for admission the following fall semester and October 01 for admission the following spring semester. Summer term admission is not offered to international applicants.

Degree Audits

Entering students are issued a degree audit by The Graduate College, listing the courses required for completion of a specific master's program. Degree audits can be accessed online through CatsWeb. Students should refer to their degree audit frequently to ensure that the course work they are completing will be credited towards the degree they are seeking. Prior to the advance registration period for a given semester, graduate students should meet with their Program Advisor to discuss the student's background and research interests and goals, and to identify appropriate course work to be taken. With the approval of the student and the student's research advisor, the Program Advisor may initiate changes in the degree outline by petition to the Dean of The Graduate College.

Course Work

Upon admission into the Biology graduate program, students are expected to pursue their course work and research activities in an efficient and timely manner. Course work for the master's degree may be chosen from any of the 5000- or 7000-level courses listed in the Biology section of the Graduate College catalog unless the course description states that the course cannot be counted credited towards a degree. Specific degree requirements for the various master's degrees are listed below:

Master of Science in Biology. The thesis-based Master of Science degree with a major in Biology requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of course work including three one-hour seminars (BIO 5110, 7102, and/or 7120) or BIO 5295 and two one-hour seminars, a minimum of two semesters of thesis (BIO 5399A/B), and a minimum of 21 additional hours of 5000- or 7000-level Biology course work. The non-thesis Master of Science degree with a major in Biology requires a minimum of 45 semester hours of 5000- or 7000-level course work, including at least one semester of an independent study project (BIO 5390) and either three one-hour seminars (BIO 5110, 7102, or 7120) or BIO 5295 and two one-hour seminars. A supporting minor for these degrees may be selected with the approval of the appropriate graduate advisor

Master of Arts in Biology. The thesis-based Master of Arts degree with a major in Biology has the same requirements as outlined above for the Master of Science degree, except it permits substitution of non-science course work for students wishing to have a graduate minor outside of the College of Science and Engineering. A maximum of two courses offered by in other departments may be substituted for elective course work towards the M.S. and M.A. in Biology degrees with prior approval of the graduate advisor and Dean of The Graduate College. Courses taught outside the department that do not require prior approval are: CHEM 5385; HR 5330, 5331, 5339, 5351; and GEO 5415, 5417, 5418, and 5419.

Master of Science in Aquatic Resources. The Master of Science with a major in Aquatic Resources is a thesis-based degree that emphasizes research into aquatic ecosystems and the biological communities that they support. This degree requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of course work including two one-hour seminars (BIO 5110, 7102, or 7120), a two-semester sequence of courses in statistics and experimental design (BIO 7405, 7406) and two semesters of thesis (BIO 5399A/B). Graduate students pursuing an M.S. in Aquatic Resources can select one of two areas of concentration for their course work and research: Aquatic Biology or Aquatic Systems. Students in the Aquatic Biology concentration will focus on the biology and ecology of aquatic organisms and an understanding of the dynamics and management of aquatic ecosystems and must complete a minimum of fourteen hours of elective course work chosen in consultation with the program advisor and supervising professor. Students in the Aquatic Systems concentration will focus on an understanding of the structure and functioning of aquatic systems as integrated physical, biological, and socioeconomic entities and will emphasize practices aimed at protecting, maintaining, and restoring the health and sustainable use of these resources. This area of concentration encourages investigation of aquatic systems at the level of the watershed, as influenced by atmospheric and terrestrial processes, and requires students to complete a minimum of fourteen hours of elective course work chosen in consultation with the program advisor and supervising professor.

Master of Science in Population and Conservation Biology. The M.S. with a major in Population and Conservation Biology requires a minimum of two years full-time course work and research leading to a thesis. The program represents an interdisciplinary course of study that combines principles of population biology with strong training in measurement and analysis of biological systems, augmented with the student's choice of study in particular specialties. Students are required to complete a two-semester sequence of courses in statistics and experimental design (BIO 7405, 7406) in the first year. The course of study also includes a two-semester sequence of population biology seminars (BIO 7120) a minimum of six hours of thesis credit, and fourteen hours of elective courses that

allow students to specialize in particular sub-disciplines of the field, including the ecology of populations, population management, conservation biology or evolutionary ecology and genetics.

Master of Science in Wildlife Ecology. The M.S. in Wildlife Ecology is a thesis-based degree with an emphasis on the application of ecological principles to studies in the fields of wildlife ecology and natural resource management. This degree requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of course work including two semesters of statistics and experimental design (BIO 7405, 7406), three one-hour seminars (BIO 5110, 7102, and/or 7120) or BIO 5295 and two one-hour seminars, two semesters of thesis (BIO 5399A/B), and a minimum of thirteen additional hours of 5000- or 7000-level courses that relate to the student's area of interest.

Major Professor and Thesis Committee Selection

Advisor Selection: thesis vs. non-thesis. Regardless of whether a student chooses the thesis or non-thesis route, he/she must secure an advisor before the end of his/her first long semester. This person is the "thesis advisor" if the thesis route is chosen, or the "graduate advisor" if the non-thesis route is selected. By the beginning of the second year of study, non-thesis students should also select a committee that will administer the required final comprehensive examination.

A master's thesis committee comprises three or more individuals, one of whom is the thesis advisor. Committee members should be chosen on the basis of what they can contribute to a student's thesis research and/or graduate studies. Committee members expect to be consulted about the research project and to contribute guidance and expertise. The committee approves the thesis proposal and the thesis, and administers the final comprehensive examination. In choosing committee members, students should seek guidance from their major professor and experienced graduate students working in areas similar to his/her anticipated research.

Thesis Courses

Texas State University policy expects master's students to sign up for thesis credit each semester that they are engaged in thesis research (BIO 5399A the first semester, and BIO 5199B, 5299B, 5399B, 5599B or 5999B) in all subsequent semesters). Students must be enrolled in a thesis course the semester in which they submit their thesis to The Graduate College and graduate. Each semester that a student is in progress toward her/his degree, a grade of "PR" (progress) is awarded. The student will normally receive a grade of "CR" (credit) for the final semester. The Graduate College office will then award a total of six hours of thesis credit.

Thesis Proposal

Students enrolled in a thesis-based degree program are expected to form a committee, prepare a thesis proposal, hold a thesis proposal discussion with their committee members, and submit a signed proposal to The Graduate College for approval by the end of their second long semester of enrollment. The thesis proposal is a detailed plan for carrying out the proposed research project and its preparation should entail considerable planning, literature research, and consultation with the major professor and committee members. A "Thesis Proposal Form," which must accompany the thesis proposal when it is submitted for approval, can be downloaded from The Graduate College website.

Once approved by the student's major professor and committee members, the thesis proposal is reviewed and signed by the student's graduate program advisor, the Chair of the Department, and The Graduate College Dean. Thesis proposals can only be submitted for approval during a semester in which the student is enrolled in a thesis course.

Students lacking an accepted thesis proposal by the end of their second long semester may not be eligible to continue as an IA or RA.

The Thesis

When the thesis research is nearing completion, the student should begin writing a draft of the thesis to be submitted to the major professor and thesis committee members. It is often very helpful if the student can obtain a copy of a thesis written by another student supervised by the same major professor to serve as a reference for formatting and other content matters.

During the process of writing the thesis, the student should consult with the major professor frequently to avoid extensive rewrites. Students should plan on this process taking at least twice as long as expected. Most major professors want a draft they have approved ready to submit to the thesis committee at least one month before the final thesis deadline published by The Graduate College. This is necessary to allow committee members sufficient time to thoughtfully critique the thesis.

After the major professor has approved the first draft of the thesis, the student submits the draft to each committee member, allowing at least two weeks for review. After reading, committee members should go over the draft with the student, indicating major and minor problems and the necessary revisions required to make the thesis acceptable.

The student should then meet with his/her major professor to reconcile the various comments. If there is disagreement among the committee members, they must reach a consensus as to what is acceptable before the student can write the final draft. Creating this consensus is the advisor's responsibility, not the student's.

Once a consensus has been reached, the student should prepare a penultimate draft of the thesis. The student should make a copy of the thesis available to each committee member in time (at least 48 hours prior) for use at the final oral exam.

Comprehensive Examination and Thesis Defense

All master's students, thesis and non-thesis, are required to take a final comprehensive examination. In the Biology Department this exam is administered by the student's committee. Students on academic probation or conditional status are not permitted to take the final examination.

Grading of the final exam is "pass" or "fail." In order to pass, a student must receive votes of confidence from the major professor and a majority of the committee members (including the major professor). A student can be failed over the advisor's positive vote if the majority of the committee votes not to pass. Such outcomes may be appealed to the department's Graduate Committee, whose decision is final.

Non-thesis students may take an oral or written final exam; this decision should be made in consultation with the advisor and committee members. The comprehensive exam should be administered in the final semester after most course work has been completed. The exam performance is graded by the committee as "pass" or "fail." In the event a student fails this exam, the committee may allow a re-examination if time permits before the end of the semester; may recommend additional course work and re-examination after the course work is successfully completed; or may recommend the student be removed from the biology graduate program. Only one re-examination is permitted. The results of the comprehensive exam should be reported on the "Master's Comprehensive Examination Report" form (downloadable from The Graduate College web site). The examination report form must be filed with The Graduate College at least 10 days prior to the date of expected graduation.

For thesis students, the comprehensive examination is oral and is scheduled after the thesis is complete. This examination will normally take the form of a thesis defense and will be immediately preceded by a public presentation of the thesis work. Students should discuss the exam with their committee members beforehand to understand their expectations and how best to prepare.

The time and place of the thesis presentation and defense must be announced to the Biology Department and the general public at least two weeks before the actual event. It is the student's responsibility to schedule the defense with the department's administrative assistant after receiving permission to proceed from his or her major professor.

The thesis defense is in two stages, a public, 30–40-minute presentation of the thesis work followed by a closed examination by the thesis committee. After the presentation, questions from the audience will be entertained, but the actual examination phase should not start until after the general audience has been excused. The exam performance is graded by the committee as "pass" or "fail." A grade of "pass" means that the thesis requires no or only minor revisions. Under such circumstances, the thesis committee signs the examination report and entrusts oversight of any needed revisions to the major professor. In the event a student fails the exam, the committee may recommend revisions to the thesis and upon the completion of these revisions, a new defense and oral examination; or the committee may require the student to undertake a new thesis under the supervision of the same, or a different, thesis committee; or the committee may recommend the student be dismissed from the biology graduate program. Only one re-examination is permitted. The results of the comprehensive exam should be reported on the "Master's

Comprehensive Examination Report” form (downloadable from The Graduate College web site) and the examination report form must be filed with The Graduate College at least 10 days prior to the date of expected graduation.

After successfully defending the thesis, the student secures the committee members’ signatures, makes any changes requested by the committee, and prepares a final electronic copy of the thesis for submission to The Graduate College. Guidelines for proper formatting of the thesis and the electronic submission process are available on The Graduate College website:

<https://www.gradcollege.txst.edu/students/thesis-dissertation.html>

The Graduate College will contact the student within several days to let him/her know if the thesis is acceptable or if it requires revision. Staff of The Graduate College evaluate the thesis for proper style and format, not on content. If revisions are required, the student must make these and then re-submit the thesis to The Graduate College for reevaluation. When all revisions required by The Graduate College have been made, the student will be informed that the thesis has been approved.

DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The doctoral program emphasizes original research and is designed to provide depth and breadth of knowledge in the field of Aquatic Resources and Integrative Biology, including basic and applied research, management, and policy. Students will apply research and knowledge, both independently and with other specialists, in a multidisciplinary environment to identify and solve complex problems and issues relevant to the sustainable use of aquatic resources.

Each doctoral student will develop a program of research and study in consultation with their Ph.D. advisor and the Doctoral Program Director, and approved by the Dean of The Graduate College. This program will include a set of core courses and an appropriate selection of elective courses necessary to provide the student with the scientific expertise and knowledge to work independently and with others in a multidisciplinary environment to address the range of issues constituting sustainable aquatic resources.

Admission

The requirements set forth below are the minimum for admission to The Graduate College at the doctoral level. Meeting these requirements does not necessarily ensure acceptance into the doctoral program. Applicants must receive departmental recommendation for admission after the application files are completed in the Office of The Graduate College. The Dean of The Graduate College grants final admission approval. The University reserves the right to deny admission to any prospective or former students who have criminal records, including any conviction of a felony, offenses involving moral turpitude, or other offenses of a serious nature.

Applicants to the doctoral program in Aquatic Resources and Integrative Biology should have an earned master’s or bachelor’s degree or the equivalent from an accredited college or university in biology, chemistry, engineering, geology, or in related natural science fields. All applicants must complete the online application for admission, and provide the required application fee and copies of official transcripts from each university or college attended. All application materials are submitted through the online application system of The Graduate College. Scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) are no longer a required component of the application.

Each applicant must submit a current curriculum vitae, a statement of goals that describes his or her professional aspirations and rationale for pursuing a doctoral degree in Aquatic Resources and Integrative Biology, and three letters of recommendation. Applicants must also provide an “Intent to Mentor” letter from a Biology Department faculty member. In this letter, the faculty member must agree to serve as the student’s initial dissertation advisor. The purpose of the mentor requirement is to help ensure that students have a successful start to their graduate careers. A current listing of faculty and their research interests and contact information can be accessed on the department’s website:

<https://www.bio.txst.edu/Graduate-Programs/Graduate-Faculty.html>

Students normally enter the Ph.D. program during either the fall or spring semester. To ensure full consideration for admission to the program, all required application materials must be submitted to The Graduate College no later than January 15 for entry the following fall semester, or no later than August 15 for entry in the following spring semester. Admission decisions will normally be made within 30 days of application deadlines. Applications received after the posted deadlines may not be considered for financial support until the following academic year.

International applicants to the doctoral program in the Department of Biology must submit all required materials outlined above as well as meet other specific Graduate College admission requirements outlined later in this document.

Residency Requirement

Doctoral students must satisfy a one-year residency requirement. This is defined as 18 graduate credit hours, as part of the required hours of course work, taken in residence at Texas State during consecutive fall, spring, and summer semesters.

Semester Hour Requirements

Students entering the doctoral program with a master's degree must complete 20 semester hours of core course work to meet the minimum requirements for advancement to candidacy. Students entering the doctoral program with a bachelor's degree must complete 27 semester hours of core course work to meet the minimum requirements for advancement to candidacy.

Degree Audits

Each Ph.D. student is issued a degree audit by the The Graduate College which should be used to plan the student's course of study. In the first semester of enrollment, students should review the degree audit in consultation with their supervising professor and the Program Director. Any change in the degree audit must be requested by the Program Director and submitted to The Graduate College for final approval.

With admission into the doctoral program, it is expected that students will pursue their course work and research activities in an efficient and timely manner. If it is determined that a student is not making adequate progress toward completion of the doctoral degree requirements, consultations will be undertaken between the student, his or her Ph.D. advisor, the Program Director, and the department Graduate Committee to develop a remediation plan, which may include revising a student's program of study or research. Failure to successfully remedy documented deficiencies will result in termination of the student's enrollment in the doctoral program at the discretion of the Graduate Committee. Students removed from the doctoral program in this manner may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate College for reinstatement in the program.

Course Work

For students entering the program with a master's degree, the Ph.D. in Aquatic Resources requires the completion of 21 hours of core courses and 40 hours of elective courses and dissertation (including a minimum of 15 hours of dissertation credit). For students entering the program with a bachelor's degree, the Ph.D. in Aquatic Resources requires the completion of 28 hours of core courses and 63 hours of elective courses and dissertation (including a minimum of 15 hours of dissertation credit). The selection of courses should be made in consultation with the student's Ph.D. advisor and the Program Director. With approval of the Program Director, a core course beyond the minimum required hours can be counted as an elective course toward the total hours required for the degree. A complete listing of core and elective courses can be found in the Graduate Catalog.

Dissertation Committee

Early in their program of study, each doctoral student must establish a Dissertation Committee, which will oversee the research progress of the student, administer the Advancement to Candidacy Examination, and supervise the writing of the dissertation. The Dissertation Committee will consist of at least five members, including the student's research advisor, two other Texas State University Biology Department faculty members, and two external members, at least one of whom must be from an institution other than Texas State. The research advisor will chair the committee and will normally be from the major department. The research advisor must be classified as "Regular Doctoral faculty" by the Texas State University Graduate College and the other committee members must be have

appointments as “Regular Doctoral,” “Associate Doctoral,” or “Adjunct Doctoral” faculty by The Graduate College. Exceptions to the usual Dissertation Committee membership will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Doctoral Program Advisor in consultation with the Graduate Committee.

Application for Advancement to Candidacy

Students can download the “Advancement to Candidacy Application” from the Biology Department website or they can obtain a copy from the Program Director. The student should complete and sign the upper portion of the form and return it to the Program Director. When all requirements for admission to candidacy have been met (completion of core course work, submission of an approved dissertation proposal, and completion of the comprehensive examination), the Program Director will forward the Advancement to Candidacy application to the Dean of The Graduate College for review and approval.

Advancement to Candidacy Time Limit

All students admitted to the doctoral program in Aquatic Resources and Integrative Biology are expected to take the Advancement to Candidacy Examination within one calendar year of completing the core course work required by their degree audit. This expectation holds for both full-time and part-time students. Requests for a time extension must be submitted to the Program Director by the student’s Ph.D. advisor. The Program Director will, in turn, submit a recommendation to the Dean of The Graduate College.

No credit will be applied toward a student’s doctoral degree for course work completed more than four years before the date on which the student is admitted to candidacy. This time limit applies to course credit earned at Texas State, as well as course credit transferred to Texas State from other accredited institutions.

Grade-Point Requirements for Advancement to Candidacy

A minimum GPA of 3.0 on all course work undertaken as a graduate student in the doctoral program is required for admission to candidacy. No grade earned below “B” on any graduate course work may apply toward a Ph.D. degree in Aquatic Resources and Integrative Biology at Texas State. Incomplete grades must be cleared through the Office of The Graduate College at least ten days before approval for advancement to candidacy will be granted.

Dissertation Proposal

A dissertation proposal prepared by the student and approved by the student’s Ph.D. advisor and the other members of the Dissertation Committee is a requirement for Advancement to Candidacy status. The proposal must outline the substance and scope of the dissertation research, present the methodology to be used, and survey the relevant literature. The student’s Ph.D. advisor and other Dissertation Committee members must indicate approval of the dissertation proposal on the “Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal” form. This form can be downloaded from The Graduate College website or it can be obtained from the Program Director. A final copy of the dissertation proposal, accompanied by the signed approval form, must be turned in to the Program Director, who will forward it to the Dean of The Graduate College for review and final approval.

It is expected that doctoral dissertations in degree programs offered by the Department of Biology will have the following elements: 1) The dissertation must describe original research. Research is defined here as the creation of new knowledge and/or the development of new insights into existing knowledge using quantitative methods. 2) The dissertation must integrate the original work into existing knowledge in the field of study. 3) The broader impact of the work must be such that it will be of value to researchers studying similar questions in locations other than the study site and/or of value to managers in locations other than the study site. 4) The work must be publishable in a recognized scholarly journal that receives national and/or international contributions.

Advancement to Candidacy Examination

Students in the Aquatic Resources and Integrative Biology doctoral program are required to pass a comprehensive examination that will assess the student’s preparedness to carry out the proposed plan of dissertation research. Students taking the Advancement to Candidacy Examination must have completed all required core and background courses as prescribed in their degree audit.

The Advancement to Candidacy Examination will consist of both written and oral components. The written component of the examination will be administered by the Program Director over a time period not to exceed five working days. The examination will consist of questions submitted by Dissertation Committee members directly to the Program Director, who may edit the questions for clarity and/or duplication. Upon receiving the student's answers, the Program Director will provide each member of the Dissertation Committee the answer(s) to the question(s) authored by that committee member for grading. Results should be reported to the Program Advisor within five working days.

Grading is "pass" or "fail" on each committee member's section of the examination. Successfully passing the examination requires a grade of "pass" from each member of the Dissertation Committee. A grade of "fail" requires written justification from the appropriate committee member, which will be made available to the student. If the student fails one or more sections of the written examination, a retest on the failed section(s) may be scheduled at the student's request. Only one retest of each section is permitted. Failure of the written portion of the Advancement to Candidacy examination will result in dismissal of the student from the doctoral program. An appeal of this dismissal may be made to the Biology Graduate Committee.

Successful completion of the written portion of the candidacy exam must be followed within thirty days by an oral presentation and defense of the dissertation proposal. The oral component of the Advancement to Candidacy Examination will entail a public seminar presentation of the student's dissertation proposal, followed immediately by a closed defense of the proposal attended only by the student and his or her Dissertation Committee. The oral defense may also include questions related to the written portion of the exam and/or general knowledge questions.

The following outcomes are recognized for the oral presentation and proposal defense: "pass," "conditional pass," and "fail." Successfully passing the examination requires a grade of "pass" from each member of the Dissertation Committee. If one or more Dissertation Committee members express reservations about the quality of the presentation or of the proposal itself, a grade of "conditional pass" may be assigned. In this case the committee must report to the student, in writing, the flaws that should be rectified to make the presentation and/or proposal acceptable. Upon completion of the required changes, the oral presentation and/or defense are repeated (to Dissertation Committee members only). The second oral examination must be scheduled no more than three months after the date of the original examination and only one re-examination is permitted. If the Dissertation Committee finds that the proposal is irretrievably flawed or discovers evidence of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty, a grade of "fail" will be assigned. Irresolvable differences among the Dissertation Committee members should be presented to the Biology Graduate Committee for mediation. Failure of the oral portion of the Advancement to Candidacy examination will result in dismissal of the student from the doctoral program. An appeal of this dismissal may be made to the Biology Graduate Committee.

Upon successful completion of both the written and oral portions of the advancement to candidacy examination, the Dissertation Committee recommends the student for Advancement to Candidacy by completing the "Dissertation Proposal and Proposal Defense Form" and the "Application for Advancement to Candidacy Form," both of which can be downloaded from The Graduate College website or obtained from the Program Director. The results of the Advancement to Candidacy Examination must be filed with The Graduate College before the Dean of the Graduate College gives final approval to candidacy. The Program Director is responsible for submitting this report to the Office of the Graduate College.

Dissertation Research and Writing

All doctoral students are required to complete a dissertation. The dissertation must represent an original contribution to scholarship based on independent investigation. Preparation of the dissertation should follow the guidelines in the current edition of the *CBE (Council of Biology Editors) Style Manual* or in an appropriate professional journal in the designated field, as deemed acceptable by the Dissertation Committee.

Dissertation Enrollment Requirements

After being admitted to candidacy, students must be continuously enrolled for dissertation hours each long semester until the defense of their dissertation. A student must be enrolled for dissertation hours during the semester in which the degree is to be conferred. Students must complete a minimum of 15 semester hours of dissertation research and writing credit.

Dissertation Time Limit

Students are expected to complete the dissertation within three years of advancement to candidacy. Successful completion of the Dissertation Defense must occur within ten years of the student's entry into the Ph.D. program. Any exceptions to these time limits require the approval of the Program Director and the Dean of The Graduate College. The Program Director will review each student annually to ascertain his or her progress in completing the degree, and will consult with the student's Ph.D. advisor and Dissertation Committee on this matter as appropriate.

Dissertation Committee Changes

Any changes to the Dissertation Committee must be submitted for approval to the Dissertation Committee Chair, the Doctoral Program Director, the Department Chair, and the Dean of the Graduate College. Changes must be submitted no less than sixty days before the dissertation defense. The "Ph.D. Research Advisor/Committee Member Change Request Form" may be downloaded from the The Graduate College website or obtained from the Program Director.

Dissertation Defense

The Dissertation Defense will consist of two parts. The first part is an oral presentation of the dissertation research as a public seminar that should be given as part of the department's weekly seminar series. The second part of the defense is restricted to the student's Dissertation Committee and will entail an oral examination over the dissertation research.

The oral examination over the dissertation research may not be scheduled until all other academic and program requirements have been fulfilled. A complete draft of the dissertation must be given to the members of the Dissertation Committee at least 65 days before the date of commencement during the semester in which the student intends to graduate. After committee members have reviewed the draft with the student and provided comments, the student, in consultation with the Ph.D. advisor, will incorporate the recommended changes into a second draft of the dissertation. When each committee member is satisfied that the draft dissertation is defensible, the oral examination may be scheduled. The full committee, including all external members, must be present at the defense. Approval of the dissertation requires positive votes from all members of the Dissertation Committee. At the conclusion of the defense, a "Dissertation Defense Report," which can be downloaded from The Graduate College website or obtained from the Program Director, must be completed, signed by all committee members, and submitted to the Program Director, who will forward it to the Dean of The Graduate College for review and final approval. Specific information on the examination procedure can be obtained from the Program Director.

Approval and Submission of the Dissertation

Following approval and signing of the dissertation by the members of the Dissertation Committee, the student must submit an electronic copy of the dissertation to The Graduate College for final approval. The Graduate College will contact the student within several days to let him/her know if the dissertation is acceptable or if it requires revision. Staff of The Graduate College evaluate the dissertation for proper style and format, not on content. If revisions are required, the student must make these and then re-submit the dissertation to The Graduate College for reevaluation. When all revisions required by The Graduate College have been made, the student will be informed that the dissertation has been approved.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADMISSIONS INFORMATION

An international applicant is defined as an applicant who is not a citizen of the United States. All non-U.S. citizens fall under regulations of Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. University rules applying to non-U.S. citizens must comply with federal law; hence, admission requirements for international students, including permanent residents, differ from those for United States citizens. In addition to the Admission Requirements for U.S. Citizens listed above, non-U.S. Citizens must follow the steps outlined on the website of The Graduate College:

<https://www.gradcollege.txst.edu/international/steps.html>

English language proficiency must be demonstrated, either by a minimum TOEFL IBT score of 78 overall, a PTE (Academic) score of 52 overall, or an IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 overall with minimum section scores of 6.0; applicants who hold the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree from an accredited institution in certain countries are automatically exempt from the proficiency requirement (see The Graduate College website for details).

International students who plan to attend Texas State on an F-1 student visa must furnish proof of sufficient financial resources for their educational and personal expenses to the Office of the Graduate College. Proof of a minimum level support for the academic year is required. This level changes annually and current information can be found on the website of International Student and Scholar Services:

<https://www.international.txst.edu/prospective/tuition.html>

After all academic and financial requirements have been met, Texas State will issue an I-20 Form to qualified international applicants. A permanent resident alien is not required to furnish proof of financial support and is not issued an I-20 Form. Contact the Office of The Graduate College at 512-245-2581 or gradcollege@txstate.edu with specific questions regarding international student admissions.

International Students Transferring from Other Institutions in the United States.

International students transferring from other institutions in the United States must plan carefully and allow adequate time for submission of application materials and evaluation of credentials because of new immigration regulations governing school transfers. Students must follow the procedures outlined below. Failure to plan carefully may require students to leave the United States and return before transferring to Texas State.

Students transferring to Texas State from another SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) institution in the United States should verify the procedures to transfer out with the appropriate Designated School Official (DSO) at their current school. A Texas State "Status Verification Form" must be completed by the student and a DSO from the current school and forwarded to Texas State. The DSO in the international student office of the current school will assign a release date to the SEVIS record for students who have decided to attend Texas State.

Following the release date, the Texas State International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) Office will be able to issue a SEVIS Form I-20. Please contact the ISSS Office as soon as you receive your admission letter and have submitted the "Status Verification Form" to arrange to have your I-20 created. According to immigration regulations, students must transfer to Texas State within 60 days of completing studies at the current school.

Students are required to start classes at Texas State during the semester indicated in the admission letter issued by The Graduate College and within five months from the release date. Students unable to begin classes at Texas State within the five-month limit are required to leave the United States and may reenter within 30 days before the program start date indicated on the Texas State I-20.

New Texas State transfer students are required to report to the Texas State ISSS Office no later than 15 days after the program start date listed on the SEVIS Form I-20 and in the admissions letter issued by The Graduate College.

After new transfer students have enrolled in classes at Texas State, the DSO at Texas State will update records to reflect the student's enrollment and current address.

Immigration regulations and procedures change frequently. Therefore, students should contact the DSO at the current school and at Texas State for any updates in transfer procedures.

If you have any questions regarding transfer procedures, please contact the Texas State ISSS Office at international@txstate.edu or call 512-245-7966.

IMPORTANT ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Course Loads

At the graduate level, the full-time course load during a long semester is nine hours and the maximum load is 15 hours. The full-time course load during each summer session is five graduate hours and the maximum load is six hours. Students on an F-1 visa must register as a full-time student each fall and spring semester. As a graduate student, an international student must carry a minimum of nine semester credit hours, as required by immigration regulations, to be considered full-time.

Course loads exceeding the maximum loads listed above require written approval. Only the Dean of The Graduate College may authorize an overload. To request an overload, students should ask their graduate advisor to submit a written request to the Dean of The Graduate College at least three days prior to registration.

Graduate students supported by Instructional Assistantships or Research Assistantships are required to enroll in a minimum of nine hours of graduate level course work per long semester.

Eligibility for Federal Financial Aid

Many graduate students in the department receive federal financial aid, usually as a supplement to the salary provided as an instructional or research assistant. Federal regulations require that only courses that count towards a degree can be used in determining aid eligibility; courses that are not included in the degree audit are not counted in determining your eligibility for federal aid. It is important that students understand that once degree requirements have been met, additional courses taken are not counted in determining federal aid eligibility. The only exceptions are thesis courses – a student may take more than the minimum number of thesis hours. Once the seminar, required course, and elective course requirements are met, students applying for the maximum federal student aid may only enroll in thesis.

Transfer Credit for Master's Degree Programs

A maximum of six semester hours of credit earned at another institution may be accepted as transfer credit and applied toward the master's degree provided that the credit was earned in graduate courses completed in residence at an accredited institution; the courses are appropriate to the student's degree program at Texas State; and the courses have not been, and will not be, used for credit toward another degree.

If the credits were earned prior to the student's admission to the Texas State Graduate College and the credits were earned while the student was enrolled in a graduate degree program at a prior institution, the student must provide the Office of The Graduate College with written verification of his or her status at that university. Additionally, the student must have his or her departmental graduate advisor submit a written request to the Dean of The Graduate College petitioning for acceptance of the transfer work toward the student's Texas State degree.

If the credits are to be earned after the student is admitted to the Texas State Graduate College, the student must obtain prior written approval from the Dean of The Graduate College who will then send a letter of good standing to the other institution before the student enrolls in the course(s) to be transferred. The student must initiate a request for a letter of good standing well in advance of the time of anticipated enrollment if the student plans to take courses at another university to complete a part of his or her Texas State graduate program. Transfer credit will not be permitted unless a letter of good standing has been issued prior to the student's enrollment in the course(s) to be transferred.

A student currently working toward a master's degree at Texas State who wishes to take a course at another accredited university to apply toward his or her degree at Texas State must request and receive permission from the appropriate departmental graduate advisor to take a course elsewhere. The student may be requested to provide a catalog from the other school that gives course descriptions for any transfer work requested. The graduate advisor will then submit a written request to the Dean of The Graduate College so that the Dean can issue an official letter of good standing. The request from the advisor should identify the course(s) by name and number and should state what semester(s) and where the student will be taking the work. If the Dean of The Graduate College approves the request, a letter of good standing will be sent to the university where the student will enroll. As soon as the student completes the course work, an official transcript of the work must be forwarded to the Office of The Graduate College.

Transfer work will be accepted only if it bears a letter grade of “B” or higher or a numerical equivalent. Grades of “Credit,” “Pass,” “Satisfactory,” etc., are not acceptable. Transfer work from another institution will not be accepted for graduate degree credit if such courses are designated as non-degree, background, preparatory, etc. No credit will be awarded until an official transcript showing the course work to be transferred is on file at The Graduate College. Students admitted on Conditional Admission or students on Academic Probation or Suspension may not receive credit for transfer work.

Transfer Credit for Doctoral Degree Program

With the approval of the Doctoral Program Advisor and the Dean of The Graduate College, students can transfer up to six semester hours of course work that are directly applicable to the Aquatic Resources and Integrative Biology Ph.D. program at Texas State from another doctoral program, provided the credit was completed in residence at an accredited institution. Transferred course work must be at the doctoral level and The Graduate College must be provided with written verification of the student’s status at the university from which the course(s) are transferred. The Doctoral Program Advisor must provide a written request to the Dean of The Graduate College, requesting acceptance of the transfer credit as part of the course work requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

Students wishing to take doctoral-level course(s) at another accredited university to apply toward the doctoral degree at Texas State must receive permission beforehand from the Doctoral Program Advisor and provide an acceptable reason for taking the course(s) elsewhere. The student must request that the Doctoral Program Advisor submit a written request to the Dean of The Graduate College so that the Dean can issue an official letter of good standing. The request should identify the university, course(s) by name and number, and semester the course(s) will be taken. If the Dean of The Graduate College approves the request, the Dean will send a letter of good standing to the university in which the student plans to enroll. After the course work is completed, an official transcript of the work must be forwarded to the Graduate College at Texas State.

Transfer work will be accepted only if it bears a letter grade of “B” or higher or a numerical equivalent. Grades of “Credit,” “Pass,” “Satisfactory,” etc., are not acceptable. Transfer work from another institution will not be accepted for graduate degree credit if such courses are designated as non-degree, background, preparatory, etc. No credit will be awarded until an official transcript showing the course work to be transferred is on file at The Graduate College. Students on Academic Probation or Suspension may not receive credit for transfer work.

Repeating Courses

A graduate student may repeat a course, but cannot receive credit for the course more than once unless the course description in the catalog specifically provides that the course may be repeated for credit. When a course is repeated once, the last grade earned (“W” and “I” grades excluded) is the only grade included in computing the student’s grade point average. When a course is repeated more than once, the second grade and all subsequent grades are included in computing the students grade point average. If the last grade in a repeated course is lower than an earlier grade, the last grade is used to determine whether the course fulfills university requirements.

Dropping a Class

Dropping a class is an official action whereby a student drops one or more courses, yet remains enrolled in at least one other course. The deadline for dropping classes is the date on which sixty percent of the semester has passed. Please refer to the academic calendar on the University Registrar’s website for the precise drop date for any given semester. When a student drops one or more classes by the automatic “W” deadline, a “W” grade will be assigned automatically.

Withdrawal from the University

Withdrawing from the university (dropping all classes) is an official action whereby a student informs the Office of the University Registrar that the student will cease attending all classes in which he or she is enrolled. The deadline to withdraw and receive an automatic grade of “W” for all classes is the date on which sixty percent of the semester has passed. After the automatic “W” period, faculty assign grades to students who officially withdraw from the university. Faculty will assign a “W” grade only to those students who have a passing average at the time the withdrawal action is officially completed; otherwise, a grade of “U” is assigned. Please refer to the academic calendar on the University Registrar’s website for the official withdrawal deadline.

Graduate students working under the supervision of a research mentor (master's and doctoral) who wish to withdraw from the university MUST discuss this decision and inform the mentor in advance of their intention to leave the mentor's research program. All lab notebooks, research materials, computer files and software, keys, and any other related materials must be returned and/or copies left behind.

Academic Probation and Suspension

Graduate students are required to maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA for all master's and/or doctoral-level courses listed on his or her degree audit. Cumulative GPAs are computed at the end of the fall semester, spring semester, and second summer sessions (both summer sessions combined are treated as equivalent to one semester in determining a student's satisfactory academic progress). If the cumulative GPA drops below 3.0 during any semester of enrollment at Texas State, the student is placed on academic probation. The student has one semester to raise his or her cumulative GPA above the 3.0 standard. If a student fails to do so, the student will be suspended from The Graduate College for a period of no less than six months.

A student on suspension can be reinstated after six months or more by petitioning the Dean of The Graduate College, who will then seek the recommendation of the student's program advisor. In requesting reinstatement, the student on suspension must give compelling reasons why his or her academic performance is likely to improve if reinstated. The program advisor will not offer a positive recommendation without agreement by the student's research advisor.

Academic Dishonesty

Texas State University expects students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach. To support the goal of maintaining a climate of academic honesty, the University has adopted an Honor Code and students found in violation of the Honor Code are subject to disciplinary action.

Texas State Honor Code

As members of a community dedicated to learning, inquiry, and creation, the students, faculty, and administration of our University live by the principle in this Honor Code. These principles require all members of this community to be conscientious, respectful, and honest.

We are conscientious. We complete our work on time and make every effort to do it right. We come to class and meetings prepared and are willing to demonstrate it. We hold ourselves to doing what is required, embrace rigor, and shun mediocrity, special requests, and excuses.

We are respectful. We act civilly toward one another, and we cooperate with each other. We will strive to create an environment in which people respect and listen to one another, speaking when appropriate, and permitting other people to participate and express their views.

We are honest. We do our own work and are honest with one another in all matters. We understand how various acts of dishonesty, like plagiarizing, falsifying data, and giving or receiving assistance to which one is not entitled, conflict as much with academic achievement as with the values of honesty and integrity.

Violations of the Honor Code include, but are not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. "Cheating" means engaging in any of the following activities: copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files, or programs; using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test; collaborating, without authorization, with another person during an examination or in preparing academic work; knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying or possessing the contents of an unadministered test; substituting for another student or permitting another person to substitute for oneself in taking an examination or preparing academic work; bribing another person to obtain an unadministered test or obtain information about an unadministered test, and purchasing, or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one's own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm. "Plagiarism" means the appropriation of another's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written work offered for credit. "Collusion" means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit. "Abuse of

resource materials” means the mutilation, destruction, concealment, theft or alteration of materials provided to assist students in the mastery of course materials.

IMPORTANT EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

The Department of Biology and its faculty make an effort to provide financial support for the students enrolled in our graduate programs, either in the form of Instructional Assistantships (IA positions) funded by the department or Research Assistantships (RA positions) funded by research grants to individual faculty members. The following are general guidelines that have been set by the University, The Graduate College, and/or the Biology Department regarding graduate student employment.

Eligibility and Enrollment

To be eligible for employment as a Graduate Instructional Assistant (GIA) or Doctoral Instructional Assistant (DIA) during a long semester (fall or spring), graduate students must have received unconditional admission to, and be enrolled in, a graduate degree program for a minimum of nine graduate semester credit hours. To remain eligible for continued employment, a graduate student must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. Students who have received conditional admission to a degree program are not eligible for employment as IAs, but may be eligible for employment as Research Assistants (RAs) under certain conditions. Employment possibilities for students on conditional admission should be discussed with the department’s Associate Chair for Graduate Programs.

While Instructional Assistants and Research Assistants are normally required to be enrolled in a minimum of nine graduate hours every long semester of employment, each student is entitled to a one-time exception to this nine-hour requirement. The exception is normally taken during the last semester of employment when most coursework has already been completed and only thesis hours are needed to complete the degree, although it may be used in any semester. To request the one-time exception from the nine-hour requirement, students should contact the department’s Associate Chair for Graduate Programs prior to the first class day of the semester in which the exception will be used.

Should the cumulative GPA of a graduate student employed as an IA fall below 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation by The Graduate College and will not be eligible for re-employment until the cumulative GPA is raised to the minimum requirement. The Graduate College is strict in regard to this policy and appeals will not be accepted. Should the enrollment of a student fall below nine graduate hours (for example, as a consequence of dropping a class) during any long semester in which an exception from the nine-hour requirement has not been approved, the student will have to immediately apply for the exception or terminate employment.

Professional Development

The Graduate College requires all Graduate and Doctoral Instructional Assistants to complete three hours of a Professional Development course, Bio 5100 or Bio 7100; this should be done during the first three semesters of employment. As part of your initial hiring paperwork, you may complete a form entitling you to a waiver of the tuition and fees normally charged for this course. Keep in mind that you must complete this form each semester you seek the waiver and that the form must be approved and submitted by the twelfth class day of the semester. Note that although Professional Development is a required course for Instructional Assistants, it does not carry degree credit nor does it count in determining eligibility for federal financial aid.

Summer Employment Eligibility

Biology Department course offerings are very limited during the summer terms and IA employment opportunities are therefore also limited. The department will make every effort to equitably distribute available IA positions during the summer sessions but cannot guarantee that enough positions will be available to meet all student requests.

Graduate students who were enrolled for a minimum of nine graduate hours in both the preceding fall and spring semesters, or who had an approved exception from the minimum enrollment requirement on file, are eligible for summer employment with no enrollment requirement. Students who were not enrolled in a minimum of nine graduate hours in both the preceding fall and spring semesters, or who did not have an approved exception from

the minimum enrollment requirement on file, must enroll in a minimum of three graduate hours during summer to be eligible for employment. Alternatively, the one-time exception may be used during a summer session.

Student FICA Exemption

Under the Internal Revenue Service Code, services performed by a student in the employ of a college or university are generally exempt from Social Security and Medicare withholding, the two components of the FICA tax, provided that the student is “enrolled and regularly attending classes.” The IRS interpretation of this statement is that a student employee will be exempt from FICA taxes if the student is enrolled at least half-time, in accordance with regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education. For graduate students, an enrollment of at least five hours is required to qualify for the FICA exemption during a long semester and an enrollment of at least three hours is required during a summer session. If a student is enrolled less than half-time, the student may still be eligible if he or she is in the last semester of a course of study and is enrolled in the number of hours needed to complete the requirements for obtaining a degree. If you have questions regarding the FICA exemption, please contact the Payroll Office.

Instructional Assistant Employment Responsibilities

Confidentiality. Instructional Assistants (IAs) must maintain professional confidentiality with both colleagues and students. IAs should not divulge information such as the grades, academic weaknesses, or personal problems of a student to anyone except a person with a professional interest in both the student and the information. Except in emergencies or as otherwise authorized by law, no confidential information should be divulged without the student’s consent. If a student is absent when graded examinations are returned, the student’s examination should not, without written permission from the student, be conveyed to him or her through another student. IAs should not display assigned student work to other instructors except for assistance in grading or in helping the student to improve. IAs should not use a student’s work as a classroom example—even as an anonymous example—without the student’s consent. IAs should not post grades in a manner that would publicly identify the student as would, for example, identification by name or social security number. IAs must allow each student access to his or her own records. IAs should be aware that both federal and state laws protect privacy.

Prohibition of Discrimination or Harassment. Texas State, in accordance with applicable federal and state law and institutional values, prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion, disability, or sexual orientation in any University activity or program. “Discrimination” is defined as conduct directed at an individual because of race, color, national origin, age, gender, religion, disability, or sexual orientation that subjects the individual to treatment that adversely affects the individual’s employment or education. “Harassment” means extreme or outrageous acts or communications that are intended to harass, intimidate, or humiliate students, faculty, staff, or visitors on account of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or sexual orientation, and that reasonably cause them to suffer severe emotional distress.

Prohibition of Sexual Harassment. It is the policy of the University that no faculty, staff, or student may sexually harass any guest or visitor to the campus or any member of the university community, including faculty, staff, students and candidates for University positions, and that such acts will not be tolerated either at Texas State or other university programs off campus. Any faculty, staff, or student will be subject to disciplinary action for violation of this policy. “Sexual harassment” is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment or academic career; submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the individual; or such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive employment or academic environment.

Issues of professional responsibility, conflict of interest, and sexual harassment may arise when a difference in authority is present between two persons involved in a relationship. Freedom of choice for a student may be diminished when faculty or staff exercise power through praise or criticism, performance evaluations, grades, and recommendations for further study or current and future employment. An example of a relationship that may be construed as sexual harassment is a situation where the student in the relationship, while freely consenting in the beginning, feels pressure to continue the relationship. Staff and faculty in positions of authority need to be aware of the potential for sexual harassment as well as conflicts of interest in personal relationships with subordinate faculty and staff members or with students.

Consensual Relationships. A consensual relationship is a mutually acceptable, romantic, or sexual relationship between a University employee (including a student employee) and an employee, student, or student employee who is directly supervised, taught, evaluated, or advised by that employee. It is the policy of the University that employees with direct teaching, supervisory or advisory responsibility over others recognize and respect the ethical and professional boundaries that must exist in such situations. Consensual relationships create conflicts of interest or appearances of impropriety that impair the integrity of academic and employment decisions. Such relationships also contain the potential for exploitation of the subordinate employee, student, or student employee and can subject both the University and individuals to the risk of liability. Therefore, the University strongly discourages consensual relationships between supervisors and subordinates, teachers and students, and advisors and students.

Should such a relationship develop, the teacher, supervisor, or advisor has the obligation to disclose its existence to an immediate supervisor and cooperate in making alternative arrangements for the supervision, evaluation, teaching, grading, or advising of the employee, student, or student employee. If a consensual relationship exists or begins to develop, the individual in the supervisory, teaching, or advisory position shall immediately notify his or her immediate supervisor of the relationship and cooperate with that supervisor in making the arrangements necessary to resolve the conflict of interest. Employees in positions of authority who persist in consensual romantic or sexual relationships and fail to cooperate in efforts to eliminate the conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety they present, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. If the subordinate party complains of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct related to an undisclosed relationship, there will be no presumption that the relationship was consensual.

IMPORTANT RESEARCH POLICIES

Research Involving Vertebrate Animals

If a graduate research project involves the use of vertebrate animals, the thesis/dissertation advisor must submit a Texas State-IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) protocol form and have an approval code before research can begin. This applies to all vertebrates no matter where they are or how obtained, including animals in their natural setting. Studies involving observation of animals that does not disturb or change their behavior (e.g., surveys) are exempt from the IACUC approval requirement.

Research Involving Human Subjects

Federal regulations and university policies require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for research with human subjects. This applies whether faculty or students conduct research. Research projects conducted by students, such as theses, dissertations, honors projects, capstone projects, and independent study projects, that collect data through interactions with living people or access to private information fall under the jurisdiction of the IRB.

All student-led protocols must be reviewed and submitted to the IRB by the faculty advisor. In addition, all IRB applicants are required to complete CITI IRB training prior to submitting their applications. Research applications will not be approved until all training requirements are fulfilled. Research Integrity and Compliance (RIC) understands that student projects are usually very time sensitive. Therefore, students are encouraged to begin their discussions with their faculty advisor about the nature of their intended research and its potential IRB review as soon as possible.

Other Permits and Permissions

If a student's research will involve use or collection of wild vertebrate animals, animals and/or plants on any protected species list, or any access requiring permission from governmental or private agencies (including written landowner permission), the appropriate regulations must be understood by the advisor and student, and the necessary permits and documentation secured before the research can begin. The student will be expected to provide appropriate references and permit numbers in the thesis/dissertation proposal and thesis/dissertation. It is the thesis/dissertation advisor's responsibility to educate the student in these matters and to jointly secure the necessary permits. These permits, etc., do not replace the IACUC approval; they are required in addition and usually before IACUC approval is provided.

Intellectual Property Rights

Intellectual property is information to which one can claim ownership. In science, this concept usually refers to the results of research that are publishable and/or subject to copyright or patent. According to the Texas State University System Regents' Rules, students own the copyright of their works created in their role as a student, including research papers, essays, theses, dissertations, published articles, and recordings of performances. The student creator of a copyrighted work will determine whether to register the copyright or enforce his or her rights to the work. Except as provided elsewhere in the policy, faculty, staff, and students must obtain permission from a student creator before using the student's work.

Two or more individuals create a joint work when their contributions are inseparable, interdependent, and intended to create a single work. The copyright to a joint work is jointly owned by the contributors. Each contributor may individually register, enforce, or commercially exploit the copyright with or without approval by all joint owners, provided the other joint owners receive an equal share of any proceeds, unless otherwise agreed in writing.

Scientific Dishonesty

Texas State currently does not have specific policy with respect to scientific dishonesty. The Department of Biology has adopted the following policy statement (used with permission) from Texas Women's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Misconduct in research undermines the scientific enterprise and erodes the public trust in the University community to conduct research and communicate results using the highest standards and ethical practices. The institution is responsible both for promoting academic practices that prevent misconduct and for developing policies and procedures for dealing with allegations of fraud or misconduct. All members of the institution's community (students, staff, faculty, and administrators) share responsibility for developing and maintaining standards to ensure ethical conduct of research as well as detection and appropriate handling of abuse of these standards. This responsibility must be assumed while sustaining the openness and creativity vital to the research enterprise. The policies and procedures outlined below apply to faculty, staff, and graduate students. They are not intended to address a broad range of ethical issues in academic research.

Scientific dishonesty involves some form of fraudulent behavior that entails an act of deception whereby one's work or the work of others is misrepresented. Fraud is distinguished from honest error and from ambiguities of interpretation that are inherent in the scientific process. Further, fraud or serious misconduct involves significant breaches of research integrity that may take numerous forms such as (but not limited to) those outlined below.

Falsification of Data. This ranges from fabrication to deceptive reporting of findings and omissions of conflicting data.

Improprieties of Authorship. Plagiarism and other improper assignment of credit, such as: excluding others or claiming the work of another as one's own; presentation of the same material as original in more than one publication; including individuals as authors who have not made a definite contribution to the work published; and submission of multi-authored publications without the concurrence of all authors.

Misappropriation of Others' Ideas. Improper use of information or influence gained by privileged access such as service on peer review panels, editorial boards, and policy boards of research funding organizations.

Violation of Generally Accepted Research Practices. Improper manipulation of an experiment to obtain biased results; intentional improper statistical or analytical manipulations.

Violation of Federal, State, or Institutional Rules Governing Research. This includes, but is not limited to those regarding use of funds, care of animals, human subjects, investigational drugs, DNA, new devices, and radioactive, biological or chemical materials.

Inappropriate Behavior in Relation to Misconduct. Includes inappropriate accusation of misconduct; failure to report known or suspected misconduct; withholding or destruction of information relevant to a claim of misconduct; and retaliation against persons involved in the allegation or investigation of misconduct.

Evidence of Academic and/or Scientific dishonesty renders a student subject to disciplinary and/or legal action including expulsion from the University.

Use of Copyrighted Materials

Copyrighted materials (except for brief quotations and paraphrases) may not be reproduced without written permission from the copyright holder. This includes most Web page material whether explicitly stated or not. For a current overview of copyright issues, visit the Stanford University Fair Use center (<http://fairuse.stanford.edu/>).

GRADUATE STUDENT–MENTOR CONFLICTS

Pursuing a graduate degree can be a demanding and ultimately rewarding time for students. Students often work long hours and face a variety of challenges along the way, including potential conflicts with instructors, committee members, and major professors (mentors). In most cases, students and their mentors have productive and healthy professional relationships with minimal conflicts; however, there are circumstances when students and mentors have substantial conflicts that appear to have no resolution or positive outcome. Student–mentor conflicts can arise from a diversity of causes, including disagreements related to research plans, data interpretation, timelines for graduation, and personality differences. Sometimes, conflicts arise due to bias or discrimination issues.

Below, some guidelines to help resolve mentor–student conflicts, the resources available for graduate students to resolve these kinds of conflicts, and ways to deal with sexual misconduct and discrimination issues, are outlined. If conflicts arise between a mentor and a graduate student, the best practice is for the student and mentor to attempt to resolve problems face-to-face. If a student has a conflict with their mentor about issues such as research plans, data interpretation, timelines for graduation, etc., they should try to constructively work through the issues.

If the student-mentor conflict is severe, at an impasse, or if the student feels that there are more serious issues involved (e.g., sexual misconduct, discrimination), then the student should meet with the advisor for their graduate program to discuss the issue. If the student does not feel comfortable meeting with their graduate advisor, they can meet with a trusted faculty member or the department chair. Please note the following, however:

All University employees, including student employees, who in the course and scope of employment, witness or receive information regarding an incident that the employee reasonably believes constitutes sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking, and which is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who is a student or employee of Texas State at the time of the incident, are required to promptly report the incident to the institution's Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator.

If the student perceives that there are student–mentor conflict issues are related to bias against the students' race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender, veteran status, or disability, the student is encouraged to make a report to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX (<https://compliance.txst.edu/oeotix/discrimination.html>). Such issues might include any conduct, speech, expression, or action that is thought to be motivated in part or in whole by bias or prejudice, hatred or bigotry and directed at any individual or group, or one's actual or perceived race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, gender, veteran status, or disability, that is inferred to be meant to intimidate, demean, mock, degrade, marginalize, or threaten individuals or groups based on that individual or group's actual or perceived identity.

If the source of the student–mentor conflict is related to sexual misconduct or harassment, the student is encouraged to report this to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX (<https://compliance.txst.edu/oeotix/>). If the student does not wish to initially report the incident, then the student may discuss the situation with their graduate advisor, other trusted faculty member, or the department chair. Remember, however, that as required by University policy, any employee who receives a report of an incident involving sexual misconduct is required to report that incident to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX.

If a student–mentor conflict cannot be resolved at the departmental level, the student may want to contact the University Ombudsperson for Students (<https://www.dos.txst.edu/services/ombuds-services.html>) or the Dean of the Graduate College (graduatecollegedean@txstate.edu).

Considerations

The majority of student–mentor conflicts can be avoided through open, honest, respectful, and frequent communication between students and their mentors. Students and mentors need to have a clear understanding of their respective roles during the graduate school experience and of the expectations for each party. It is best to have discussions about expectations and roles at the beginning of your graduate program.

In many circumstances, student–mentor conflicts can be resolved by having both parties review and understand university and departmental guidelines, program requirements, rules for the preparation of theses and dissertations, timelines for defenses and graduation, etc. It is important to realize that in many cases, conflicts between students and mentors are not entirely one-sided in that both parties do not completely understand policies or have misinterpreted statements, timelines, or motivations of the other party.

Graduate studies can be stressful and create uncertainty for some students. The website of The Graduate College provides links to a variety of student support services that are available at the University:

<https://www.gradcollege.txst.edu/students/student-support.html>