I. Doctoral Program Details

A. Advisors, Registration, GPA, Standings and Stipends

Doctoral Students are required to consult with their faculty advisors each semester for planning of their course of study and registration. The Biology Graduate Program Director (Dr. Aguilera) and the Doctoral Advisors (Drs. Walsh, Spencer, Zhang) will advise all incoming and enrolled graduate students. In addition, incoming students should select or be assigned a faculty mentor in their specialized area of study within the first semester. Together, these advisors will oversee the trainee’s program of study. Upon admission to the program, trainees will choose a Dissertation Advisor and work with that person to assemble a Dissertation Committee. This Dissertation Committee will oversee the proposal, research and dissertation portions of the trainee’s program. In addition to these advisors, there is also a faculty member elected as Ombudsman for graduate students (Jerry Johnson).

Full time doctoral students must register for nine doctoral-level credit hours (see below) in each of the fall and spring semesters (summer registration may be required depending on funding source). Dates and times for graduate registration are listed in each semester’s course schedule. Each student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 to remain in good academic standing. To receive a stipend as Assistant Instructor (AI), the trainee must be enrolled full time and be in good standing.

B. Course Requirements

Courses required for doctoral students include those from four categories: Required, Menu electives, Free Electives, and Doctoral Research/Dissertation.

1. Required Courses will be offered at least every two years. Each student must take all four core courses, three Biology seminars and the seminar course on ethics. For full time students, these core courses should be completed in the first two years of the program. These courses include:
   - BIOL 5340  Structure and Function of Macromolecules
   - BIOL 5328  Biostatistics
   - BIOL 6301  Environmental Pathobiology
   - BIOL 6310  Advanced Research Techniques
   - BIOL 5130  Seminar (at least three seminar courses)
   - BIOL 5131  Ethical, Social and Political Dimensions

2. Menu Electives will be offered at least every two to three years. Each student must take at least two of these electives, at least one of which must be a 6xxx level course. Menu electives include:
   - BIOL 5326  Advanced Topics in Immunology
   - BIOL 5346  Ecological Toxicology
   - BIOL 5360  Limnology
   - BIOL 6303  Gene Regulation
   - BIOL 6304  Physiological Regulatory Mechanisms

3. Free Electives will be offered at least every three years. In addition to the credit hours required above, each doctoral student must take additional credit hours of free electives or excess menu electives to total a minimum of 9 hours. See the catalogue for a complete list of free electives. A partial list of free electives includes:
   - BIOL 5342  Synthesis and Degradation of Macromolecules
   - BIOL 5343  Cellular Toxicology
   - BIOL 5344  Molecular Pathogenesis
   - BIOL 6305  Cellular Physiology
   - BIOL 6306  Membrane Biology
Up to 24 hrs of graduate level course work from an earned Master’s degree may be considered for transfer to the doctoral degree. To apply for transfer of credit, submit a list of the courses, as well as the official course descriptions, to the Doctoral Advisor. For credit to be transferred, the graduate advisor must find that the course is an appropriate substitution for the degree program and that it was successfully completed by the student. Final approval is given by the Graduate School. Most often, transferred courses will be listed under the “Free Electives” portion of the program of study.

4. Doctoral Research. Students must accumulate 30 hours of doctoral level research (BIOL 6X90) plus 6 hours of dissertation (BIOL 3698 and BIOL 3699) after admission to candidacy. BIOL 6398 should be taken in the first semester following successful advancement to candidacy. Students must to enrolled in BIOL 6399 during the semester in which they have their final dissertation defense.

C. Examinations

The Qualifying exam should be taken before the end of the second year.

The exam will consist of a written section as well as an oral exam administered by the students committee. In addition, for the oral portion of the exam the student should select a faculty member to be a non-examining member of the panel and to be an advocate for the student.

The written portion of the Qualifying exam is taken prior to defense of the dissertation research project. The committee will prepare 4 questions; the student will choose 2 of the 4 questions to address in the written oral. The student will be responsible for all questions during the oral exam. The written exam will be reviewed by all members of the committee and this process will be overseen by a member other than the mentor. The student will have 2 weeks to complete the written exam. After successfully completing the written portion, the student will be allowed to continue to the oral defense of the proposed research. Immediately following the dissertation defense, an oral examination will be administered by the committee. If the examination is not successful, the student may petition for a second examination at the discretion of their Dissertation Committee and the Graduate Program Director.

D. Timeline for Biology Doctoral Degree

The requirements for awarding of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree are:
- Successful completion of required course work and laboratory rotations
- Successful completion and approval of an Individual Development Plan
- Successful completion of qualifying exams
- Successful defense of dissertation proposal
- Successful completion and defense of dissertation

In order to encourage timely completion of the degree, the following time constraints are enforced for full time students in this program:

At the start of the program, students must select a mentor for a laboratory rotation who will advise the trainee during the first semester. The Graduate Advisor and/or the Faculty Dissertation Advisor will aid the student in designing a course of study tailored to the trainee’s interests. The trainee must form a Dissertation Committee. The Dissertation Committee shall consist of a Chair or Co-Chair from the Tenured/Tenure-Track faculty of the Biology Graduate Faculty plus three additional members of the Graduate Faculty, one of whom must be from
outside of the Biological Sciences Department. This committee will guide the student through their doctoral research and writing of their dissertation and will be responsible for final approval of the written dissertation. To be considered a full-time student, students must register for nine hours of courses both in the Fall and Spring semesters and register for three hours of course work for the Summer semester. To improve future tracking of trainees and for ease of communication, all trainees are expected to obtain a linkedin (www.linkedin.com) account.

By the end of the first year, students should have rotated in the laboratories of two approved faculty. Rotations are taken once for credit as the Advanced Research Techniques (BIOL 6310) course. At the end of the first semester, trainees will not be given a grade P (In Progress) until the completion of the second rotation and the submission of two rotation reports (within one semester of completion). Trainees must write a 2-5 page report of their rotation results and experience as part of the grade for the course (see Table 1). This report should be written in the form of a research paper with the following components: (1) Summary/Abstract (include the specific aims of project), (2) Brief Introduction, (3) Materials and Methods, (4) Results, (5) Discussion (or Results and Discussion) and (6) References. It is expected that data in the form of figures will be included in the report. It is important to state at the beginning the aim(s) of the project and the results obtained during the rotation. The report will be reviewed and returned for correction. Grades will not be entered until the corrections have been returned to the Graduate Program Director. If reports are not provided within a year of completion of the rotations, the final grade will be lowered to a B after one semester and a C after that. In addition, trainees will not be allowed to proceed to their qualifying exams if reports are not submitted prior to these exams.

UTEP Masters students that transfer to our Ph.D. program and remain with the same research mentor will be required to submit only one rotation report consisting of the work performed during the MS portion of their training. The report must be submitted during the first semester in the Ph.D. program and subject to the same guidelines provided above.

Table 1. Timeline for Doctoral Candidates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Year 1   | - Completion of two semester-long laboratory rotations and submission of two research reports to the graduate program director. EEB students must identify a Mentor by 1st semester.  
- Mentor is identified and committee is formed  
- Complete Preliminary Degree Plan  
- Completion of an Individual Development Plan. (Must be approved continue to qualifying exams)  
- Annual committee meeting | Enroll in core courses  
Take seminar class both semesters  
Biosciences trainees must complete rotations and submit rotation reports for grades prior to preliminary exams |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2-3</th>
<th>Preliminary Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consists of 4 written questions. Students answer 2 and the other 2 will be part of oral exam during the proposal defense. Written answers will be limited to 5 single spaced pages per question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After passing the written portion of the exam, students will defend their research proposal and have an oral examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Written and oral exams are coordinated by a committee member other than the mentor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Complete all coursework including free electives and core courses |
| Take seminar course for at least one more semester (at least 3 credits required) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years 1-5</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Annual committee meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal presentation of research results at seminar – no credit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Research hours (as needed) and at least 6 credits of thesis hours. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years 4-6</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Permission to write dissertation must be unanimous among committee members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student must submit 1 paper for publication related to dissertation prior to defense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| By the sixth semester, and preferably by the end of the second year, students should have completed ALL CORE courses for the doctoral program. NOTE that some of the core courses are offered only once every two years and must be taken in the year they are offered! |

| After completion of core courses but no later than the end of the third year, students must have successfully completed the Qualifying Exams and have advanced to candidacy. A dissertation research proposal is part of the Qualifying Examination. Each student will write a detailed Dissertation Proposal, including a review of the field, statement of hypothesis and specific aims, a detailed description of the approach and methods to be used and all appropriate references. This proposal must be approved by all members of the student’s Dissertation Committee and must be made available for comments by the Biology Graduate Faculty. The Dissertation Committee will be responsible for administering the written and oral examination portion of the Qualifying exam. The written and oral portions of the exam will be coordinated by a member of the Dissertation Committee other than the Dissertation Advisor. Students will continue to make timely progress on their dissertation work, with annual submission of results for review by the Dissertation Committee. |

| Dissertation Defense (Final Oral Dissertation Defense). To complete the doctoral program, each student must successfully defend their Doctoral Dissertation based on their original research. When the student and their committee agree that research progress has been sufficient, a formal written note from the mentor and signed by all committee members must be submitted to the Graduate Program Director indicating that the student has permission to write the dissertation. After the dissertation is written and approved by the committee, the student may schedule the oral defense of the dissertation. AT LEAST ONE WEEK PRIOR TO THAT DATE, a final complete copy of the dissertation will be given to each member of the committee AND a copy will also be placed in the Biology Office for review by interested faculty. Following the public defense, the committee will meet privately with the student to evaluate the dissertation and defense and will determine whether to accept, accept with modifications (any needed corrections will be provided to the chair and student in writing within 48 hours), or to reject the dissertation. If a dissertation is accepted with modifications, the committee should specify whether the final version needs a full review by the committee or only by the Chair of the Committee or designate. |
E. Summary of Normal Progress towards the Ph.D. Degree:

1. **Milestones Agreement** – At the end of the first semester, the student must submit the signed Milestones Agreement to the Graduate School.

2. **Core Course Work**: Course work will be completed by the sixth semester of the student’s program of study.

3. **The Qualifying Examination**: This exam will be taken as soon as feasible after the completion of the core courses and relevant elective coursework, and should be completed by the beginning of the third year in the program.

4. **Advancement to Candidacy**: After passing the written qualifying exam, defending the dissertation proposal, and successfully completing the oral exam, students are advanced to candidacy. Students must formally meet with the Dissertation Committee once a year at which time a progress report will be presented. Soon thereafter, the committee chair must submit a report on the meeting to the Director of the Graduate Program in Biology.

5. **Completion of Ph.D. Program**: Ideally, students should complete the Ph.D. requirements (including dissertation) by the fourth year, but no later than the sixth year in the program. Permission for extension of Ph.D. timeline beyond the sixth year must be approved by the Trainee’s Dissertation Committee and the Biological Sciences Graduate Program Director. **ALL TRAINEES SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THE STATE DOES NOT PERMIT STATE FUNDING (i.e., Teaching Assistantships or Assistant Instructorships) AFTER COMPLETION OF 99 CREDIT HOURS.**

F. Exceptions to the Guidelines

Exceptions to guidelines require the specific approval of the Doctoral Committee, the Director of the Graduate Program in Biology and the Graduate School. Candidates requesting exceptions will be required to fully justify that request.

G. Ph.D. Course of Study Form

The course of study form is a record of your progress through the doctoral requirements. Before your second semester in the program, you should have completed an initial course of study form and have had it approved by both the departmental Doctoral Advisor and the Graduate School. At the completion of each major requirement of your doctoral work, the student is required to complete and have all forms approved. This will help insure that all your records are complete.
STUDENT: ____________________  STUDENT NUMBER: ____-____-_____

DEPARTMENT: Biological Sciences  MAJOR: Biology

[Minor not applicable]

DATE OF ACCEPTANCE INTO PROGRAM: __________________

TERM OF FIRST COURSE USED TOWARDS DEGREE: ______________

This program has a DISSERTATION REQUIREMENT.

INITIAL FACULTY MENTOR: ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

REQUIRED CORE COURSES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>DATE / GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5328</td>
<td>Biostatistics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BIOL 5340</td>
<td>Struct and Fct of Macromolecules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6301</td>
<td>Environmental Pathobiology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6310</td>
<td>Advanced Research Techniques</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5130</td>
<td>[Seminar]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5130</td>
<td>[Seminar]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5130</td>
<td>[Seminar]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5131</td>
<td>Ethical, Social and Political Dimensions</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(16 HOURS)

MENU ELECTIVES [choose two, at least one 6000 level]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>DATE / GRADE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5326</td>
<td>Advances in Immunological Concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5346</td>
<td>Environmental Toxicology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 5360</td>
<td>Limnology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6303</td>
<td>Gene Regulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6304</td>
<td>Physiological Reg. Mechanisms</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(6 OR 7 HOURS)

OTHER APPROVED ELECTIVES [to total 31 hrs and may include up to 24 transfer credits from a Master of Science degree program, with Departmental approval]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number and Title</th>
<th>DATE / GRADE / Transfer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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DISSERTATION RESEARCH [total of 30 hrs]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Number</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6190</td>
<td>Independent Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6290</td>
<td>Independent Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6390</td>
<td>Independent Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6490</td>
<td>Independent Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6590</td>
<td>Independent Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 6690</td>
<td>Independent Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students are urged to study the general requirements for graduate degrees stated in the Graduate Studies Catalog. Students are responsible for checking their own progress to be sure they meet these requirements. Any deviation from the above course schedule must have the approval of the Department Doctoral Graduate Advisor and the Director of Graduate Student Services. The Preliminary Program of Study should include all course work required for the graduate degree. It does not constitute a waiver of any requirements for the degree as set by the Graduate School or Department Program requirements beyond the minimum required for the degree that are listed above.
### Appendix A: Current Administrative Positions and Contact Numbers

**Chair, Department of Biology:**  
Dr. Bruce Cushing  
Bioscience 2.118  
747-5844

**Director of Graduate Studies:**  
Dr. Renato Aguilera  
Bioscience 4.144  
747-6852

**Doctoral Advisor:**  
Dr. Elizabeth Walsh  
Biology 218  
747-5421

Dr. Charles Spencer  
Bioscience 5.148  
747-8776

**MS Graduate Advisor:**  
Dr. Jerry D. Johnson  
Biology 205  
747-6984

**Building Manager:**  
Enrique Martinez  
Bioscience 2.158  
747-6881

TBA  
Biology 115  
747-5986

**Biology Office Staff:**  
Annette Vasquez  
Bioscience 2.138  
747-7478

**BBRC Staff:**  
Mayanin Acuña  
Bioscience 2.132  
747-6850

**RISE Staff:**  
Elizabeth Quezada  
Bioscience 2.136  
747-6890
FACULTY MENTOR/DOCTORAL STUDENT CONTRACT

Faculty Mentor Responsibilities
The faculty mentor
- Will keep trainee “on track” and hold mentee accountable for his/her time and quality of effort.
- Will provide opportunities for trainee to develop research and academic skills
- Will advise the trainee on the selection of trainee’s dissertation committee and will ensure this committee is instituted within the year of residence.
- Will ensure that the trainee meets with dissertation committee at least once a year.
- Will have frequent meetings with mentee and provide an open environment for discourse and questions.
- Will ensure that the trainee fulfills all graduate program responsibilities and meet milestones (see timeline below)
- Will ensure adherence to the general rules for the responsible conduct of research by the trainee and will hold responsibility for the general validity of the data generated and published by the trainee.
- Will ensure adherence by the trainee to the animal and recombinant DNA protocols approved for the lab.
- Will guide the design and planning of research/assays and interpretation and the completion of the research
- Will provide constructive criticism and review dissertation work and possible publications.
- Will assist the trainee in preparing research presentations at departmental and scientific meetings.
- Will notify Graduate Program Director if the mentee is experiencing personal or academic difficulties.
- Will submit a report on yearly dissertation committee meetings to the Biology Graduate Program Director.

Student Responsibilities
The student
- Will have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of his/her degree.
- Will meet regularly with their research advisor and provide him/her with updates on the progress and results of their activities and experiments.
- Will work with their research advisor to develop a dissertation project. This will include establishing a timeline for each phase of the work. The student will strive to meet the established deadlines.
- Will work with their research advisor to select a dissertation committee. This will be done by the end of the first academic year.
- Will meet with this committee at least once annually (or more frequently, if needed). The student will be responsive to the advice of and constructive criticism from the committee.
- Will attend and participate in laboratory meetings, seminars and journal clubs that are part of their educational program.
- Will maintain a detailed, organized, and accurate laboratory notebook. The student should be aware that their original notebooks and all research data in all formats are the property of the laboratory and institution but that they are able to take a copy of their notebooks after completion of the dissertation.
• Will discuss policies on work hours, sick leave and vacation with their research advisor.
• Will discuss policies on authorship and attendance at professional meetings with their research advisor.
• Will attend the doctoral student seminar series. Attendance is mandatory. Students will present once per year commencing in their second year.
• Must make timely progress toward degree completion and satisfactorily meet the standards of scholarship established by the University according to the timeline indicated below.
• Must have a clear understanding of the requirements to complete their degree objectives and develop a plan to satisfy these requirements within the shortest reasonable timeline.
• Graduate students who receive financial support for their graduate program should understand the responsibilities associated with the support they receive and to carry out these responsibilities in a timely, conscientious and professional manner.
• Graduate students with assignments as teachers have special responsibilities to be prepared for their class/laboratory sessions, and to maintain professional and mentoring relationships with their students.
• Continuous registration is required of all graduate students. Graduate students who fail to register and are not on an official leave of absence are not considered to be students.

Timeline for Biology Doctoral Degree:
• For the Bioscience program, incoming trainees must enroll (once) in BIOL 6310 (Advanced Research Techniques) and conduct rotations in two laboratories during the first two semesters. Trainees must submit two written reports to obtain a final class grade (see Ph.D. Handbook for instructions).
• Course work should be initiated during first semester and completed by the sixth semester in residence.
• Will meet with dissertation committee once a year and provide progress report at each meeting.
• Will take qualifying exam at the end of Year 2 and no later than the third year in program. Written permission is required to extend beyond year 2.
• Trainees must submit a manuscript for publication prior to applying for graduation.
• Trainees should complete the Ph.D. requirements (including dissertation) by the fourth year, but no later than the sixth year in the program. If it is anticipated that the project will not be completed by the end of the sixth year, the Committee Chair must petition on behalf of the student for an official extension.

_________________________________  
Student
_________________________________  
Advisor
________________________  
Date
Title IX
The University of Texas at El Paso is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded educational programs or activities. Title IX protects students, employees, applicants for admission and employment, and other persons from all forms of sex discrimination including sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and acts of sexual violence. Sexual violence may include rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual coercion, stalking, and relationship violence. Title IX prohibits institutions from excluding, separating, denying benefits, or otherwise treating individuals differently on the basis of sex. Sex based discrimination is prohibited at UTEP both by law and by University and UT System policies. For additional information or questions, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, who can be reached by phone at (915) 747-8358, by email at titleix@utep.edu, or by mail at 500 W. University Ave., El Paso, TX 79968, Kelly Hall, Room 312. In addition to or in lieu of contacting the Title IX Coordinator, inquiries relating to Title IX may also be sent to the Assistant Secretary of the Office for Civil Rights.