

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
GRADUATE STUDIES HANDBOOK

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PREFACE

The intent of this handbook is to make available a ready reference covering current rules, regulations, and procedures governing graduate programs and students in these programs in the Department of Biological Sciences at Northern Illinois University. It is expected that each graduate student and faculty member in the Department become familiar with and abide by the established departmental and University policies outlined in the handbook. If a situation or question arises that does not appear to be covered by the material included herein, or a clearer interpretation of an established policy is required, you should consult with the [Director of Graduate Studies](#) or a member of the Graduate Committee or the Department Chair.

University policies are subject to change; graduate students and faculty should be aware of current regulations as set forth in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

The Graduate Committee
Department of Biological Sciences

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I. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS: MASTER OF SCIENCE

A. PROGRAM OPTIONS

Option A (thesis) - This is a research-oriented program intended primarily for a student wishing to specialize in a particular discipline within the biological sciences. A significant portion of the program involves the completion of a research investigation and the preparation of written documentation of this research effort (thesis). This option is strongly recommended for a student who wishes to gain employment in a research environment or one planning graduate study beyond the M.S. degree.

Option B (non-thesis) - This is a program designed for a student who wishes to be a generalist by taking course work in several disciplines within the biological sciences. It is appropriate for a student who wishes to gain a broad background in biological knowledge so as to qualify for those careers that require such breadth (e.g., teaching in a secondary school or community college, administration, or interpretive work in parks and nature centers).

Human Anatomy Specialization (Specialization in Human Anatomical Sciences) - This specialization is intended to prepare graduates to teach human anatomy and human physiology at the community college level. The course work is designed to provide the student with a solid background in the human anatomical sciences, including skills in the dissection of human cadavers.

The specific requirements for each option are indicated in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

B. PROGRAM TIMETABLE

Master's Thesis Option: see [BIOS MS Steps to Complete Degree](#) checklist

Master's Non-thesis Option: Discuss program requirements with the DGS and identify a Project Director from among the faculty.

Anatomical Sciences: After consultation with various members of the [anatomy faculty](#), choose who, among them, will serve as Project director.

C. COMMITTEES

An interim departmental advisor is assigned to all M.S. students admitted to the department. The name of this individual is indicated on the student's letter of admission from the Graduate School. For the majority of students, this will be their main advisor for their entire time in the department. An incoming student should meet with that advisor prior to their registration.

The departmental Graduate Committee consists of the DGS, who serves as the committee chair, and two to three elected members of the department.

Option A (Thesis Program)

- i. The student's Thesis Committee shall consist of a Chair under whose direct supervision the thesis research is to be completed, and at least two other Graduate Faculty members to be selected by the student and their advisor. In biological sciences, the comprehensive exam committee and the thesis committee are one and the same, consisting of three members, and:
- ii. At least one-half must be tenured or tenure-track faculty members at Northern Illinois University.
- iii. At least one-half of the members must be full or senior members of the graduate faculty at Northern Illinois University. Most faculty in Biological Sciences are full or senior members; consult with them for their status.
- iv. All members must belong to the graduate faculty in the student's program or a closely related one as determined by the department chair (or designee).
- v. Committee members from outside the university must be granted graduate faculty status, which is usually a routine process of requesting this status for the person with a form and submission of their CV. Obtain this form from the BIOS Graduate Administrative Assistant. Such status can be maintained even after a faculty member retires or leaves for another institution. Thus, such departures during a student's progress toward a degree need not require a student to form an entirely new committee. However, should a thesis committee need to be changed, the student in conjunction with the advisor will complete a [request to change thesis committee form](#) and submit it to the graduate secretary.
- vi. The Thesis Committee:
 1. Approves the student's Program of Courses at the departmental level
 2. Approves the thesis research proposal
 3. Conducts the Final Oral Comprehensive Examination, which includes a defense of the Thesis
 4. Judges the acceptability of the Thesis and the Final Oral Comprehensive Examination performance and makes a recommendation (by majority vote) on awarding the degree.

Option B (Non-Thesis Program)

- i. The advisor for an individual pursuing the M.S. degree under Option B will be the BIOS 770 Project Director. The BIOS 770 Project Director and the student will prepare the student's Program of Courses. With the approval of the BIOS 770 Project Director and the DGS, the student will select the members of the Final Oral Comprehensive Examination Committee. This Examination Committee will be composed of at least three Graduate Faculty members in addition to the BIOS 770 Project Director, who serves as its Chair. This committee will be formed by the time the student has earned the first 15 semester

hours to be applied toward the degree. See current graduate catalog for additional details concerning Option B requirements.

*Anatomy Specialization*_(Specialization in Human Anatomical Sciences)

- ii. The advisor for an individual pursuing the M.S. degree under Anatomy Spec. will be the Project Director. The Project Director and the student will prepare the student's Program of Courses

D. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Please see the [Graduate Catalog for Master of Science in Biological Sciences](#).

Students should meet with their thesis advisor to complete the [MS Graduate Degree Plan](#), which outlines the necessary coursework to complete the MS degree.

Students should begin their thesis research immediately. Research is integral to graduate studies. Research courses include 770 and 699. A student should take a maximum of 8 hours of 770 before taking 699, which once initiated, requires continuous enrollment.

E. REMOVAL OF DEFICIENCIES

Unless they have obtained an exception from the graduate committee, students in the M.S. program are expected to have had, prior to admission, collegiate-level courses in biological sciences, chemistry, mathematics, and physics similar to those required for the Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences at Northern Illinois University. Students lacking any of this course background on admission will have such courses declared deficiencies.

Courses listed as deficiencies on the Program of Courses should be completed according to the schedule established by the Advisor or Thesis Advisory Committee. Deficiencies in either the thesis or non-thesis option must be removed prior to the completion of the degree program.

F. LIMITATIONS OF TIME

The limitation of time for a M.S. degree is 6 years. If a M.S. student has credits that exceed this 6-year limit, these credits expire. If these credits were earned at NIU, there is a possibility to re-validate them. Contact the DGS for more information. This cannot be done with credits earned at another university.

G. COURSES FOR WHICH CREDIT IS ALLOWED

At NIU only courses which are numbered 500-798 carry credit toward the master's degree. Graduate-level courses for which there exists an undergraduate equivalent (typically courses that are offered as 400/500 classes) shall not constitute more than 50% of hours applied toward a master's degree.

Some courses numbered in the 400's carry only undergraduate credit. This is indicated in each semester's [Schedule of Classes](#). Graduate students registering in 400-level courses are responsible for ascertaining whether these courses have been approved for graduate credit.

H. STUDENT-AT-LARGE AND TRANSFER CREDIT

Although a Student-at-Large has not been admitted to a graduate degree program, it is possible that courses (with the exception of BIOS 770 or an equivalent) taken in this status may count toward fulfillment of course and credit requirements for the degree once accepted into a program. Students-at-large cannot take BIOS 770.

With the approval of the Department of Biological Sciences and the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, a maximum of 15 semester hours of transfer graduate credit may be accepted from other accredited colleges or universities toward the master's degree, provided they fall within the 6-year time limit for the degree. None of these transfer hours may be in correspondence courses. Credits toward an undergraduate degree can be used to waive requirements but cannot count toward a graduate degree. Credits earned while in a graduate program can be transferred to fulfill requirements and count toward a graduate degree.

In meeting the hour requirements for the degree, the total credit accepted in transfer from accredited institutions may not exceed 15 semester hours.

To receive consideration for work done elsewhere, the student must submit to the Graduate School an official transcript of the work to be considered for transfer and identify these courses in the appropriate [transfer approval request form](#).

I. CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION

Most students, full- and part-time, prefer to pursue an advanced degree without interruption in time. Those students who interrupt their studies should especially note the six-year maximum time period allowed to fulfill all requirements for the master's degree.

Once a student has begun work on a thesis, registration must be continuously maintained in BIOS 699 each academic term, excepting summer session, unless a leave of absence is obtained. Students availing themselves of the services of the staff or the facilities of the university in any other way that directly or indirectly relates to fulfilling degree requirements must also be registered; this excludes activities during the summer session. Students in the thesis program must also be registered in BIOS 699 during their final semester even if this is summer semester, unless they received "final approval" in the

previous semester.

J. THESIS

A student electing Option A is required to submit a thesis. This thesis is the written documentation of a research investigation they have completed under the direction of a Thesis Advisory Committee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

The thesis is submitted to the Graduate School after receiving approval from the student's Thesis Advisory Committee. The thesis must be submitted according to the instructions on the [Graduate School Website](#). The deadline date for submission of this final version of the thesis is indicated in the [Graduate School calendar](#).

After return of the final version of the thesis is approved by the Chair of the Thesis Committee, it can be submitted to the graduate school according to instructions on the Graduate School website.

A student on academic probation is not eligible to submit a thesis for acceptance by the Graduate School.

A student who has formally begun the thesis is expected to continue to progress on the research, and therefore, to register in BIOS 699 in each subsequent term, excluding summer session (unless this is the final semester), until the thesis is submitted to and formally approved by the Graduate School. Registration for this purpose may be in absentia. If circumstances prohibit continuing registration, a graduate student may request a leave of absence from the office of the dean of the Graduate School. Any student interrupting registration without obtaining a leave of absence may be dropped from the degree program upon recommendation of the Department. After a student has registered for the maximum number of hours of credit to be received for the thesis, they should register for BIOS 699 each semester for at least one credit hour until the thesis receives final approval by the Graduate School.

As stated in the APPM, previously published work and manuscripts submitted for publication may be included in a thesis fulfilling the requirements for graduate degree programs, subject to individual department and faculty approval. These may include chapters, sections of chapters, data, or the entire document authored by the degree candidate; however, the research, writing, and publication of the work must be wholly undertaken and completed while at NIU during the course of graduate study for the degree to which the thesis is submitted. The research, writing, and publication must have been performed under the supervision of a full or senior member of the graduate faculty from the major department. Most faculty members in Biology are full or senior members; ask faculty to clarify their status.

Students should also keep in mind that previously published manuscripts are copyright works. Publishers, however, routinely grant students the right to reproduce such works as part of a thesis. Typically, as a condition of this permission, publishers require that the text not be altered. A student who wishes to include a publication in a thesis should

contact the publisher directly. The bulk of a thesis could be such a publication or publications, with a separate introduction, discussion, and conclusion added.

K. EXAMINATIONS

A Final Oral Comprehensive Examination is required of all students. This examination will be conducted by the thesis committee as part of the defense.

Students must submit the results of oral defense of thesis form to the graduate school by the date specified in the graduate calendar.

II. ACADEMIC PROGRAMS: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

A. PROGRAM TIMETABLE

PhD Dissertation: see [BIOS PhD Steps to Complete Degree](#) checklist

B. COMMITTEES

Typically, students have already selected the chair of their doctoral committee prior to acceptance into the Ph.D. program. In the rare cases where the doctoral committee chair was not identified or [needs to be changed](#), the chair of the student's doctoral committee will be selected by the end of their second semester with the approval of the department chair. The student, in consultation with the chair of the doctoral committee, will nominate a doctoral committee. This committee will consist of no fewer than four members and needs to be validated by submitting a [Dissertation Committee Approval Form](#). Adjunct graduate faculty may serve on the doctoral committee. Replacements which may be required on the committee will be nominated by the student and doctoral committee chair.

Committee members from outside the university must be granted graduate faculty status, which is usually a routine process of requesting this status for the person with a form and submission of their CV. Obtain this form from the BIOS Graduate Administrative Assistant. Such status can be maintained even after a faculty member retires or leaves for another institution. Thus, such departures during a student's progress toward a degree need not require a student to form an entirely new committee. However, should a dissertation committee need to be changed, the student in conjunction with the advisor will complete a [Request to Change Doctoral Committee form](#) and submit it to the BIOS Graduate Administrative Assistant.

C. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Please see the [Graduate Catalog for Doctor of Philosophy in Biological Sciences](#).

Ph.D. students will develop a program of courses in consultation with their doctoral

advisor and committee members. Students should complete the [PhD Degree Plan](#) with their advisor and submit to the Graduate Administrative Assistant.

Transfer credit may be used only with the approval of the department and the office of the dean of the Graduate School. When allowed, the courses must have been taken within the time limitations for the doctoral degree. A MS degree can transfer as 30 semester hours. See current graduate catalog for details.

D. REMOVAL OF DEFICIENCIES

Unless they have obtained an exception from the graduate committee, students in the PhD program are expected to have had, prior to admission, collegiate-level courses in biological sciences, chemistry, mathematics, and physics similar to those required for the Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences at Northern Illinois University. Students lacking any of this course background on admission will have such courses declared deficiencies.

Courses listed as deficiencies on the Program of Courses should be completed according to the schedule established by the Advisor or Thesis Advisory Committee. Deficiencies in either the thesis or non-thesis option must be removed prior to the completion of the degree program.

E. LIMITATION OF TIME

The limitations of time for a Ph.D. is typically 9 years. If a PhD student has credits that exceed this 9-year limit, these credits expire. If these credits were earned at NIU, there is a possibility to re-validate them. Contact the DGS for more information. This cannot be done with credits earned at another university.

F. COURSES FOR WHICH CREDIT IS ALLOWED

Typically, Ph.D. students get almost all of their course credit from 770/799. At NIU only courses which are numbered 500-799 carry credit toward the Ph.D. degree.

Some courses numbered in the 400's carry only undergraduate credit. This is indicated in each semester's [Schedule of Classes](#). Graduate students registering in 400-level courses are responsible for ascertaining whether these courses have been approved for graduate credit.

G. TRANSFER CREDIT

With the approval of the Department of Biological Sciences and the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, a maximum of 30 semester hours of transfer graduate credit may be accepted from other accredited colleges or universities toward the doctoral degree,

provided they fall within the 9-year time limit for the degree. None of these transfer hours may be in correspondence courses.

In meeting the hour requirements for the degree, the total credit accepted in transfer from accredited institutions may not exceed 30 semester hours. A MS degree can transfer as 30 h. Credits earned toward an undergraduate degree can be used to waive requirement but do not count as semester hours.

To receive consideration for work done elsewhere, the student must submit to the Graduate School an official transcript of the work to be considered for transfer and identify these courses in the appropriate transfer approval request form.

H. CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Most students, full- and part-time, prefer to pursue an advanced degree without interruption in time. Those students who interrupt their studies should especially note the nine-year maximum time period allowed to fulfill all requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

Once a student has begun work on a dissertation, registration must be continuously maintained in BIOS 799 each academic term, excepting summer session (unless this is the final semester), unless a leave of absence is obtained. Students availing themselves of the services of the staff or the facilities of the university in any other way that directly or indirectly relates to fulfilling degree requirements must also be registered; this excludes activities during the summer session.

I. DISSERTATION

Each Ph.D. student must submit a dissertation, which is a written documentation of a research investigation they have completed with the approval of and under the direction of the doctoral committee in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree. The dissertation is to be a substantial contribution to knowledge in the biological sciences in which the student exhibits original scholarship. See Section III.A. PROGRAM TIMETABLE for more information about writing and submitting the dissertation. Length and format of dissertation is up to the discretion of the doctoral committee chair and committee, in consultation with the student.

As stated in the APPM, previously published work and manuscripts submitted for publication may be included in a dissertation fulfilling the requirements for graduate degree programs, subject to individual department and faculty approval. These may include chapters, sections of chapters, data, or the entire document authored by the degree candidate; however, the research, writing, and publication of the work must be wholly undertaken and completed while at NIU during the course of graduate study for the degree to which the thesis is submitted. The research, writing, and publication must have been performed under the supervision of a full or senior member of the graduate faculty from the major department.

Students should also keep in mind that previously published manuscripts are copyright

works. Publishers, however, routinely grant students the right to reproduce such works as part of a thesis. Typically, as a condition of this permission, publishers require that the text not be altered. A student who wishes to include a publication in a thesis should contact the publisher directly. The bulk of a dissertation could be such a publication or publications, with a separate introduction, discussion, and conclusion added.

J. ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

Candidacy Examinations

The student must pass a candidacy examination consisting of written and oral portions and administered by the doctoral committee. This examination will include a comprehensive coverage of the student's academic background to enable the committee to evaluate the student's potential for successful completion of the Ph.D. degree program. This examination will be taken at a time designated by the doctoral committee, but no sooner than the completion of the first 27 graduate-level semester hours and no later than the completion of the first 60 graduate credit hours, to be applied to the Ph.D. program. For a student to pass their candidacy examination, a majority of the doctoral committee must vote in the affirmative on both the written and oral portions. A student who fails this examination may, with the permission of the committee, repeat it once; the repeated examination will be at a time designated by the committee, but no sooner than the lapse of one semester and no later than eight months before granting of the degree.

According to the above requirements, the candidacy examination is normally taken some time between the end of the second year and the end of the third year in the program. The exact timing is up to the student's advisory committee but in general, the student should have completed all formal course work and should have made significant preliminary progress on their dissertation research. It is anticipated that after a student passes the candidacy examination, they will direct all of their academic effort to their dissertation research.

The written portion follows a "proposal-based" format. The primary goal is to evaluate the ability of the student to identify an interesting and significant biological problem, to formulate hypotheses or models that investigate or explain the problem and to design experiments that rigorously test the hypothesis or model. A further goal is to enable the student to attain skills and experience in preparing funding proposals to be submitted to federal, state or private funding agencies.

As a first step, the student will prepare a one-page abstract of the proposal, to be submitted to and approved by the advisory committee, prior to preparation of the full-length proposal. This abstract should contain:

- a brief, descriptive title of the proposal or problem,
- a concise summary of key evidence/experimental findings underlying the hypothesis,
- a short, focused statement of the hypothesis or model to be tested and
- a general and very brief listing of the different approaches that might be taken to test the hypothesis or model.

The committee will evaluate the abstract as approved,

- in need of minor modification (one or more areas need rethinking or modest changes), or
- in need of major revision (the committee concludes that it would be difficult to develop a high-quality proposal and extensive modification, or a new proposal topic is needed).

Once the proposal abstract is approved, the student and committee will identify an appropriate format, length, scope and timetable for preparing the full proposal. In general, proposals should conform to the format of a federal granting agency appropriate to the student's area of research. Examples include the National Institutes of Health (R15), National Science Foundation (Standard or Doctoral Dissertation Improvement grants - DDIG), USDA-NIFA Agricultural and Food Research Initiative, and EPA (STAR Graduate Fellowship).

Within the specified format of the grant proposal narrative, the proposal will be comprised of:

Primary approaches. The primary approaches will be based directly on the dissertation research of the student (this is likely to be an elaboration of a proposal previously presented to the doctoral committee).

Supporting approaches. The supporting approaches will include the description of research plans that strengthen the primary dissertation research. For example, a field-oriented study could be enhanced by molecular work, a laboratory study could be enhanced by field research, a bioinformatics study could be enhanced by laboratory experiments. The purpose of the supporting approaches is to develop research and knowledge breadth that may be favorably viewed by a grant panel. The supporting approaches will be evaluated on originality, scientific credibility and the degree of integration with the primary approaches of the proposal. The degree to which these supporting approaches are incorporated into the student's dissertation research, if at all, will be determined by the student and dissertation committee.

The student must develop the ideas and write the proposal on their own, without detailed discussion of the proposal with the major advisor or other faculty members. Students may consult faculty members for advice on specific techniques, approaches or resources, but should not discuss how those particular techniques or approaches apply to the proposed research or seek faculty feedback on written passages. Students may, however, discuss their proposed ideas with other graduate students or postdoctoral fellows.

The student should submit the proposal to all members of the examination committee at least two weeks prior to the proposed oral portion of the candidacy exam. The committee will decide, by majority vote, that the quality of the proposal is sufficient to proceed to the oral exam and will provide the student with written feedback.

The oral examination will be comprised of a presentation of the proposal by the student, followed by questions from the doctoral committee. Committee members may ask questions directly related to the proposal and questions that test the student's

understanding of areas of the biological sciences related to that of the proposal.

The committee to conduct the candidacy examination must be appointed no later than the end of the semester or term preceding the semester or term in which the student will take the examination. The Dissertation Committee (which is normally the same as the committee conducting the candidacy examination) should be formed before or shortly after the candidacy exam. The committee(s) must consist of four or more members.

Required forms are found on the Graduate School web page:

[Requesting Appointment of a Committee to Conduct the Candidacy Examination](#)

[Approve a Dissertation Committee](#)

[Report on the Results of the Candidacy Examination](#)

K. FINAL EXAMINATION (DEFENSE OF DISSERTATION).

A Final Oral Comprehensive Examination is required of all students. This examination will be conducted by the thesis committee as part of the defense.

Students must submit the results of oral defense of thesis form to the graduate school by the date specified in the graduate calendar.

III. GENERAL PROGRAM POLICIES

A. REGISTRATION

Each student should obtain a copy of the [Schedule of Classes](#) published for each semester's registration by the Office of Registration and Records and become familiar with the current registration procedures and deadline dates. This publication for the subsequent semester is sent automatically to a student currently enrolled; the spring issue is sent to one registered in the fall and the fall issue to one registered in the spring. Summer registration does not result in an automatic mailing for the subsequent fall semester. New or re-entering students may obtain the publication by addressing a request to the Graduate School or Office of Registration and Records. While a pdf of this schedule is available, students will likely prefer simply using the search functions in MYNIU.

A currently enrolled student may register for classes during the time frame indicated in the [Schedule of Classes](#). An individual enrolling for the first time as a graduate student in the Department of Biological Sciences must check with their assigned advisor prior to registering. Currently enrolled and re-entering students may also register during the period of general or late registration.

The appropriate forms and necessary procedures for registration are indicated in the [Schedule of Classes](#).

In order to register for a class which is indicated as PERM (Permit) under the Reference # in the Schedule, the student must confer with the instructor or office designated to obtain the required permission to enroll and the Reference #. If the instructor is indicated as "Staff" or no instructor is designated, consult the Department office. Students seeking a Reference # for BIOS 699, 770, or 799 (Master's Thesis, Independent Study, or Doctoral Dissertation) must request enrollment from the Graduate Administrative Assistant. Permission from the course instructor is required.

B. COURSE LOADS

A graduate student may enroll for a maximum of 12 credit hours, including audit hours, during a regular term. During the summer session, a student may enroll for a maximum of 9 credit hours.

While the nominal requirement is 9/9/6 (fall/spring/summer hours), teaching assistants can enroll for as few as 6/6/3 without filing an [underload permit](#). Further, it is our understanding that if a graduate assistant is not being paid over the summer, it is possible to not register at all. Typically, an underload permit will be used in a student's final semester when all or nearly all degree requirements have been met. Only one underload permit can be used in the fall or spring, although a second one can be used in the summer.

In planning enrollment, keep in mind the requirements for degrees (30 credit hours for a MS; 90 credit hours for a Ph.D.).

Registration for course loads in excess of those prescribed above must have prior written approval of the student's advisor. Maximum enrollment limits are established by the Graduate School. A student in good academic standing may register for up to 16 semester hours in the fall and spring semester and 13 semester hours in the summer session. Consult with the DGS concerning the procedure for petitioning for a course underload or overload.

Audited courses and undergraduate courses count toward the course load, but not toward the grade point average.

C. AUDITORS

Any graduate student may be permitted to audit one or more courses, either undergraduate or graduate, provided approval is first obtained from the instructor of the course. A student who enrolls as an auditor in a course will not receive credit. In order to have the audit recorded on the transcript (with a grade designation of "0"), the student must satisfy requirements as determined in advance between the student and the course instructor. (If those requirements are not met, the recorded grade will be "OW".)

D. GRADING SYSTEM, INCOMPLETES, GRADE APPEALS, WITHDRAWALS

For details on these topics, see the "General Regulations" in the current graduate catalog.

E. GRADUATION

A student who intends to graduate at the end of a particular term must apply through MyNIU by the graduation-application deadline for that term as stated in the Graduate School Calendar.

All requirements for a graduate degree must be completed according to the schedule mentioned above. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these deadlines.

If a student applies for graduation in a particular term but realizes that degree requirements will not be met or otherwise fails to graduate at the end of that term, the student must submit a [Deferral of Graduation Request](#). This form must be received in the Graduate School at least three months prior to the commencement date.

After a student has applied for graduation and it has been verified that all degree requirements have been completed, an official "certificate of completion" can be issued by the Graduate School to the student or to another party designated in writing by the student. Such a certificate is commonly accepted as proof of completion in advance of

issuance of the diploma and degree transcript.

F. ACADEMIC STANDING

To remain in good academic standing, a student must maintain a 3.00 GPA in all graduate course work. The GPA is computed on a cumulative basis, by dividing the total number of gradepoints by the total number of graduate credit hours that a student has completed with grades that are counted in the GPA computation. The GPA includes any graduate work a student has completed as a student-at-large, but not any work accepted in transfer from other institutions. Any course in which a student has received a grade of I, IN, W, S, OW or 0 is not included in this computation.

At the end of any term in which the cumulative GPA drops below 3.00, a student will be placed on academic probation. A student on academic probation who fails to bring the GPA to the required level upon the completion of an additional 9 credit hours of graduate work (excluding course work graded on an S/U basis but including work for which IN has been recorded, or upon any enrollment in three subsequent terms) will be academically dismissed from the Graduate School. A graduate-level student who has accumulated 6 or more semester hours of grades of C-, D, F, U, or WF in graduate course work at NIU will be academically dismissed from the Graduate School, regardless of the student's GPA. If a course is repeated, whether under the special repeat option or otherwise, the grades in both attempts will be considered in determining whether this 6-semester-hour total has been reached. A student on probation who has registered for but not completed 9 or more additional hours will not be permitted further registration until the student has removed all incompletes or NRs (grades not reported) and achieved good academic standing. A student on academic probation is not eligible to submit a thesis or dissertation for acceptance by the Graduate School.

G. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of students to know and observe all regulations and procedures relating to the program they are pursuing. Students planning to graduate should familiarize themselves with the deadlines for application for graduation and other pertinent dates. A [Graduate School Calendar](#) is available from the Graduate School.

Students must satisfy the degree requirements of the Graduate Catalog in effect at the time they are admitted to and begin course work in a degree program; or they may, with the consent of their advisor, meet graduation requirements by complying with the provisions of a later catalog. Aside from degree requirements, students are subject to the academic policies and regulations of the catalog currently in effect.

There is a university policy on [academic integrity](#). The attempt of students to present others' work as their own is a serious offense. Students found guilty of either cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination, or of assisting others in such activities, may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.

H. PROCEDURE FOR PETITIONS

At the departmental level the Graduate Committee is authorized to review requests for exceptions to departmental rules. A student wishing to petition for such an exception should direct the request to the [Director of Graduate Studies](#) (DGS).

At the University (Graduate School) level, many kinds of exceptions may be granted by the [Dean of the Graduate School](#), in exceptional circumstances. In some instances, the Graduate Council Appeals Committee is authorized to review requests for exceptions and certain appeals. Its primary authority lies in the sphere of regulations indicated in the Graduate Catalog. In special cases it may serve as an appellate body for academic matters deriving from the rules and practices of the department and college. A student wishing to bring a matter before the Graduate Council Appeals Committee should address the request to the Dean of the Graduate School. In all cases in which exceptions to university regulations are sought, the student will be expected to obtain the endorsement of the department.

Neither the departmental Graduate Committee nor the Graduate Council Appeals Committee hears grade appeals.

If a question arises as to the level at which a petition should be submitted, the student should consult the DGS or Department Chair.

I. TRANSITIONING FROM MASTER'S TO DOCTORAL PROGRAM OR VICE VERSA

Students are unable to simply transition from pursuit of a Master's degree to a Doctoral degree. Current Master's students interested in the department's doctoral degree must first successfully defend their Master's thesis, then apply for a position in the doctoral program. Anyone interested in this is encouraged to talk to their thesis advisor and the DGS for further information.

Students enrolled in the doctoral program, who wish to be considered instead for a Master's degree (in lieu of a PhD) have the option to do so, but this happens very rarely.

To receive a Master's degree after enrolling in the doctoral program, students must:

1. Consult with their doctoral dissertation advisor and the DGS on how to move forward
2. Complete all the requirements laid out in one of the Master of Science program options.

J. GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

A number of Graduate Teaching Assistantships are available to first year graduate students in the Department of Biological Sciences for the nine-month academic year,

with appointments typically commencing August 16.

Policies pertaining to teaching assistantship appointments include the following:

1. The stipend for teaching assistants is established by the department. The amount of the current stipend can be furnished by the Director of Graduate Studies or the BIOS Graduate Administrative Assistant.
2. Assistants must be graduate students in good standing on the effective dates of their appointments. Students shall have their appointments terminated if, during the term of their appointments, they (1) are academically dismissed or (2) fail to achieve good standing after one academic semester, excluding summer session, on probationary status. Any deviation from termination due to probationary status shall be possible only upon request from the major department with final approval by the office of the dean of the Graduate School.
3. An appointment for the second or successive year will be made only if the student's performance during the first or preceding year is satisfactory in all respects. Teaching performance of assistants is monitored through evaluations by students and faculty.
4. Departmental policy is to provide support as a teaching assistant to an M.S. student for no more than two academic years (four semesters), and to a Ph.D. student for no more than five academic years. Students wishing to apply for TA support beyond those amounts will need to apply to the graduate committee (by November 1st for spring and by April 1st for fall) for an extension, explaining why their graduation is delayed and timeline to completion. The graduate committee will consider extension requests but cannot guarantee funding beyond those amounts.
5. It shall be the prerogative of the Department of Biological Sciences to determine the appropriate duties of teaching assistants, within the guidelines set by the College. Teaching assistants receiving a full stipend will be expected to render not more than 20 hours of service per week, and those on half stipend not more than 10 hours per week. Teaching assistants will be required to perform duties during periods of their appointment when the University faculty is regularly on duty. Requirements for performance of duties during University recess periods or other specific times must be agreed upon in writing, in advance, preferably at the time of appointment, between teaching assistants and the employing department or cost center.
6. Teaching assistants and research assistants (students funded by outside funding sources or by sources other than teaching assistantships) are exempt from paying tuition during the period of their appointment; they pay all fees, which as of July 2019, are approximately \$140 per credit hour. Information on fees and [due dates](#) can be found at the [Bursar's Office](#).
7. As stated in the Graduate Catalog and the APPM, the nominal course enrollment requirement is 9/9/6 (fall/spring/summer hours). However, students can enroll for as few as 6/6/3 without filing an underload permit. Further, it is our understanding that if a TA is not being paid over the summer, it is possible to not register at all.

Typically, an underload permit will be used in a student's final semester when all or nearly all degree requirements have been met. Only one underload permit can be used in the fall or spring. In planning enrollment, keep in mind the requirements for degrees (30 credit hours for a MS, 90 credit hours for a Ph.D.). Students may enroll for course loads in excess of these maximum only with the approval of the Department.

8. No student holding a faculty, administrative or civil service position at Northern Illinois University may concurrently hold a teaching assistantship. Teaching assistants may not accept additional employment in any capacity with Northern Illinois University except by permission of the office of the dean of the Graduate School.
9. An appointment as a teaching assistant does not give faculty status; an assistant's status is that of graduate student. As such, the assistant is expected to abide by regulations pertaining to such students. Graduate teaching assistants must, however, perform their teaching duties in accord with the professional ethics appropriate for members of the teaching faculty.
10. Graduate teaching assistants are assigned each semester to specific courses by the departmental Chair and DGS. Assistants are invited to inform the DGS of their course preferences for a teaching assignment; faculty members are also afforded the opportunity to request assistants for particular courses. Each course is under the direction of a specified faculty member, to whom the teaching assistants in that course are directly responsible. Students in the course will perform an evaluation of each teaching assistant each semester and teaching assistants should seek the input of the course instructor on their performance as well. Teaching assistants share additional duties (e.g., examination proctoring) as departmental needs arise.
11. Each teaching assistant is required to inform the department office of at least three hours per week scheduled as their office hours.

K. GRADUATE AND DISSERTATION COMPLETION FELLOWSHIPS

Graduate School and Dissertation Completion Fellowships are available to a very limited number of outstanding master's and doctoral graduate students, respectively, throughout the University. Faculty may submit nominations to the Department Graduate Committee, which makes recommendations to the Graduate School. Final selection is by a committee of the University's Graduate Council. These appointments are normally for the academic year; thus, faculty nominations are often made in January and sent to the graduate school in February of the preceding year.

L. THE TERWILLIGER SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Each spring the departmental Graduate Committee recommends to the Dean of the Graduate School a recipient of the George L. Terwilliger Scholarship Award. The Terwilliger award is presented annually to an outstanding graduate student in Biological

Sciences in honor of Prof. Terwilliger (1904-1976). Dr. Terwilliger was a member of the departmental faculty from 1925 to 1968 and served as department head from 1952 to 1964. Nominations from the faculty for the awards are received by the Graduate Committee early each spring semester.

M. TRAVEL GRANTS

Students may apply for funds through the Department and the graduate school to travel to conferences. It's best to submit applications for such funding 7 weeks prior to their expected travel, to allow the Department and the College time to process the application. More instructions, including eligibility can be found on the Graduate School website under [Graduate Student Travel Grant Application](#).

N. OTHER FINANCIAL AID

Students in financial need should consult the Student Financial Aid Office to ascertain eligibility for other sources of support. Many grant and scholarship opportunities are available, and students should consult with their advisor for opportunities suited to their field.

O. DESK SPACE

The Department strives to provide desk space for each graduate teaching assistant. A teaching assistant should check first with their research advisor and if no desk space is available the DGS should be so informed. Other graduate students may request a desk from the DGS and assignment will be made on space-available basis.

P. KEYS

Graduate students may obtain university keys to rooms in Montgomery Hall as their approved activities may require. To obtain keys, see the office staff in room 349. A refundable deposit is required for each key; the key must be returned as soon as it is no longer needed, whereupon a refund of the deposit is initiated. University keys may not be loaned or duplicated, and if lost must be reported immediately. According to state law, a person who allows another person unauthorized entrance into a secured area may be prosecuted as an accessory before the fact.

Q. USE OF UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Graduate students may not obligate the Department of Biological Sciences for any costs unless written permission is obtained from the individual authorized to control budget. This pertains to ordering materials and to requesting services (e.g., interlibrary loan,

photocopying, equipment repair, computer use, art/photo) that involve a charge.

R. COMMUNICATIONS

Each graduate student will be assigned a mailbox in room 348, adjacent to the faculty mailboxes. The proper university address for receiving mail is simply Department of Biological Sciences, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2861 (without a building name or room number indicated). Graduate students may have mail of a professional nature sent to them at this address. Each graduate student will also be assigned an e-mail account. Teaching assistants, especially, should monitor their e-mail and mailboxes daily to receive messages in a timely fashion. Students that are supported on Teaching Assistantships will have two email addresses – one for teaching (called the AID) and one as a student (called the ZID). Especially those with AIDs need to ensure they check both email addresses.

S. BIOLOGY GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

The Department of Biological Sciences has a Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA) elected annually by graduate students at an open meeting.

T. PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES

Within the Department is a chapter of the Phi Sigma Society, a national honor society in the biological sciences.

Northern Illinois University also has a chapter of Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society. Students demonstrating the ability to conduct significant research may be nominated for membership or associate membership in Sigma Xi.

IV. UNIVERSITY SERVICES AND REGULATIONS

A. TUITION AND FEES

Estimate tuition and fees with the [NIU Planning and Cost Estimator](#). Tuition waivers do not exempt students from paying fees.

B. LOANS

Contact Student [Financial Aid and Scholarship Office](#).

C. STUDENT SUPPORT AND SERVICES

As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can negatively impact your learning, such as anxiety, depression, interpersonal or sexual violence, difficulty eating or sleeping, loss/grief, and/or alcohol/drug problems. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and affect your ability to participate in day-to-day activities. In order to support you during such challenging times, Northern Illinois University provides a number of confidential resources to all enrolled students, including Counseling and Consultation Services 815-753-1206, Advocacy Services for Sexual Assault, Dating Violence and Stalking Support 815-753-1206 [24-Hour Crisis Assistance: Public Safety at 815-753-1212], and Services for Students with Disabilities (drc@niu.edu) or phone: 815-753-1303.

If you are in need of accommodation, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located in the Campus Life Building, Suite 180, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu.

D. FOOD PANTRY

If you are struggling to feed yourself or your family, you are not alone. NIU has a food pantry that is open Thursdays 5:30-7:30pm to anyone with an NIU OneCard that doesn't have an NIU meal plan. It is located on the south side of Chick Evans Field House. To contact the pantry, call 815-753-1421, or visit their [website](#).

E. VETERANS' ASSISTANCE

Contact [Military and Post-Traditional Student Services](#).

F. CODE OF ETHICS FOR PUBLICATION

NIU strives for the highest level of research integrity. If research misconduct is suspected it is important to report the event to the [Research Integrity Officer](#). Research at Northern Illinois University has traditionally and routinely been performed at a high level of quality and scholarly integrity.

Authorship

Responsible authorship is necessary to academic integrity. Scholarly integrity and the responsible conduct and reporting of research are essential for maintaining public trust in the research enterprise and for community benefit from research discovery. Scholarly publications include (and are not limited to) books, articles, abstracts, presentations at professional meetings, and grant applications. This includes other dissemination of written findings, thoughts and analyses.

There are three conditions that typically qualify a researcher to be eligible for authorship:

1. Substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
2. Drafting or revising the article or contributing critically important intellectual content to the article; and
3. Final approval of the version to be published.

Any researcher that has satisfied the first and second conditions must be given the opportunity to approve the version to be published and must have the opportunity to be included as an author. All individuals who qualify for authorship should be listed. However, any person can refuse to be an author if (s)he elects to do so. Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. Multi-center projects should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript. When submitting a group authored manuscript, the corresponding author should clearly indicate the preferred citation and should clearly identify all individual authors as well as the group name. Other members of the group may be named in the acknowledgements. Procurement of funding, collection of data or general supervision of the research group in the absence of the above criteria does not alone justify authorship. If a student feels that the above ethical considerations have been violated by a faculty member, a written signed complaint may be filed with the Chair of the Department. If students feel the matter has not been satisfactorily addressed, they should contact the university [Ombudsperson](#) or [Office of Research Compliance, Integrity, and Safety](#).

G. CODE OF ETHICS FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is unwelcome, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature (such as sexual advances or gender harassment) that unreasonably interferes with or limits a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the University's educational programs, activities, and/or employment. Sexual harassment may be based on a power differential, the creation of a hostile environment (reasonably severe conduct that is sufficiently pervasive to have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work or educational performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or educational environment), or retaliation. If you are being sexually harassed, you can report it to a [confidential resource](#), the [Title IX Director](#) or the [Department of Police and Public Safety](#).

H. DISCRIMINATION

In accordance with applicable statutes and regulations, NIU is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, religion, age, physical and mental disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, political affiliation, or any other factor unrelated to professional qualifications, and will comply with all applicable federal and state statutes, regulations and orders pertaining to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity and affirmative action. For further information or to report any incidents, please visit the [Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity](#) website.