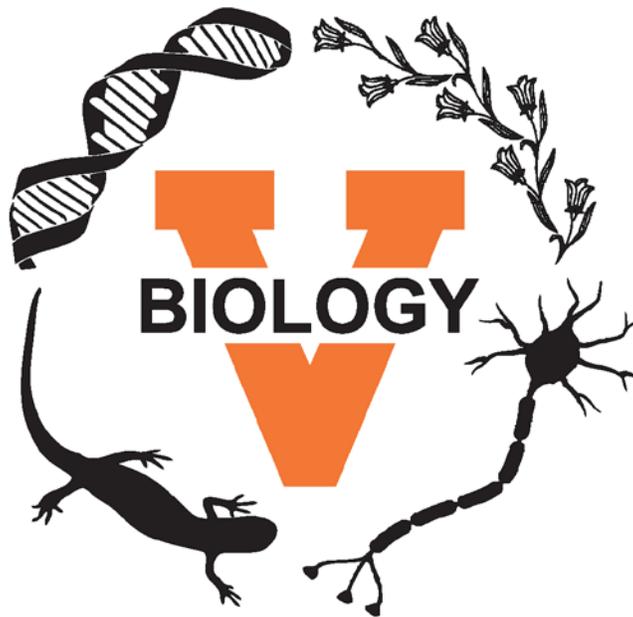


**UNIVERSITY
OF
VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY**



**GRADUATE STUDENT
HANDBOOK**

Revised July 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ph.D. DEGREE PROGRAM IN BIOLOGY

STUDENT ADVISING AND SUPERVISION	3
I. Entering Students	
II. The Major Professor (Ph.D. Advisor)	
III. The Dissertation Committee	
ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS for the Ph.D. degree	4
I. First Year Courses	
II. First Year Lab Rotations	
III. Formal Coursework	
IV. Colloquia, Seminar, and Topical Research Courses	
V. Other Courses or Training	
VI. Non-Topical Research	
OTHER REQUIREMENTS	6
I. Teaching	
II. Teaching Assistantship Requirements and Evaluation	
III. Residency	
IV. Student Participation in Departmental Activities	
ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE STUDENT PROGRESS	6
I. First Year Evaluation	
II. Second Year Qualifying Examination	
III. Annual Progress Evaluation Beginning in the Third Year	
THE DISSERTATION AND ITS DEFENSE	8
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	8
MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAMS IN BIOLOGY	
M.S. AND M.A. PROGRAMS	9
I. Student Advising	
II. Academic Requirements	
III. Residency Requirements	
IV. Student Participation in Departmental Activities	
V. Master's Thesis Committee	
VI. The Master's and Its Defense	
VII. Title of the Degree	
VIII. Financial Support	
M.A. WITH SPECIALIZATION IN CONSERVATION BIOLOGY	11
MOUNTAIN LAKE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM	11
MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING (M.A.T.) PROGRAM	12

Ph.D. PROGRAM IN BIOLOGY

STUDENT ADVISING AND SUPERVISION

I. Entering Students

Prior to the beginning of the fall semester, entering graduate students will participate in a departmental orientation with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Students new to the program will also meet with the DGS to formulate a program of study for their first academic year. The DGS serves as an advisor to all graduate students until they select their dissertation advisor (Major Professor) at the end of their first academic year. The Director of Graduate Studies will schedule a meeting with each first-year student at the end of the fall semester for guidance in planning for the spring semester. A petition to request academic credit for up to 2 relevant graduate-level courses totaling up to 8 credit hours that were taken as part of graduate training at another institution should be made at the beginning of the first enrolled semester by email to the Director of Graduate Studies and the graduate program coordinator.

II. The Major Professor (Ph.D. Advisor)

Each student will eventually choose one professor in the Biology Department (or an adjunct faculty member with a courtesy appointment in Biology whose primary appointment is in another department, see below) to serve as their principal mentor and advisor for the duration of their graduate studies. The choice of this Major Professor is by mutual agreement between the student and professor and is usually made at the end of the spring semester of the first year (typically by May 1), after the student's final laboratory rotation. Students who enter the program with a Masters degree are only formally required to complete one rotation and may select a Major Professor at the end of their first semester. Students inform the DGS of their choice of Major Professor, who then solicits confirmation from the selected Major Professor. Either party can terminate this agreement. In such a case, both student and professor shall provide written notice to the DGS. With the guidance of the Major Professor, the student develops a research program appropriate for a doctoral dissertation. The student completes this research program with direction from the Major Professor and the Dissertation Committee, who together guide the student's research, evaluate progress toward completion of the dissertation, and assesses the suitability of the body of work for a Ph.D. degree.

If the primary faculty appointment of the Major Professor is in a department other than Biology, then the Chair of the Department of Biology must approve the student's choice of a Major Professor. In these cases, the Director of Graduate Studies will prepare a letter of agreement defining the financial arrangements for the student. This letter must be signed by the student's Major Professor, by the Chairs of both the Major Professor's Department and the Department of Biology, and by the Director of Graduate Studies in Biology. This agreement will become part of the student's departmental file and commonly stipulates that all future student expenses (including stipend/wages, tuition, and health insurance) are the responsibility of the Major Professor or, should funds be unavailable, of the Major Professor's department. Students who select a Major Professor holding a primary appointment in a department other than Biology are still eligible for support as Graduate Teaching Assistants in Biology, but are not eligible for GSAS Fellowships provided through Biology beyond their first year.

III. The Dissertation Committee

By the end of January of the second academic year, the student and their Major Professor choose four additional Graduate Faculty at the University, in disciplines relevant to the area of dissertation research, to serve together with the Major Professor as the Dissertation Committee. At least three of the five faculty members on the Dissertation Committee, including the Major Professor, must carry appointments in the Department of Biology. One member of the Dissertation Committee must be a Graduate School of Arts & Sciences or BIMS-affiliated faculty member appointed in a department other than the Department of Biology (this committee member is also known as the Dean's representative). Faculty members who have a joint appointment in Biology and in another department are not eligible to serve as the Dean's representative. One member of the Dissertation Committee who is appointed in the Department of Biology, other than the Major Professor, will be designated as the First Reader. In consultation with the Graduate Committee, the DGS approves the composition of each Dissertation Committee at the time the Dissertation Committee is assembled and when changes in the composition of the

Dissertation Committee are requested. Students must notify the DGS and graduate program coordinator of their committee members by the end of January of their second year, but are encouraged to do so earlier.

The First Reader serves as the chairperson of the Dissertation Committee and chairs the Qualifying Examination, required annual progress meetings, and the Dissertation Defense. After each of these meetings, the First Reader will submit to the Director of Graduate Studies a summary of the meeting/exam/defense highlighting the student's progress and the Committee's recommendations and expectations. Standard forms for summarizing the Qualifying Exam and annual progress meeting are available on the Biology website. The First Reader also selects a Second Reader from the Dissertation Committee to help review the Dissertation Proposal prior to its distribution to the entire Dissertation Committee in advance of the Qualifying Examination.

The Dissertation Committee serves as the Examination Committee for the qualifying examination and dissertation defense. It also serves as an advisory body to the student during the tenure of her/his graduate studies; students are required to meet annually, or more frequently as needed, with their Dissertation Committee. It is the student's responsibility to schedule these meetings to ensure that they remain in good standing in the graduate program. Students should schedule these meetings several months in advance to ensure availability of their committees.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS for the PH.D. DEGREE

I. Formal Course Work

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) requires the completion of no less than 72 hours of graduate credit, of which a minimum of 24 must be as topical (i.e., graded) credit hours. The remaining 48 credit hours usually consist of non-topical research credits. The 24 topical credit hours include First Year Courses (BIMS 7100, BIOL 8250, and BIOL 8270), laboratory rotations (BIOL 9910 and BIOL 9920), five graded lecture and/or laboratory courses, and one colloquium or journal club course. The five graded lecture/lab courses must be at the graduate level (5000-level courses or above) and fulfill a minimum of 3 credit hours each. Special exceptions include: the BIMS 6000 core course at 10 credit hours, which will count as 2 graded courses; the 6-week BIMS modular courses (2 credits), which each count as 0.5 graded lecture courses; and the spring semesters of BIOL 8082/4 Advanced Ecology & Evolution (2 credits), which each count as 0.5 graded courses. Other 2-credit courses may be allowed to count toward the five graded lecture/lab courses by vote of the Graduate Committee after petitioning the DGS. Enrollment in BIOL 9995, Topical Research in Biology, is limited to a maximum of 6 credit hours. Credit for up to 8 hours of relevant graduate-level course work taken after completion of the undergraduate degree at this or other institutions may be granted upon successful petition to the DGS and the Graduate Committee in first semester of enrollment, and can be used to satisfy up to two of the five required graded lecture/lab electives. Regardless of the area of research interest and specialization, each graduate student is urged to seek a broad background in the biological sciences by selecting a diversity of courses.

The Department expects that the 24 topical credit hours will be completed by the end of the student's 3rd semester (i.e., Fall of the 2nd year), with the exception of a half semester of BIOL 8082/4 Advanced Ecology & Evolution in the 4th semester. Students must register for no less than 12 credit hours per semester to be considered a full-time student. Requests to enroll in more than 12 credit hours must be approved by the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Students must submit this request by filling out the standard course action form and the DGS must also secure approval from the Assistant Dean via email. Prior to completing coursework, students may enroll in up to 12 credit hours of Non-Topical Research, Doctoral Prep (BIOL 9998). After formal coursework is completed, students usually register for 12 credit hours of Non-Topical Research, Doctoral (BIOL 9999).

Almost all graduate-level topical courses are offered on a graded basis. The following set of grade symbols is used by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences: A+ (4.0), A (4.0), A- (3.7); B+ (3.3), B (3.0), B- (2.7), C (0.0). According to Graduate School regulations, a grade of B- is the lowest satisfactory grade for graduate credit. Furthermore, students must maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 each academic year in order to be considered by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences as making satisfactory progress toward a degree. Although a grade of B- is adequate for general academic credit, it is considered a marginal grade for pre-doctoral students in the Department of Biology. Thus, a grade of B- or lower in one or more courses, especially in the first year, will be viewed as an indicator of unsatisfactory progress in the doctoral program.

The Biology Graduate Committee reviews student grades at the end of each semester. Any student receiving a grade of B- or lower in any graduate course will be placed on academic probation and provided recommendations for improvement. If academic progress does not improve within the next semester, the Graduate Committee may recommend expulsion from the program to the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

II. First Year Courses

Each first-year student is required to register for BIOL 8270 “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Graduate Students” (Fall semester, 2 credit hours), BIOL 8250 “Communicating in Science” (Spring semester, 1 credit hour), and BIMS 7100 “Research Ethics” (Spring semester, 1 credit hour). The purposes of these courses is to provide new students with experience in scientific communication, introduce skills for success in graduate school, clarify the tenets of responsible conduct and reporting of research, and introduce new students to research in the department. It is also suggested that you take BIOL 7110 “Teaching in Science”. This course is useful for developing your skills as a graduate teaching assistant in the Biology department.

III. First Year Laboratory Rotations

First-year students on the Ph.D. track must complete two laboratory rotations, generally during the fall and spring semesters. Students entering the Ph.D. program with a Master’s degree in a biological science are only required to complete one rotation, during their first semester in the program, but may elect to conduct a second rotation. Students taking the BIMS 6000 core course are expected to do their first rotation in October, between the first and second half of the BIMS course, and their second rotation in early January, after the end of the BIMS course. Students who are not enrolled in the BIMS 6000 core typically complete one rotation in each semester. These lab rotations must be arranged in advance with the faculty advisor whose lab will host the rotation. Rotations require enrolling in the graded, 3-credit courses BIOL 9910 and 9920, “Introduction to Laboratory Research” with the Director of Graduate Studies listed as the instructor. Students will present the results of their rotation projects as posters and/or oral presentations to the department as assignments for the BIOL 8250 “Communicating in Science” course in the spring semester. Students receive a letter grade and a written rotation evaluation from their research advisor for their rotation research projects.

A first-year student has the option to complete a third rotation during the second half of the spring semester or the summer prior to their second year. Summer research courses are taken on an ungraded basis. However, students will receive a letter grade from their rotation advisor as part of the written rotation evaluation.

Students who transfer to the Ph.D. program from the University of Virginia’s M.S. program in Biology after their first year, or who enter the Ph.D. program after completing the M.S. degree in this department, will not be required to complete the rotations. Students who have completed an M.S. degree at another institution are required to complete one rotation during their first semester in the Department.

IV. Colloquia and Seminar courses

Students are required to take at least one graduate-level colloquium or journal club course during their first three semesters. Colloquia are courses in which students orally present and discuss recent research progress and journal clubs are courses in which students present and discuss research papers from the relevant biological literature.

V. Other Courses or Training (including MLBS courses)

Besides the formal course work listed above, additional courses or training may be recommended or required by the student’s Major Professor or Dissertation Committee. In particular, proficiency in computer science, in statistics, or in other specialized areas, may be set as additional requirements by the Dissertation Committee.

The Major Professor or Dissertation Committee may also recommend or require that a student participate in course work or independent study at a field station or at another institution. In special situations, for example, when a student holds a traineeship in an interdepartmental training program, additional course requirements may be imposed as stipulated by the training grant.

Students may complete courses at the Mountain Lake Biological Station (MLBS) during the summer for

credit with prior permission from the MLBS Director and the Director of Graduate Studies. To do so, students must register in the FALL for BIOL 7994, Independent Study in Biology (MLBS) for the number of credits equal to the credits of the MLBS course. In order for the course to be eligible for credit, the MLBS course instructor must send a written evaluation that includes a letter grade to the Director of Graduate Studies or to the Graduate Program Coordinator after completion of the course.

Students may elect to take courses offered by other institutions if those courses are relevant to their course of study. The Department of Biology may provide supplemental funding toward the costs of such external courses; requests for Britt Biology Travel Awards are solicited three times/year by the Graduate Committee. Students must submit a formal application for supplemental funding as directed by the Britt Travel Award announcement.

VI. Non-Topical Research

After completion of the 24 graded credit hours required by GSAS, students register for 12 credits of Non-Topical Research BIOL 9999 (for Ph.D. students) or BIOL 8998 (for M.S. students) under their faculty advisor every semester until they graduate.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

I. Teaching

Each Biology graduate student is required to complete a minimum of one full-time, semester-long Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) at some time during their graduate training. PhD students may be funded more than one semester as a GTA. A student with an external award that precludes teaching at any time during their graduate education may petition the Graduate Committee for exemption from whole or part of this requirement. Specific GTA assignments will be determined prior to each semester by the Department of Biology's Director of Undergraduate Programs, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and based in part on input from individual students about their areas of interest and expertise.

II. Teaching Assistantship Requirements and Evaluation

Because teaching represents an important component of the department's academic mission, students who accept GTAs also accept the responsibility of completing these assignments satisfactorily. Before or at the beginning of their first teaching assignment, every student must attend and satisfactorily complete the required teaching workshops sponsored by the [Teaching Resource Center](#). Students who use English as a second language must satisfactorily complete [the Center of American English Language & Culture's](#) English language testing/training program in order to be eligible for a teaching assignment. All students must perform satisfactorily in their teaching assignment, as judged from course evaluations or reports from supervisory faculty, to maintain their GTA and to be eligible for future GTAs.

III. Residency

Ph.D. students are strongly encouraged to plan on completing their dissertation in five years. After five years, funding is not guaranteed and must be arranged with the Director of Graduate Studies. All requirements for the Ph.D. must be completed within seven years of the date of admittance into the Ph.D. program as outlined in the [Graduate Record](#). To request an extension beyond seven years' time to complete the Ph.D. degree, a student must submit a "Request for Extension of Time to Complete Degree Form" to the Director of Graduate Studies for his/her signature before it can be submitted to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences for final approval.

IV. Student Participation in Departmental Activities

Satisfactory progress to degree includes the expectation that all graduate students attend departmental seminars and student and faculty research talks. Graduate students are encouraged to become energetic members of the Department of Biology by participating regularly in its various academic and social activities. Graduate student participation in meetings of the Graduate Student and Postdoc Association (GSPA), annual recruitment activities

during visits by prospective graduate students, and weekly lunches with visiting seminar speakers is strongly encouraged. At the discretion of the Chair of the Biology Department, graduate students may be invited to serve as members of departmental committees that broadly impact research and/or teaching in the department. For example, in addition to faculty members, the Graduate Committee has a student representative each year.

ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE STUDENT PROGRESS

I. First Year Evaluation

The Graduate Committee evaluates the overall performance and progress of each new student after their first semester and year. The Committee considers (1) performance in formal course work and laboratory rotations; and (2) participation in seminars, teaching, and other general academic activities of the Department. A student whose overall performance has been judged satisfactory may proceed into the second year of study. A student whose performance has been judged unsatisfactory will be required to do one of the following: (1) successfully complete additional course work; (2) pursue a Master's degree; or (3) leave the Biology graduate program.

II. Second Year Qualifying Examination

During the spring semester of the second year of study, each student must successfully complete a qualifying examination administered by his or her Dissertation Committee.

The Qualifying Examination consists of two components: (1) a written document describing the student's proposed research with experimental plan; and (2) an oral defense of the document to the student's Dissertation Committee. The written document consists of a proposal that includes the specific aims of the student's proposed research, the scientific background and significance of the proposed study, a summary of preliminary results, a detailed description of the planned experiments including the rationale and expected outcomes, and a list of all references cited in the text. The Dissertation Proposal Guide, a detailed set of instructions describing the preparation of the proposal, will be provided to students to assist in writing and organizing the proposal. Proposals must conform to all stated guidelines, including page limits, to be acceptable for review.

Because the primary purpose of the Qualifying Examination is to test the student's competence in their general area of study, a satisfactory performance requires that the student demonstrate a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of the concepts and methodologies of the disciplines comprising their major area of research interest. The student will also be expected to demonstrate an authoritative and up-to-date grasp of the literature in their area of specialization and to be able to discuss in detail the experimental design, rationale, and methodology of in their proposed research.

Prior to submitting the Dissertation Proposal to the Dissertation Committee, the proposal must be evaluated by two members of the faculty. One is the First Reader of the Dissertation Committee and the other is a member of the student's Dissertation Committee. When both reviews are completed, the student will receive a written evaluation of their proposal from the First Reader, indicating the proposal's acceptability, detailing the overall strengths and weaknesses of the research plan, and outlining any revisions that may be required for the final draft. It is the student's responsibility to ensure sufficient time for the initial review of the proposal (2 weeks) and incorporation of any feedback provided by the First Reader.

A student whose Dissertation Proposal is deemed satisfactory after the preliminary review will distribute a copy of their proposal to each member of their Dissertation Committee and to the Graduate Program Coordinator, and schedule an oral presentation and defense of the Dissertation Proposal with their Dissertation Committee. A minimum of two weeks must elapse between distribution of the proposal to the Committee and the exam. The Qualifying Examination should occur no later than the last day of classes in the spring semester.

A student whose written proposal is deemed unsatisfactory by the First Reader will be given an opportunity to address the deficiencies noted by the faculty reviewers and to submit an appropriately modified proposal. If the resubmitted proposal is accepted, the student will be allowed to proceed to the Qualifying Examination.

A student whose overall performance in the Qualifying Examination has been judged unsatisfactory will not be admitted directly to doctoral candidacy. At the discretion of the Dissertation Committee, such a student may be

offered the option of reexamination within a specified period of time. If the student is not offered reexamination, or if the student's performance is judged unsatisfactory on reexamination, she/he will be directed either to pursue a program leading to the Master of Science degree or to leave the Department.

At the end of the Qualifying Examination, it is the responsibility of the First Reader to complete a "Ph.D. Examination Form", which includes a written summary of the outcome of the Qualifying Examination and any recommendations of the Dissertation Committee for the student to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

III. Annual Progress Evaluation Beginning in the Third Year

So that the Dissertation Committee remains abreast of the student's progress, the student is required to meet with the Committee at least once every 12 months, beginning in the Fall term of the student's third year. This meeting is necessary to remain in good standing in the Ph.D. program. After the meeting, the First Reader submits a brief report describing the Committee's appraisal of the student's progress, as well as any recommendations, directions or additional requirements set for the student by the Committee, to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

THE DISSERTATION AND ITS DEFENSE

Each student is required to complete a piece of original and significant research for their doctoral degree. Upon completion of the research program, the candidate presents the written dissertation, in a form approved by the Major Professor and First Reader of the Dissertation Committee, to the Dissertation Committee for its approval.

The dissertation must be prepared in the format specified by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in the pamphlet entitled "Physical Standards for Preparation of Dissertations and Theses". See this link for GSAS specifications: <http://graduate.as.virginia.edu/sites/graduate.as.virginia.edu/files/thesisPhysicalStandards.pdf>. Students are strongly encouraged to document their research in a form suitable for publication prior to completing the dissertation. An acceptable form for the dissertation would be an introductory review of the literature, followed by one or more papers in publishable form, followed by a general discussion. Prior publication of the work is not only acceptable, but desirable. However, in the case of multi-authorship publications, the degree candidate should clearly indicate in the dissertation the extent and nature of their own contribution.

The dissertation, in a form acceptable for submission to the University, will be submitted to each faculty member of the Dissertation Committee at least two weeks prior to the defense of the dissertation. The First Reader chairs the dissertation defense, and a representative of the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (i.e. a faculty member from another department) must be present. Up to one member of the Dissertation Committee may participate in the defense via video conferencing. After successful defense of the dissertation, the student should ensure that the GSAS "[Final Examination Form](#)" is completed and signed by all members of the Dissertation Committee; this form should be given to the Graduate Program Coordinator for signature by the Department Chair or Director of Graduate Studies. Upon acceptance of a final version of the dissertation (i.e. the version that will normally be presented to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences) by the Dissertation Committee, a public defense of the dissertation will be scheduled. The notice to announce the public defense to the University community must be posted at least two weeks in advance of the event.

The public defense will take the form of a formal departmental seminar. Following the successful completion of the public defense, the dissertation is formally accepted, symbolized by the signing of the title page by members of the Dissertation Committee. Signature by members of the Dissertation Committee verifies that all departmental requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy have been satisfied. If substantive questions about the dissertation are raised during the public defense, then the Dissertation Committee will meet in private to discuss any changes to the dissertation required to complete the defense successfully. This permits the candidate to complete the final formal procedures for bestowal of the degree by the Graduate School. Note that all components of the dissertation, including private and public defense and submission of the finished thesis, must be completed by the appropriate GSAS deadline for that semester (typically April 30, July 31, or November 30).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial support, in the form of fellowships, traineeships, Research Assistantships (GRA) and Teaching Assistantships (GTA), is available to Ph.D. students as detailed below. If satisfactory progress is made, a Ph.D. candidate is assured support for five years by any combination of these support mechanisms. If there are significant mitigating circumstances, a student may apply for a longer period of support. Recommendations in such cases will be made by the Director of Graduate Studies, subject to approval by the Department Chair.

To qualify for continued financial support, students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 and must be in good standing in the Biology Graduate Program. In addition, eligibility for continued support through GTAs requires satisfactory performance by the student in her/his teaching assignments.

1. All students admitted into the Ph.D. program are assured support for five years of study, contingent on satisfactory progress in the program. Such support includes the annual stipend (in the amount set each year by the faculty) and full payment of tuition, health insurance and academic year fees. Support may be provided in the form of a fellowship, Teaching Assistantship, or a combination of these, depending on student qualifications and the availability of funds.
2. During the first year of study, Ph.D. students are typically supported with 1 semester of fellowship funding from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, plus 1 semester of funding from a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA). Students enrolled in the BIMS 6000 core are typically supported by fellowship in the first semester and teach in their second semester, whereas students not enrolled in this course typically teach in their first semester and receive a fellowship in their second semester.
3. Beginning in the summer of the first academic year, students are generally supported as Graduate Research Assistants (GRA) with funds derived from the research grants of their Major Professors. Such support includes payment of the stipend and of "research" tuition and fees. Alternatively, students may be supported by an external traineeship or fellowship award.
4. Second-year Ph.D. students are typically supported by a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) during both semesters of the academic year, unless alternate support in the form of an external fellowship, traineeship, or Graduate Research Assistantship is available.
5. In the event that a Major Professor is unable or unwilling to provide a Research Assistantship (GRA), the student will be offered a Teaching Assistantship on a semester-by-semester basis (fall, spring and summer, if available) until such time that other funding becomes available.
6. Support for students in the sixth year and beyond is dependent on the availability of their own external fellowship funds, Teaching Assistantships, or research funds from the Major Professor. Fellowships from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will not be provided to students beyond the fifth year.
7. The number of years of support provided to a student who has obtained a Master's degree, or switched from a Master's degree program to our Ph.D. program, will be determined by the Graduate Committee at the time the student enters the Ph.D. program, after evaluation of the student's status with regard to fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree.
8. All students are strongly encouraged to apply for extramural awards (e.g., NSF Pre-Doctoral Fellowships) to support their studies. In addition to the career-building prestige they confer, these external awards often provide a level of stipend support greater than that offered by a Teaching or Research Assistantship. Students are encouraged to discuss the preparation of these award applications with the Director of Graduate Studies and their Major Professor well in advance of the application deadlines.
9. The department will pay the Affiliated Status fee for one term only for students in the final semester of graduate study who are finishing their dissertation. Access to library resources, athletic facilities and other University resources is limited under Affiliated Status.

MASTER DEGREE PROGRAMS IN BIOLOGY (M.S. and M.A.)

M.S. and M.A. Programs

I. Student Advising

The Master's degree candidate is expected to choose a Major Professor (i.e., thesis advisor) prior to admission to the M.A. or M.S. program. The Major Professor aids the student in selecting courses and in making other academic decisions and directs the student in their thesis research. The student may change her/his Major Professor at any time. In such a case, both student and professor shall provide written notice to the Director of Graduate Studies.

A student entering the department as a declared M.S. or M.A. degree candidate meets with the Director of Graduate Studies and the designated Major Professor immediately prior to the beginning of the semester of admittance to plan a program of study. Requests for academic credit for graduate-level courses taken as part of graduate training at another institution should be made to the DGS at this time. Requests for transfer credit are subject to approval by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

II. Academic Requirements

A Master's degree candidate must successfully complete no fewer than 30 credit hours at the graduate level (5000-level or above). A minimum of 24 credit hours of graded graduate-level course work is required. Included in the 24 credit hours is enrollment in four graded lecture/laboratory courses, one colloquium or journal club course and required first year courses: BIOL 8270 "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Graduate Students" (Fall semester, 2 credit hours), BIOL 8250 "Communicating in Science" (Spring semester, 1 credit hour), and BIMS 7100 "Research Ethics" (Spring semester, 1 credit hour). Note that enrollment in BIOL 8995 is limited to a maximum of 6 credit hours. The purpose of the first-year courses is to provide new students with experience in scientific communication, introduce survival skills for success in graduate school, learn the tenets of responsible conduct and reporting of research, and introduce students to the general research areas and faculty in Biology.

Satisfactory progress in graduate-level course work is governed by the policies of the Graduate School and the Department of Biology as described above for Ph.D. students.

III. Residency Requirements

Master's students should aim for completion of their thesis within two and a half years. All work for the Master's degree must be completed within five years from the time of admission. Residency requirements are set by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and can be found in the Graduate Record.

IV. Student Participation in Departmental Activities

Satisfactory progress to degree includes the expectation that all graduate students attend departmental seminars and student and faculty research talks. Graduate students are encouraged to become energetic members of the Department of Biology by participating regularly in its various academic and social activities. Graduate student participation in meetings of the Graduate Student and Postdoc Association (GSPA), annual recruitment activities during visits by prospective graduate students, and weekly lunches with visiting seminar speakers is strongly encouraged. At the discretion of the Chairperson of the Biology Department, graduate students may be invited to serve as members of departmental committees that broadly impact research and/or teaching throughout the department.

V. Master's Thesis Committee

M.S. Program Thesis Committee

An M.S. student's Thesis Committee is chaired by the Major Professor and consists of two other faculty of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences (GSAS) who are appointed in the Department of Biology. In consultation with the Graduate Committee, the Director of Graduate Studies approves the composition of each Thesis Committee at the time it is assembled (by the end of January in the first year of study), and when changes in the composition

of the Thesis Committee are requested. With the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, faculty of other departments in the GSAS may serve on the Thesis Committee.

So that the Thesis Committee remains abreast of a student's progress, a student must meet at least once every 12 months with their Thesis Committee, with the first meeting held no later than the end of the first academic year. This meeting is necessary to remain in good standing in the program. Subsequent to each meeting of the Thesis Committee, the Major Professor prepares a brief written report that describes the committee's appraisal of the student's progress as well as any directions or additional requirements set by the student's Thesis Committee. A copy of this report is to be submitted by the Major Professor to the Graduate Program Coordinator for inclusion in the student's departmental record.

M.A. Program Thesis Committee

An M.A. student's Thesis Committee is chaired by the DGS and Major Professor. Like the M.S., a student should meet with its Thesis Committee at least once every 12 months. This meeting is necessary to remain in good standing in the program. Subsequent to each meeting of the Thesis Committee, the Major Professor prepares a brief written report that describes the committee's appraisal of the student's progress as well as any directions or additional requirements set by the student's Thesis Committee. A copy of this report is to be submitted by the Major Professor to the Graduate Program Coordinator for inclusion in the student's departmental record.

VI. The Master's Thesis and Its Defense

Students should begin to formulate a thesis project in consultation with their advisor during the first semester of their program. M.S. students are expected to embark on a laboratory-based thesis, while M.A. students are expected to complete a library-based thesis. The library thesis entails an extensive literature search of a specific topic from which unifying concepts and themes are drawn for discussion and criticism. The laboratory thesis entails the completion of an original research project carried out under the supervision of the Major Professor.

Upon completion of the library or laboratory research, the student prepares a written thesis. This thesis must be prepared in the format specified by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in the pamphlet entitled "Physical Standards for Preparation of Dissertations and Theses."

The thesis must be reviewed and approved by the student's Thesis Committee. If the Thesis Committee is satisfied with the thesis and does not require additional research or extensive rewriting, an oral defense of the thesis is scheduled. During the thesis defense, the student is examined on their knowledge of general biology and of their area of research specialty. For a student who is unable to demonstrate proficiency in this examination, reexamination may be required by the Thesis Committee.

Upon successful completion of the thesis defense, the student should ensure that the ["Final Examination Form"](#) is completed and signed by all members of the Thesis Committee; this form should be given to the Graduate Program Coordinator for signature by the Department Chair or Director of Graduate Studies.

VII. Financial Support

Students in the Master's degree program are not guaranteed financial support upon acceptance into the program. However, M.S. and M.A. candidates are eligible for Research Assistantships, depending on availability of funds.

MASTER OF ARTS WITH SPECIALIZATION IN CONSERVATION BIOLOGY

This program is designed for completion *within a single year*, providing University of Virginia undergraduates the opportunity for a five-year program of study. Successful completion of this program results in the awarding of two degrees, a Bachelor's degree after four years of study and an MA degree after the fifth year of study. Students are expected to follow the procedures for the Master's Degree Programs in Biology except as noted below.

Students should select a graduate thesis advisor (Major Professor) prior to application to the program and develop plans for an independent project in conjunction with their intended thesis advisor prior to completion of their undergraduate degree. The independent project may be on any topic related to Conservation Biology agreed

upon and supervised by the student's graduate thesis advisor. Independent projects may include research or projects structured around an internship with an institution doing work related to conservation. Most projects will be carried out during the summer between the fourth and fifth year and finished during the fifth year. Each student will select a Thesis Committee before the end of their first graduate semester.

The academic requirements for the M.A. with Specialization in Conservation Biology are 18 graduate credit hours of graded coursework, in addition to 12 graduate credit hours of independent research on an approved topic. The core course requirements include one course in Ecology, one course in Evolution, and a third class that may be in either subject. In addition, a graduate level methods course and seminar are required. The student's program advisors will evaluate the appropriateness of specific courses to each required area. Additional courses required of all M.A. students must also be taken.

In addition, to the standard MA thesis requirements, students are expected to give a public presentation of their thesis following their thesis defense.

MOUNTAIN LAKE MASTER DEGREE PROGRAM

A candidate for the Master's degree at Mountain Lake must meet the following requirements:

1. Acceptance to the program by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Biology Graduate Committee.
2. Residence of at least 3 full summer sessions at Mountain Lake Biological Station.
3. Successful completion of 30 hours (4 terms) of graded course work, no more than 6 of which may be Non-Topical Research if the degree involves a thesis.
4. Completion of a library or a laboratory thesis.
5. ["Final Examination Form"](#) and thesis defense.
6. Completion of all work within a period of 5 years.

Further information is available from the Mountain Lake Biological Station office located in Gilmer Hall.