



Student Handbook & Program Requirements  
Graduate Group in Ecology, UC Davis  
Fall 2015

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Graduate Group in Ecology (GGE) and the University of California at Davis. This handbook is a written record of the materials we will be covering during the orientation meeting. Please keep this handbook handy during your time at UC Davis so that you can refer to this as necessary.

**Please remember, it is your responsibility to register for the required courses and to meet program requirements in a timely fashion.**

Before we start, we would like to clarify any confusion about what a graduate group is and how it differs from a departmentally based graduate program. The GGE is often mistakenly called the “Ecology Department,” even though Ecology is a graduate group. A graduate group is a formally established, degree-granting unit composed of faculty from different departments all over campus. While the differences may seem arcane, they are important for two reasons. One is physical co-location: you will not be housed with most of your GGE student colleagues. This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is a disadvantage because you may not get to know other GGE faculty as well as you might if you were all housed in the same department. An advantage of the graduate group structure is that you will have access to a larger collection of high quality, diverse students and faculty than you would normally find in a typical academic department.

An innovative approach to graduate education, the graduate group structure fosters a highly interdisciplinary approach to the study of Ecology. Graduate groups award degrees, staff courses, and monitor your progress toward your degree, so groups focus on curriculum planning. Your home department (where your Major Professor is housed, where you should have an office and receive mail) supplies access to non- fellowship funding, facilities and interaction with students and professors within the department’s discipline(s). Spend some time to learn about facilities and opportunities through your home department (e.g., teaching assistantships, greenhouse or lab space, other facilities). The easiest way to do this is in consultation is with your Major Professor. Services and business procedures vary, sometimes dramatically, between departments. This is especially true when it comes to technical support and internet access. Check with your home department to determine what type of operating system they support before you purchase a computer.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE REGISTRATION PROCESS

Earlier this summer you received a letter from the GGE outlining preliminary courses in which you should enroll. It also specified any course work entrance deficiencies. Please note you **must complete deficiencies** as soon as possible, and no later than the **first year** of residence in the program.

After enrolling in courses, you should have received a fee statement either via My Bill or SIS web, and paid your fees by the deadline. If you were not able to enroll in all of the courses you want to take your first quarter, there is a course adjustment period in which you may add or drop courses via SIS web. Please check the inside cover of the "Class Schedule and Registration Guide" (hereafter called CSRG) for deadlines and the process to add and drop (please note that courses have varying drop deadlines). This publication is available each quarter at the UC Davis Bookstore or on the UC Davis webpage listed below. If the scheduled meeting times of any of your courses overlap, the system won't allow you to register, so you must obtain a Permission to Add number (PTA) from the department that offers the course. You must also obtain a PTA for any course that is full. This sometimes requires obtaining permission from the instructor, be sure to check with the administrative department prior to requesting a PTA.

After your first quarter, the registration process should be relatively simple. You will get the best start if you pay attention to the early steps in the process. In practice, curriculum planning is a matter of defining the courses your Guidance Committee (GC) requires of you, while preserving the option of revising your curriculum as experience or schedule changes dictates. While we cannot specify curriculum planning completely in advance, we can help you by showing you how to proceed. This is the subject matter in the remainder of this section of the handbook.

### **Course Catalog:**

<http://registrar.ucdavis.edu/UCDWebCatalog/>

### **Class Schedule:**

<http://registrar.ucdavis.edu/csrg/>

**STEPS IN CURRICULUM PLANNING  
WHAT TO DO AND NOT DO, AND A LITTLE BIT OF  
GRADING POLICY**

**FIRST PRIORITY: FULFILL ENTRANCE DEFICIENCIES**

Your orientation letter included a list of any existing entrance deficiencies. **Deficiencies must be completed during your first year of residence. If you have any deficiencies listed in your letter that you feel you have met previously, please provide official written verification, we will evaluate it and your record will be updated.** Completing entrance requirements is your highest priority. If you have missing entrance requirements, you have one of several alternatives:

- a. You may be able to show evidence that you have met the requirement. Either a course was overlooked, or you have met it in a way that was not obvious (e.g., You were given credit by your undergraduate institution for a requirement, **there must be an AP notation on your undergraduate transcript or you may provide a copy of the AP exam results. AP credit will only be allowed if your AP score is met at the required UCD minimum standard to receive credit, or at the corresponding level for your undergraduate college.**).
- b. You may submit an updated transcript showing courses taken during your last term of your previous degree program, or courses taken during the summer.
- c. You have been a TA for a course equivalent to the missing prerequisite. Verification from the instructor will be required to use this option.
- d. take the course.

ECL 200 A and B are usually taken in your first year of residence, but should not be attempted until most prerequisites have been met. This is especially true if you have not taken an upper division Introduction to Ecology course, or have been advised not to enroll in 200A. Acceptable courses to satisfy the Introduction to Ecology requirement at UC Davis are ESP 100 and EVE 101. Substitutions are not allowed, but passing an entry exam for 200A allows registration for 200A/B).

You must complete all entrance requirements, and they must be met as quickly as possible. Your Major Professor or GC cannot waive entrance requirements, nor approve substitutions that are not already pre-approved by the GGE. If you have entrance deficiencies, you are required to submit a proposed plan to satisfy them. The form is included in your orientation packet. **The Deadline to submit a proposal to satisfy entrance requirements is: October 30<sup>th</sup>.** Once submitted to the GGE graduate program coordinator, it will be reviewed and submitted to the GGE Graduate Adviser/Program Chair for a decision.

## **SOLICIT ADVICE FROM YOUR MAJOR PROFESSOR AND STUDENTS IN YOUR LAB OR AREA OF EMPHASIS (AOE)**

In most circumstances, fellow students and Major Professors form relationships because of shared interests. Shared interests also extend to other students in your laboratory, and to students with similar interests in other laboratories or within your AOE. Therefore, it makes sense to consult your Major Professor, your AOE adviser, and fellow students for advice about courses you might consider taking. Not only can your colleagues help you identify useful courses, they can also help you with course scheduling and proper sequencing. The Ecology Graduate Student Association (EGSA) is also available for consultation. Please contact the EGSA via e-mail (addresses are listed under [egsa.ucdavis.edu](http://egsa.ucdavis.edu)).

In addition, each AOE has a student representative as a resource. A list of AOE personnel, including student representatives, is available at the end of this handbook. One note of caution in this regard: it is advisable to consider that program requirements may have changed since a more senior student colleague has completed their requirements. Be sure to verify any advice given with the GGE graduate program coordinator.

## **BE AWARE OF, AND ALLOW TIME FOR, REQUIRED COURSES**

The following are courses that are required your first and second terms of residence (fall and winter):

- ECL 200 A, ECL 200B (unless deficiencies mean postponement until the second year of residence). (5 units)
- ECL 296 “Topics in Ecology” (the Ecology and Evolution Seminar Series, 4:10 -5 pm on Thursdays). A schedule of seminars is available on the GGE website ([www.ecology.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ecology.ucdavis.edu)) under courses and seminars. This seminar series is attendance only. (1 unit)
- Any missing prerequisites, as available, to be taken in your first or subsequent quarters.
- JDPE students will enroll in BIO 645 and BIO 745 in fall and spring terms, and will not enroll in ECL 200A/B when registered at UCD (unless deficiencies mean postponement until the second year of residence).

Spring: only ECL 296 is required by the group. JDPE students will enroll in ECL 296 the entire year of residence at UCD, and often take ECL 290s and the field course. All students are required to complete 1-3 ECL 290s (participatory seminar classes; these have a different number at SDSU) depending on your degree objective, plus a field course. These may be taken in the first or second years. See p. 10 for details.

Other courses required of all students in the first 2 years include an upper-division Evolution course, a Field Methods course, and participatory seminars.

For Fall, if you have registered in ECL 200A and 296, you may need only one other course, teaching or research credits to complete your schedule. In general, it is a good idea to restrict your load to no more than 8-9 graded units of your 12 units per quarter (beyond ECL

296, research units - 299's, and any ECL 290's you may elect). Graduate students must enroll in at least 12 units of coursework, but may register for up to 16 units in total that may be a combination of up to 12 units of graduate courses, plus undergraduate units and research units.

**Don't forget - you must enroll in a minimum of 12 units to be considered a full-time student.** Be sure to meet this requirement! If you are not considered a full-time student it will affect your eligibility for university employment and fellowships. If after enrolling in regular courses and seminars, you find that you still do not have 12 units you should complete your schedule with research units. Graduate students enroll in research units (299's) through their Major Professors' home department. Please contact the individual department staff person that deals with courses for the proper section and CRN (course registration number) for your Major Professor. Please note that 299 CRN's change each quarter and you will need to repeat this process each term.

If you enroll in research units (299's) be sure that you discuss research expectations with your Major Professor prior to starting the quarter.

## **WHAT YOU MUST DO VERSUS WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING**

The preceding sections describe what you are required to do in your first year. Your GC will help you decide what courses will be required during your first two years. After completing these requirements, participation in courses and seminars is up to you. Although it is not always helpful to your progress to take regular classes routinely throughout your graduate career, attending seminars can be of immense value. Acting as a professional scientist entails being able to discuss general topics in ecology with your colleagues and being up to date on recent advances in your field. The Ecology and Evolution Seminar Series (ECL 296, Thursday, 4:10) is an outstanding way to stay current as well as gain experience with seeing how others present themselves as scientists. Each year this seminar invites ~25 leading ecologists from around the world. It is well worth your time to attend their seminars. For those speakers that are in your sub-discipline, contact the speaker host and sign up to talk to them, or go to the graduate student lunch. This is an excellent opportunity to develop contacts. Please register for ECL 296 if you will be attending the series. Other resources are reading and discussion seminars that are integral to your professional development. The GGE requires that you take three quarters of ECL 290, student participatory seminars, for the PhD and one for the MS. In practice, however, most academic ecologists will engage in a weekly topical discussion group throughout their careers. Finally, requirements force you to get involved. It is up to you to stay involved to make the most of your graduate education and professional development as a scientist.

## **SATISFACTORY/UNSATISFACTORY GRADING POLICY:**

GGE students are allowed to take ONE course per quarter on an S/U basis, but there are restrictions on which courses can be taken for an S/U grade. A course may be taken S/U if it is intended to broaden the educational experience, and if:

- It is NOT a GGE or AOE required course and/or entrance deficiency listed on your GC form;
- It is NOT an ecology course;
- It does not relate directly to the program or area of research for the degree;
- It is approved by the Guidance Committee
- If it approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies
- If only an S/U grading option is available for the course
- Ph.D. students who have advanced to Candidacy may take any course S/U

A petition to take a course using the S/U grading option must be approved by the GGE Chair/Adviser before classes start. Only under exceptional circumstances will students be allowed to change to S/U after the 10<sup>th</sup> day of instruction. (The GGE Chair/Adviser will follow the same Graduate Studies policy for approving a late drop.)

## **THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE (GC): PLANNING YOUR CURRICULUM FOR FUTURE REGISTRATION:**

**ASSEMBLE YOUR GUIDANCE COMMITTEE AND MEET WITH THEM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, AND NO LATER THAN THE END OF YOUR FIRST QUARTER OF RESIDENCE. Deadline is December 18, 2015.**

The GC has primary responsibility for assisting you with curriculum planning. After you meet with your GC to establish your course work plan, the completed GC report is your official GGE course work requirements, which you must complete before you can take the oral qualifying examination (PhD), after which you formally advance to candidacy. Additional details on this topic follow.

## **FUNCTIONS AND REPORTS OF THE GC**

Your GC is charged with analyzing your record and interests. Based on this analysis and the course work requirements of the GGE and your AOE, the committee specifies the required and recommended course work that will form your program of study. Once approved by the Chair of the GGE (hereafter Group Chair), the GC report is filed with the GGE. Course work must be completed before you can take your oral qualifying examination (PhD students only) and then advance to candidacy. MS students may advance to candidacy prior to completing course work.

It is useful to regard the first report of the GC as an initial report that can be altered later since early course work may sharpen your focus and eventually lead to changes in your course work requirements. However, because we check your GC report as part of the process of advancement to candidacy for the MS student, and prior to taking the qualifying examination for the PhD, **you are required to file a record of all changes in your GC report** if and when the committee agrees to change them. In the event that this becomes necessary check with the GGE office for the correct procedure.

**NOTE:** Meet with your GC as a group. In recent years, some students have filed reports by getting individual signatures without the GC ever having met. This is not to your benefit: please be sure to meet with your committee as a group before filing the GC report. If you have problems in getting your committee assembled, please ask your Major Professor for assistance. **Important reminder: The GC cannot waive or substitute entrance requirements!**

## **FORMATION OF THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE**

The following is the composition of the Guidance Committee:

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### **MS Students (Plan I and II):**

Chair = Major Professor  
Adviser = AOE Adviser

### **PhD Students:**

Chair = Major Professor  
Adviser = AOE Adviser  
GC Member = a GGE faculty member of your choosing in consultation with your Major Professor. This should be someone who is familiar with your field of interest.

### **JDPE Students:**

Chair = Major Professor  
Adviser = AOE Adviser  
GC Member = a GGE faculty member who will also serve as your UC Davis host the year you are registered at the Davis campus. This should be someone who is familiar with your field of interest.

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**PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**  
**MORE OF WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO, BUT MOSTLY WHAT YOU**  
**NEED TO DO**

Details of program requirements for the program and the Area of Emphasis (AOE) that you were admitted to can be found on the GGE webpage; the latter should be listed on your GC form under AOE requirements. Additional important details are outlined as reminders.

**OVERALL UNIT REQUIREMENTS**

MS Plan I requires completion of 30 units: 1.) a combination of upper division undergraduate (100 series); 2.) graduate level (200 series); and 3.) submission of a thesis. At least 12 of the 30 units must be graduate work in ecology or related discipline.

MS Plan II requires completion of 36 units of upper division undergraduate and graduate level courses, as well as satisfactory performance on a comprehensive final oral examination. At least 18 of the 36 units must be graduate level course work in ecology or related discipline. No more than 9 units of research credit (299 courses) may be counted toward the unit requirement for Plan II. Students who were in a UCD undergraduate program prior to entering the MS program in the GGE may use previous course work to fulfill course work requirements. However, they may not use these courses to fulfill the UCD unit requirement.

The PhD degree does not have a minimum unit requirement other than the units associated with the required course work as determined by the GC. Required course work will also include any AOE course requirements and other courses to prepare you to successfully defend examination topics for the PhD qualifying examination.

All course work must be taken for a letter grade, unless a letter grade is not an option for the course.

**COURSEWORK THAT MAY BE SATISFIED ELSEWHERE**

There are certain courses that may be completed prior to enrolling at UC Davis, *e.g.*, the evolution and/or field course requirement, as well as the entrance requirements. If a course is not clearly labeled with the specific course titles used at UCD or SDSU, you will be asked to provide documentation to show that the course you've taken in fact fulfills the requirement. If this applies to you, please check with the GGE graduate program coordinator for details. With your committee's approval, upper division undergraduate courses or graduate courses taken elsewhere may be used for AOE requirements.

## MEETING THE ECL 290 REQUIREMENT

An Ecology 290 is a student participatory seminar. Each ECL 290 is usually organized by a GGE faculty member based on a specific topic which must be ecological. In addition, students must make at least one presentation during the course of the seminar. Each presentation must be at least 25 minutes in length to receive credit. ECL 290 seminars should be chosen for breadth and not limited to topics related to your area of research.

- ✓ MS students must take one ECL 290
- ✓ PhD students must take three ECL 290's

A number of Ecology 290 seminars are offered each term. A list of ECL 290's for each term can be found on the GGE webpage: <http://ecology.ucdavis.edu>

There may be other ECL 290's organized after the start of the quarter. Be sure to monitor the list server or the Ecology webpage for updates. For subsequent quarters, the schedule is available the first week of the quarter.

**Other departmental 290 seminars are not allowed for ECL 290 credit, you must take ECL 290's.** If there is a 290 being offered by another graduate program, but led by a GGE faculty member, the faculty member may request that it be cross-listed as an ECL 290. The faculty member/instructor must request approval of the seminar prior to the term starting, and the seminar must conform to the content and structure of an ECL 290 in order to be approved.

JDPE students may complete one pre-approved 290 seminar at SDSU and these will also be listed on the GGE website. **Post approval of a seminar is not allowed,** and the requirements for format and content are the same as an ECL 290.

## FIELD COURSE REQUIREMENT

The field course requirement may be met in advance of starting the Ecology program. The field course requirement may be met by any of the following, as long as the essential component of learning to perform field studies is fulfilled:

- ✓ Special study or individual research course (such as an OTS course)
- ✓ Previous MS thesis research (for PhD students only)
- ✓ During employment or an internship in an agency or firm (a justification or explanation should be attached to the GC outlining how this previous experience fulfills the requirement and should be compared to ECL 225)

✓ Field course, for instance ECL 225

The requirement for a field course can be met in several ways. The essential consideration is that a course used to meet this requirement must have included actual field experience: the student must collect data independently or as part of a group and create a report of the results of a study undertaken to examine the structure, dynamics, or behavior of a natural ecological system. The requirement can be met as part of a special study course or individual research course that contains the essential component, as part of employment or an internship in an agency or firm, or in one or more regular courses that include field work, including summer field station courses. Any experience not containing the essential component as specified will not be considered as meeting the requirement. Please note that courses taken that include field trips do not necessarily meet this requirement. If you feel that you have satisfied this requirement in a non-classroom setting, please attach an explanation to your GC form outlining your request.

## **CHOOSING EXAMINATION TOPICS**

All degrees requiring an oral examination (MS Plan II and PhD) have two mandatory subjects for the examination: “Principles of Ecology” and “Research Methods/Quantitative Skills”. Although the first is based primarily on ECL 200 A and B or BIO 645 and BIO 745, it represents a comprehensive area that assumes a broad knowledge of Ecology. The second often corresponds to statistics, but may cover a range of quantitative and experimental methods that are appropriate to your research specialization.

MS Plan II students have one elective examination topic area, and PhD qualifying examinations include three. The topic areas selected should be relatively broad. The topic areas should be chosen carefully with the assistance of your GC, and must be approved by the Group Chair. Many students define their areas too narrowly with the expectation that the choice corresponds to the thesis or dissertation research. These areas should reflect your expertise in general areas related to your research (e.g., plant ecology for plant ecologists, and perhaps for landscape ecologists as well; population ecology rather than population viability analysis for a conservation biology student). They should cover broad areas relevant to the program and your AOE, and should not be narrowly focused on the thesis, dissertation topic, or area of special interest. Consult the document for this purpose entitled “Guidelines for Preparation and Taking Qualifying and Masters Plan II Examinations in the Graduate Group in Ecology” which can be found on the Ecology webpage. Oral examination committees consist of three faculty members for MS Plan II and five for the PhD; the Chair and Research Methods examiners must be GGE members.

If you receive a “low pass” or “marginal pass” on the final examinations for ECL 200A and B or BIO 645 and BIO 745, please make sure that you discuss this with the

instructors, as appropriate. Failure to pass the final exams will require remedial work and re-examination prior to taking the qualifying examination.

Oral examination topics must follow the elective areas identified and approved on the GC report. Should a change to the examination topics become necessary, you will need to seek approval from your GC and the GGE Chair/Adviser in advance of submitting the GGE petition to take the oral examination.

## **ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY**

Prompt advancement to candidacy is very important, and delays must be justified (e.g., unavoidable scheduling conflicts, strong personal reasons, part time status).

### **MS Plan I (Thesis) and Plan II (Final Oral Examination):**

The petition to advance to candidacy can be printed from the following website:  
<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/>

**MS:** If you are an MS student, you should advance to candidacy when at least half of your course work for the degree has been completed (usually by the end of the first academic year). Your GC will also assist you in selecting the members for your thesis or MS final examination committee. Your major professor is **always** the Chair of either of these committees. The remaining two members are chosen with the consent of your GC. Once you advance to candidacy, the GC is automatically dissolved.

**PhD:** When you have completed your course work (normally by the end of the second year, you file the formal petition to take the PhD qualifying examination. The petition officially nominates the members of your qualifying examination committee, and the members are approved by the Group Chair and the Office of Graduate Studies. The necessary GGE petition can be obtained from the GGE office. Guidelines concerning the composition and procedures for the examination are enclosed in your orientation packet and are also available on the Ecology webpage. Your Major Professor cannot serve on your qualifying examination committee (a difference from the MS final examination). You should also consult with your GC in selecting a dissertation committee. Your Major Professor always serves as the Chair of your dissertation committee. Once you have advanced to candidacy, the GC is automatically dissolved.

**JDPE:** All of the above for the PhD. Your UCD research host may not serve on your examination committee. The examination committee must have two GGE members from each campus.

Only *one member* may be nominated from outside the GGE faculty membership to serve on any of the committees mentioned above. A proposed member who is not faculty with the Academic Senate must have a Lecturer, Adjunct Professor or equivalent appointment if from UC Davis, and an external member requires approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies with additional required documentation (a petition plus a Ph.D. and CV showing peer-reviewed publications in the topic area). Please check with the GGE office for further details of these requirements. If you have sought and received advice from additional people outside the GGE faculty, you may want to consider adding them as an extra member of your thesis/dissertation committee.

## YEARLY PROGRESS REPORTS

The Dean of Graduate Studies **requires** that graduate students be evaluated annually for progress toward the degree. Graduate students are responsible for taking the leadership in completing this yearly evaluation, so you should initiate it and obtain the approval of your GC or appropriate committee (see below). The evaluation will usually be requested during the spring quarter each year, and **must** be turned in to the GGE office by the deadline. Generally, if your grades are satisfactory, you are meeting required benchmarks by each deadline (see the timelines provided below), and you are making progress with your research (if applicable), your GC will give you a satisfactory progress report. If a progress report is not received in a timely fashion the GGE may file an unsatisfactory progress report with the Dean of Graduate Studies.

You will remain in good standing as long as your cumulative GPA remains above 3.0 on a 4 point scale. If your GPA is less than 3.0 in any quarter, you will be placed on academic probation by the Office of the University Registrar. If your overall GPA falls below 3.0 you will not be eligible to advance to candidacy and this may affect your eligibility for University employment or fellowship support. In addition, if you are a full-time student, failure to complete 12 units each quarter will lead to an unsatisfactory “minimum progress” designation. Finally, be careful about accumulating incomplete (I) grades. These automatically convert to an “F” grade after one academic year. Students who accumulate more than 8 units of “I” and/or “U” grades will also be placed on academic probation. If personal issues affect or are likely to affect your progress, please see the GGE program coordinator and/or your major professor ASAP to discuss options for protecting your academic record.

As part of the yearly progress report process we highly recommend that you schedule an annual consultation with your Major Professor to discuss your funding for the following academic year. You will complete a progress report form and also a funding form each year. The forms must be completed and turned in as part of your permanent file.

In addition, the GGE office conducts an annual evaluation of your progress towards completing requirements for your degree which is completed at the same time. To get a sense for what will be evaluated, a list of appropriate benchmarks are listed below:

### **Checklist of Program Requirements:**

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**MS Students Plan I and II:** MS Plan I students must complete 30 units, MS Plan II must complete 36 units of course work.

- √ Year 1: Submit the plan to satisfy existing entrance deficiencies by October 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - ❖ Complete an approved Guidance Committee Form by December 18<sup>th</sup>
  - ❖ Spring of Year 1 or fall of Year 2: File for Advancement to Candidacy
  - ❖ Spring of Year 2: MS Plan II students should be taking the final exam

- ❖ Spring of Year 3: MS Plan I students should be nearing completion of the thesis
- ❖ MS students should be graduated by summer of Year 3.

#### **PhD and JDPE Students:**

- ✓ *Year 1:* Submit the plan to satisfy existing entrance deficiencies by October 30<sup>th</sup>. Complete an approved Guidance Committee Form December by 18<sup>th</sup>
- ✓ By the end of spring of *Year 2:* course work requirements should be completed
- ✓ Early in Fall of *Year 3:* file to take the oral qualifying examination, no later than 60 days prior to proposed examination date, being sure to follow the qualifying examination guidelines/deadlines
- ✓ Winter of *Year 3:* take the qualifying examination, and advance to candidacy
- ✓ Within six months of passing the qualifying examination, students must submit a dissertation proposal that has been finalized with the dissertation committee and signed by them to the GGE office for approval
- ✓ *Year 5:* PhD students should be nearing completion of the dissertation
- ✓ PhD students should be graduated no later than spring of *Year 6.*
- ✓ Complete Exit Seminar prior to submitting dissertation to Graduate Studies.

Your progress in meeting these requirements will be monitored. Should you not meet them, a “hold” on your future registration may be requested from the Office of Graduate Studies until the necessary requirements are completed.

### **THESIS, QUALIFYING EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEES**

As you progress towards completion of your degree, other committees will succeed the GC. Students have been confused about which committee is in effect at what time, so an explanation of this process is provided below.

#### **MS COMMITTEE**

After advancing to candidacy, the final oral examination or thesis committee is formed. The nomination of this committee is done on the candidacy application.

Your Major Professor is chair of the examination committee, and GC members may serve. The proposed committee must be approved by the Group Chair. MS examination committee members must be members of the GGE. After passing the examination or turning in an approved thesis, the MS student graduates. Three committee members are required for both Plan I and II.

## PHD QUALIFYING EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

After finishing all required course work, PhD students are required to take an oral qualifying examination. The Major Professor may not serve on this examination committee. Four of the other five members should be members of the GGE; exceptions to this rule must be approved by the GGE Executive Committee. Research Methods/Quantitative Skills examiners must be a GGE member. At least three members must be Academic Senate Faculty. The committee becomes official and the examination may be administered only after the Office of Graduate Studies approves it. You must be a registered student to take the examination. After passing the examination, the qualifying examination committee is dissolved. Instructions for taking the qualifying examination are included in your orientation packet and available on the GGE webpage. The petition may be obtained from the GGE office. JDPE students are not allowed to invite their UCD research host to serve on this committee. JDPE qualifying examination committees must include two SDSU JDPE faculty and two UC Davis GGE faculty.

Please **note that 60 days are required** to process the petition to take the qualifying examination. Failure to allow the necessary time will result in having to reschedule the exam date. It can also take a lot of time to schedule your committee into a mutually agreeable time slot and book a room. JDPE: the petition to advance to candidacy must be processed by both Universities, so please plan ahead. Begin this whole process early!

## PHD DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

After passing the oral qualifying examination, PhD students may advance to candidacy. The application to advance to candidacy is given to the student by the chair of the oral examination committee after successful completion of the examination. The application includes the formal nomination of the dissertation committee as submitted by the GC and approved by the Graduate Adviser (GGE Chair). The chair of the three-member dissertation committee is always your Major Professor. One member may be outside the Group, or even outside the University, subject to approval by the Graduate Adviser (GGE Chair) and Dean of Graduate Studies. If nominating a non-Academic Senate member, please submit a *Curriculum vitae* for the nominee and a Graduate Studies External Committee Membership Application which is available on the web: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/current-students/forms-information>

Justification for such a request would be for a reason such as: the prospective member is an expert in an area that is not represented by a UCD faculty member. The petition for external committee membership, CV and petition to Advance to Candidacy must all be turned in as a package to the GGE office. Final approval rests with the Dean of Graduate Studies. **Note:** You do not have to wait until you pass your qualifying examination to establish your research committee. The sooner you do this, the sooner they can help you plan your dissertation research.

JDPE students may invite their UCD research host to serve on their dissertation committee. The petition to advance to candidacy must be processed by both Universities, so please plan ahead.

## NORMATIVE TIME TO DEGREE

The official “Time to Degree” for PhD students in Ecology is five years. The unofficial “Time to Degree” or average for a PhD is six years, and for MS Plan I (Thesis) is three years, for a Plan II (Exam) it is two years.

**Note:** Graduate Studies keeps track of students’ time to degree, and how well students progress in the program. Benchmarks are used, such as advancing to candidacy to monitor a programs’ success in this area. This information is used in determining “program quality” and funding. In addition, your progress will affect your eligibility for UCD employment and GGE block grant eligibility.

## FILING FEE STATUS (FF)

Filing Fee status means that a student has completed **all** program and University requirements including course work, qualifying examination, collection and analysis of data. This status substantially reduces costs. A student may file for this status when they are writing the final draft of the thesis or dissertation and **they no longer need or use any University services**. The dissertation chair must certify that it is appropriate for the student to file for Filing Fee status, which requires that a final draft be submitted to the dissertation committee. This decision should not be taken lightly; your University employment eligibility will also be affected. You will be allowed to work for the University only one quarter after enrolling in Filing Fee status. The Graduate Studies limit for FF status is one quarter.

Because the policies and procedures for these rules, regulations and limitations may change and/or be confusing please discuss this process with the GGE office if you decide to apply for FF status.

**Note:** Students may **NOT** apply for FF status if they are currently on, or returning from the Planned Educational Leave Program (PELP). Students must have an approved and appropriate student status to file the thesis, complete the MS oral examination, or file the dissertation. Filing Fee does not apply to JDPE students.

## IN ABSENTIA REGISTRATION

UC Davis students who are conducting research outside of California for a full quarter or up to one year may register ‘*in absentia*’, which provides a substantial fee reduction. Such students will pay just 15% of the combined educational and registration fees, however they must still pay full campus fees, health insurance, and non-resident tuition, if applicable. If you have an external fellowship and are eligible for *In Absentia*, please apply for this status because any extra tuition money from your funder benefits Graduate Studies, which uses it for student support.

## Funding Information

There are numerous sources of monetary support (stipend and research) for your time at UC Davis. Funding for JDPE students works differently and JDPE students should consult the Program Coordinator and Staff for details. The information is not located in a single location and you are encouraged to tap the following three primary resources:

- Discuss your financial situation with your Major Professor early and frankly. You and your Major Professor have agreed to work together to develop an appropriate program of study and support for you. Discuss what is expected from you and what help your Major Professor can provide.
- Discuss with senior students in the program what has worked for them. They are a rich source of information regarding funding possibilities.
- Use the web to find sources of support both at UCD and outside UCD.

Below we describe some of the sources of funding available at UCD.

### Ecology Fellowship & UCD Fellowships

**\*\*\*Follow Directions or forfeit consideration\*\*\***

Each year the Graduate Group in Ecology receives an allocation of fellowship funds from the Office of Graduate Studies in the form of a “GGE Fellowship”. The application deadline for the Ecology Fellowship is December 1<sup>st</sup>. Exceptions to the deadline will NOT be made. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted. JDPE students are not eligible for UCD Fellowships and are supported primarily by SDSU.

Please note that the following Ecology application requirements:

- ✓ GPA: You must have a cumulative GPA of 3.50 at the end of fall quarter in the current year for fellowship consideration.
- ✓ Fellowship application. Pay close attention to additional requirements if you are applying for a UCD fellowship that is discipline or research based. Answers to questions regarding specific conditions for these fellowships may be found on the Student Support section of the Office of Graduate Studies webpage.
- ✓ A research proposal is required for all applications for funding.
- ✓ Three letters of recommendation. One must be from your major professor.
- ✓ Your academic record. Copies of your previous and UCD transcripts will be provided by the program..
- ✓ A *curriculum vitae*.
- ✓ If you are selected for a GGE Fellowship your Major Professor will be asked to

match the award in the form of at least one quarter of support.

- ✓ You must submit a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order for the University to process your fellowship should you be selected to receive an award. It is a good idea to submit the FAFSA regardless of the source of support you expect to receive.

### **Additional Information for International Students**

The GGE requires that you submit all of the materials listed above in order to be considered for a GGE Fellowship which also includes non-resident tuition fellowships. If these materials are not received, your application will be determined incomplete and will not be considered for fellowship support.

### **Additional Fellowship and Extramural Support Information**

A listing of University fellowships and extramural support can be found at the following website: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/current-students/financial-support>. GGE students have been successfully awarded these external fellowships:

- National Science Foundation
- Environmental Protection Agency (STAR)
- Ford Fellowship
- American Association of University Women
- Switzer Environmental Fellowships
- Nancy Foster Fellowship
- Fulbright

### **Graduate Student Researcher**

Graduate student researcher positions are primarily provided by your Major Professor. However, these positions may be available through other faculty as well. You must be a full-time student (enrolled in 12 units), and be in academic good standing (minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00) to maintain employment eligibility. Information regarding academic appointment of students and post-doctoral researchers can be found (including salary information):

<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/employment/index.html>

The Graduate Group in Ecology has elected to use the UC recommended default compensation plan. The Step that you are hired will be determined by your level of education and where you are in the program.

### **Teaching Assistantships**

The GGE does not hire teaching assistants. However, GGE students are hired by individual departments. A listing of these departments, contacts and deadlines are available here: <http://ecology.ucdavis.edu>. When you apply for a TA position, please let the GGE graduate program coordinator know what materials the department requires from your file and they will be provided. Apply early and often. Many deadlines fall in Winter or Spring of the previous academic year.

### **Work-Study Graduate Student Researcher**

The GGE is allocated a limited “GGE Fellowship” of federal work-study funding each year. Work-study funding will fund a graduate student research position with either your Major Professor or another UCD faculty member for either a 25 or 50% appointment. This funding may be used for the fall, winter and spring quarters. Summer work-study is not allowed. This funding is considered financial aid and you must file a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) to be considered. To be awarded work-study funding you must do the following:

- ✓ Submit a FAFSA. <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>
- ✓ Have sufficient financial aid eligibility to be awarded work-study
- ✓ Your Major Professor, or other hiring faculty member, must confirm and/or request the allocation in writing. E-mail is fine
- ✓ You must be a US Permanent Resident or Citizen to be eligible
- ✓ A call for work-study allocations will be sent to the faculty in the spring, the request for a work-study allocation must be made by a faculty member

Work-study funding covers 75% of the salary plus registration fees at Step I, the remaining 25% is covered by the hiring faculty member. Work-study funding will not cover non-resident tuition.

**Financial Aid:** <http://financialaid.ucdavis.edu/graduate/index.html> or <http://financialaid.ucdavis.edu/graduate/Contact/gcontacts.html>

### **Funding to Support Your Research**

There are two UC Davis fellowships available to support your research: The Henry A. Jastro Research Fellowship and the Humanities Graduate Fellowship. The University Fellowship application includes the Humanities Graduate Research, and you can apply for this funding by the December 1<sup>st</sup> deadline by “checking the appropriate box”. You may also indicate your interest in being considered for the Jastro research fellowship on the GGE Fellowship application. To be eligible you must be working with a faculty member who carries an appointment in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Science. There are an additional number of limited GGE fellowships for students whose major professors reside outside of CA&ES. Another source of information regarding support for teaching and research is: <http://research.ucdavis.edu/>.

## Other Useful Information

### California Residency

It is very important to pay early and close attention to requirements for establishing residency in California (for US citizens and permanent residents only). You are considered a non-California resident for a full calendar year (or more if you have not taken steps to establish residency). There is an opportunity to apply for reclassification to a California resident each term. Additional information can be found: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/current-students/newly-admitted-students/ca-residence-tuition-fees> , or you can contact the Residency Deputy in the Office of the University Registrar.

International students are not eligible to file for California residency, and will always be considered non-residents. However out-of-state tuition waivers are available for international students who are past the first year and within normative time.

### Changing AOE's and Degree Objective

Changing AOE's requires completion of a petition that can be obtained from the GGE office. Students are required to submit a brief statement of purpose that helps justify the AOE change and a letter of support from the Major Professor, along with the petition. Review and approval of the petition will be the responsibility of the AOE and GGE Chairs. Additional letters or information justifying the change in AOE may be requested. Students may submit an application to change from the MS to PhD degree option after completing at least two quarters in the program. Petitions from the PhD to MS may be submitted at any time. To change from the MS to the PhD, the following is required: a new statement of purpose outlining the PhD project you propose, a letter of support from your Major Professor that includes student funding information, and two additional letters of recommendation.

### Graduate Student Health Insurance Program (GSHIP)

GSHIP fees are covered for any quarter in which you hold a fellowship, graduate student research position or teaching assistantship of 25% or greater. If you are on PELP or Filing Fee you should make arrangements to continue your health insurance coverage with the Student Health Center. Information regarding the Cowell Student Health Center can be found: <http://shcs.ucdavis.edu>. If you have outside health coverage you have the option to waive the student health insurance.

### Graduate Student Leaves including for Maternity and Family; Child Care Support

Regularly-enrolled UC Davis graduate students are eligible for paid maternity leave, family leave, some other kinds of leave, and monetary assistance for child care is available regardless of financial need. Please see this site for details: <https://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/current-students/employment/leave-accommodation>

### Graduate Student Associations: Campus: <http://gsa.ucdavis.edu/>

Group: [egsa.ucdavis.edu](http://egsa.ucdavis.edu) [www.facebook.com/ucdavisegsa](http://www.facebook.com/ucdavisegsa)  
<http://jdpestudentassociation.weebly.com/resources.html>

### Internship and Career Center: <http://icc.ucdavis.edu/>

## **Tax Policies Affecting Graduate Students**

Fellowships: Refer to Internal Revenue Service Publication 520. Fellowships and scholarships are taxable, except for the amount paid for tuition, required fees, books and course-related expenses. The university will neither withhold taxes nor reports such payments to the IRS or State Franchise Tax Board for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Individuals are required to report this income themselves and to make arrangements with the federal and state tax services to make estimated quarterly tax payments on fellowship income. Information on tax reporting is available in the Government Documents section of the University library.

International students receiving fellowships are paid through the payroll system; awards are reported to the Internal Revenue (IRS) and State Franchise Tax Board, and taxes are withheld, as prescribed by the home country tax treaty and the IRS tax code. Individual circumstances will vary.

Nonresidents of California receiving stipends of \$1,000 or more per month are paid through Payroll. California taxes must be withheld. The University will report to both federal and state tax services.

Social Security (FICA) and Medicare: Services performed by a student in the employment of a college or university are exempt from FICA taxes while the student is enrolled and regularly attending classes at the school. Internal Revenue Service interpretation stipulates that a student employee will be exempted from FICA taxes only if the student's course of study is substantial and the services performed are incidental to the course of study. Thus, a course work test AND an employment test must be satisfied for a student to achieve exempt status.

As outlined in Directive No. 95-038, during the academic year graduate students who are appointed at 50% or less, and are enrolled in a minimum of six units, for each pay period will be exempt from DCP (FICA) and Medicare withholding. While the IRS interprets that graduate students enrolled and approved for advancement to doctoral candidacy are not subject to a units requirement during the academic year, this does not take into consideration that University of California policy requires students advanced to candidacy to maintain minimum enrollment status (12units) to be eligible for an academic appointment. Students on Filing Fee do not meet the registered/enrolled student test, and are therefore non-exempt. Students must meet both the appointment percent and minimum unit test. If not, they will be required to contribute 7.5% of their total earnings to the Defined Contribution Plan, and 1.45% to Medicare.

### **Additional Tax Information**

The Internal Revenue Service has two publications that are particularly relevant to students: Publication 4: Student Guide to Federal Income Tax; Publication 520: Scholarships and Fellowships.

IRS publications available for downloading:

[http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/forms\\_pubs/pubs.html](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/forms_pubs/pubs.html)

Additional information:

[http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/ind\\_info/index.html](http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/ind_info/index.html)