A Resource Manual for Biology Graduate Students
Updated October 2016
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WELCOME TO GRADUATE STUDIES
in the Department of Biology Department
at the University of Victoria

This resource manual is intended to provide new graduate students with an introduction to the people, facilities and resources available to you during your degree at UVic. It also outlines steps you will need to go through to complete your program and tips to get through the paperwork you will face along the way. If you can't find someone or something you need in here ask the Graduate Secretary – Michelle Shen.

Communicating with other graduate students: Biograd Listserv

There is a listserv in place for graduate student communication, called BIOGRAD. This listserv was set up for graduate students ONLY to use for whatever they feel is important (i.e. new graduate students may ask questions of ‘veteran’ students, converse about projects, resources, etc.). Also, BIOGRAD may be used for non-project related messages (i.e. party invites, items for sale, etc.). Sign-up for the biograd listserv by visiting this link and fill in the online form – http://lists.uvic.ca/mailman/listinfo/biograd.

You will receive confirmation once you have been added, and, once you are signed up, you simply send your messages to biograd@lists.uvic.ca and everyone on the listserv will receive it. If you have problems, email the list owner directly at biograd-owner@lists.uvic.ca.

A Note from the Graduate Secretary – Michelle Shen

Welcome to the Department! My job is to help graduate students and their supervisors with the paperwork involved in the administrative side of a degree program. I'm the first point of contact if you have a problem, not the clerks at Graduate Records or Graduate Studies.

In order for me to be most effective in this task, it is very important that faculty and graduate students make sure that all documents (letters, memos, registration forms, travel grants, expense claims, etc.) pass by my desk first before submission to Graduate Studies or Graduate Records. Should you bypass me, it is more difficult to assist you and/or the Graduate Advisor in solving minor (and occasionally, major) administrative issues which may have an impact on your program.

Please keep me updated as to any changes to your contact information (campus phone and most importantly, your email address); changes to supervisory committee or anything else you think I might need to know. The better informed I am, the better I can help you.
Office Staff

The Biology Office is open from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm Monday to Friday

For help with:

- Everything and anything pertaining to graduate studies
  - See Michelle Shen, Graduate Secretary  biolgsec@uvic.ca or 250-721-7093

- Teaching Assistant positions
- Building Safety, Lab Safety, WHMIS
- Office or study carrel space
  - See Janice Gough, Administrative Officer  bioadmin@uvic.ca or 250-721-7092

- HR appointments (for field/lab/research assistants)
- Appointments with the Chair
  - See Chantal Laliberté, Assistant to the Chair/Department Secretary biology@uvic.ca or 250-721-7091

- HR appointments (for casual assistants paid by timesheet, work study)
- Photocopying and fax accounts
- Departmental newsletter / departmental email
- Departmental seminars
  - See Laura Alcaraz-Sehn, Administrative Assistant bioclerk@uvic.ca or 250-721-7095 or in her absence Chantal Laliberté

- Keys to buildings, classrooms and labs
- Audiovisual equipment
- Biology van rental
- Room booking (Reading Room or other rooms on campus)
  - See Laura Alcaraz-Sehn, Michelle Shen or Chantal Laliberté
Departmental Committees

Listed below are departmental committees but not all pertain to graduate students. The list of members is updated in the fall of each year. These grad reps are your link to the department – contact Chantal Laliberté (biology@uvic.ca) to find out who are the current chairs and/or members of a committee.

**Animal Care Committee**: Ben Koop (Chair Jul-Dec 2016), Will Hintz (Chair Jan-Jun 2017), Gautam Awatramani, Bob Chow, Rana El-Sabaawi, Francis Juanes, Real Roy

**ARPT Committee**: Barbara. Hawkins (Chair); Gerry Allen, Greg Beaulieu, Bob Chow, Louise Page, Steve Perlman

**Area Specific Advisors**:
Gerry Allen, Peter Constabel, Barbara Hawkins (Forest/Plant Biology)
Gautam Awatramani, Bob Chow, Kerry Delaney, Raad Nashmi (Neuroscience/Physiology)
Julia Baum, Terri Lacourse, Steve Perlman (Ecology/Evolution/Conservation)
Greg Beaulieu (First Year/BIOL 184 & 186)
John Dower, Francis Juanes (on leave), Diana Varela (Marine Biology)
Juergen Ehlting, Ben Koop (July-Dec leave), John Taylor (Genetics, Genomics)

**Co-op Committee**: Asit Mazumder, Diane Luszniak

**Cunningham Bldg Safety Committee**: Janice. Gough (Chair)

**Curriculum Committee**: Real Roy(Chair), Greg Beaulieu, Francis Choy, Barbara Ehlting, Tom Reimchen, Kim Curry, Janice Gough (non-voting), undergrad rep-open

**Departmental Meetings**: Gerry Gourlay is the graduate student representative for 2017/18

**EM/Advanced Imaging Coordinator**: Louise Page

**Honours Thesis Directors**: Raad Nashmi, John Taylor

**Library Coordinator**: Rana El-Sabaawi

**Seminar Coordinators**: Peter Constabel, Steve Perlman

**Use of Animals in Teaching Committee**: Louise Page (Chair), Gerry Allen, Gautam Awatramani, Bob Chow, Rossi Marx
Graduate Studies Committee

Grad Advisor: Dr. Diana Varela

Faculty Members: Dr. Juergen Ehlting, Pat Gregory, Terri Lacourse, Steve Perlman

Graduate Student: Malcolm Cowan (2017-2018)

The Graduate Studies Committee is the most important committee for graduate students as it creates policy for ratification by the department. Decisions concerning admission to the department are the concern of its members. This committee also makes recommendations on departmental graduate scholarship nominations. There are several other opportunities for graduate students to sit on committees, so watch for emails and get involved. Another major event that requires help from graduate students is the planning of the Annual Graduate Student Symposium, which occurs in November during Reading Break.
OVERALL PROGRAM

Master of Science (MSc)

The MSc program is a research degree that, nominally, lasts for 24 months. In practice, the median time to completion is 34 months. The maximum time allowed is 60 months. The university requires a minimum of 15 units to be completed for a Master's degree, however, Biology requires a minimum of 16 units in order to obtain a MSc in the area of Biology.

- 12 units for the thesis (BIOL 599)
- 1 unit for grad symposium (BIOL 560)
- 3 units for course work (2 courses)

The following is a check list of the things you will be working towards over the next couple of years:

- Formation of supervisory committee: within 8 months of entry
- Completion of course work: 2 courses (3 units)
- Meeting of supervisory committee: initial meeting (in first year) and then annually until completion
- Graduate symposium presentation: annually, except if in program less than eight months
- Thesis submission and defense: watch for emails regarding deadlines

Consequences of going over two years in the MSc program -- FUNDING

Financial support for MSc students is guaranteed for 2 years. Support after this point depends on the goodwill of the supervisor, or more to the point, the ability of the supervisor to continue supporting the student. The level of support (if any) beyond two years is a matter to be discussed between supervisor and student. As the degree exceeds the expected time of completion, students may lose eligibility for scholarship and fellowships and may drop in priority for other forms of support including TAships and Graduate Awards.
PhD Program

The PhD program is, nominally, a 36 month research program. The current average time to completion is closer to 60 months. The maximum time allowed is 84 months. The university requires a minimum of 30 units to obtain a PhD degree (has MSc degree). Biology requires a minimum of 31 units to complete a PhD degree (but in reality you will complete 32.5 units), which break down as follows:

- 24 units dissertation (BIOL 699)
- 3.0 units Candidacy Examination (BIOL 693)
- 1 unit grad symposium (BIOL 560)
- 4.5 units course work (3 courses)

The following is a check list of the things you will be working towards over the next few years:

- Formation of supervisory committee: within 8 months of entry
- Completion of course work: 3 courses (4.5 units)
  Meeting of supervisory committee: initial meeting in first year then annually until completion
- Graduate symposium presentation: annually, except if in program less than eight months
- Candidacy examination: within 21 months of direct entry to the PhD program
- Departmental Seminar: in final year
- Dissertation submission and defense: watch for emails regarding deadlines

Consequences of going over four years in a PhD program -- FUNDING

Financial support for PhD students is guaranteed for 4 years. Any support after this point depends on the goodwill of the funding source, usually the supervisor, and more to the point, the ability of the funding source to continue supporting the student. Be sure to discuss financial support with your supervisor at the onset of your program, especially what will happen after the first three years. As the degree exceeds the expected time of completion, students may lose eligibility for scholarships and fellowships, and may drop in priority for other forms of support including TAships and Graduate Awards.
Transfer to PhD from MSc

Transferring from an MSc to a PhD is only possible after completing 2 full terms (8 months) of a Master's and with agreement of the student's supervisory committee. Note that financial support is guaranteed for a total of 4 years from initial entry point. The committee must meet to give approval. Transfers must occur at the beginning of a term. Depending on your transfer point, all or some of your fees paid towards your MSc degree are transferable to a PhD program. See Michelle for instructions on how to make the switch.

For MSc→PhD transfer students the university requires a minimum of 45 units to be completed for a PhD degree (without completing MSc). Biology requires a minimum of 46 units for a combined MSc→PhD degree.

- 37.5 units dissertation (BIOL 699)
- 3.0 units Candidacy Examination (BIOL 693)
- 1 unit grad symposium (BIOL 560)
- 4.5 units course work (3 courses)

The candidacy examination MUST occur within 8 months (2 terms) of transfer.
Thesis/dissertation preparation and defense

Both MSc theses and PhD dissertations are defended orally and in public. The examining committee for all oral defenses (MSC or PhD) must consist of the student’s supervisory committee plus an external examiner. Your supervisor is responsible for finding an external examiner and graduate students are not to have contact with their external examiner prior to the oral exam.

For MSc oral examinations, the external examiner may be from within the university, but must be from outside the home academic unit. For a PhD oral the external examiner must be from outside the university.

MSc and PhD external examiners can participate in the oral defense via video conference link. For details, ask Michelle.

Eight Easy Steps to Thesis Completion

At the beginning of each term, Michelle sends out an email providing information about defending this term, deadlines, guidelines, procedures, etc. From start to finish, the defending process is a lengthy one. MSc students must allow at least 6 weeks and PhD students must allow at least 8 weeks from the time the supervisor allows the thesis/dissertation to go to the Supervisory Committee.

1) Thesis/dissertations are prepared according to guidelines available from the Graduate Studies website: [http://web.uvic.ca/gradstudies/thesis_new/basics.php](http://web.uvic.ca/gradstudies/thesis_new/basics.php) (student support/students preparing to graduate link)

DO NOT FOLLOW FORMATTING FROM THESES/DISSERTATIONS ALREADY IN PRINT. You must following the FGS guideline to write your thesis/dissertation available at this link: [https://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/assets/docs/docs/thesis/Sample-SamplePages.pdf](https://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/assets/docs/docs/thesis/Sample-SamplePages.pdf)

2) Notify Michelle of your intention to defend.

3) Check the deadlines for:
   - Convocation – Fall or Spring Ceremony
   - Deadlines for application to graduate: [http://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/resourcesfor/students/gradreg/index.php](http://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/resourcesfor/students/gradreg/index.php)

   You must apply to graduate once we start the defense process.

4) When distributing your thesis/dissertation to your committee, check their availability for the period during which you intend to defend. On the date you distribute your thesis, email Michelle and attach a copy of your title page. This starts the “defense clock” ticking.

5) Request for Oral Examination form (ROE). While your committee is reviewing your thesis/dissertation, Michelle will prepare the ROE form. This form must be completely filled in before submission to Graduate Studies. You will need the signatures of your committee members and the Graduate Advisor, your defense date/time, the room booking for your defense, and your external examiner’s information (Michelle will work with your supervisor to confirm this information; you should NOT take part in this process).
Thesis/Dissertation Withholding form. It is highly recommended that students complete one of these forms to put embargo on archiving your thesis/dissertation to UVicSpace (formerly DSpace). Some journals may reject your paper because the material is considered “published” if it is accessible via UVicSpace. Graduate Studies advises that Option 2 is acceptable to publishers and this is the withholding option they will routinely approve. However, should you decide on Option 1, be prepared to make a special case to the Dean for approval, with plenty of documentation from you, your supervisor and the department.

When all required information is confirmed and signatures are completed, Michelle will notify you to pick up the forms from her; you can then submit the forms to the FGS. Please ensure that you upload your thesis in CourseSpaces prior to submitting your forms to the FGS. The thesis you upload in CourseSpaces must be identical to the version you submit to your committee.

6) PhD students – arrange your Departmental seminar in the term prior to the one you plan to defend in, or at the latest in the same term you plan to defend. Contact Seminar Coordinators to arrange a seminar.

7) Pre-Oral and Post-Oral Emails. One week prior to your oral, Michelle will send you a pre-oral email with many helpful reminders for your big day. Attached to this email will be your Thesis/Dissertation Approval form. Immediately after your defense, Michelle will send you Post-Defense email that will explain step-by-step what you must do to complete the defending process.

8) Defend! Suggestions for the defense:
- Bring a hard-copy of your thesis (if it’s in a binder it may be easier to flip through).
- Bring your Thesis/Dissertation approval form to obtain original signatures from your committee members and the external examiner after your oral. If any members are participating remotely, the Chair of your oral exam can sign on behalf of these members (including the external examiner). If the Chair misses to sign on the form, Michelle will scan the form to obtain signatures. One way or the other, please make sure you bring the form back to Michelle.
FINANCIAL SUPPORT

PhD or MSc students, who do not bring scholarships or outside funding with them, are supported by a mix of funding from faculty research grants and departmental sources, such as teaching assistantships and fellowships. All Biology graduate students must be guaranteed a minimum of $22,000 per annum for 2 years (MSc), 4 years (PhD) by their supervisors. Changes in the level of support from the department are supposed to be made up by an adjustment in faculty research grant support to ensure student support does not drop below this level. It is up to you to negotiate with your supervisor regarding extra monies won/earned (i.e. internal scholarships) as to whether these are included in the minimum support to graduate students and for financial support after the guaranteed minimum period expires.

Departmental and Campus-wide Awards/Scholarships

Graduate students may be eligible for a number of departmental and campus-wide awards/scholarships. To qualify you must be enrolled full-time. The Annual Competition for these internal awards/scholarships takes place in early to mid-September.

Michelle sends out email notices about deadlines for the awards/scholarships competition sometime in August. It is up to students to apply for each award/scholarship for which they feel qualified and are eligible for. Selection of nominees is done by the department’s Graduate Studies Committee (grad representative excluded).

Additional funds, in the form of UVic Graduate Awards, are awarded by the Department’s Graduate Studies Committee. These funds are allocated to the Biology Department by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and are normally awarded in both the fall and the spring terms. These awards are paid directly to the student. Graduate students are eligible for these awards provided they meet the following eligibility criteria – GPA not below 6.5; enrolled full time; length in program (within 3 years of the start of an MSc program, 5 years of the start of a PhD program; and not holding a major award (e.g. NSERC). Biology graduate students do not need to apply for these awards.
Teaching Assistantships

Teaching Assistantships (TAs) are assigned by Janice Gough, Administrative Officer. The goals of teaching assistantships are: (i) to ensure that financial support of students is adequate and (ii) to provide teaching experience. Officially, graduate students always get first choice at these positions. There is an element of merit in these positions, and students can lose their right to a teaching assistantship if their performance is judged inadequate. In the case of competition among graduate students for teaching assistantships, applicants are given priority based on the amount of financial support they receive from outside sources (i.e. NSERC, etc.). Graduate students lacking outside support are generally placed in teaching assistantships before graduate students with such support. Graduate students with outside support who have a burning desire to have the teaching experience need to make this clear on their application to TA. Students must have the agreement of their supervisor on their teaching load, as there are times when teaching may pose an unreasonable burden on the progress or completion of the graduate program. Students are limited to a maximum of 2/5 teaching load per term (equivalent to 14 hrs per week).

Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 4163

As a Teaching Assistant (TA), you are a member of CUPE local 4163. TAs, Research Assistants, Computer User Services employees, ESL instructors and sessional instructors are part of this union, which is the largest on campus. A copy of the agreement between the University of Victoria and CUPE 4163 can be obtained from the administrative officer in the department, or from the CUPE 4163 office located in the Business & Economics Bldg., Room 396. Please contact the staff in the CUPE 4163 office if you have any questions or concerns regarding the contract and/or CUPE 4163. The contract is also available on-line at http://web.uvic.ca/~cupe4163. It is important to be aware of your rights as an employee. Please contact the CUPE 4163 office at cupe4163@uvic.ca or 250-472-4778 for any questions.

Holding an outside job, studying part-time vs. full-time and withdrawing

All Biology graduate students are full-time students and are expected to devote all working hours to research. The only exception is the allowance for time involved in 1/5 or 2/5 Teaching Assistantships, which is considered a form of training. Biology does not allow part-time studies.

However, some students run into personal financial difficulties and others face crises in health, to name but two of life’s nasty surprises. It is possible to temporarily withdraw (TWD) for a term or more, but you are advised to check with your supervisor and the graduate secretary, in that order, so appropriate arrangements can be made. Withdrawal time may or may not stop the clock on your program, depending upon the type of withdrawal. Funding may also be affected. Check the restrictions stated in any scholarships that you hold, as well as those of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Please check the FGS website to see which option suits your circumstance better: http://web.uvic.ca/calendar2016-05/grad/registration/leaves.html

If you do accept other work, contracts and so on, you must make your supervisor and the supervisory committee aware of these obligations. If this outside work will have a detrimental effect on your research, then it is necessary for the supervisory committee to decide if it is in the student’s best interest to continue. Withdrawal from a program can be of two types - with or without permission. The latter will dramatically affect your ability to re-enter graduate school. The former requires both your supervisor’s permission and permission from the Dean of Graduate
Studies. Michelle will be able to help you with the proper paperwork and procedure involved in these two options.

Holidays

Each scholarship has holidays stipulated and students are required by the scholarship to abide by these conditions. Students supported by faculty members must establish holidays by discussion with their supervisor.

Fees

Fees are due at the end of the first month of each new term. If you have questions regarding your fees and tuition, please contact Tuition: [http://www.uvic.ca/vpfo/accounting/services/ tuition/index.php](http://www.uvic.ca/vpfo/accounting/services/ tuition/index.php)

They accept cash, cheque or debit – not credit cards. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the deadlines for paying fees. Every term that you are registered, you are assessed a fee for that term based on the following schedule:

**MSc**
- 6 full instalments (over 2 years)
- if you complete in 18 months, you only pay 5 instalments

**PhD**
- 9 full instalments (over 3 years)
- if you complete in 2.5 years, you only pay 7.5 instalments

Your fee instalments cover the following –
- Tuition plus GSS fees
- Athletic fees
- UBus Pass
- Extended Health and Dental fees

Once you have paid the maximum fee instalments (6 for MSc or 9 for PhD), you are assessed the smaller re-registration fees until you reach your time limits (MSc 5 years and PhD 7 years). If you exceed the time limits, an extension must be requested and your fees are once again assessed at the large fee instalments.

Fee appeals to tuition are made to the Grad Fee Reduction Appeals Committee (Grad FRAC), c/o Tuition Fee Assessments, Accounting.

Health and Dental

All students must have basic health coverage through MSP services. For international students, there is a 3 month waiting period. So apply as soon as you are accepted as a student at UVic. ([http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/)).

The Graduate Student Society (GSS) offers extended health and dental plans. If you have questions, call 250-721-8816. As you may be registered either on campus or off campus in any of the 3 terms each academic year, pay strict attention to the following.
September registration – on campus students
All students registered full-time will be assessed the health and dental fee for the UVic (mandatory) medical and dental plan. This onetime fee is due at the end of September and you will have medical and dental coverage until August 31.

Therefore, for subsequent terms (Jan-April or May-Aug), you may register as a full-time student either on campus OR off campus, and you will still be enrolled in the plan. However, should you decide to opt out of the health and dental plan, you must provide proof of coverage elsewhere and you must do this no later than September 30.

September registration – off campus students
If you are registered full-time as an off campus student in September, you may now opt into the health and dental plan as a distant student. The opt-in deadline is September 30, which is the same date fees are due. The cost of the plan for distant students is nominally higher but the same length of coverage is provided. For subsequent terms (Jan-April or May-June), it does not matter if you change your registration to full-time on campus, your fees won’t change and your end date for coverage remains as August 31.

January entry students
For students that are registered full-time on campus, you will be assessed a pro-rated health and dental fee (for the remaining 8 months of the academic year). The deadline for paying this fee or opting out is January 31. Coverage is provided until August 31 and it does not matter whether you are registered full-time either as an on campus OR off campus student in the following term (May-Aug). If you enter in January and are registered full-time as an off campus student, you may choose to opt-in as a distant student before the January 31 deadline. The plan will provide coverage until August 31 and it does not matter whether you are registered full-time on campus OR off campus in the May-August term.

May entry students
For this first term of your program, ensure that you have health and dental coverage from elsewhere as the UVic health and dental plan coverage will begin in September for you.

If you require health and dental coverage for your family members, there are options available. Contact GSS by the end of September or the end of January in order to get family plan coverage.
REGISTRATION / DEREGISTRATION

Registration in the mandatory courses (BIOL 599, BIOL 699, BIOL 693, BIOL 560 and FORB 560) is done online via MyPage. You will need your Netlink ID to proceed. However, for directed studies courses or to register in a course from another department, you must use paper registration forms. These are available from Michelle or from the Graduate Records website (http://web.uvic.ca/gradstudies/forms.php).

Directed Studies courses require a pro forma form. Non-BIOL courses (i.e. from other UVic departments) require submission of a Graduate Course Change form (commonly called an Add/Drop form). If you wish to register in an undergraduate course, please consult with Michelle. Make sure that you bring all registration forms to Michelle prior to submission to Graduate Records.

Once registered in a course (either via MyPage or paper form), you may drop the course online. Upon dropping the course, please email Michelle so that she can update your file. This applies to all courses including BIOL 599, 699, 693, 560 (i.e. if you are TWD).

The deadline for dropping courses or temporarily withdrawing for the term is usually much earlier than the deadline for adding or being registered for the term (except in the Summer Term-these two deadlines are much closer together). The penalty for late registration is a $35 late fee but the penalty for dropping or withdrawing late could mean that you are assessed fees for the entire term. Be sure you know these dates! Check the calendar or check with Michelle.

Registration Tips

- You must either be registered or withdrawn (temporarily for one term at a time or withdrawn with permission for a period of time) for all 12 months of every year of your program. If you have difficulties registering or deciding on which withdrawal option to use, contact Michelle.

- Course work: depending on the type of course, there are different registration methods.

- Thesis/Dissertation: you must be registered in BIOL 599 (MSc thesis) or BIOL 699 (PhD dissertation) in every term that you are a registered student.

- Candidacy Examination (BIOL 693): all PhD students must register in this course until such time as the candidacy examination requirements are met.

- Graduate Symposium (BIOL 560): Note that this is not a weekly course. The symposium takes place during Reading Break in the Fall term. All students must be registered in this course in every term you are a registered student.

- Forest Biology Seminar (FORB 560): all graduate students whose supervisor is a member of the Centre for Forest Biology must register for this course in every term you are a registered student.

- There are two sessions per academic year: Winter session (Sept to April) is comprised of two terms (Sept-Dec) and (Jan-April). Summer session (May-Aug) – there is no intersession for graduate students.
• When completing paper registration documents (i.e. Pro forma or add/drop forms), bring these forms to Michelle. The graduate advisor signs these forms – not your supervisor. Incomplete forms will be returned by Graduate Records, possibly causing delays. Michelle also requires a copy for your file.

• Temporary withdrawal: If you do not withdraw officially, Graduate Studies will consider you withdrawn without permission which can lead to major difficulties. There are several options when considering withdrawing, so check with Michelle.

Course Requirements

The MSc program requires 2 courses (3 units in total) and the PhD program requires 3 courses (4.5 units in total) of 500 level course work (NOTE: a ‘term’ course = 1.5 units). Decisions on course load are made by the student and his/her supervisor, with recommendations from the student’s supervisory committee. Courses are selected to expand a student's expertise, to develop a technical ability, or to provide theoretical background critical to the execution of the proposed research. In some cases, the course load is designed to strengthen a student's perceived weakness.

If you cannot find suitable courses within the department, consider the following options:

• Try finding a faculty member to develop a Directed Studies course to suit your particular need. For MSc students, there is no limit to the number of Directed Studies you can take, but only one can be with your supervisor. PhD students may take up to two directed studies courses (for a maximum of 3.0 units), but only one of the two with your supervisor.

• Course offerings from other centres, schools or departments at UVic can help to broaden your perspective and options. Some additional places to look for useful courses include the Centre for Forest Biology, the Centre for Biomedical Research, the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, the School of Environmental Studies, and the departments of Mathematics and Statistics, Biochemistry and Microbiology, Computer Science, and Geography. The Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre also offers many useful courses.

• The Western Dean’s Agreement (WDA) provides graduate students in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba with the opportunity to do their course work at a variety of participating postsecondary institutions.

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The WDA can facilitate a student’s collaboration with professors at other institutions (e.g. independent or directed studies courses), which can form an integral part of your graduate program as well as earn you course credit. However, students interested in pursuing studies with off-campus researchers under the WDA should anticipate roughly 6-months of pre-planning before coursework begins, since application requirements vary among the aforementioned institutions. See Michelle for help with WDA requests.
Biology Graduate Symposium

The Annual Biology Graduate Symposium (BIOL 560) is a required course for all graduate students. The symposium takes place during the fall reading break in November and is organized by a committee of graduate students. Students are required to participate every year of their program except when exempted by the Graduate Advisor. Students are required to present every year, except if they have been in the program less than eight months. Watch for emails that begin to circulate in mid-to-late September. Details such as what is required, when it is required and exemption criteria will be provided.

Your Supervisory Committee

The role of your supervisory committee is to help to guide you through the academic part of your program. Your committee should meet annually to evaluate your progress. Changes to the committee membership are handled by your supervisor, in consultation with the Grad Advisor, but remember that you also have a say in deciding who should be on your committee. It is up to you to ensure you have one committee meeting per year. This is for your benefit. To set up a meeting, pass it by your supervisor and then see Michelle who will contact all your committee members and arrange a date, time and place. Typically, you should have a small presentation prepared (10-15 min talk, visuals help) for each meeting to update your members on your progress in the past year; it is strongly recommended that you also provide your committee with a progress report at least 4 days before the committee meeting. Remember to provide Michelle with a copy of your progress report for your file. If you encounter difficulty in getting your committee to meet with you, contact the Grad Advisor.

To fulfill the Faculty of Graduate Studies requirements for committee composition, ALL MEMBERS of a committee must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and must hold a PhD (Michelle can check the FML list).

The Department of Biology requires the following compositions for graduate supervisory committees --

MSc Committee: requires 3 members in total, an outside member is not required

PhD Committee: requires 4 members in total, an outside member is required (an outside member can be someone outside the Dept of Biology or UVic)

There are a variety of combinations available to fulfill committee requirements. If you wish to have someone on your committee who does not meet the criteria stated above, see Michelle for options. Remember that large committees can increase the difficulty of scheduling meetings, and lead to longer meetings and longer defenses.

It is an expectation that all committee members participate in every committee meeting, candidacy exam and oral defense.

It is also useful to consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies guidelines governing the supervisory relationship. https://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/research/home/yoursupervisor/relationship/

Trouble with your supervisor?

If you encounter troubles with your supervisor that cannot be easily resolved, then you should seek additional help or advice – please see the Graduate Advisor.
Candidacy Exam – Departmental Policy

Background: Students in the Biology Ph.D. program are termed “provisional Ph.D. candidates” until they have successfully passed the candidacy examination. The examination must be held within 21 months of a student entering the Ph.D. program. Students transferring from the M.Sc. to the Ph.D. program must complete the exam by the end of their second term as Ph.D. students. An extension of these time limits may be granted under exceptional circumstances with the permission of the graduate advisor. All provisional Ph.D. students must register in BIOL693 (Candidacy Examination) in the term in which they are sitting the candidacy examination.

The purpose of the examination is to test the student's understanding of material considered essential to the completion of a Ph.D. and to assess the student's competence to do research that will culminate in the Ph.D. dissertation. As such, it will consist of preparation of a thesis proposal followed by an oral examination on material considered necessary for successful completion of a Ph.D. in the student’s subject area.

Pre-examination supervisory committee meeting: At least 3 months prior to the candidacy exam the supervisory committee will meet with the student to set a date for the exam and provide the student with verbal guidelines for what material will be covered. The material to be examined will be that considered necessary background for the student to successfully complete a Ph.D. in his/her subject area (see examples below), and thus includes everything discussed in the thesis proposal.

The thesis proposal: The thesis proposal will outline a research plan for the Ph.D. thesis project and should not exceed 10 single spaced pages (excluding references and figures). The proposal should follow the format of a grant proposal by (i) providing the scientific background and rationale for the proposed research, (ii) presenting hypotheses and/or questions to be addressed, (iii) identifying research objectives, and (iv) proposing the methodology for undertaking the research that will constitute the thesis. A brief discussion of preliminary results may be included, if appropriate. The thesis proposal must be provided to the entire committee at least three weeks prior to the candidacy exam. Any committee member who requires revisions to the proposal before it can be defended must notify the graduate advisor at least one week prior to the scheduled date of the examination. In this case the examination will be postponed, and the student will be given three weeks to submit a revised proposal. The rescheduled examination will take place not more than two weeks following submission of the revised proposal. Any committee member who wishes to delay an examination to allow for revision of the proposal will consult with the student’s academic supervisor and at least one other member of the examining committee before making the request. If no committee members require revisions, the proposal is deemed suitable for examination.

The examination: The exam is chaired by the Biology Graduate Advisor or a faculty member of the Biology Graduate Studies Committee if the Graduate Advisor is unavailable. The examination committee consists of the student’s Ph.D. supervisory committee. Normally the candidacy examination is closed to all except the supervisory committee and chair of the examination. The candidacy exam starts with a brief (~15 minutes) presentation by the student that provides the background for the project, updates the committee on the research carried out to date, and introduces the proposed future research. The exam proceeds with a round of oral questions from the supervisory committee, with the supervisor(s) being the last to question the student in each round. There may be more than one round of questions, although the entire exam does not normally exceed two hours. Questions are aimed at determining the student’s understanding of background knowledge required to undertake the proposed research, and on
any other related subject areas (e.g. a demonstrated knowledge of the historical context of the field, the ability to design clear experiments, an understanding of the advantages/limitations of relevant methods, etc.).

At the end of the examination, the student will leave the room and the chair will then ask each member of the committee to review the performance of the student and assign a grade of pass, fail, or adjourn. Reasons to adjourn the exam include but are not limited to: further work is required or the thesis proposal is acceptable but the student has failed the oral portion of the exam.

**Possible outcomes:** There are three possible outcomes to the candidacy exam.

**Pass** - The student receives no more than one vote of either fail or adjourn. Candidates who pass the exam will have successfully advanced to Ph.D. candidacy and will continue in the program.

**Fail** - Candidates receiving two or more votes of fail will be required to withdraw from the Ph.D. program.

**Adjourn** - The student receives either (a) one vote of fail and one or more votes of adjourn, or (b) more than one vote of adjourn. In such cases the candidate will be offered the opportunity to take a second (and final) candidacy exam within three months. In the event of a second exam, the candidate will not be required to revise his/her thesis proposal but will be given a second opportunity to defend the proposal and to demonstrate suitable background and competence for successful completion of a Ph.D. If the student does not pass the second exam, he/she will be required to withdraw from the Ph.D. program.

**Departmental Seminars**

Graduate students and faculty are expected to attend Departmental seminars. The Department budgets money to bring in speakers from various institutions because this helps strengthen our contacts. Being an island university has its drawbacks, one of which is that we are not on the main circuit for speakers travelling to the west coast (compared to UBC or SFU). The seminars are consequently an important avenue to the outside world and should be treated as a worthy bonus in departmental life. Unless otherwise advertised, the seminar takes place every Friday afternoon at **2:30pm in MSB Building 150 or 160** from September to April.

**Improving Spoken and Written English for Foreign Students**

Foreign students who have TOEFL marks less than 700 should consider improving their written or spoken English, as this will help them significantly when it comes to presenting seminars and writing a thesis. In addition, graduate students with TOEFL scores of less than 700 should upgrade their skills in both written and spoken English before accepting a teaching assistantship. We recommend that you consider the offerings in the University Extension program.
TRAVEL AND CONFERENCES

Student Travel Grant Policy

The Faculty of Graduate Studies provides funding to partially cover the cost of travel for both research and conferences. The Biology Department also provides $50 per student per fiscal year for those presenting either a talk or a poster at a conference. Only one travel grant application form is required to apply for both monies from Graduate Studies and money from Biology. If you would like to apply for the $50 departmental travel fund (in addition to the GS travel grant), please ensure you bring the Travel Grant Application form to Michelle prior to submitting it to Graduate Studies. The department will not accept the application after your travel.

Here's the link to the travel grant application form:
https://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/assets/docs/docs/RevisedOct%202014%20Travel%20Grant%20APPLICATION_REGS.pdf

Graduate Studies allocates travel grant money for each month and this money is distributed on a first-come first-serve basis. Some months experience a heavier demand, so apply as soon as possible. Please note that first time applicants are considered first.

In addition to these, there are often society or group awards from the organizing body of the conference. You must apply well in advance for these. If there is an important society in your field of study, we advise that you get a student membership. One of the benefits of membership is being aware of such awards. Some societies will, if you are one of the individuals selected, pay for the entire costs of your trip. Michelle can provide you with a letter confirming student status which you may need for this purpose.

Travel Expense Reimbursement Claim form

To be reimbursed for your travel and conference expenses, you must submit a ‘Travel Expense Reimbursement Claim form’ when you return from your trip. You must do so within 60 days of your travel. You can find the form on-line from the Accounting website at http://www.uvic.ca/vpfo/accounting/assets/docs/acctpayable/TER.pdf. Use only one claim form to claim your expenses. If you have applied for the departmental contribution, fill out the form and bring it to Michelle. She will obtain the signature required for the departmental contribution. The expense claim form is then sent to the FGS for them to process and then forwarded to Accounting. If you ONLY apply for the FGS travel grant, you can submit the form to the FGS directly after you complete the form. You will eventually be reimbursed. It can take some time.

Some Tips for Travel Claim

Since most graduate students are not in a position to carry the costs that accompany long distance flights and registration fees, we advise that you see your supervisor about getting an advance from their account to cover these expenses for you.

Receipts must be provided for registration expenses, lodging, and ground transport (gas, rentals, taxis, public transport etc.).

Make a scanned copy of all your receipts for your records. Leave the original claim form and your original receipts with Michelle.
DEPARTMENT FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

The Biology Department has a number of facilities available for faculty and graduate students. For the sake of clarity and to prevent ambiguity, the general rule of thumb is that these facilities exist for research purposes only. University facilities and equipment purchased or supported by taxpayers’ funds should never be used for personal and/or unrelated activities, nor should they be extended to outside interests without having been cleared by the Chair of the Department.

Building hours are 7:00 am to 10:00 pm Monday to Friday. Access after hours or on weekends is by key only. Keys are signed out in the Biology General Office. You need to have a form signed by your supervisor; a $5.00 deposit per key is required and is reimbursed when the key is returned. Please, never lend your keys and report lost keys to the Biology Office immediately. Lost keys can be replaced but the deposit increases to $10 per key.

Advanced Imaging Laboratory

The Imaging Lab (CUN 057 / 250-721-7134 http://web.uvic.ca/ail) has cameras, inverted, upright and stereo microscopes for visible light and epi-fluorescence, video equipment, computing equipment including slide and flatbed scanners and colour printers. When possible, equipment should be booked in advance. Accounts are usually held by the supervisor, so projected expenses should be approved beforehand. Use and materials consumed must be recorded against the PI’s name. Heather Down (hdown@uvic.ca) is available to provide some assistance, but graduate students are generally expected to do all their own graphics and imaging work. This is an excellent resource for printing conference posters, making PowerPoint slides, and other imaging requirements.

Animal Care/Aquatic Facility

If your research requires animal care facilities, then your research program must first be approved by the University’s Animal Care Committee. The application can only be submitted by your supervisor.

Animal Care contact:
Dr. Michele Martin, Veterinary Director 250-853-3694 or acsvet@uvic.ca

Aquatic Facility contact: Mr. Brian Ringwood 250-721-7139 or acsaqua@uvic.ca

Science Stores (Petch Bldg, Room 168 / 250-721-8853)

Supplies for research purposes are restricted by individual faculty research accounts. Provision of materials is entirely up to the individual supervisor. It is important to discuss exactly which supplies and materials a grant holder is willing to cover to avoid misunderstandings.
Computing

Graduate students can obtain a Netlink ID account for email (and other computing needs) for the duration of their program. This can be done on-line at http://netlink.uvic.ca. If you have trouble with computers supported by the university, or with software which is supported by a site license, you may wish to contact the Computer Help Desk of the Department of Computing Services (250-721-7687).

Courier

The department and university use a number of courier services. Choose the service most appropriate to the destination and the price that the account holder (your supervisor) is willing to pay. There are a few options to choose from -- cheap 3 and 4 day cross-continental couriers, as well as expensive next day ones. All courier packages are sent from Science Stores (Petch Room 168). You will need an account number from your supervisor.

EM Lab - Electron Microscope

Access is for graduate students who either have a background in electron microscopy or who have successfully completed the appropriate graduate courses. Charge-backs are made to individual faculty member’s accounts. Present a projection of microscope costs to the faculty member who is going to pay, before your project begins. To use this facility, contact Brent Gowan in CUN 065 (bgowen@uvic.ca or 250-721-7132).

Fax

The departmental FAX machine (1-250-721-7120) may be used for business purposes. To send a fax, please check with the Biology Office staff. Incoming faxes are put directly into the appropriate mailbox, so if you are expecting one, check your mailbox first before asking the office staff. Be sure to ask the sender to clearly put your name on the incoming fax.

Greenhouse Facilities

The Bev Glover Greenhouse Research Facility is a state-of-the-art complex of 6 greenhouses, 16 growth chambers and wet and dry labs. It is administered by the Centre for Forest Biology. For access, contact the secretary of the Forest Biology program, Diane Gray (dgray2@uvic.ca or 250-721-7119).

Herbarium

Collections in the UVic Herbarium are available for student use for plant identification and plant taxonomic studies. Loans of material from herbaria around the world can be arranged through the curator, Dr. Gerry Allen (250-721-7110 or gallen@uvic.ca).
Mail

The Biology Office staff will sort incoming mail, which comes once per day (9:30 am or thereabouts). Graduate students pick up their mail from the alphabetized slots (yellow labels) in the Biology Office. Outgoing mail service may only be used for research purposes. Do not put envelopes with stamps on them in the outgoing mail boxes from the office, there are appropriate mail drop boxes on campus for this purpose.

Photocopying

Access to photocopying is by faculty account, and is therefore at the discretion of individual faculty members. To set up an account see Laura or Chantal. There are two photocopiers in the department, one in the Biology Office in Cunningham, and another just outside the office door. The office photocopiers have prioritized usage - office or teaching use is first and foremost, preceding research requirements and student needs. Personal use for non-research purposes is forbidden.

Service Lab - Electronics

Located in CUN 163. The technician, Mike Delsey (mdelsey@uvic.ca or 250-721-7116), handles the departmental electronics. Access to this service is by a work order, which must be approved by your supervisor. Work orders are obtained from the Service Lab.

Service Lab - Mechanical and Wood Working

Work should be referred to the Chemistry Lab (mechanical, glass and instrument shops) or the Physics Lab (mechanical and electronics).

MSSV John Strickland

For information on booking ship time contact Administrative Officer, Dean of Science Office (sciadmin@uvic.ca or 250-721-7060). The Strickland is operated by Captain Ken Brown. A valid FAST account and approval from your supervisor is required at the time of booking.

University Library Reps

If you wish to order monographs or books, have your supervisor make a request to Dr. Francis Juanes (juanes@uvic.ca or 250-721-6227).

Vehicles

The Department keeps a vehicle available for research and teaching purposes which can be booked from the Biology Office. Payment for these activities is from research or course accounts. You must provide a valid FAST account from your supervisor when picking up the key from the Biology Office. Day rates and mileage rates are subject to change without notice. Private use is forbidden. Check with the office staff to sign out the vehicle.
SAFETY

Safety in the Lab and in the Field

You are required to obtain relevant training on occupational health and safety, such as WHMIS and Biosafety courses. These are offered by the university through the Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Environment. http://ohs.uvic.ca/

Please consult with your supervisor to determine which courses you need to take (i.e. handling radioactive chemicals, hazardous chemicals, etc.).

Radioactive Chemicals

To handle, use and dispose of radioactive chemicals you must take and pass a course given by Occupational Health and Safety. You can only use these chemicals in approved locations. You are obliged to wear lab coats. Lab coats are not to be worn outside the lab.

Hazardous Chemicals

If you are handling any hazardous chemicals then you must take a Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) course offered by the university, http://ohs.uvic.ca/training/index.html. You must know how to store and dispose of any chemicals that you may be required to use. If in doubt, contact Occupational Health and Safety (250-721-8879). You are obliged to wear lab coats. Lab coats are not to be worn outside the lab.

Accidents

You must report EVERY ACCIDENT to Chantal Laliberté in the Biology Office, no matter how trivial. This includes ‘near-misses’ where a piece of equipment or infrastructure comes close to injuring someone and warrants investigation by the safety committee.

Unless unavoidable, you should not work alone in labs. If you do, keep the number for Campus Security posted nearby (7599). Make sure you know where first aid kits are kept.

For accidents/injuries involving no time loss and/or medical expense, the incident is recorded in an Accident Record Book when you report it to Tanya.

Those students paid through the university (e.g. NSERC scholarships administered through the university, RA monies, TA monies, etc.), are covered by the Workers Compensation Board of British Columbia (WCB). For accidents/injuries involving time loss and/or medical expense, the department head/designate completes WCB Form 7 and sends it to the Occupational Health, Safety and Environment (OHSE) office. Accident investigators will complete an Accident Investigation Report. The injured employee (student) completes WCB Form 6A. All forms are returned to OHSE and forwarded to WCB.

Students that are being paid via graduate student support stipends (GSSP) are not covered by WCB as this money is not a salary.
Biohazard Work, *E. coli*, Recombinant Work

If you are working with a microorganism and carrying out recombinant work, or with an organism which requires containment, then you must include your research description in your supervisor's application to the University's Biosafety Committee. You are obliged to wear lab coats. Lab coats are not to be worn outside the lab.

Scientific Diving

The Scientific Diving Program is based on the Canadian Associate of Underwater Science (CAUS) regulations and is administered by the Marine Safety Committee. This program assists researchers in safely performing underwater studies using the various forms of diving as a scientific tool.

The scientific diving program is outlined in the Uvic Guide for Scientific Diving Safety ([http://ohs.uvic.ca/research_safety/scientificdivingpolicy.pdf](http://ohs.uvic.ca/research_safety/scientificdivingpolicy.pdf)).

In order to participate in scientific diving you must register to become a scientific diver. You must also complete a project proposal form before beginning your scientific diving project. For more information, please contact OHSE at ohs@uvic.ca or 250-721-8971.

THE END