



DEPARTMENT OF
BIOLOGY

University of New Mexico

Department of Biology

Graduate Student Handbook

2025-2026

This handbook is a living document, designed to evolve and improve over time through the collaborative efforts of our academic community. We encourage all graduate students to actively participate in this process by suggesting changes—big or small—that they believe will enhance the content or clarity of this guide. Please direct your suggestions to the Chair of the Graduate Policy Committee (hwearing@unm.edu) for consideration. Your insights are invaluable in helping us maintain a resource that effectively supports your academic and professional journey here at UNM.

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on beginning your graduate studies in the Department of Biology at the University of New Mexico! Whether you are pursuing a Master's or doctoral degree, this marks an important step toward achieving your professional goals. Graduate students play a crucial role in our department, significantly contributing to our missions in research and teaching. We are delighted to welcome you to our community of scholars.

Graduate school is a unique and transformative period in your life. It offers you the chance to immerse yourself in scientific exploration, discover new ideas and opportunities, acquire new skills, and build professional skills, awareness, and confidence. More than just a pursuit of academic qualifications, graduate training enables you to shape your professional life and forge lasting personal and professional relationships. However, earning your degree requires more than time; it demands a strong commitment from you, your advisor, and the department. Together, your advisor and the department will provide intellectual support and access to necessary resources to ensure your success. In return, you should be prepared to work diligently, stay abreast of requirements, and seize the many opportunities available through the department and UNM.

This handbook outlines the practices, procedures, rules, and regulations that govern the academic aspects of your graduate education, specifically within the Biology Department. It serves as a supplement to the UNM Catalog, which remains the definitive source for most graduate program requirements. For additional details, you should refer to the Graduate Program section of the UNM Catalog, particularly the version corresponding to your year of admission, as it contains the requirements applicable to you.

Please read this handbook thoroughly and familiarize yourself with the rules, policies, and procedures relevant to your graduate education. We are here to help; however, ultimately, it is your responsibility to understand and follow the full rules and regulations of the University. All necessary forms for progressing through the graduate program can be found in the [Graduate Program](#) section of the departmental website or on the [Graduate Studies](#) website. If anything is unclear, do not hesitate to ask questions. The Biology Graduate Program Coordinator is your primary contact for clarification on any matters related to your program.

See the following for further information:

The UNM Student Handbook (aka Pathfinder): <https://pathfinder.unm.edu/>

UNM Graduate Studies: <https://grad.unm.edu/home/>

Degree Roadmaps from UNM Graduate Studies: <https://grad.unm.edu/resources/start-to-finish-unm/start-to-finish.html>

UNM Course Catalog: <https://catalog.unm.edu/-/home>

UNM Biology website: <https://biology.unm.edu>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Throughout the document, the following terms are used and defined here:

Biology Graduate Program Coordinator is responsible for on-going development and review of the department's graduate program. The Coordinator is responsible for student coursework advisement and review of fulfillment of academic and graduate school requirements for Qualifying Exams and Dissertation Defense.

The **Committee of Studies (COS)** determines the course work necessary for satisfaction of degree requirements, discusses whether transfer of credits from other institutions is appropriate, and most importantly, interacts with the student in the formulation and implementation of their research program. The COS administers a student's Master's Examination and/or Doctoral Comprehensive Exam.

Doctoral Candidate: A doctoral student who has passed the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam and successfully filed for advancement to candidacy.

Dissertation Committee: A PhD student forms this committee upon passing the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam. This committee will guide the student through the end of the PhD. Typically, the COS serves as the core of the Dissertation Committee, plus the addition of one member from outside of the Biology Department.

Doctoral Comprehensive Exam (Comps): An examination that assesses a graduate student's mastery of the field's broad subject matter and readiness to undertake independent research. The exam consists of three parts: a written research proposal, a written exam, and an oral exam.

Dissertation: A substantial piece of original research completed as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree.

Ethics Training: Mandatory training sessions that cover the ethical conduct of research, often including topics such as data management, authorship, and responsible use of resources.

Fieldwork: Research conducted outside of the laboratory setting, often in natural environments, which is integral to many biological studies.

Good Standing means that the student is meeting minimum requirements, including a GPA of 3.0 or better, no missing grades, is making progress towards the degree, and is within the guaranteed financial support period (i.e., two years for MS; five years for PhD).

Graduate Advocate is a faculty member from Biology who serves in an advisory role should you experience conflict within the department.

Major Advisor is a faculty member from Biology who oversees the student's research, training, and mentorship in the program and is chair of the student's Committee on Studies and, subsequently, Dissertation Committee.

The **Master's Examination** consists of a public thesis defense of the thesis and the Final Exam for Thesis (Thesis Exam). The exam is administered by the Committee on Studies (COS) and covers thesis-related themes plus additional content at the discretion of the COS.

Ombuds Services is a no-barrier, first-stop for UNM employees, their co-workers, and graduate students seeking guidance, information, and insight from a trusted, skilled neutral in a setting that is confidential, independent, and informal.

Research Proposal: A document submitted by each Biology graduate student outlining the literature background, objectives, methods, preliminary data, anticipated results, and a bibliography of their proposed thesis or dissertation research.

Seminar (Course): A course focused on the discussion and presentation of current research topics in biology, often requiring students to present their research findings.

Seminar (Departmental): A weekly research talk presented by an invited speaker.

Teaching Assistantship (TA): A position offered to graduate students involving teaching responsibilities, which provides teaching experience and financial support.

Thesis: The culminating project of a Master's Plan I degree, involving original research and resulting in a written document that is presented and defended in front of a thesis committee.

DEGREE PROGRAMS

Graduate students in the Biology Department are admitted into one of two degree programs: the Master's (Plan I or Plan II) or the PhD.

Master's Degree

Two options are available for obtaining a Master's degree in Biology at UNM:

MS Plan I (Research Degree):

This is a research-focused degree that combines coursework with independent research, culminating in a thesis. It is suitable for students who intend to pursue a career in research or continue their studies toward a PhD.

MS Plan II (Coursework Degree):

This option emphasizes advanced coursework in Biology without the requirement of a thesis. It is designed for individuals seeking to expand their knowledge beyond the typical B.S. program but who do not plan to engage in significant research or technical laboratory work. Plan II is not recommended for students aiming for a research-oriented career or intending to pursue a PhD at UNM or elsewhere.

Doctoral Degree

A PhD in Biology requires advanced training in a specific area of the field and the ability to conduct significant independent research. This includes designing and implementing a research project and writing a comprehensive PhD dissertation. Although many students pursue a PhD after earning a Master's degree, it is not a prerequisite for admission to the PhD program.

Changing Degree Program

You should discuss any change with your Major Advisor and your Committee on Studies.

MS students wishing to enter the PhD program:

Master's students wishing to enter the PhD program must submit a standard application during the normal application period. Your application will be evaluated, along with other applicants, by the department's Graduate Student Selection Committee during their normal screening period. Students requesting admission to the PhD program must be in good academic standing and progressing in a timely manner.

PhD students wishing to change to the Master's program:

On occasions a doctoral student, in consultation with their Major Advisor and Committee on Studies, may decide it best to change to the Master's degree program. This change requires no special paperwork, but the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator must be notified as soon as possible. The student must then complete all requirements for either the MS Plan I or MS Plan II, depending on which plan the student chooses. It is important that the student discuss plans with the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator to ensure all tasks and paperwork will be completed.

MS I students wishing to switch to MS II (or vice versa):

If you decide, with the approval of your Major Advisor and Committee of Studies, to change from MS Plan I to MS Plan II, or vice versa, and you have already had your Program of Studies approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies, you need to submit an entirely new Program of Studies prior to the Master's Examination.

Master's *en route* to PhD

Graduate students in the Biology PhD program who entered without a Master's degree in Biology can earn an MS *en route* to the PhD in Biology. Students may wish to pursue this avenue if they are considering a non-academic career in which having an additional degree might influence their professional classification or pay grade. Approval of the Major Advisor and Committee on Studies is required. Students choosing this route must complete a MS Program of Studies (POS) form, as well as all the normal requirements of a MS degree. Students wishing to pursue an M.S. *en route* must notify the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator upon successful completion of their comprehensive exam. The Coordinator must write a memo to Graduate Studies to use the comprehensive exam as their Master's Examination. The Master's *en route* degree can be either Plan I or II. Typically, a Plan II is pursued because of its simplicity, but a Plan I (with thesis) is possible as well. Note that in the case of a Plan I MS *en route*, the research presented in the MS thesis cannot then be used as a chapter in the PhD dissertation.

The MS requires 30 credit hours, of which all 30 credits can be applied towards the PhD degree. It is recommended to only claim the minimum 30 credit hours on the MS Program of Studies because you must have 18 hours independent for the PhD for a cumulative amount of 48 credit hours. If you are applying transfer credit from a previous Master's degree at a different institution, you can only apply up to 24 credit hours towards the PhD. The courses must carry graduate level credit and have been passed with a grade of "B" or better.

Dual Degree Program

Students in dual degree programs must complete both degrees in the same semester. For detailed information, refer to the graduate section of the UNM Catalog and please consult with the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator. For example, a student enrolled in an MS in Biology and an MS in Museum Studies must defend both degrees in the same semester.

MAJOR ADVISOR AND COMMITTEES

Major Advisor

Your Major Advisor plays a key role in fostering your progress as a developing scientist; they are responsible for helping you establish your plan of study and course work, for seeing that you progress toward degree requirements in a timely fashion, for helping you assemble a Committee on Studies, and, most importantly, for working closely with you in your graduate research. The bonds you form with your Major Advisor during your graduate studies are often firm and lasting, and are founded upon a close, professional working relationship. Accordingly, you should select a Major Advisor with care. Major Advisors must be members of the Biology Graduate Faculty.

Advisors differ in their philosophies of graduate training: some spend considerable time with their students, closely directing their studies, sometimes training students who continue their own lines of research. Other Advisors allow their students to explore widely and view their role as a sounding board on which students may try out new research ideas; at the extreme, this can produce a situation in which the student receives little direction and may flounder unless they are highly motivated and independent. Most Advisors, of course, fall somewhere between these extremes. You should consider such aspects of style and personality along with the expertise or research activity of a faculty member in your selection of an Advisor.

We are committed to supporting the diverse career goals and personal growth of our graduate students. An [Individualized Development Plan \(IDP\)](#), also known as an Individualized Mentoring Plan, is a critical tool designed to facilitate this process. The IDP helps students and their mentors collaboratively outline professional goals, identify necessary skills and experiences, and track progress throughout their graduate studies. By encouraging self-assessment, fostering communication, and providing a structured pathway for achieving both short-term and long-term objectives, IDPs serve as a cornerstone for personalized academic and career development. We strongly encourage all students and advisors to engage actively in this process, which is instrumental in enhancing their educational experience and preparing them for successful careers in biology and beyond. We also encourage you to file completed, signed IDPs with the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator and to revisit these documents at least annually with your advisor.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to have two individuals serve as co-chairpersons of your Committee on Studies and as your co-Major Advisors. At least one of these individuals must be a member of the Biology Graduate Faculty. An Adjunct Professor of Biology may serve, along with a member of the Biology Graduate Faculty, as a co-chairperson. However, an Adjunct Professor may not serve as the sole chairperson of the Committee on Studies.

Committee on Studies

All graduate students must form a Committee on Studies (COS) by their second semester. The Committee determines the course work necessary for satisfaction of degree requirements, discusses whether transfer of credits from other institutions is appropriate, and most importantly, interacts with the student in the formulation and implementation of their research program. In the MS program, the COS administers the Master's examination leading to the MS degree. In the PhD program, the COS administers the doctoral comprehensive exam. Upon passing the comprehensive exam, PhD students form a Dissertation Committee that will guide them through the end of the PhD (see below). Typically, the COS serves as the core of the final Dissertation Committee.

You must confer with your Major Advisor *within the first semester* of your graduate studies about the establishment of your Committee on Studies, which must occur before the end of the second semester. Typically, the COS consists of three members: the Major Advisor, a second member of the Biology

faculty, and a third member as described in [Guidelines for Approval Request for Committee Service](#) of the UNM Catalog. Additional members beyond three may be included. The composition of the Committee must be approved by the Major Advisor and must be in compliance with the Graduate Studies guidelines. The appointment of your COS must be reported on a [Committee on Studies](#) form and returned to the Coordinator after the appropriate signatures have been obtained. The Coordinator will verify that the committee meets both Biology and Graduate Studies policy.

Each graduate student must meet with their COS at least once during each academic year. While format of the meeting is open, it should provide an opportunity for the Committee to monitor the student's progress, discuss course work, review recent research efforts, plan future research, etc. It is then *the student's responsibility to provide a brief synopsis (a "COS Report")* of the meeting, signed by the Major Advisor, to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator's Office within a week of the meeting. The Coordinator will contact both the student and their advisor if a COS Report has not been turned in by March of each academic year. Filing of an annual COS Report is required to remain in good standing within the Biology Graduate Program; *failure to do so may result in the loss of TA funding.*

In consultation with your Major Advisor, you may change the composition of your COS (e.g., in response to a change in your research direction) by submitting a new COS form. Should you have any grievances with members of your COS, you may discuss these with your Major Advisor, other committee members, a [Graduate Advocate](#), the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, the Department Chairperson, the Dean of Graduate Studies, or the Faculty Senate Committee on Graduate Programs and Standards. For more information on this, please refer to the [UNM Student Handbook](#).

Examination, Thesis, and Dissertation Committees

At various checkpoints in the degree process, a graduate student is evaluated by a committee. Each type of committee has a specific structure dictated by Graduate Studies. All members of a committee must be approved by Graduate Studies at the time the committee is created. To obtain approval, each member must comply with a category listed at the end of this section. *Each member must possess at least the degree they are evaluating* (e.g., a member of a Doctoral committee must have a PhD) and have expertise in the field of study. If a member of a student's committee has not been previously approved by Graduate Studies, a Curriculum Vitae must be submitted by the Biology Graduate Program Office to the Graduate Studies Office.

The rest of the text in this section concerning committee composition comes directly from Graduate Studies (see <https://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/committee-service.html>). Annotations and additions specific to UNM Biology are provided in *italics*.

There are three types of student committees – examination, thesis, and dissertation; the composition for each is given below:

a) Master's Exam and/or Thesis Committees: The role of the examination committee is to approve the exam questions, conduct the exam/defense, evaluate the student response and report the results. Each committee must consist of a minimum of three members approved by Graduate Studies. Typically, the Committee on Studies (COS) serves as the Master's Exam and/or Thesis Committee.

1. Two members must be Category 1 OR one member can be Category 1 and one member may be Category 3 if their appointment is within the student's major.
2. The chair of the exam committee must be Category 1, 5, or 3, if their appointment is within the student's major.

3. The third member can be any Category (1–6).
4. A co-chair can be from any Category (1–6), provided the other co-chair is a Category 1 or 3 if their appointment is within the student's major.

No more than one voting member can be in Category 4. Departments can impose a more restrictive structure for exam committees.

b) Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Committees: The role of the examination committee is to approve the exam questions, conduct the exam, evaluate the student's response, and report the results of the exam. Each committee must consist of a minimum of three members approved by Graduate Studies. Typically, the Committee on Studies (COS) serves as the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Committee.

1. Two members must be Category 1 OR one member can be Category 1 and one member may be Category 3 if their appointment is within the student's major.
2. The chair of the exam committee must be Category 1, 5, or 3, if their appointment is within the student's major.
3. The third member can be any Category (1–6).
4. A co-chair can be from any Category (1–6) provided the other co-chair is a Category 1 or 3 if their appointment is within the student's major.

No more than one voting member can be in Category 4. Departments can impose a more restrictive structure for exam committees.

c) Doctoral Dissertation Committees: The role of the dissertation committee is to supervise a doctoral candidate's dissertation activity. (See appropriate sections of the Catalog for additional information). Each committee must consist of a minimum of four members approved by Graduate Studies; 2 of the 4 members must have Category 1 approval. The Doctoral Dissertation committee provides guidance during the dissertation research and evaluates the final written dissertation. Often, but not always, these committees are made up of the Committee on Studies plus a member from outside our department. This person must be tenured and can be from either another department at UNM, or be a member in Biology or related department at another institution. If the fourth member is from a different institution, please consult the Graduate Program Coordinator as a CV might be required for approval.

1. Chair must have approval as a Category 1, 5, or 3 if their appointment is within the student's major.
2. The second member must have approval as Category 1 or 3 if their appointment is within the student's major.
3. The third member (external/outside) must have approval as Category 2 if selected from the faculty of an institution other than UNM, or Category 1 if a UNM faculty member outside the student's discipline.
4. The fourth member can have approval as Category 1–6.
5. Co-Chair (optional) must have approval as a Category 1–6.

No more than one voting member may be in Category 4. Departments can impose a more restrictive structure for exam committees.

Committee Member Category Definitions per Graduate Studies (<https://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/committee-service.html>)

- **Category One:** UNM tenured or tenure-track faculty or UNM-National Laboratory Professors. Role: chair or a member of any Master's or doctoral committee in any discipline, regardless of the Faculty member's FTE status.
- **Category Two:** Tenured or tenure-track faculty at other institutions. Role: external member on dissertation committee. CV required.
- **Category Three:** Individuals (not tenured/tenure track) whose primary employer is UNM and who hold the titles of **research** professor, **research** associate professor, **research** assistant professor; **clinician educators** with the rank of professor, associate professor assistant professor or faculty hired onto the flex track or "V" category in the School of Medicine. Role: co-chair or member of Master's or dissertation committee; may only co-chair committees if their appointment is within the student's major.
- **Category Four:** Others who are considered experts in the field. Role: voting member of the committee. CV required. *Note: A Category Four member must possess at least the degree they are evaluating (e.g., a member of a Doctoral committee must have a PhD)*
- **Category Five:** *Emeriti/Emeritae faculty within their first year of retirement.* Emeriti/ Emeritae faculty may continue to chair existing committees for up to one calendar year from the date of their retirement if the graduate unit approves. They may not be appointed chair of any new committees once retired. Role: Chair, co-chair, or voting member of the committee
- **Category Six:** *Emeriti/Emeritae faculty more than one year post-retirement.* After the first year of retirement, Emeriti/Emeritae faculty may continue to serve on committees if the graduate unit approves. Role: Co-Chair or voting member of the committee.

Changing Major Advisors

All UNM Biology graduate students enrolled in the program are required to have a major advisor to remain in good standing. In UNM Biology, a major advisor agrees to mentor an admitted student for their first year in the program, and in most cases, will remain in that role for the duration of the student's degree. However, in certain instances, students may wish to switch advisors for reasons including, but not limited to, a change in research objectives or educational goals, the departure of the advisor from UNM, or to pursue a better-suited mentor-mentee relationship. Switching major advisors can be a delicate process, but one that is navigable. If a student wants to change advisors, there are several options available. Here, we provide a roadmap to students considering a change in major advisor to help students make informed decisions during this important time in their training. Provided that a student is in good standing, they will be afforded an equitable and collegial relationship within the department both during and after the process of transitioning major advisors.

1. **Consider your reasons for wanting to switch advisors.** Before making any decisions, it's important to understand why you want to switch advisors. Understanding your reasons will help you communicate your intentions more effectively and identify which areas of the mentor-mentee relationship need improvement. After thorough reflection, if you decide that pursuing a change is the best course of action, consider the following steps.

2. **Talk to your current advisor:** We recommend having an open and honest conversation with your current advisor about your concerns. If you anticipate a strained conversation, consider requesting the presence of a neutral mediator, such as a UNM Ombuds or a Biology Graduate Advocate. Ideally, this meeting should result in a written plan to resolve any issues.
3. **Research potential new advisors:** If you decide to switch advisors, it's crucial to find a new advisor whose research interests and goals align with yours. Take the time to research potential advisors and reach out to discuss their research and how your interests align. Evaluate the composition of their laboratory and whether the working environment suits your needs. To transfer to another research laboratory, you must secure agreement from another faculty member to serve as your major advisor (see the timeline and procedure below).
4. **Talk to a trusted advocate:** The Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, Graduate Advocate, and/or Department Chair can provide guidance on the process for switching advisors within your program, including any necessary paperwork or procedures. They can also recommend suitable new advisors and facilitate discussions with both your current and prospective advisors. An advocate is available to support the student and ensure protection against retaliation by a former advisor.
5. **Communicate with both advisors:** If you decide to switch advisors, it's important to communicate with both your current and new advisors to ensure a smooth transition. Clearly explain your reasons for switching and make sure you have a plan for any ongoing research projects or responsibilities. If communication with your current advisor has broken down, consider involving a Graduate Advocate, UNM Ombuds, or another trusted faculty or staff member to facilitate the conversation.
6. **Degree program:** Switching major advisors may involve remaining in the original PhD or MS Plan I program, or it could entail switching to a different degree program, such as from a PhD to an MS Plan I or Plan II. Consider which option best suits your needs and communicate your decision accordingly.
7. **Stay organized:** Keep track of all paperwork and emails related to the switch, and ensure you meet all deadlines and requirements. Staying organized can help ensure a smooth transition and minimize potential issues or misunderstandings. Although some leniency may be afforded to students switching labs due to the challenging nature of the process, it remains the student's responsibility to meet deadlines and [complete necessary paperwork](#).

Timeline and procedure for switching major advisors

The timeline for switching major advisors is designed to give the student ample time and support to make this change within the confines of their Assistantship contracts. Note, this is departmental policy, which supercedes—and may be inconsistent with—advice from Graduate Studies.

Step 1: A student initiates this process in writing to the Chair of the Graduate Policy Committee and the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, using the [Changing Advisor Form](#).

Step 2: Upon receipt of this letter, the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator will notify the former major advisor. The student will have 90 days to identify a new advisor.

Step 3: The process is completed when the student, along with the new and former advisors, sign a letter acknowledging the change. This letter, also co-signed by the Chair of Biology and the Chair of the Graduate Policy Committee, is then submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator to approve the change. The letter should be collaboratively produced by the student and both advisors and must include firm agreements regarding the intellectual property of research ideas, data, and authorship on manuscripts to which the student has contributed. Essentially, switching major advisors should not penalize the student's productivity or research output.

The department guarantees financial support to all students who are switching major advisors and are in good standing. Current TA/RA contracts will be honored, and already signed future contracts will also be honored, thereby supporting a student through the subsequent semester. It is assumed that the former advisor will no longer pay for an ongoing RA contract; therefore, arrangements must be made for the new advisor to support the student for the remainder of the active contract. The Department may have funds to bridge this gap and the Chair should be an active participant in these discussions to avoid unnecessary gaps in student pay. Any action regarding the termination of a contract must be in accord with [Article 12](#) of the Collecting Bargaining Agreement. Students should maintain their coursework in anticipation of finding a new advisor to maintain progress toward their degree. If after utilizing the available resources discussed above the student is unable to identify a willing advisor, their affiliation with UNM Biology and the Graduate School will end, and any remaining guarantees of financial support will be terminated. In such a situation, the student is not precluded from reapplying to the graduate program in a future admissions cycle.

REGISTRATION

Before registering for classes each semester, you should confer with your Major Advisor. Doing so will provide an opportunity to assess your academic progress, and, if needed, to change courses required on your degree program. Students who are in good academic standing without financial holds on their account can register online using UNM's Lobo Web system. Open registration dates are listed on the [Office of the Registrar's](#) website. You should make every effort to register on time to avoid late-registration fees. Generally, you may not register in graduate courses later than the end of the second week of a regular semester, or the end of the first week of a summer session, without the approval of the instructor(s) and the Dean of Arts & Sciences.

Students who are not New Mexico residents but who hold an assistantship will receive a reduction in tuition from the non-resident rate to the resident rate. When a non-resident student does not have TA or RA contact, they will be charged the higher non-resident tuition rate. Therefore, it is highly recommended that such students apply for residency status toward the end of their first year in New Mexico. For details regarding the residency application process, please consult the [Residency Information](#) page on the Registrar's Office website.

If you hold an assistantship appointment, you must register for a minimum of six (6) credit hours by the first day of the semester (excluding summers). Other forms of financial aid, such as loans or scholarships, may have different enrollment requirements; please consult the UNM Financial Aid Office for details. The Biology Department recommends that students register for a full load (12 credit hours) each semester. This may be done by adding hours of BIOL 551 (Problems), BIOL 599 (Master's Thesis), BIOL 651 (Advanced Field Biology), or BIOL 699 (Dissertation), as appropriate.

Table 1. Guide to the courses associated with research credit.

Class	Credits	Usage
BIOL 551 (Problems)	1–12	This course gives you credit for the research you are conducting under supervision of your Major Advisor. PhD students may register every semester until they have advanced to candidacy; MS students may register up until the semester they register for BIOL 599. MS Plan I can use up to 6 credit hours towards their degree, Plan II can use up to 12 and PhD can use up to 18.
BIOL 651 (Advanced Field Biology)	4–8	This course is an alternative way to get credit for your research. Note: this course is not repeatable, meaning it may only be taken for credit once.
BIOL 599 (Master's Thesis)	1–6	MS students must register for this course in their final semester (typically semester 4). For MS Plan I, students must complete a minimum of 6 credit hours to earn their degree. Once a student registers for BIOL 599, they must stay continuously enrolled until degree completion.
BIOL 699 (Dissertation)	3–12	PhD students begin taking BIOL 699 after they advance to candidacy. Once you register for BIOL 699 you must continue taking it every semester until you graduate, per Graduate Studies policy. A minimum of 18 credits of BIOL 699 must be taken. Note: Students can take BIOL 699 in the semester they take comps, but it will only count towards the minimum 18 credits if they pass comps.

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

Certain program elements are common to the MS and PhD programs. We describe these here.

Research Proposal

Each student registered for graduate studies in Biology must submit a formal research proposal. This proposal should include an introduction covering the relevant literature background, a full description of the objectives of the study, the methods of data collection and analysis, presentation and interpretation of progress to date (preliminary data) if research is already underway, the anticipated results, and a bibliography. The structure and scope of your proposal should be discussed initially with your Major Advisor and COS, revised as appropriate, submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator for submission to the Biology Graduate Policy Committee for final review and approval along with an Approval of Research Proposal form. A copy of the research proposal will be placed in your departmental file.

Note that, in consultation with the Major Advisor and COS, the student's actual research may deviate from the proposed research plan. After the research has been completed and written up, the thesis or dissertation is judged on whether it meets quality and quantity requirements rather than on whether it exactly follows the research proposal.

MS I Proposal

This proposal should be submitted during the student's second semester. A typical length is about 4–5 single-spaced pages. The specifics on content, length, and timing are up to your Committee on Studies. Seek your committee's guidance for specifics on how to prepare your proposal.

MS II Program

No research proposal is required.

PhD Proposal

This proposal is prepared before the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination. A typical length is about eight single-spaced pages, and it is submitted to the COS no later than two weeks before the date of the Exam, but the specifics on content and timing are up to your COS. Seek your committee's guidance for specifics on how to prepare your proposal. The proposal is reviewed by the COS as part of the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination and must be approved for the student to advance to candidacy.

Scientific Presentations

The ability to deliver an effective yet rigorous public presentation to a scholarly audience is essential for professional biologists. To help complete the Scientific Presentation requirement, students may present in Biology's Brown Bag Seminar Series, a national or international scientific conference, a well-advertised departmental seminar outside of the Brown Bag seminar, or comparable venue as approved by your Committee on Studies (COS). Students are encouraged to discuss their presentation with their Major Advisor and/or COS during preparation.

For Brown Bag presentations, a student must register for BIOL 531: Brown Bag Research Seminar in the semester they present. Students must contact the course instructor or BGSA student representative about securing a presentation spot.

Following the presentation, students must complete a [Scientific Presentation](#) form, obtain the instructor's signature (for Brown Bag) or the Major Advisor's signature (for all other presentations), and submit to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator for processing. Note: a separate form is needed for each presentation.

MS I Program

Students must deliver at least **one** substantial oral scientific presentation on original research to a scholarly audience in a public forum. Students should complete the presentation before the end of their third semester, in preparation for the final oral examination.

MS II Program

No scientific presentation is required.

PhD Program

Students must deliver at least **two** substantial oral scientific presentations on original research to scholarly audiences in public fora. At least one presentation must be completed in the department's Brown Bag seminar series, preferably no later than the Fall semester of the 4th year.

MASTER'S OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN BIOLOGY

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all forms are completed and submitted on schedule, with the appropriate signatures, to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator. Although not required, it is recommended that the student keep a copy of each form for their records.

MS I Program

To meet the formal requirements of the MS I Program, one must:

- 1) Complete the New Graduate Student Seminar (BIOL 500). Attendance is mandatory. Note that this course may not be included on the Program of Studies;
- 2) Complete Scientific Integrity (BIOL 502) or equivalent. This course provides a certificate valid for 4 years, after which period it must be renewed;
- 3) Complete two semesters of Department of Biology Seminar (BIOL 530);
- 4) Successfully complete the course work requirements with a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0;
- 5) Successfully complete the graduate <https://biology.unm.edu/graduate/scholarship-files/core-curriculum-ms.pdf> requirement;
- 6) Successfully present a [scientific presentation](#) by the end of the 3rd semester (see Program Elements, above);
- 7) Complete a Graduate Studies (GS) [Program of Studies](#) electronic form no later than the semester prior to graduation;
- 8) Once thesis credits (BIOL 599) are started, maintain continuous enrollment of at least one (1) hour in each Fall and Spring semester through graduation. If you expect to graduate during the summer semester, you must register for BIOL 599 in that semester as well.
- 9) Submit a [research proposal](#) by the end of the second semester (see Program Elements above);
- 10) Pass the Master's Examination; and
- 11) Present and successfully defend a thesis acceptable to the department and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The following provisions must also be observed:

- 1) After the Program of Studies has been filed, changes including changes between Plans I and II, will require a revised Program of Studies form.
- 2) All course work used to fulfill the degree requirements, including any non-degree or transfer work, must be assigned a grade of a *B or better* and must be completed within a *seven-year period before* the semester of graduation.
- 3) All degree requirements must be completed within seven years of the student's start date.
- 4) Transfer of graduate credit to a Program of Studies is never automatic. With the approval of the student's graduate unit, a maximum of 50% of the course work on a Program of Studies may consist of transfer credit hours, assuming they meet the restrictions specified in the UNM Catalog.

The course work must have been taken at an accredited institution and must be judged by both the graduate unit and the Dean of Graduate Studies to be appropriate to the student's degree.

MS Plan I Course Work Requirements

The MS I requires 30 credit hours: 24 credit hours of biology-related course work plus a minimum of six credit hours of Thesis (BIOL 599). These credits are subject to the following restrictions:

- 1) BIOL 500 cannot be included in the 24 credit hours.
- 2) All credit hours must be at the graduate level (400* or 500, as indicated in the UNM Catalog), with a minimum of 6 credit hours at the 500 level.
- 3) The 24 credit hours must include three UNM Biology courses (at the 400* or 500 level) to fulfill the Core Curriculum requirement; note that BIOL 502, 500, 530, 551, 599, and 651 do not count towards this requirement. Each Core course must be taken from a different Biology faculty member. This requirement should typically be completed during the first year of the program.
- 4) Of the 24 credit hours, only 12 may be taken with a single professor.
- 5) Of the 24 credit hours, a maximum of nine are allowed from non-degree coursework taken at UNM prior to entering the Biology MS program.
- 6) As described above, once enrolled in Thesis credits (BIOL 599), a student must stay continually enrolled through graduation.
- 7) Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0. While discouraged, students may include up to 2 courses (or 6 credits) in which a "C" or "C+" was earned.

Additional notes regarding curriculum:

- ✓ Students should note that they will likely end up with more than the required 30 credit hours of course work, especially if they have been supported on an assistantship contract and are taking 12 credits per semester.
- ✓ Course selection should be made with the guidance of the Committee on Studies.

Core Curriculum

Master's students are expected to complete the graduate core curriculum course requirement within their first year in the program: three UNM Biology Department courses at the 400* or 500 level (excluding 402/502, 500, 530, 551, 599, or 651). At least two courses must be at the 500 level, and only one may be at the 400* level (i.e., all must be graduate level courses). Note: to verify if a 300- or 400-level course can be applied as graduate level credit, you can reference the course description in the catalog at catalog.unm.edu. The three courses must be offered by three different faculty members (for MS I students; see below for MS II differences).

This requirement will be tracked by a Graduate Curriculum Form signed by the student's Committee on Studies members listing the courses taken, and signed by the Major Advisor when the courses are completed.

Program of Studies

A Program of Studies (POS) for the Master's Degree must be filed with the Graduate Program Coordinator after you have completed 18 hours of graduate work. Graduate Studies maintains a [list of deadlines](#) for this and other forms that you should reference. The Core Curriculum requirement must be completed before the POS is filed. The POS is a listing of the 30 credit hours of courses to be counted towards the degree requirement. It is important to include only the courses that will be used in obtaining your degree.

The electronic POS form may be accessed at gradforms.unm.edu. The Program of Studies should be planned in consultation with your Major Advisor and/or Committee on Studies.

Thesis Guidelines

Each candidate for the Master's degree under Plan I must submit a thesis that gives evidence of capacity for sound research. The thesis must be approved by your Committee on Studies.

The University of New Mexico requires all theses to be submitted electronically for Graduate Studies approval and archiving at UNM Digital Repository, the UNM Library's online institutional repository. Be sure to carefully follow the thesis format guidelines available on the Graduate Studies website at: <http://grad.unm.edu/degree-completion/index.html>. The Biology Department strongly encourages students to attend the Graduate Studies Thesis/Dissertation workshop (historically offered in both video and in-person formats), which is offered throughout the academic year. For more information about the workshop, visit <http://grad.unm.edu/resources/workshops.html>.

There are two acceptable, alternative formats for the thesis: the traditional and the "hybrid" manuscript-based. Students may opt to use either style. However, approval of which style is used will be obtained from the COS prior to preparing the thesis. The traditional thesis is a single manuscript, authored solely by the student, presenting original research performed by the student. A "hybrid" manuscript-based thesis is a collection of one or more manuscripts or articles formatted for publication and presented as separate chapters of a single thesis; additionally, the thesis must contain a general abstract, introduction, and conclusion.

For either style, the rules and regulations established by Graduate Studies (GS) regarding format (front matter, text, reference matter, paper dimensions, margins, etc.) must be adhered to. See the manuscript section within the [thesis guidelines](#) set by Graduate Studies. For the hybrid style, further formatting information is given in the [Hybrid Manuscript for Theses & Dissertations](#) policy. Students must also follow copyright policies for obtaining permission to use a previously published manuscript.

Theses Electronic Embargo Restriction

Theses are submitted to Graduate Studies by uploading to the UNM Digital Repository. All theses are available in an open access source and can be searched online. To delay public access, a student may request an embargo or access restriction on their document. A student must complete the [Embargo Restriction Request Form](#) at the link above and follow the instructions and deadlines. This request should be submitted at the same time the Announcement of Exam is completed. For more information on this policy here: <https://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/etd-embargo.html>.

Note: Students must pay a fee at the UNM Cashier's Office located in the Business Center on the Corner of Lomas and University. The fee is \$40, as of 2024.

Intent to Graduate

You need to officially inform the Biology Department of your intention to graduate by completing the departmental [Intent to Graduate form](#). Submit the Intent to Graduate form to the Biology Grad Program Coordinator (with your advisor's signature) by the second Friday in July for Fall semester, second Friday in November for Spring semester, or second Friday in April for Summer semester. This form will confirm your intent to complete the degree requirements by the posted deadlines. Note: While it is not preferred, students may change their intent should they find it necessary. While UNM awards degrees three times during the year, the Biology Department Commencement is held only in May; everyone who completed their degree requirements during the year is invited to participate.

Master's Examination

At the end of a student's program, they publicly defend their thesis and undergo the Final Exam for Thesis (Thesis Exam). These two events may be initiated only after the Program of Studies has been approved by Graduate Studies. Additionally, the student must be in good standing and enrolled in at least one credit of BIOL 599. The Final Exam for Thesis is conducted by the COS, is drawn from the themes of the thesis or related fields as appropriate, and may be written, oral, or both, at the discretion of your Committee on Studies. *A complete copy of the thesis must be provided to each member of the COS at least two weeks before the date of the Thesis Exam*, but a committee member may request additional lead time (>2 weeks). It is recommended that you discuss the plan with each committee member at least six weeks before the planned exam date.

At least two weeks prior to the date of the Master's Examination and/or Master's Exam for Thesis, the student must complete the Announcement of Examination (AOE) of the date, time, and place of the examination; the title of the Thesis; and committee members. Graduate Studies guidelines and a link to the Announcement of Examination is located at <http://gradforms.unm.edu/>. To meet the graduation semester deadline, the examination announcement must be submitted by November 1 (Fall), April 1 (Spring), or July 1 (Summer). Once this request is approved by Graduate Studies, a link will be forwarded to the Committee on Studies Chair.

The results of the examination are reported independently by your committee chair and committee members to Graduate Studies online by November 15 (Fall), April 15 (Spring), or July 15 (Summer) or within two weeks of the exam, whichever comes first. Possible results are *Pass*, *Conditional Pass*, and *Fail*.

Conditional Pass. The COS may assign *Conditional Pass* in which additional actions are assigned. These actions may include making major changes to the written thesis, completion of a written assignment, etc. Once the student has completed the action(s), the Committee Chair must write a memo (addressed to Graduate Studies) stating that the action(s) have been completed and to change the exam result from *Conditional Pass* to *Pass*. This memo is given to the Graduate Program Coordinator who will forward it to Graduate Studies. If the student does not complete the action(s) by the semester graduation deadline, the student's graduation will be delayed. Keep in mind the 90-day time limit as outlined below. To avoid confusion or the concern of 'moving goalposts', a student who receives a *Conditional Pass* should expect a detailed list of assigned actions and a fair timeline that is agreed upon by the COS and student at the completion of the exam. The COS Chair must write a memo to Graduate Studies stating that the student has fulfilled the conditions and to change the result to *Pass*.

Fail. If a candidate fails the examination, the COS may recommend a second examination; a six-month interval should elapse before a second examination is given. A candidate may take this examination only

twice. Failure to pass the second time will result in the student's termination from the Biology graduate program.

Final Submission of Thesis

The thesis, in final form and approved by the COS, shall be [submitted electronically](#) for the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies by November 15, April 15, or July 15 for Fall, Spring or Summer graduation, respectively. Along with the thesis, the student must also submit the [Certification of Final Form](#), approved by the committee chair to Graduate Studies.

Graduate Studies offers workshops during the semester to explain and demonstrate how to complete the above task. This workshop is highly recommended as it is helpful when you are ready to submit your final documents and the appropriate paperwork.

90-Day Rule

A Plan I Master's student must submit their thesis to Graduate Studies within ninety (90) days of passing their Final Examination for Thesis, or by the graduation deadline—whichever comes first. If the thesis is not submitted within the allotted period, the student must schedule and complete a second Final Examination for Thesis. In all cases the results of the thesis defense must be submitted to Graduate Studies no later than two weeks after the announced date of the thesis defense.

Graduation Courtesy Policy

University regulations require that the student be enrolled and complete a minimum of one (1) hour of thesis credit (BIOL 599) (three (3) hours for PhD students) in the term they complete degree requirements. Should the student miss the graduation deadline (July 15 for summer graduation, November 15 for fall graduation, April 15 for spring graduation), but complete all degree requirements on or before the last day of that term, the student is not required to register for the next (graduation) term. The student must inform the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator that they will be taking advantage of this "courtesy policy". The Coordinator will notify Graduate Studies.

Degree Term Limits

Master's Degree Seven-year Limit. Biology Master's students are typically expected to complete their degree within two years. Per Graduate Studies, a Master's student *must* complete their degree within seven (7) years of the first class applied to the degree. Generally, candidates who have interrupted their graduate education for professional work in their field may be granted an extension of the time limit, but a petition must be filed (see Leave of Absence). All requests for an extension of the limit for this or other reasons must be originated by the student, supported by the Committee on Studies, given to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, supported by the department, and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Course Maximum Time Limit

In general, a course has a shelf life of 10 years. A student may use courses taken at another institution to fulfill UNM Biology degree requirements, providing their Committee on Studies approves and the course

is less than 10 years old at the time of graduation. After the committee has approved a non-UNM graduate level course, the student will include the course(s) on their Application for Candidacy.

Suggested Schedule and Checklist for Completing an MS I in Biology

Year 1

- Meet with Major Advisor regularly.
- Fill out an [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) with your advisor and file it with the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- Set up Committee on Studies. Submit a [Committee on Studies Form](#) naming your committee members.
- Meet with Committee on Studies. This Committee must meet with the student at least once a year. A [Committee on Studies Report](#) must be submitted after each meeting.
- Complete courses each semester. Students with an assistantship must complete a minimum of 6 credits per semester; 12 is routine.
- Fulfill the graduate course curriculum requirement. Submit a [Graduate Core Curriculum Form](#).
- Submit the Program of Studies after completing 18 hours of graduate course work. Submit the [Program of Studies Form](#).
- Complete or schedule a Scientific Presentation. This requirement should be completed by the end of the 3rd semester. Submit [Scientific Presentation Form](#) once presentation has been completed.
- Begin Research and Complete the Research Proposal. Submit [Research Proposal Approval Form](#) with approved research proposal attached.
- Create a Google Scholar profile.

Year 2

- At the start of Year 2, revisit the IDP with your advisor and file a revised version with the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- Finish conducting research.
- Write thesis.
- Finish coursework as necessary. Register for at least 1 credit hour each semester through graduation. Typically, the 6 required Thesis hours (599) are completed in Spring of year 2.
- Submit the Intent to Graduate Form to the Biology Graduate Program office in the semester prior to defending. Submit the [Intent to Graduate Form](#).
- Submit the [Announcement of Exam Form](#) two-weeks prior to the scheduled defense and exam.
- Defend thesis and take and pass Final Exam for Thesis.
- Submit thesis by the published deadline. Complete the [Certification of Final Form](#), the [Information Cover Sheet](#), and (if applicable) the [Embargo Request Form](#).
- The department *requires* all their graduating students to complete an exit survey.

MS II Program

To meet the formal requirements of the MS II Program, one must:

- 1) Complete the New Graduate Student Seminar (BIOL 500). Attendance is mandatory. Note that this course may not be included on the Program of Studies;
- 2) Complete Scientific Integrity (BIOL 502) or equivalent. This course provides a certificate valid for 4 years, after which period it must be renewed;
- 3) Complete two semesters of Department of Biology Seminar (BIOL 530);
- 4) Successfully complete the course work requirements with a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0;
- 5) Successfully complete the graduate [core curriculum](#) requirement;
- 6) Complete a Graduate Studies (GS) [Program of Studies](#) electronic form no later than the semester *prior* to graduation; and
- 7) Pass the Master's Examination.

The following provisions must also be observed:

- 1) After the Program of Studies has been filed, changes including changes between Plans I and II, will require a revised Program of Studies form.
- 2) All course work used to fulfill the degree requirements, including any non-degree or transfer work, must be assigned a grade of a *B or better* and must be completed within a *seven-year period* before the semester of graduation.
- 3) All degree requirements must be completed within seven years of the student's start date.
- 4) Transfer of graduate credit to a Program of Studies is never automatic. With the approval of the student's graduate unit, a maximum of 50% of the course work on a Program of Studies may consist of transfer credit hours, assuming they meet the restrictions specified in the UNM Catalog. The course work must have been taken at an accredited institution and must be judged by both the graduate unit and the Dean of Graduate Studies to be appropriate to the student's degree.

MS Plan II Course Work Requirements

The MS II requires 30 credit hours. These credits are subject to the following restrictions:

- 1) BIOL 500 cannot be included.
- 2) If a minor is declared, a minimum of 18 credit hours must be in the major field.
- 3) A minimum of 12 credit hours must be taken at the 500 level.
- 4) Three UNM Biology courses (at the 400* or 500 level) must be taken to fulfill the Core Curriculum requirement; note that BIOL 502, 500, 530, 551, 599, and 651 do not count towards this requirement. This requirement should typically be completed during the first year of the program.
- 5) A maximum of 12 credit hours of Problems (BIOL 551) and a maximum of eight (8) credit hours of Field Biology (BIOL 651) may be counted.

- 6) Only 12 credit hours may be taken with a single professor.
- 7) A maximum of nine credits are allowed from non-degree coursework taken at UNM prior to entering the Biology MS program; these credits must have been taken at the graduate level.
- 8) To meet residency requirements, at least 50% of required course work must be completed at UNM after admission to the graduate program.
- 9) Students must earn a B or better in the courses to be included in the degree requirement. While discouraged, students may include up to 2 courses (or 6 credits) in which a “C” or “C+” was earned.

Core Curriculum

Master’s students are expected to complete the graduate core curriculum course requirement within their first year in the program: three UNM Biology Department courses at the 400* or 500 level (excluding 402/502, 500, 530, 551, 599, or 651). At least two courses must be at the 500 level, and only one may be at the 400* level (i.e., all must be graduate level courses). Note: to verify if a 300- or 400-level course can be applied as graduate level credit, you can reference the course description in the catalog at catalog.unm.edu. The three courses must be offered by three different faculty members (for MS I students; see below for MS II differences).

This requirement will be tracked by a Graduate Curriculum Form signed by the student’s Committee on Studies members listing the courses taken, and signed by the Major Advisor when the courses are completed.

Program of Studies

A Program of Studies (POS) for the Master’s Degree must be filed with the Graduate Program Coordinator after you have completed 18 hours of graduate work but *no later than the last day of classes of the semester before you expect to graduate*. The Core Curriculum requirement must be completed before the POS is filed. The POS is a listing of the 30 credit hours of courses to be counted towards the degree requirement. It is important to include only the courses that will be used in obtaining your degree.

The electronic POS form may be accessed at gradforms.unm.edu. The Program of Studies should be planned in consultation with your Major Advisor and/or Committee on Studies.

Intent to Graduate

You need to officially inform the Biology Department of your intention to graduate by completing the departmental [Intent to Graduate form](#). Submit the Intent to Graduate form to the Biology Grad Program Coordinator (with your advisor’s signature) by the second Friday in July for Fall semester, second Friday in November for Spring semester, or second Friday in April for Summer semester. This form will confirm your intent to complete the degree requirements by the posted deadlines. Note: While it is not preferred, students may change their intent should they find it necessary. While UNM awards degrees three times during the year, the Biology Department Commencement is held only in May; everyone who completed their degree requirements during the year is invited to participate.

Master's Examination

At the end of a student's program, they undergo the Master's Examination. This event may be initiated only after the Program of Studies has been approved by Graduate Studies. The Master's Examination is conducted by the COS. The exam typically covers the entire range of coursework that the student has taken during their program and may or may not also include an oral summary of a pre-selected research paper agreed upon by the COS and student. The exam may be taken in a variety of formats, including a written exam, an oral exam, or a combination of both. The content and structure of the exam may vary depending on the committee, but typically, it evaluates the student's knowledge and understanding of the major concepts and theories covered in their coursework and of the selected research paper. It is recommended that you discuss the plan with each committee member at least six weeks before the planned exam date.

At least two weeks prior to the date of the Master's Examination, the student must complete the Announcement of Examination (AOE) of the date, time, and place of the examination, and committee members. Graduate Studies guidelines and a link to the Announcement of Examination is located at <http://gradforms.unm.edu/>. To meet the graduation semester deadline, the examination announcement must be submitted by November 1 (Fall), April 1 (Spring), or July 1 (Summer). Once this request is approved by Graduate Studies, a link will be forwarded to the Committee on Studies Chair.

The results of the examination are reported independently by your committee chair and committee members to Graduate Studies online by November 15 (Fall), April 15 (Spring), or July 15 (Summer) or within two weeks of the exam, whichever comes first. Possible results are *Pass*, *Conditional Pass*, and *Fail*.

Conditional Pass. The COS may assign *Conditional Pass* in which additional actions are assigned. Once the student has completed the action(s), the Committee Chair must write a memo (addressed to Graduate Studies) stating that the action(s) have been completed and to change the exam result from *Conditional Pass* to *Pass*. This memo is given to the Graduate Program Coordinator who will forward it to Graduate Studies. If the student does not complete the action(s) by the semester graduation deadline, the student's graduation will be delayed. Keep in mind the 90-day time limit as outlined below. To avoid confusion or the concern of 'moving goalposts', a student who receives a *Conditional Pass* should expect a detailed list of assigned actions and a fair timeline that is agreed upon by the COS and student at the completion of the exam. The COS Chair must write a memo to Graduate Studies stating that the student has fulfilled the conditions and to change the result to *Pass*.

Fail. If a candidate fails the examination, the COS may recommend a second examination; a six-month interval should elapse before a second examination is given. A candidate may take this examination only twice. Failure to pass the second time will result in the student's termination from the Biology graduate program.

Degree Term Limits

Master's Degree Seven-year Limit. Biology Master's students are typically expected to complete their degree within two years. Per Graduate Studies, a Master's student *must* complete their degree within seven (7) years of the first class applied to the degree. Generally, candidates who have interrupted their graduate education for professional work in their field may be granted an extension of the time limit, but a petition must be filed (see Leave of Absence). All requests for an extension of the limit for this or other reasons must be originated by the student, supported by the Committee on Studies, given to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, supported by the department, and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Course Maximum Time Limit

In general, a course has a shelf life of 10 years. A student may use courses taken at another institution to fulfill UNM Biology degree requirements, providing their Committee on Studies approves and the course is less than 10 years old at the time of graduation. After the committee has approved a non-UNM graduate level course, the student will include the course(s) on their Application for Candidacy.

Suggested Schedule and Checklist for Completing an MS II in Biology

Year 1

- Meet with Major Advisor regularly.
- Fill out an [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#) with your advisor and file it with the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- Set up Committee on Studies. Submit a [Committee on Studies Form](#) naming your committee members.
- Meet with Committee on Studies. This Committee must meet with the student at least once a year. A [Committee on Studies Report](#) must be submitted after each meeting.
- Complete courses each semester. Students with an assistantship must complete a minimum of 6 credits per semester; 12 is routine.
- Fulfill the graduate course curriculum requirement. Submit a [Graduate Core Curriculum Form](#).
- Submit the Program of Studies after completing 12 hours of graduate course work. Submit the [Program of Studies Form](#).

Year 2

- At the start of Year 2, revisit the IDP with your advisor and file a revised version with the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- Finish coursework as necessary. Register for at least 1 credit hour each semester through graduation.
- Submit the Intent to Graduate Form to the Biology Graduate Program office in the semester prior to defending. (Submit the [Intent to Graduate Form](#).)
- Submit the [Announcement of Exam Form](#) two-weeks prior to the scheduled Master's Examination.
- Take and pass Master's Examination.
- The department *requires* all their graduating students to complete an exit survey.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD) DEGREE IN BIOLOGY

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all forms are completed and submitted on schedule, with the appropriate signatures, to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator. Although not required, it is recommended that the student keep a copy of each form for their records.

The Doctorate is a degree representing broad scholarly achievement, a deep understanding of a field of study, and expertise in conceiving, conducting and reporting independent research. As such, its attainment is not simply a matter of “meeting requirements.” The requirements described below should be viewed only as a minimal formal context in which you are expected to grow in the professional stature represented by the doctoral degree.

To meet the formal requirements for the PhD degree, you must:

- 1) Attend the New Graduate Student Seminar (Orientation; BIOL 500). Attendance is mandatory;
- 2) Complete Scientific Integrity (BIOL 502) or equivalent. This course provides a certificate valid for 4 years, after which period it must be renewed;
- 3) Complete five semesters of Department of Biology Seminar (BIOL 530);
- 4) Complete the curriculum requirements, including the graduate [Core Curriculum Requirement Form](#);
- 5) Successfully complete the [PhD Teaching Requirement Form](#);
- 6) Submit a research proposal and [Research Proposal Approval Form](#);
- 7) Apply for and be admitted to [doctoral candidacy](#);
- 8) Successfully complete at least two Scientific Presentations, at least one of which is in the Biology Brown Bag series (See Scientific Presentations, above);
- 9) Pass the Doctoral Final Examination: Present and successfully [defend a dissertation](#) acceptable to the department and the Dean of Graduate Studies within five (5) years of passing the PhD comprehensive examination.

Curriculum Requirements

- 1) A minimum of **48 hours of total graduate credit course work plus an additional 18 credit hours of BIOL 699 (dissertation) must be completed.** The requirements for the 48 graduate credit course work are described in detail below.
- 2) Graduate Core Curriculum: Four UNM Biology Department courses of 400* or 500 level (excluding 402/502, 500, 530, 551, 599, 651, or 699) with at least three of the four courses at the 500 level, as discussed and agreed upon by your Major Advisor and Committee on Studies (COS) members. Each course must be taken from a different graduate faculty member. Students should consult with their major advisor and COS for appropriate courses. These courses should be completed in the first four semesters and reported on the Graduate Core Curriculum form. Students with interests in ecology and evolution are strongly encouraged to take Biology courses 516 and 517.
- 3) At least **24 hours of graduate credit course work (300*, 400* or 500-level) must be completed at UNM**, of which at least 18 hours of graduate credit course work must be completed after admission to the doctoral program.

- 4) Of the required 48 hours of coursework, **no more than 50% may be taken with a single faculty member.** Course work that has been completed for the Master's degree is included in this limit.
- 5) After advancing to candidacy, a doctoral student **must enroll continuously in a minimum of three (3) dissertation hours (699) each semester until the dissertation is successfully submitted to Graduate Studies.** This requirement does not apply to the summer semester, unless defending in the Summer.
- 6) Of the 48 credit hours, a maximum of nine are allowed from non-degree coursework taken at UNM prior to entering the Biology PhD program.

Curriculum notes to be aware of:

- Students should note that they will likely have taken more than the required 48 credit hours of course work.
- Course selection must be made with the approval of the student's Advisor and Committee on Studies once assembled.
- Students must earn a B or better in the courses to be included in the degree requirement. While discouraged and must have approval from the committee, students may include up to 2 courses (or 6 credits) in which a "C" or "C+" was earned or a "CR" grade change was selected.

PhD Teaching Requirement

All Biology doctoral students must have classroom teaching experience before the conclusion of their degree. Completion of this requirement is documented via the [PhD Teaching Requirement Form](#). The teaching requirement must be fulfilled no later than the semester proceeding the semester in which the Final Examination is scheduled. PhD candidates may complete this requirement two ways:

Guest teaching in a lecture

Students must teach *a minimum of six (6) lecture hours* delivered in a formal course offered by the Biology Department. The student, in collaboration with the instructor of record, will select the appropriate block of lectures to satisfy this requirement. In addition to delivering the six (6) lecture hours, the student should be deeply involved in the course. This should include working with the instructor of the course to design the lectures in a way that fits smoothly into the overall course plan, attending other lectures in the course to obtain a feeling for the style of the course and the interests and level of training of the students, preparing the lecture independently, and participating in the examination of students regarding the material presented in these lectures. Normally, the course selected to fulfill this requirement should be in the student's own disciplinary area. Undergraduate or graduate courses offered during the regular academic year or courses team-taught with a faculty member or with another graduate student under faculty direction during a Summer Session are appropriate, so long as they are formal courses involving regularly scheduled lectures.

Teaching Assistantship for a semester

Students must have a T.A. assignment for a lecture or laboratory course for at least one (1) semester that includes teaching *a minimum of six (6) lecture hours*. The signature of the Instructor of Record on the form indicates that the student has lectured during the course. Note that certain TAs that involve intensive grading (or other duties) but do not include a lecturing component do not fulfill the PhD teaching requirement.

Doctoral Comprehensive Examination

After preparing a dissertation proposal (see “Research Proposal,” above), the doctoral student must pass both the written and oral components of the comprehensive examination in the major field of study. The structure of the written portion of the exam is determined by the student’s COS; early and frequent discussion with these members is encouraged so that the student knows what to expect. The examination is not limited to the areas of the student’s course work and dissertation research but will test their grasp of the field. Students must be in good academic standing to take the examination. The comprehensive examination should be taken in the fourth or fifth semester of the student’s academic career, and is taken prior to submitting the Application for Candidacy.

At least two weeks prior to the planned examinations, the student must submit the **Announcement of Examination** (accessed at <http://gradforms.unm.edu>) for review by Graduate Studies and approval by the Dean. As part of filling out this form, the student will select the name of each committee member from a drop-down menu. If the names of one of your COS members does not appear in the drop-down menu, it indicates that they need approval from Graduate Studies, which is often the case for non-UNM faculty. Submit a current CV to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator requesting that the member be approved to serve on your COS. It may be necessary to discuss the COS with the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator to ensure compliance with Graduate Studies policy (see above information on COS structure). Once approved by Graduate Studies, the COS chair will receive an email with a link to the report of exam form shortly before the exam. After the exam, the COS will discuss and enter the results electronically.

Graduate Studies outlines the post-exam process as follows: After the comprehensive exam, the COS discusses the student’s performance confidentially, which is then communicated to the student. The COS Chair then records the consensus decision which will trigger an email linking to the form for each committee member to agree or disagree with the consensus decision. The COS Chair will record the vote for any non-UNM committee members. Further, each committee member notes whether the student should receive distinction. Graduate Studies will email the student with the results of the exam.

After the exam, the student will receive one of the following rankings: *Distinction*, *Pass*, *Conditional Pass*, or *Fail*. *Pass* and *Conditional Pass* are the two most frequently used evaluations.

- *Distinction* is awarded when the student’s knowledge and exam results exceed expectations.
- *Pass* is given when the student’s knowledge and exam results meet expectations.
- *Conditional Pass* is given when the student missed minor key points/questions during the exam such that the student needs additional knowledge before proceeding with their dissertation. The conditions imposed by the COS (e.g., writing a research paper, taking a class, etc.) must be completed by the student by the end of the following semester. Therefore, if the student takes their exam in the Fall, they must complete the requirements by the end of the Spring semester. To avoid confusion or the concern of ‘moving goalposts’, a student who receives a *Conditional Pass* should expect a detailed list of assigned actions and a fair timeline that is agreed upon by the COS and student at the completion of the exam. The COS Chair must write a memo to Graduate Studies stating that the student has fulfilled the conditions and to change the result to *Pass*.
- *Failure* is awarded when the student lacks the knowledge required to continue with their dissertation. If a student fails the examination, the COS may recommend termination from the graduate program or re-examination. In the latter case, the re-examination must be administered within one year from the date of the first exam. Failure to pass the second time will result in the student’s termination from the graduate program.

PhD Dissertation Committee

Once a student passes their comprehensive exam, they will need to assemble a PhD Dissertation Committee. Three members must hold tenure-track faculty positions. Of these three, two must hold tenure-track positions at The University of New Mexico. The Chair and a second member must be from the Biology Department. One committee member must be a tenure-track member of the UNM Graduate Faculty outside the Biology Department or from an associated research discipline at another institution. The external/outside member must be qualified to review the dissertation. Dissertation committee members usually comprise the Committee on Studies members and either UNM faculty outside Biology or from another institution. The external committee member must be approved by Graduate Studies and should be chosen on the basis of their competence in the research area of the dissertation and should be invited to serve in this capacity at least six (6) months prior to the completion of the dissertation. If planned far enough in advance, the external member can be scheduled for a departmental seminar to coincide with the student's defense, at which point funds may be available to cover travel expenses. A committee member may attend the presentation and committee meeting remotely. Per Graduate Studies policy, the majority of the committee must be present in person at the time of the exam. A complete copy of the dissertation must be submitted to each member of your Dissertation Committee at least two (2) weeks before the final examination.

Advancing to Candidacy

For the purposes of meeting application requirements for outside fellowships, the Biology Department considers you to have advanced to candidacy as soon as you pass the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination. However, to formally advance to candidacy per Graduate Studies, you must submit an **Application for Candidacy form**. The following requirements must be successfully met before this form can be filed:

- 1) Approved Graduate Core Curriculum form;
- 2) Research Proposal submitted and Approval of Research Proposal form approved
- 3) Passing of the Comprehensive Examination;
- 4) Approved Appointment of Dissertation Committee form.

The Application for Candidacy form is used much like the Program of Studies to provide a clear list of classes that meet the requirement of the degree. This form is available on the Graduate Studies website (<http://gradforms.unm.edu>).

After advancing to candidacy, the program for the doctorate includes a minimum of 18 hours of Dissertation (BIOL 699) credit. The student should consult with their Major Advisor concerning the time of the initial enrollment and the number of BIOL 699 hours to be carried each semester, 12 hours being the maximum (except for summer, in which nine (9) is the maximum). BIOL 699 can only be started the semester after advancing to candidacy.

Once a student starts taking Dissertation (BIOL 699) hours, they must continue to register for 699 during each regular semester (exclusive of summers, unless they plan to graduate during that summer semester) until the dissertation is approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. All students registering in Dissertation (699) must enroll for at least three (3) hours per semester. The Dean of Graduate Studies will not accept a dissertation from a student who is not enrolled in 699 for the current semester.

PhD Dissertation guidelines

All doctoral students are required to prepare and submit a dissertation as part of the fulfillment of the degree requirements. The dissertation should demonstrate their ability to conduct sound, publishable research and must be approved by the Dissertation Committee. There are two acceptable, alternative formats for the dissertation: the traditional and the manuscript-based. The latter is sometimes referred to in the department as a “hybrid” dissertation. Students may opt to use either style; however, approval of which style is used will be obtained from the committee chair and the members of the dissertation committee prior to preparing the thesis or dissertation.

For either style, the student must adhere to the rules and regulations established by Graduate Studies regarding format (Front matter, text, reference matter, paper dimensions, margins, etc.; see <http://grad.unm.edu/degree-completion/index.html>). You should familiarize yourself with these expectations in advance of submission to prevent missing a deadline and undue stress.

The University of New Mexico requires all theses and dissertations to be submitted electronically for approval by Graduate Studies and archiving at UNM Digital Repository and Proquest-UMI repository. Students are strongly encouraged to attend a Graduate Studies Thesis/Dissertation workshop offered throughout the academic year.

Traditional Dissertation

The traditional dissertation is a single manuscript, authored solely by the student, presenting original research performed by the student. The text section is typically subdivided into: Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion, References, and (optionally) Appendices.

Manuscript-based Dissertation

A manuscript-based dissertation is a collection of manuscripts or articles formatted for publication and presented as separate chapters of a single thesis or dissertation. This style must satisfy the following guidelines as agreed by the [Biology Department and UNM in 2004](#):

- 1) The articles or manuscripts must report original research that is primarily the student's or to which the student contributed significantly. The student must do at least 51% of the work of each chapter and therefore be the first author on all chapters. The inclusion of a particular manuscript in the dissertation will be with the approval of the student's advisor and the members of the examination committee;
- 2) The manuscripts must be articles published in a peer-reviewed national or international journal and/or manuscripts prepared for publication in a peer-reviewed national or international journal. This guideline allows for a single dissertation to consist of a mixture of published and unpublished material;
- 3) The chapters may be in the format style for the journal for which they are intended. However, the student's advisor and the members of the examination committee have the option to require re-formatting of chapters to a single uniform style;
- 4) The names of all co-authors on multi-authored manuscripts will be included. If one or more of the manuscripts are already published at the time the dissertation is submitted, the article's citation will be provided at the beginning of each chapter;

- 5) Students should consult Graduate Studies regulations regarding issues related to copyright. Students are responsible for obtaining permission to use a published, copyrighted manuscript in their dissertation from the journal in which the paper is published. Students are advised to consult the policies of the journal regarding release of copyright for use in dissertations. Many journals openly state in their policies and guides to authors that published manuscripts may be used for dissertations without obtaining additional permission;
- 6) The completed dissertation will contain:
 - (a) an abstract that collectively summarizes the individual manuscripts or chapters;
 - (b) a general introduction that lists the individual manuscripts and describes how each chapter or manuscript relate to a general theme of the dissertation is recommended. The student should seek the advice of their faculty mentor and members of their dissertation defense committee on the content of the introduction;
 - (c) the articles or manuscripts as separate chapters;
 - (d) a conclusion or summary that provides an overview of the collective findings reported in the separate chapters is recommended at the discretion of the committee;
 - (e) an optional appendix containing any additional material that will not be submitted for publication may be included or a literature review section, as appropriate.

Dissertation Electronic Embargo Restriction

Dissertations are submitted to Graduate Studies by uploading to the UNM Digital Repository. All theses are available in an open access source and can be searched online. To delay public access, a student may request an embargo or access restriction on their document. A student must complete the [Embargo Restriction Request Form](#) at the link above and follow the instructions and deadlines. This request should be submitted at the same time the Announcement of Exam is completed. For more information on this policy here: <https://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/etd-embargo.html>.

Note: Students must pay a fee at the UNM Cashier's Office located in the Business Center on the Corner of Lomas and University. The fee is \$40, as of 2024.

Intent to Graduate

You need to officially inform the Biology Department of your intention to graduate by completing the departmental [Intent to Graduate form](#). Submit the Intent to Graduate form to the Biology Grad Program Coordinator (with your advisor's signature) by the second Friday in July for Fall semester, second Friday in November for Spring semester, or second Friday in April for Summer semester. This form will confirm your intent to complete the degree requirements by the posted deadlines. Note: While it is not preferred, students may change their intent should they find it necessary. While UNM awards degrees three times during the year, the Biology Department Commencement is held only in May; everyone who completed their degree requirements during the year is invited to participate.

Doctoral Final Examination (Defense)

At the end of a student's program, they undergo the Doctoral Final Examination (Defense) which consists of a public and a private part. The Defense may be initiated only after the Application for Candidacy has been approved by Graduate Studies. Additionally, the student must be in good standing and enrolled in at

least 3 credits of BIOL 699. The public part of the defense is a formal, 50-minute oral presentation on the contents of the Dissertation, followed by questions and discussion, and open to the general public.

Afterwards, the candidate and the Dissertation Committee will meet privately to continue the examination. This portion of the Defense deals primarily with the dissertation and its relationship to the candidate's major field; it is not a general comprehensive exam.

A complete copy of the thesis must be provided to each member of the Dissertation Committee at least two weeks before the date of the Thesis Exam, but a committee member may request additional lead time (>2 weeks). It is recommended that you discuss the plan with each committee member at least six weeks before the planned exam date.

At least two weeks prior to the date of the Doctoral Examination, the student must complete the Announcement of Examination (AOE) of the date, time and place of the examination, the title of the Dissertation and committee members. The Graduate Studies guidelines and link regarding the Announcement of Examination is located at <http://gradforms.unm.edu/>. To meet the graduation semester deadline, the AOE must be submitted by November 1 (Fall), April 1 (Spring), or July 1 (Summer). Once this request is approved by Graduate Studies, a link will be forwarded to the Dissertation Committee Chair. Additionally, Biology students must announce their defense by emailing the information to the BGSA list as well as the UNMBIO listserv at least one (1) week in advance of the presentation.

The Dissertation Committee Chair will govern the private portion of the exam. At the conclusion of the examination, the members of the Dissertation Committee shall confer, vote, and submit the committee recommendations electronically. The Committee may: (1) recommend that the dissertation be approved without change; (2) recommend that the dissertation be approved subject only to minor editorial corrections, or (3) require that the dissertation be revised before approval. In the cases of (1) and (2), no further meeting of the Committee will be needed, although in the case of (2), the committee chair will be responsible for seeing that the corrections are made before the dissertation is uploaded for final approval and processing. In the case of (3), the full Committee will decide that their stipulations have been met. The results of the examination will be submitted on the Report of Examination and submitted online for the Biology Department Chair approval before moving forward to Graduate Studies for their final processing and approval. A student may meet with the Graduate Studies staff member responsible for reviewing the document to ensure compliance.

The results of the examination are reported by your committee chair and members to Graduate Studies via an online web link by November 15 (Fall), April 15 (Spring), or July 15 (Summer) or within two weeks of the exam, whichever comes first. Possible results are *Pass*, *Conditional Pass*, and *Fail*.

Conditional Pass. The Dissertation Committee may assign *Conditional Pass* in which additional revisions are assigned. These actions may include minor or major revisions. Once the student has completed the action(s), the Committee Chair must write a memo (addressed to Graduate Studies) stating that the action(s) have been completed and to change the exam result from *Conditional Pass* to *Pass*. This memo is given to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator who will forward it to Graduate Studies. If the student does not complete the action(s) by the semester graduation deadline, the student's graduation will be delayed. Keep in mind the 90-day time limit as outlined below.

Fail. If a candidate fails the examination, the Dissertation Committee may recommend a second Doctoral Examination; a six-month interval should elapse before a second examination is given. A candidate may take this examination only twice. Failure to pass the second time will result in the student's termination from the Biology graduate program.

Submission of Dissertation

A student's dissertation, in final form and approved by the Dissertation Committee, shall be submitted electronically for the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies by 5:00pm November 15, April 15, or July 15 for Fall, Spring or Summer graduation, respectively. Along with your dissertation, you also must submit the [Certification of Final Form](#), approved by your committee chair. Graduate Studies offers workshops during the semester to explain and demonstrate how to complete the above task. This workshop is highly recommended as it is helpful when you are ready to submit your final documents and the appropriate paperwork.

The 90-Day Rule

A PhD student must submit their dissertation to Graduate Studies within ninety (90) days of passing final examination for the dissertation, or by the graduation deadline—whichever comes first. If the dissertation is not submitted within the allotted period, the student *must* schedule and complete a second final examination for the dissertation. In all cases the results of the defense must be submitted electronically to Graduate Studies no later than two weeks after the announced date of the thesis defense.

Courtesy Policy

University regulations require that PhD students are enrolled and complete a minimum of three (3) hours of BIOL 699: Dissertation in the term they complete the degree requirements. Should the student miss the graduation deadline (July 15 for summer graduation, November 15 for fall graduation, April 15 for spring graduation), but complete all degree requirements on or before the last day of that term, the student is not required to register for the next (graduation) term. The student must inform the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator that they will be taking advantage of this “courtesy policy”. The Coordinator will notify Graduate Studies.

Degree Term Limits

PhD Degree Five-year Limit Post-Comprehensive Exam. The UNM Catalog states that “Doctoral candidates have five (5) calendar years from the semester in which they pass their doctoral comprehensive examination to complete the degree requirements. The final requirement is generally the acceptance of the student's dissertation by the Dean of Graduate Studies.” The Biology Dissertation Committee and the Department Chair must first approve the dissertation before it may be forwarded to Graduate Studies. Generally, candidates who have interrupted their graduate education for professional work in their field may be granted an extension of the time limit, but a petition must be filed (see Leave of Absence). All requests for an extension of the limit for this or other reasons must be originated by the student, supported by the Dissertation Committee, given to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, supported by the department, and approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Course Maximum Time Limit

In general, a course has a shelf life of 10 years. A student may use courses taken at another institution to fulfill UNM Biology degree requirements, providing their Dissertation Committee approves and the course is less than 10 years old at the time of graduation. After the committee has approved a non-UNM graduate level course, the student will include the course(s) on their Application for Candidacy.

Suggested Schedule and Checklist for Completing a PhD in Biology

Year 1

- Arrange for Major Advisor and set up Committee on Studies (COS). This Committee **MUST** meet with the student *AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR* until the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination is completed. (**Committee on Studies Form**)
- Begin taking required courses in your area of specialization.
- Choose a dissertation project and gather preliminary data.
- Create a Google Scholar profile

Years 2–3:

- Fulfill the graduate core curriculum course requirement. (**Graduate Core Curriculum Form**)
- Each year, complete a **Committee on Studies Report** form. This form must be signed by both the student and their major professor reporting the activities of the student during the year.
- Fulfill Teaching Requirement. (**Teaching Requirement Form**)
- Submit Research Proposal. (**Research Proposal Approval Form**)
- Complete the online **Announcement of Exam** form at least two weeks (three is better) in advance of your Doctoral Comprehensive Examination
- Successfully complete the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination, normally by the end of the 5th semester. (The committee will complete a **Report of Exam Form**)
- Set up Dissertation Committee. (**Appointment of Dissertation Committee Form**)
- Make formal Application for Candidacy with the department and Graduate Studies. The online **Application for Candidacy Form** must list all course work to be counted toward the degree.

Years 3–5:

- Finish research and write dissertation.
- Notify the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator of Intent to Graduate. Complete the [Intent to Graduate Form](#), obtained from and returned to the Coordinator's office. Deadlines are: for Spring graduation, the last week in November; for Summer graduation, the last week in April; for Fall graduation, the second week in July.
- Review the [Doctoral Manuscript Submission Procedures](#) located on the Graduate Studies web page.
- Review the [Manuscript Preparation and Submission Quick Reference Checklist](#) located on the Graduate Studies web page.
- Near the last semester, consider completing an [ETD Embargo Restriction](#) form.
- Complete the online **Announcement of Exam** form at least two weeks (three is better) in advance of your Dissertation Defense
- Successfully defend the Dissertation.
- Submit the Dissertation to Graduate Studies *no later than 90 days after successful completion of the defense*, or no later than **November 15 (Fall), April 15 (Spring), or July 15 (Summer)**, whichever comes first. Per Graduate Studies, failure to meet this deadline will result in the student having to re-do the Dissertation Defense.
- Complete the tasks as outlined on the Degree Completion tab on the Graduate Studies website

- Before the semester deadline, PhD students are required to complete a **Survey of Earned Doctorates** (<https://sed-ncses.org/GradDateRouter.aspx>). Note: students will not be granted their degree without completing this survey.
- The department *requires* all their graduating students to complete an exit survey.

GENERAL DEPARTMENTAL GUIDELINES & POLICIES

Google Scholar Profile

Each student is required to register for a Google Scholar profile at <https://scholar.google.com/> to share articles, preprints, and meeting abstracts, to share research area interests and find collaborators. Once an account is created, please email the address to the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator: biograd@unm.edu.

Enrollment Status Definition

According to the UNM Catalog, during the academic year (fall and spring) graduate students enrolled in nine (9) or more credits without an assistantship or a minimum of six (6) credits with an assistantship contract are full-time; students registered for 5–8 without an assistantship are half-time and students four (4) or less are considered less than half-time. This is important for those who must meet a specific enrollment status to be eligible for a scholarship, grant, fellowship, or would like to defer their student loans.

Graduate Student Training

In addition to coursework, the University wants to ensure we are both in compliance with grant agencies and protecting campus safety, therefore, graduate students are required to complete the following training. There are also many sources for attending professional training and workshops around campus. Unless stated otherwise, online training courses will be assigned to you via UNM [Learning Central](#).

Required Training:

The Gray Area

This Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training is offered through the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center. As a Title IX University, we are responsible to protect our community from discrimination based on sex. All students must attend a session once during their tenure at UNM. Biology offers a session as part of the week-long new student orientation. For more information please visit this webpage: <https://loborespect.unm.edu/>

Scientific Integrity (BIOL 502.025)

The Scientific Integrity course discusses research integrity & ethics. This training is required by funding agencies and must be taken by all graduate students conducting research. We offer this as part of the new student orientation. After completing students will receive a certificate good for 4 years. Students renewing their certificates may take this training again or may select from the available PAW (Professional & Academic Workshop) webpage under the Integrity & Ethics Workshops. <http://grad.unm.edu/resources/paw.html>

FERPA (Federal Education Right to Privacy Act) (EOD 790)

University staff, faculty, TAs and GAs are expected to review, understand and follow this federal regulation that protects student privacy. Each student holding a teaching or graduate assistantship contract is required to complete FERPA training annually. Find the training at UNMs Learning Central at <https://learningcentral.health.unm.edu/learning/user/login.jsp>.

Basic Annual Safety Training (SRS 0117)

The BAST is a review of basic safety training and must be completed annually by Dec 1st each year by each assistantship recipient and all UNM employees. This is an online training. Sign into UNMs Learning Central at <https://learningcentral.health.unm.edu/learning/user/login.jsp>.

Active Shooter on Campus: Run, Hide, Fight (EOD 481)

This required training is designed to help everyone understand what actions to take in case of an active shooter. Similarly to a fire drill, being prepared is key to survival. This online workshop helps someone be an active participant by knowing when to report suspicious activity and how to recognize behavior patterns which may lead to possible trouble. This training is available at Learning Central <https://learningcentral.health.unm.edu/learning/user/login.jsp>.

Intersections: Preventing Discrimination and Harassment (EOD 1017)

As members of the UNM community, students must understand that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated. This annual training offers scenarios and practices which helps all campus members be aware of discrimination and how to help end it.

Optional Training sources

Graduate Teaching Academy: <http://grad.unm.edu/resources/gta.html>

Learning Central: <https://learningcentral.unm.edu>

PAW (Professional & Academic Workshops): <http://grad.unm.edu/resources/paw.html>

AIRE (Academic Integrity & Research Ethics): <http://grad.unm.edu/aire/workshops/home.html>

Leave of Absence

Students may find themselves in circumstances that require them to withdraw temporarily from their graduate program. Students should discuss these circumstances first with their Committee chair. The student should then request, in a carefully justified letter to the departmental chairperson, a leave of absence. This request must be handed into the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator for appropriate distribution. The student's written request, together with a memo of support from both their Committee chair and the department chairperson, is forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who will make the final decision. See [*Guidelines to Petition to the Dean of Graduate Studies*](#) for further information. Per UNM policy, a leave of absence is generally limited to a maximum of one calendar year. The time spent in a leave of absence will not count against a student's eligibility for departmental support or against the time to degree limit.

If a formal leave of absence is not requested and/or approved, a student who does not enroll for classes for three consecutive semesters (including summer sessions) will be dropped from current student status at the University of New Mexico. Once the three semesters have passed, *a student who wishes to return must reapply for admission to UNM and to the Biology Department*. If a student is re-admitted in such a situation, the time during which the student was not enrolled *will count* against the time limit for degree completion.

Students should not take a leave of absence to undertake research work related to their degree. For example, it is not permissible to take a leave of absence to work on a research grant related in any way to your degree program. Students who have started enrollment in BIOL 599 (Master's Thesis) or BIOL 699 (Dissertation) hours *must* maintain continuous enrollment in this course to remain in good standing.

In cases where the leave of absence becomes prolonged, and there is little hope of a student returning to finish their degree program, the department chairperson may, in consultation with the student's Committee on Studies or Dissertation Committee, terminate the student's relationship with the department.

Petition Procedures

Petition for waiver or modification of a policy should be made only under exceptional circumstances. The petition submitted by the student must have the approval of their Committee chair. Petitions should be submitted using the "[Petition to the Dean of Graduate Studies](#)" Form. Granting the petition is solely at the discretion of the Graduate Policy Committee (for Biology policies) or both the GPC and Graduate Studies (for University policies).

In the event of a disagreement between the Graduate Policy Committee and a student and/or the student's Advisor or Committee on Studies on the interpretation or implementation of departmental graduate policies, a decision may be appealed to the Chairperson of the Biology Department. The appeal should indicate the nature of the problem and the justification for the appeal. If either party involved wishes to dispute the Chairperson's decision, the disagreement may be appealed to a meeting of the Biology Department Faculty. Subsequent appeals must follow standard university procedures. University policy for the petition process is described in the Graduate Program section of the UNM Catalog.

Termination

A student may be terminated from graduate status for the following reasons:

- 1) receiving three grades of NC and/or F;
- 2) having a cumulative GPA of less than 3.0 for two consecutive, or three cumulative, enrollment periods (semesters); or
- 3) failure to meet program requirements.

If, in the opinion of the Biology Department, a student shows little promise of completing the degree program, the department will notify the Dean of Graduate Studies in writing that the student is suspended from further work in that program. This can occur for the following reasons:

- (a) twice failing the Master's Examination, PhD Comprehensive, or PhD Dissertation Defense.
(Note: the Committee on Studies may choose not to grant a second try after a failure, in which case termination would occur after a single failure.);
 - (b) failure to complete various degree requirements within a reasonable length of time (e.g., core course requirement, teaching requirement, or Dissertation); or
 - (c) in the event that a graduate student no longer has a Major Advisor,
- 4) Failure to enroll in three consecutive semesters (including summer).

Grievance Process

"The Graduate Student Academic Grievance (GSA) procedures have been established to address complaints, disputes or grievances of an academic nature initiated by students enrolled in graduate degree programs at the University of New Mexico. Although conflicts that on occasion occur between students

and faculty or administrators may be resolved through formal adjudication, a more informal and productive kind of resolution—one that is mutually agreed upon by the parties involved—is strongly encouraged.” Further details on the formal grievance process are available in the UNM Catalog and via the United Grad Workers of UNM [Grievance Form](#).

Within Biology, there are a number of people with whom students may discuss their situation including but not limited to: the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, members of the student’s Committee; [Biology Graduate Advocates](#), other faculty members, the Department Chair. Outside of Biology, individuals include the Graduate Studies Ombudsman, the Dean of Arts & Science, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Dean of Students. The student may also find it productive to discuss their situation with a counselor located in Student Health.

UNM Student Handbook

Students may use, in addition to the Biology Graduate Student Handbook, the UNM Student Handbook (<http://pathfinder.unm.edu/>) for further UNM policy explanations.

Financial Support

Students seeking advanced degrees may apply for or be awarded funding in the form of service awards (assistantships) and non-service awards (fellowships, scholarships). Additionally, students may apply for financial aid (Pell Grants, Loans, etc.), private funding (scholarships), or may find that employers will help cover costs while working on a degree (e.g., National Labs, etc.). Non-service awards are available only in limited numbers for specific announced times. See Appendix A for *Assistantship Eligibility, Expectations, Responsibilities, and Contractual Obligations*.

Assistantships

The Biology Department offers Teaching, Graduate, and Research assistantships. Most students are awarded a department assistantship at the time they are admitted for generally two (2) years for a MS or five (5) years for a PhD.

Each semester students are asked to complete a form to confirm their interest in (and preference for) an assistantship. This form is used to confirm their interest in an assistantship and, if teaching, their assignment preferences. At this time, satisfactory progress is checked to ensure the student is in good standing. Good standing means that the student is meeting minimum requirements, including a GPA of 3.0 or better, no missing grades, is making progress towards the degree, and is within the guaranteed financial support period (i.e., two years for MS; five years for PhD).

The following general principles and regulations apply to assistantships and fellowships of various kinds:

- Assistantships and fellowships are primarily grants-in-aid given in recognition of the academic promise of the student and to enable the student to earn a graduate degree. Financial need also may be considered.
- These awards are made only to students currently enrolled, or about to be enrolled, in graduate study. Students completing their degree or in the last semester of their degree may not be eligible for some awards.

Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants:

- Appointments are made for an academic semester or a summer session. Assistants are expected to be available for service one week before each semester of appointment through finals week. Assistants should be provided with a clear understanding of their major responsibilities as assistants;
- Normally, an assistant's academic program and assistantship responsibilities should constitute a full-time commitment. Assistantship appointments usually are made for appointment percentage of 0.50 (20 hours of service per week, on the average), or of 0.75, 0.25, or 0.17; in exceptional cases, other fractional appointments may be made. TAs and GAs generally receive the same stipend; differential stipends are received by pre-Master's and post-Master's assistants;
- Tuition will be waived of 6 to 12 hours per semester when the student meets specific degree requirements that an appointment equals 0.50. Unused hours of waived tuition will not be carried over into future semesters. Hours beyond the tuition waiver are eligible for the resident tuition rate, provided their appointment is at 0.25 or higher;
- Contract will only cover tuition for Biology-related credits that are needed for progress toward the comprehensive exam, thesis, dissertation, or required credit hours;
- Students must be enrolled in at least six (6) hours of graduate credits each semester (excluding summers) to be eligible for an Assistantship, and are encouraged to take up to 12 hours of graduate credit per semester;
- University regulations and applicable federal laws limit graduate student employment percentage (combination of all jobs) as follows:
 - *Domestic students:* no more than 0.75 appointment (30 hours per week) during academic year, no more than 1.0 appointment (40 hours per week) during summer session.
 - *International students:* no more than 0.50 appointment (20 hours per week) during academic years, no more than 1.0 appointment (40 hours per week) during summer session.
- Students who have or have had additional or other employment at UNM, present or past, must inform the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator. Past employment positions may not have been terminated, which causes problems for the current assignment. **The total combined appointment cannot exceed the limits listed above. Important: When a contract does not comply with this policy, it will be returned by GS, which may delay or change the contract and/or salary.**
- Summer appointments are optional and competitive. Students interested in a summer appointment must complete a request form. Assistants are not required to be enrolled during the summer session to hold an assistantship; however, those who do not enroll in at least three (3) credit hours will be subject to FICA tax withholding.
- A student must be enrolled in their last semester at UNM, regardless of whether they have a contract for that semester; and
- Assistants are eligible for student health insurance if their contract is at the minimum appointment of 0.25 for the Fall and Spring semesters. The Spring student health insurance includes coverage for the Summer. Students may purchase health insurance, within the acceptable time frame, for the Fall, Spring, or Summer if they are not awarded a contract during that semester.

Research Assistants:

- assist in research that is relevant to and ultimately may be used for the student's thesis, dissertation, or other requirements for the graduate degree;
- are normally employed for a period not less than one academic semester or summer period;

- may or may not receive a tuition waiver at the discretion of the Principal Investigator, but are eligible for the resident tuition rate for the term of the contract, provided their appointment is 0.25 or higher; and
- are usually employed for 20 hours per week. An RA who has advanced to candidacy may be employed more than half time with the approval of their Major Advisor. Furthermore, a research assistant may be employed up to a maximum of 40 hours per week during the period between the Fall and Spring semesters (Winter Intersession) and during the Summer Session.

Determining assignment

The department uses the *Assistantship Funding Info Request form* and *Faculty Assistantship Info form* to help determine assignments each Fall and Spring. Students indicate on this form the classes and areas they feel comfortable or are interested in teaching. *Note: These forms are used as guides, but it is not always possible to assign the student their desired class or subject area.* The department believes it is important that our students learn different study areas and teaching techniques, therefore, sometimes a student will be given an assignment in which they are not expert. The student form is emailed to the BGSA listserv each semester. It is expected that ALL students will complete this form. Additionally, this aids the department in determining its commitment for Teaching Assistantships for the semester and the progress of the student. The Faculty Assistantship Info form indicates the faculty's wishes for their class's TAs and the assignment for their student(s). Additionally, they indicate the academic standing of their student(s).

Summer Assignments are open to all students. The assignment is for eight (8) weeks, teaching the same 16-week material twice per week. While Biology students are awarded first, upon review of the department's needs, the department can offer assistantships to students from other departments to fill in any opening. Students normally teach one class and do not need to be enrolled, provided they are currently enrolled.

Duration of Financial Support

The department will make every effort to ensure that all doctoral students, *who are making satisfactory progress toward their degrees*, are offered support for their *first five years (10 semesters)* of graduate study at UNM. At the time of admission, the department will offer a Teaching Assistantship to doctoral applicants who meet the standards for admission and are accepted into the doctoral program with financial support. The department will continue to offer these students Teaching Assistantships for their first five years. Summer assistantships do not count towards a student's guaranteed offer of support for 2 years (4 semesters for MS) or 5 years (10 semesters for PhD), respectively.

In rare cases, applicants may be admitted to the PhD program without a guarantee of departmental support. Such students will have stated in writing to the department that they have access to funds from other sources and have no expectation of receiving departmental financial support. Students accepted without support must fulfill all criteria for admissions required of other applicants to the doctoral program.

Students may elect to decline the offered Teaching Assistantships in favor of other support, such as Research Assistantships, graduate fellowships, or private funds (see guidelines below regarding Declining a Teaching Assistantship). However, the departmental commitment of teaching assistant support is only for the five years or 10 semesters of graduate study from the date a student begins the program, *regardless of what other means of funding support that student may elect to use during that time.* For example, if a student secures their own financial support from a grant for their first two years of their PhD program, they are not then entitled to an additional two years of departmental teaching assistantship support; rather, they would be eligible for three years of departmental financial support. The department

recognizes a responsibility to ensure financial support to all doctoral students who are in good standing and in their first five years of study before admitting new students.

Students whose qualifications are as great as those admitted to the Doctoral program, but who apply to the Master's program, will be offered Teaching Assistantships for their first two years (four semesters) of graduate study, provided they continue to make satisfactory progress in the Master's program. Students who qualify for the Master's program, but do not have credentials equal to those of students accepted for the Doctoral program, may be admitted, but without any guarantee of support. Students who apply and are accepted for transfer from the Master's to the Doctoral program will be entitled to the same commitment of support as Doctoral students; i.e., they will be offered Teaching Assistantships during their first five years of graduate study in the department including the time they have been enrolled in the Master's program.

Students who have *earned* their Master's degree in the UNM Biology Department and who have received departmental financial support in the process may later choose to seek admission to the PhD program. If admitted, such students will be guaranteed no more than six years (12 semesters) of departmental support for their entire graduate program. As always, this offer is contingent upon the student making satisfactory progress and on the availability of funds.

Teaching Assistantships that become available after new students have been admitted and after all eligible Doctoral and Master's students have been awarded will be offered to Doctoral students who have exceeded their five years of eligibility and/or to unsupported Master's students. Students who do not submit the Assistantship Funding Info Request form by the deadline are in jeopardy of being placed where a TA is needed. Assignments will be determined by the quality of the student's work and the department's need for teaching expertise. The Associate Chair of the department, in consultation with the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, is responsible for making these decisions.

The department has agreed to provide PhD students in their sixth (6th) year (11th & 12th semesters) and MS student in their 3rd year (5th & 6th semesters) with additional support if needed by giving priority to these students after the guaranteed funded students have been awarded. The 6th & 3rd year students will be placed in a bonus pool if they request funding by the deadline and are making satisfactory progress. The department will select students from this pool first if additional teaching assistants are required and funds are available. The contract will cover the stipend, insurance, and tuition. Once a Biology student has begun their seventh (7th) year of study and meets the normal requirements, the student will be placed in the TA pool, behind those in their 6th and 3rd year.

Declining a Teaching Assistantship

A serious problem for the department can arise if students who have signed a teaching assistantship contract changes their plans. We may, for example, be left without a qualified instructor for a scheduled laboratory section. **To minimize this potential problem, we request that students notify the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator of any change in plans by no later than June 15 for the following Fall semester or by November 15 for the following Spring semester.** The department cannot guarantee that desired changes in plans made after these dates can be accommodated. If you do not notify the department of your intent to decline a teaching assistantship before the specified date, the department has the right to, and may decide to, withdraw any commitment of future support. Although we work to fulfill students' teaching wishes, the assignments are based on the needs of the department and on providing a teaching experience for its students.

Please note that when a student declines an assistantship, the award will not be extended. All award periods begin the semester the student starts the program and continue for the applicable

guaranteed funding time. An exception may be made to this policy if a student takes an approved leave of absence.

Research & Travel Support Sources

You should not hesitate to explore sources of funding available to graduate students. The following are some suggestions of funding sources available from the Biology Department, the University, and nationally. Additionally, the [Biology Graduate Student Association](#) has a list of funding resources; this list is updated and maintained by the Biology graduate students. Funding leads are forwarded to the Biology Graduate Student Listserv (BGSA-I), by other students, and the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator. Students are encouraged to share funding opportunities and successful proposals with other Biology students.

Scholarships, Grants, Fellowships, Loans, & other funding opportunities

Biology Scholarships

Biology solicits applications for Scholarships in late Fall or early Spring to be awarded during Research Days. The applicant must be enrolled and be in good standing to be awarded. Both undergraduate and graduate students are evaluated by the Department Scholarship Committee. Applications are located on the Biology Department Scholarships webpage <http://biology.unm.edu/scholarships.shtml> and are submitted to the scholarship email and processed by the department's Biology Graduate Program Coordinator. This email and the applications are only accepted during the open application period.

Biology Graduate Research Allocations Committee (GRAC)

The GRAC is a student driven committee composed of graduate students from the Biology Department. Both travel and research grants are available. Three committee members read and score each proposal. The committee convenes once all proposals have been evaluated. The committee discusses each proposal and ranks them according to scores and outcomes of discussions. Grants are funded fully, partially, or declined.

GRAC will not fund food, lodging, registration, or publication costs. Travel awards are given only to those who will be presenting their research at a conference. Although requests for funding of a project previously funded that academic year are allowed, they will receive funding only if adequate proof of progress in the study and of attempts to obtain additional sources of funding is demonstrated. The lifetime limit in research grants is \$1,000 for Master's students and \$1,500 for PhD students. Applications are limited to two per academic year with the understanding that second applications will be considered only if sufficient funds are available.

Students may apply for both a travel and research grant within the same semester. An application must be made to [Student Research Allocations Committee \(SRAC\)](#) that same semester for that particular activity, or proof of SRAC ineligibility must be given. Complete applications should contain a cover page (research or travel grant application), SRAC cover page, a two-page proposal outlining the activity to be funded, and a one-page outline of the budget, detailing items to be funded by GRAC. These funds are available in the Fall and Spring only; no Summer GRAC funds are available.

Additionally, students may apply for travel funds through the BGSA.

Graduate Studies

Doctoral Conference Presentation Award

The Doctoral Conference Presentation Award provides up to \$1,000 to fund travel for doctoral students (MFA included) to give oral presentations or posters at national or international, professional conferences. Funds may only be used for travel expenses, lodging, meals, and conference application fees. Applications will not be accepted for research travel. Travel must be outside of Albuquerque. If you are traveling internationally, you must get approval from the Office of Export Control before you travel and to receive reimbursement. For details of eligibility and application see: <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/research-travel-grants/doc-conference-award.html>.

Graduate Research Supplement

The Graduate Research Supplement awards support up to \$2,000.00 to facilitate completion of the MFA or PhD dissertation. These awards support direct expenses incurred for archival or field research. This award may not be used for stipends, books, conference travel, or equipment expenses. Awards are based on major accomplishments since entering graduate school, a well-defined and successful program of research, a timeline for completion of the dissertation, a 500-word personal statement, two letters of recommendation, and approval by the graduate unit. Each department may submit one nomination for this award. See <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/research-travel-grants/research-supplement.html> for eligibility and application information.

Rogers Research/Project Award

The Rogers Research Award provides funding up to \$1,000 to facilitate field research directly related to a thesis or dissertation, including artistic projects for MFA. Funds may be used only for travel/lodging and research materials that are necessary to conduct the field/project research. Travel must be outside of Albuquerque. If you are traveling internationally, you must get approval from the Office of Export Control BEFORE you travel and to receive reimbursement. For further details see: <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/research-travel-grants/rogers-research.html>.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The Graduate & Professional Student Association is a graduate student-run organization. The goal of the GPSA is to enhance the academic and intellectual environment for the graduate and professional students at the University of New Mexico and to promote the rights, interests, and professional development of graduate and professional students within the university community. GPSA representatives serve on UNM committees and manage an office in the Student Union Building.

The GPSA offers grants to supports UNM graduate students in the Fall and Spring. They offer several funding opportunities each semester. A sample list includes: Student Research Grant (SRG), Professional Development Grant (PDG), NM Research Grant (NMRG), and the Graduate Scholarship fund (GSF). Applications are reviewed and awarded by current graduate students at UNM. See <https://gpsa.unm.edu/funding/grants-funding/grant-scholarship.html> for complete funding information and details for each grant or scholarship. See <http://gpsagrants.unm.edu/about/grant-reading> if you are interested in reviewing grant proposals. Student ‘readers’ are given a small stipend for their participation.

Current students, staff, and faculty are always looking for and sharing funding opportunities, check <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/scholarships/index.html> for possible updated information.

Student Research Grant (SRG)

The Student Research Grant (SRG) fund may fund travel and lodging to conduct research in the field (includes artistic projects like photography or dance), the cost of research materials, and/or travel/lodging and conference fees for conferences at which the applicant is making a presentation. Funding is available up to \$500.

New Mexico Research Grant (NMRG)

The New Mexico Research Grant (NMRG) may fund travel, lodging, supplies, and other costs related to field research. This grant is for larger or longer-term projects than the SRG. Projects with a New Mexico state agency, nonprofit or community organization require a letter of recommendation from a representative of the organization. Grants are awarded for up to \$5,000 (High Priority). Other research projects are eligible for up to \$3,000 (General Priority).

Professional Development Grant (PDG)

The Professional Development Grant includes travel/lodging and fees to interviews, auditions, mock trials, unpaid internships, clinicals, and conferences at which the applicant is not making a presentation.

Graduate Scholarship Fund (GSF)

Every Fall and Spring semester, GPSA awards \$1,000 scholarships to students through the Graduate Scholarship Fund. This fund was created to help students afford to complete their graduate or professional degree. Graduate and professional students in good standing in a UNM graduate or professional degree program are eligible for the scholarship. Preference is given to students near the completion of their studies who demonstrate significant financial need. Students may receive the scholarship for a maximum of four semesters.

Fellowships

Fellowships are awarded from various funding sources. A list of potential fellowships is available on the Graduate Studies website at <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/fellowships/index.html>.

It is highly recommended that all Students complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) <https://fafsa.ed.gov/> and file with UNM. Many fellowships and scholarships are based on financial need and the FAFSA is used to determine eligibility.

Loans

The University has loan options for graduate students. For more information, please visit Graduate Studies website: <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/index.html>.

Other Funding Opportunities

- Pivot Funding Database: http://pivot.cos.com/funding_main
- Graduate Resource Center: <http://unmgrc.unm.edu/academic-resources/funding-for-graduate-students.html>
- Research & Travel Grants <http://grad.unm.edu/funding/research-travel-grants/index.html>
- External Funding <http://bgsa.unm.edu/Funding/external-funding.html>
- University Library Fellowship <https://elibrary.unm.edu/cswr/fellowships.php>
- UNM Alumni Scholarship https://unmalumni.formstack.com/forms/scholarship_eligibility

Employment

Graduate students may search for a student employment or work-study position at UNM; however, they may not be employed in another UNM category such as temporary researcher, etc. While the Biology Department prefers that students only work 20 hours a week in an Assistantship position, a unique situation may occur allowing them to take on an overload. Biology graduate students may work up to 30 hours a week provided they have their advisor's approval and are not an international student. International students may work a maximum of 20 hours a week. Students must understand that they must be registered to qualify and need to evaluate their other responsibilities before accepting the overload, keeping their grades and time to degree in mind.

Part-time employment on or off campus is located on the Student Employment Office website at <http://stuemp.unm.edu/student-jobs/index.html>. Note some of these positions require students to be work-study qualified.

The University [Career Services Center](#) assists undergraduates, graduate students, and alumni in finding suitable full-time employment. Career Services is in the University Advisement and Enrichment Center, second floor room 220 in Mesa Vista Hall.

DEPARTMENTAL SEMINARS & EVENTS

New Graduate Student Seminar (Orientation)

All new graduate students in the Biology Department are required to register for and attend BIOL 500 during their first Fall semester in the program. This seminar provides an opportunity for you to find out how the department is organized, what facilities are available for your use on campus, and what various members of the Biology Faculty are interested in and doing. It's a good way to get an overview of the department and its programs and to have your questions answered as you're just getting started. This seminar meets one or two days the week before school begins each Fall semester.

Scientific Integrity course

Incoming students must register for and attend the Scientific Integrity course, which is held the week before the Fall semester begins. This course discusses research ethics and students are awarded a certificate at the end of the two half-day course. NIH and other grant-funding agencies expect students to have taken this course before they are eligible to participate in research funded by these agencies.

Departmental Seminar

The Biology Department sponsors a weekly seminar series of visiting speakers. Seminars provide an important opportunity to obtain first-hand knowledge of ongoing research at other institutions and to meet some of the leading scientists in these disciplines. Invited speakers are experts from across biology and provide our department the chance to see how others in the field are tackling a diverse array of problems. They are also excellent opportunities to observe what works (or doesn't) in scientific presentations. Keep in mind that these lectures are sponsored by labs in our department, so when you see these presentations, you will get a window into research conducted by your colleagues. While all graduate students are expected to attend all departmental seminars, they are required to register for BIOL 530 five times as a PhD student and twice as a Master's student. PhD students are encouraged to complete at least three semesters of BIOL 530 prior to (or concurrent with) their Doctoral Comprehensive Exam.

Research Days

The Biology Department hosts a special and exciting celebration of our students during our Research Days event – normally the end of March or early April. The event starts with Thursday's departmental seminar. On Friday, we proudly showcase the department's research efforts by both undergraduate and graduate students. Students will present a poster or give a short oral presentation of their research. Both events are judged with prizes to be awarded at the Keynote Lecture. The festivities end with a reception and BGSA silent auction of donated items. Scholarship awards are presented at the reception and the BGSA often sells their promotional products, T-shirts, and mugs.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

UNM Department of Biology Assistantship Eligibility, Expectations, Responsibilities, and Contractual Obligations

(Revised May 2024)

Biology Department Assistantships are **assigned for 18 weeks of work**; your contract begins 1 week prior to the first day of classes and ends on the last day of finals. To be qualified for an assistantship, UNM policy states that:

- students must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credit hours towards your degree
- maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA
- may not be on probation
- must be within the time limit for completion of the degree

Eligibility: credit hours

To ensure eligibility, the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator will check your official LoboWEB class schedule. Any issues with your schedule will be addressed at that time.

If you are a Biology graduate student with guaranteed support, the number of tuition credit hours paid by the department will be determined from the class schedule. The department will pay for 6–12 credit hours for classes that count towards the Biology degree only. Any tuition for classes taken that cannot be applied towards the Biology Degree requirements or classes added to the schedule after the 1st Friday of the semester will be the responsibility of the student; the Biology Department will not cover the tuition, unless arrangements have been made with the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator and approvals have been obtained.

Teaching Assistantship (TA) assignments are based on the schedules downloaded by the department the week prior to the start of the semester. If you make changes to your schedule, it is your responsibility to provide the department an updated schedule. If you make changes to your schedule after your contract begins, you will be responsible for ensuring your class schedule fits the business needs of the department. If you make changes to your schedule after the cutoff date and your class schedule conflicts with your teaching schedule, the department will not adjust the teaching schedule. Therefore, your choices are to change your schedule or to cancel the contract. Please note that if you choose to turn down an assistantship, the department still counts that offered support as part of its two- (MS) or five-year (PhD) obligation.

Eligibility: GPA & Probation

During week 1 of the semester, the department will download your official LoboWEB class schedule to verify that you are maintaining a 3.0 GPA and that you are not on probation. You will be contacted if a problem is discovered.

Responsibilities and Duties

Teaching assistants are responsible for all classes/labs, grading, office hours, preparation, attending lectures and meetings as required by the instructor or coordinator of the course; expectation for a full-time teaching assistantship is 20 hours per week. TAs are not allowed to cancel classes and are expected to meet for the entire class time. No food or drinks are allowed in the labs. This not only applies to you, but to your students as well. Because most instructors or coordinators require you to hold office hours, you must provide students and the main biology office with essential information (office hours, contact information, and expectations). Know the material you will be teaching. Keep accurate records of all graded materials. Grade the quizzes and assignments in a timely fashion (preferably returning graded work to your students within one week; i.e., the following lab). Leave the lab/classroom as you found it. Please make sure that you clean up after each lab, every week. If you are the last TA of the day, turn off the lights, lock up the room, and return borrowed materials.

Absences

While Graduate Studies states that no absences during a short-term graduate assistantship contract will occur, the Biology program understands the need for flexibility. Should an unforeseen circumstance occur which prevents the graduate student from meeting this expectation; the student must notify the Biology Graduate Program Coordinator, their current semester assistantship supervisor, and major advisor as soon as possible. Please do not wait until the hour before your class starts; 48 hours is preferable, but that may not always be possible. In the unlikely event this is necessary, the department requests the student to find a replacement. The department will accept one unforeseen circumstance per student per semester, should it be necessary. Any additional circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and abuse may lead to termination of contract. Remember that your contract ends the last day of finals; do not make travel arrangements or plans before finals week is over.

Medical Leave

The Graduate Studies policy for taking a medical leave while holding an assistantship is as follows: “Assistantship recipients who suffer a serious medical condition requiring absence from assigned duties for two consecutive weeks may be granted, upon written request to the head of the graduate unit, a two-week sick leave without loss of stipend. After this leave, the student will be paid only for the time the assistantship responsibilities were fulfilled. The graduate unit must notify the Graduate Studies office whenever it grants an assistant a two-week sick leave, as well as the date that the assistant returns to their position.” The Biology Department requests that the student provide, along with the memo as listed above, medical documentation of the reason for missing work with an expected return date. Failure to return from a medical leave of absence results in termination of the assistantships. You will also be required to repay the University at a pro-rated amount for your stipend, tuition, and benefits. Students have the right to petition the Dean of Graduate Studies for extended medical leave.

Please remember that you represent the Biology Department and its ability to achieve top results while providing the best education. Be a positive role model for your students. Do not discourage them, inspire them!

These Graduate Studies policies may be found in the UNM Catalog. This document has been reviewed by the Graduate Policy Committee, Department Chair, Associate Chairs, and the Graduate Faculty Advisor.

Appendix B

UNM Department of Biology Master's Degree *en route* to PhD Policy

A Biology PhD student may earn an MS Plan II (without a thesis) degree when sitting for their Doctoral Comprehensive Exam with permission from the department and the Committee on Studies. Both the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam and the MS degree will be evaluated as separate tasks; however, only one oral meeting will be required. Students will not have to defend publicly the MS Plan II; however, they will need to satisfy the committee's expectation of a Master's student. Additionally, the student will need to pass their Doctoral Comprehensive Exam.

According to Graduate Studies, students must complete the requirements of a Master's degree to take advantage of this option. It is the student's responsibility to meet all requirements at the time of the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam. Students must also submit an Intent to Graduate Form, a Program of Studies (POS), Committee on Studies form (three approved members), and completed the Biology Core Classes (three of the four) prior to the end of the semester *before* the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam. Example: if a student will be taking their Doctoral Comprehensive Exam in March (Spring semester), they must submit this form before the last day of the preceeding Fall semester.

Checklist:

- **Committee on Studies support**
 - ✓ Committee on Studies form on file;
- **Intent to Graduate form**
 - ✓ Submit the semester before the exams;
- **Program of Studies***
 - ✓ Must be submitted the semester *before* taking the exam (Fall: July 1; Spring: Oct 1; Summer: March 1). Listing the 30 required hours with no more than 50% of the course work with one instructor;
- **Core Classes**
 - ✓ Three of the four courses need to be completed; may use the completed PhD form if already submitted and approved;
- **Announcement/Report of Exam**
 - ✓ Must submit one for the MS Plan II and one for the Doctoral Comprehensive Exam .

Most forms are available on the Biology Graduate Student forms page <http://biology.unm.edu/graduate/graduate-student-forms.shtml>, however the forms marked with a * are located at <http://grad.unm.edu/resources/gs-forms/index.html>