

Graduate Requirements for the Field of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

1. All students will convene a Prescriptive Committee meeting during the Spring semester of their first year, and also at least once in their second academic year, to discuss their evolving ideas, summer research plans, and general progress, and to plan for their A-exam. The Prescriptive Committee will include at least two faculty in addition to the student's advisor(s). The Prescriptive Committee has an intermediate advisory function during the interval between the first-semester launch team and the student's eventual dissertation committee. Although in most cases there will be substantial overlap in membership among the Prescriptive and later committees, it is expected (and normal) for students to drop or add committee members as their research interest evolve, especially in their first several years. The most important functions of the Prescriptive Committee are to (1) advise the student on A-exam preparation far in advance of the actual exam, and (2) help the student begin to formulate their dissertation research project.

2. Students are required to take their A exam before the beginning of their 5th semester, or in exceptional cases during the first half of their 5th semester. If a re-examination is deemed necessary by the committee (something the Field feels would be constructive for some students), then the re-examination must be passed by the end of the student's 6th semester.

3. The Field strongly encourages Committees and students to include a written component in the A exam. A suggested model is that in consultation with the student, the committee chooses in advance at least one of the following potential writing assignments, as deemed most appropriate and beneficial to the student's progress and training:

1. A solid draft, submitted, or published research-based paper
2. A review paper on an aspect of the student's research area
3. A dissertation prospectus or equivalent, such as a substantial grant proposal
4. An essay or series of essays on a topic relevant to the A-exam material

If the committee requests any of these be included as a formal part of the A-exam, it is important to note that the written work should be completed and passed before the oral exam is held, because the official exam-outcome paperwork must be filed within 3 days of the scheduled oral exam date.

4. By the end of their 6th semester, students will draft a full, written dissertation proposal and review it with their committee, preferably in a committee meeting, or via individual consultations if a collective meeting is not possible.

5. Following their A exam year, students are required to convene at least one committee meeting per academic year that they remain in the program.