

SoLS Graduate Handbook

SoLS Graduate Policies: Additional Requirements and Expanded Explanation

Organization of the School of Life Sciences (SoLS)

SoLS is comprised of four Sections;

- Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB)
- Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB)
- Microbiology (Micro)
- Integrated Physiology (IP)

All Graduate Faculty in SoLS are affiliated with one or more of these Sections. Each Section has tailored its Graduate Program specifically to meet needs of their graduate students and the demands of that particular field. Generally, each graduate student belongs to the Section to which his/her Graduate Advisor belongs. However, when the student's research topic spans multiple sections, the student and his/her Advisor may choose to pursue the student's training through another section.

During your time as a graduate student in SoLS, your progress toward obtaining your degree program will be monitored by the Graduate Operations Committee (GOC). The roles of the Graduate Operations Committee include:

- providing new or revised materials for the graduate Catalog,
- revising the graduate catalog when necessary,
- instructing the students on policies of the graduate program,
- periodically reviewing existing Graduate programs,
- conducting an orientation meeting with new students,
- reviewing the composition of advisory committees,
- monitoring the students' progress towards their degrees by reviewing annual evaluations submitted by students and their advisors,
- providing the graduate coordinator with information on the standing and progress of students to their degrees.

The GOC is comprised of representatives from each Section. It is recommended that each graduate student knows who their GOC representative is.

Deadlines

The Graduate College has specified a time limit for the completion of Master's (M.S.) and Doctoral (Ph.D.) degrees. A MS student must complete all MS degree requirements within six years. A student beginning a doctoral program and holding a MS degree in an appropriate field of study must complete all requirements for the doctoral program within six years. A student beginning a doctoral degree program without a MS degree must complete all requirements for the doctoral program within eight years. In special circumstances, the student's Advisory Committee may recommend that the graduate dean extend these degree time limits. Each department may establish shorter time periods than those previously discussed contingent upon approval of the graduate dean and provided that the information is included in the Graduate catalog.

Advisory Committee and Structure

Incoming students are appointed an interim advisor based on the student's stated field of interest and communications between the student and faculty during the admission process. The interim advisor usually becomes the permanent advisor. However, the student or advisor may elect to change this arrangement with the consent of the School of Life Science (SoLS) as represented by the Graduate Operations Committee (GOC). According to the Graduate College no student can have graduate status without a graduate advisor.

At the start of your first semester, it is your responsibility to form your Advisory Committee. During the course of your studies you must meet with your committee at least once every calendar year, between January and November 1st. It is the student's responsibility to set up a committee meeting and to organize a time and place. Committee meetings are usually held in either the faculty lounge or Room 111. Room bookings can be made through the School's Office.

Ask your advisor (interim or permanent) for suggestions about who would be most appropriate. The guidelines for selecting faculty for the Advising Committee varies between advisors based on the advisor's philosophy about graduate training. Keep in mind that the purpose of this committee is to help you plan your program of study (i.e., coursework) and guide you in your research. In fall of 2005, the faculty reaffirmed the bylaw mandated role of the GOC in approving the Advisory Committee and by implication, the GOC's right to review the composition of the Advisory Committee. The primary reason for disapproval of committee composition would be lack of appropriate breadth and/or scientifically appropriate expertise. Both SoLS and the Graduate College have forms for the Advisory Committee and Proposed Degree Program (coursework) that need to be routed through the GOC. Links to both the Graduate College and the SoLS forms are available on the following website, <http://biology.unlv.edu/graduate.html>.

Rarely, a student progresses fairly deeply into studies to find that either the student or the advisor wish to discontinue the relationship. The consequence of this decision depends upon the timing or cause for this change. If there is a change in mentorship, the student will have to file the appropriate forms to alter the composition of the Advisory Committee and may have to change research topics, take additional coursework or resubmit a new prospectus. The GOC will help in this transition and will give guidelines to the student and new advisor as appropriate. Occasionally, a faculty member who has originally been appointed to a graduate student's committee may be unavailable for committee functions and in this case a request for substitution may be made by the committee. Changes in Advisory Committee may also occur because of change in interest of focus. Final approval or disapproval in all of these cases is granted by the Graduate College. However, please note that changes to the supporting members of the Advisory Committee late in a student's program are not favorably received.

The entire committee is responsible for the development and approval of the student's program and any changes in it; for approval of the thesis or dissertation; and for the conduct and evaluation on the comprehensive and/or final examinations.

Master's Students

The Advisory Committee for MS students will be composed of four members; your thesis advisor, two SoLS graduate faculty and a Graduate College Representative (for more information about the GCR go to the section entitled Graduate College Representative). It is your responsibility to identify suitable committee members and approach them about serving on your advisory committee.

Ph.D. Students

The Advisory Committee for Ph.D. students will be composed of four or five members: your dissertation advisor, two SoLS graduate faculty and a Graduate College Representative (for more information about the GCR, go to the section entitled Graduate College Representative). It is strongly advised that Ph.D. students also identify an additional ("outside") advisory committee member, who has an affiliation outside the University of Nevada System. Once an outside member has agreed to serve, the student and his/her Graduate Advisor should submit the outside member's CV along with a letter (available at: <http://biology.unlv.edu/graduate.html>) requesting Associate Faculty Status for the outside member. This member will, at the minimum, attend either the comprehensive exam or dissertation defense but not necessarily both. Beyond this minimal expectation, each Advisory Committee can decide on the timing and amount of involvement of an outside committee member, although all outside committee members are encouraged to attend the final defense. Due to financial considerations, SoLS may only finance one on-site visit. It is recommended that visits to UNLV by outside committee members be folded into the departmental seminar schedule as a cost-saving measure.

Graduate College Representative (GCR)

SoLS has historically requested that the Graduate College faculty representative be a full-fledged participating member of the student's Advisory Committee and if at all possible a member that contributes scientifically. The extent to which SoLS expects a Graduate College representative to participate is more extensive than the policies of the Graduate College. To avoid any miscommunication between SoLS and the potential Graduate College Representative, students are asked to download **a letter from the Graduate Coordinator outlining what SoLS expects from the Graduate College Representative**. Students should give this letter to their prospective representative so that the representative is aware of the elevated expectations of the representative. The letter from the Graduate coordinator is available at <http://biology.unlv.edu/graduate.html>.

If the representative is unprepared for this commitment, the student needs to identify another representative. Regardless, the Graduate College representative must hold graduate faculty status and must come from a department other than the department sponsoring the student's advanced degree program. Additionally, that representative has the right to ask oral questions during the final defense and is involved in the evaluation of the student. The representative has full voting privileges and as such, should be treated

as a full-fledged member of the committee. A list of faculty with full graduate faculty status is given on the following website:

http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu/info_faculty/faculty_status.htm

Program of Study

During your second semester in the program, students must have developed a program of study following the recommendations of the student's advisor, section and Advisory committee. The program of study outlines the courses you will complete for your degree. Usually the first Advisory Committee meeting is for the purpose of generally identifying a student's project and determining the coursework. Note that SoLS and the Graduate College have program of Study forms that both need to be filed. Forms are available on the following website: http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu/info_students/program_forms.htm.

Master's Students

Students must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours, with a B- or higher, 18 of which must be at the 700-level. If a student does not earn a B- or higher in a course, those credits will not count towards graduation. Before completing 16 credit hours students must submit the Proposed Degree Program (coursework) form to the Graduate College. You must take Bio 701 (Ethics in Scientific Research) during your first year in the program. You must take at least six credits of Bio 796 and up to six credits of Bio 797, however the Graduate College prospectus approval form must be submitted before registering for Bio 797 credits. Please see the Graduate Catalog for these requirements. Each section within SoLS may have additional requirements.

Masters students should register for at least 9 credits each semester if they are receiving financial support from the School (such as a GA); otherwise they must register for at least 6 credits each semester. Students working on their thesis must register for at least 3 credits each semester (excluding summer) until the Master's Thesis is completed and given final approval. The same rules apply for international students.

Ph.D. Students

Students must complete a minimum of 60 credit hours, with a B- or higher, 36 (18 if the student already has an MS degree) of which must be at the 700-level. If a student does not earn a B- or higher in a course, those credits will not count towards graduation. Before completing 16 credit hours students must submit the Proposed Degree Program (coursework) form to the SoLS and the Graduate College (Part 1 to the Grad College, Part 2 to SoLS).

You must take Bio 701 (Ethics in Scientific Research) during your first year in the program. You must take at least 6 credits of Bio 796, this can be repeated as required, and a minimum of 6 credits of Bio 799 must be taken, however, no more than 18 credits of Bio 799 will be counted towards the degree. All doctoral students must submit their Prospectus before registering for Bio 799 credits. Each section within SoLS may have additional coursework requirements.

PhD students should register for at least 9 credits each semester if they are receiving financial support from the School (such as a GA); otherwise they must register for at least 6 credits each semester. Students working on their thesis must register for at least 3 dissertation credits each semester (excluding summer) until the Dissertation is completed and given final approval. The same rules apply for international students.

If a graduate student enters the doctoral program with a MS, 30 credit hours can be transferred, this must be arranged with the graduate college. Please see the Graduate Catalog for these requirements.

Prospectus

The prospectus outlines the student's research plan and is discussed at a meeting of the student's advisory committee. To ensure the appropriate feedback from the Advisory Committee, committee members should receive the prospectus at least two weeks prior to the meeting; if this timeline is not met, faculty may request to postpone the Advisory Committee meeting at which the prospectus will be discussed.

Master's Students

During your third semester, MS students are expected to have completed a Prospectus Approval Form. Reasons for this recommendations are to successfully promote graduate education in a timely fashion by, 1) focusing the student both academically and in data collection, and 2) to allow faculty appropriate input during crucial research development stages (i.e., early in a student's program). It is strongly in your own best interest to have carefully thought through your research before proceeding with the work. Keep in mind that by getting the prospectus developed early, it is more likely that significant delays in progress through the program can be avoided.

Ph.D. Students

Ph.D. students are expected to have completed a Prospectus Approval Form by the end of the sixth semester. Given the greater intellectual growth required and the more extensive research that needs to be accomplished, Ph.D. students are given extra time, compared to their MS counterparts, for proposal development.

Comprehensive Exams – Ph.D. Students Only

Current guidelines indicate that Ph.D. students should have successfully passed comprehensive exams by the end of the fifth semester (typically the fall semester of the third year) if they enter the program without a M.S. degree. Those entering with a M.S. are expected to complete the comprehensive exams by the end of the second year. The G.O.C. recommends that comprehensive exams should be taken on time for several reasons. First, advancement to candidacy is a requirement for certain funding agencies. Second, one purpose of comprehensive exams is to identify students who are not adequately performing in the program. To have students wait until the end of their third year before comprehensive exams potentially sets up students to fail after significant investment by both the students and advisor. Third, funding is guaranteed for eight semesters. To wait until the end of the sixth semester before passing comprehensive

exams is unsatisfactory and should be avoided since two more semesters of funding may not be adequate to finish the dissertation. However, students and faculty are encouraged to find alternate funding to support student research. Fourth, and most positively, comprehensive exams function as a symbol that a student has obtained sufficient and appropriate intellectual abilities for PhD level work; those students who successfully obtain these abilities have accomplished a large portion of the goals of graduate education.

The exact content and format of the comprehensive exams (written and oral are required) are determined by the Section affiliation of the student's advisor. Regardless, the GOC needs to be notified about when comprehensive exams are being taken and the format chosen by the Advisory Committee. All exams must be held prior to 3 weeks before the last day of instruction in any semester.

If a student does not take the comprehensive exam by the end of the 5th semester after his/her matriculation date, he/she will not be eligible for funding from the School (such as a GA) during the sixth semester. If the student enters the 7th semester and still has not taken the comprehensive exam he/she will be placed on academic probation until the student takes the exam. If the exam is not taken by the end of the 8th semester the student will be separated from the graduate program.

Written Exams

Outlined below are several examples of written exams that a committee may choose to implement. Generally, each committee member (including the outside committee member contributes a question or set of questions and then grades the answer(s). The outcome for each question can be pass, rewrite, or fail. The oral exam should not be scheduled until all of the committee members have stated that the student has passed the written exam or provisionally passed subject to further questioning in the oral exam.

Four models for the written exam:

- 1) Each committee member provides a question(s) that requires library research and a synthesis of ideas. The student has from one week to three or four weeks (determined in advance) to complete the questions for each committee member. The written answers could be framed as short research proposals.
- 2) Each committee member provides a question(s) that requires limited library research and the synthesis of ideas. The student has one or two days to answer the questions of each committee member (total of approximately one week for all questions). The questions could be handed out one at a time with a designated time period for answering each.
- 3) Each committee member provides a question(s) that draws on the knowledge the student has already acquired. This closed book exam could be conducted over several days depending on the length of time designated for completion.
- 4) The committee (with or without student input) provides a topic for a grant proposal which serves as the written portion of the student's exam.

Oral Exams

The oral exam occurs following the successful completion of the written component. The exam is orchestrated by the doctoral advisor. The protocol described below should be followed for the oral exam.

- After the examining committee is convened by the advisor, the student is asked to leave the room while the committee discusses the student's performance on written questions, oral exams content, and/or the order of questioning. If any member was dissatisfied with answers to the written exams, the student may be asked questions related to the areas of weakness.
- The student returns to the room and could be asked to give a brief synopsis of their research as a means of initiating questions.
- The initial questions could concern the student's research or clarification of answers to the written exams. Questions should also be asked about the major fields of biology that are directly relevant to the student's area of study. Questions should also be drawn from any area of biology. Each member of the committee should be given the opportunity to ask questions with no explicit time restrictions but a general understanding that all members should have approximately equivalent amounts of time if they require it.
- After all members have had an opportunity to ask questions, the committee should discuss whether the exam will continue and whether there are any important questions that should still be answered. The exam could end at this point, but usually will continue until all committee members agree that they have sufficient information to end the exam.
- The student is asked to leave again and the committee begins deliberation of the outcome of the exam. Before discussion ensues it is recommended that each committee member write on a piece of paper a non-binding vote of pass, fail, or uncertain. The facilitator can then announce the tally as a straw poll to initiate discussion. At this point individuals can discuss their reasons for proposing a pass or fail and the resulting dialog should continue until all members agree that it is time to vote. At this point the vote is binding and a unanimous decision is required for the student to pass.

Three outcomes: Pass, Conditional Pass, and Fail.

Students who fail to pass the comprehensive exams on the first attempt can re-take the examination after three months, but it must be completed within the next calendar year. Students without a MS degree that fail the second exam may be allowed to complete a MS degree with the consent of the GOC and Advisory Committee. Students with a MS degree that fail the second exam will be removed from the program immediately.

Students who pass the comprehensive exam and have completed the formal coursework, exclusive of Bio 799, should immediately file with SoLS and the Graduate College for Advancement to Candidacy.

Final Defense

Master's Students

During the fourth semester in the MS program, students are expected to graduate. We are aware that delays typically occur, which result in postponed graduation. However, the Graduate College limits MS students to six years (12 semesters). Attempts will be made to fund students that must delay graduation, but funding is not guaranteed.

MS students, upon completion of required coursework and having submitted to the Advisory Committee a thesis draft (previously found acceptable by the advisor), may arrange for the final examination for the advanced degree. In addition to your advisory committee and the GCR, a member of the GOC must be present at your oral defense. It is your responsibility to contact the GOC to ensure availability.

In order to ensure the appropriate feedback from faculty to students, 1) the Advisory Committee members must receive the thesis/dissertation at least two weeks prior to the defense, 2) students will present an announced departmental seminar summarizing the thesis/dissertation research, to be followed by an oral defense of the thesis/dissertation on the same day before the Advisory Committee and any other graduate faculty that wish to attend, and 3) students must give at least two weeks public notice (e.g., at the minimum, email and posted fliers) announcing the departmental seminar that summarizes the thesis/dissertation research.

After your oral defense, the Oral Defense Results form and the Graduation Application form must be submitted to the Graduate College. Failure to notify the GOC of plans to graduate may result in delayed graduation.

Ph.D. Students

Ph.D. students, upon completion of required coursework and having submitted to the Advisory Committee and dissertation draft (previously found acceptable by the advisor), may apply for the final examination for advanced degree. In addition to your advisory committee and the GCR, a member of the GOC must be present at your oral defense. It is your responsibility to contact the GOC to ensure availability. Failure to notify the GOC of plans to graduate may result in delayed graduation.

In order to ensure the appropriate feedback from faculty to students, 1) the Advisory Committee members must receive the thesis/dissertation at least four weeks prior to the defense, 2) students will present an announced departmental seminar summarizing the thesis/dissertation research, to be followed by an oral defense of the thesis/dissertation on the same day before the Advisory Committee and any other graduate faculty that wish to attend, and 3) students must give at least two weeks public notice (e.g., at the minimum, email and posted fliers) announcing the departmental seminar that summarizes the thesis/dissertation research.

After your oral defense, the Oral Defense Results form and the Graduation Application form must be submitted to the Graduate College. Failure to notify the GOC of plans to graduate may result in delayed graduation.

MS and Ph.D. Oral Defense Guidelines

The oral defense guidelines generally follow the guidelines for the oral portion of the comprehensive examination.

- After the student presents the public portion of the defense, any UNLV faculty member can ask questions, or comment. If any Advisory Committee member was dissatisfied with answers to the questions they can be pursued in the closed portion of the oral defense.
- Following the public seminar, the Advisory Committee, the GCR, a GOC facilitator, and the student will adjourn for the private oral examination.
- The initial questions could concern the student's research or clarification of answers to the public defense. Each member of the committee should be given the opportunity to ask questions with no explicit time restrictions but a general understanding that all members should have approximately equal amounts of time if they require it.
- After all members have had an opportunity to ask questions, the committee should discuss whether the exam will continue and whether there are any important questions that should still be answered. The exam could end at this point, but usually will continue until all committee members agree that they have sufficient information to end the exam.
- The candidate is then asked to leave the room and the committee begins deliberation of the outcome of the exam. At this point individuals can discuss their reasons for the proposing a pass or fail and the resulting dialog should continue until all members agree that it is time to vote. At this point the vote is binding and a unanimous decision is required for the student to pass.

Graduation

Keep in mind that the Graduate College has its own deadlines that must be met for successful graduation with in a particular semester. Students should check with the College of Science Graduate Liaison prior to the semester that they plan to graduate to ensure that the Graduate College has all the appropriate forms. Students that have not followed Graduate College or SoLS procedures and thus are not completely finished will not graduate or be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony. Only those students who have successfully completed the program will be allowed to participate in graduation.

If a student intends to graduate the semester the thesis/dissertation is completed, an original and one copy must be in the Graduate College office in approved final form ready for binding of the thesis at least two weeks prior to the end of classes. This means you must start the process well before then! Students typically underestimate the time involved in writing and formatting the dissertation. Failure to adequately consider these issues is likely the primary reason most students will not graduate in the semester they plan on finishing.

A current edition of a “Guide for Preparation and Presentation of the Thesis and Dissertation” is available from the Graduate College website. This document covers the Graduate College regulations for theses and dissertations. You are *strongly* encouraged to obtain a copy well in advance of writing.

Graduate Student Annual Evaluations

Progress of Graduate Students in the School of Life Sciences (SoLS) is evaluated every year by the Graduate Operations Committee (GOC). Each graduate student in SoLS must have *at least* one Advisory Committee meeting each academic year and must complete the Annual Advisory Committee Meeting Form at that time. This form, once completed, must be placed in the GOC box in the SoLS office and is an essential part of the student evaluation process. This form is solely for GOC use and **should not** be filed with the Graduate College. This form will be used by the GOC to determine whether students are making satisfactory progress. Failure to submit this form before the annual evaluation period will be considered as making unsatisfactory progress by the GOC.

The GOC of the SoLS will review the Annual Evaluation Forms on **November 1 each year**, or if that date falls on a weekend, the following Monday. If the GOC determines that the student has made “unsatisfactory progress” towards the degree the graduate coordinator will recommend that the student is placed on academic probation by the Graduate College for at least 1 semester.

Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory progress leading to academic probation

Unsatisfactory progress will include:

- 1) No current affiliation with a research mentor (thesis/dissertation advisor)
- 2) Failure to take the comprehensive exam by the end of the 5th semester of their graduate program.
- 3) Failure of the comprehensive exam for the first time.
- 4) Failure to remediate a conditional pass in the comprehensive exam within the period stipulated by the examination committee.
- 5) Failure to hold an official meeting with his/her advisory committee during the calendar year.
- 6) Failure to enroll in at least 6 credits within 1 calendar year (3 credits each semester).
- 7) Failure to re-enroll in coursework after a leave of absence has expired.
- 8) Failure to adequately perform GA duties as outlined as conditions for SoLS support.
- 9) Failure to adequately perform his/her research-oriented academic duties as outlined by his/her research mentor as conditions for RA support.
- 10) A student receives one grade below “B-“ (or lower) in any graduate class, or has a cumulative GPA that drops below 3.0.

Part-time students are expected to progress through the program at the same rate as full-time students.

Unsatisfactory Progress and Academic Probation

If the GOC determines that a student is not making satisfactory progress, the GOC and Graduate Coordinator will request that the Dean of the Graduate College either remove the student from the Program, or place the student on academic probation. In the case of probation, the SoLS' Graduate Operations Committee will also indicate what work the student must complete (including deadlines) to be reinstated in the program. If the Graduate Dean approves the request, notification is made to the student and the academic unit, and the letter from the Graduate College must clearly state the conditions of remediation and timelines for reinstatement (a separate letter will be sent from the SoLS' Graduate Operations Committee if it does not). Remediation may include extra coursework with grades above 3.0, meeting any terms imposed by the student's advisory committee (including retaking the comprehensive exam), or terms set by faculty supervising the student as a GA/RA. Students must provide documentation to show that he/she has fulfilled the terms of remediation to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

Usually the student has one semester to remediate probation, but this timeline is at the discretion of the SoLS' Graduate Operations Committee. If the student successfully completes the requirements for reinstatement in the allotted time, he/she can request reinstatement from the Graduate Operations Committee. If the Committee concurs with the student (the decision must be unanimous), it will forward a letter to the Graduate College requesting reinstatement. If the student fails to clear probation after the allotted time, a letter will be forwarded to the Graduate College asking that the offending student be separated from the Program and the Graduate College. Once removed from the Graduate College, the student can only be readmitted to a graduate Program within the SoLS by applying to the Graduate Admission Committee as a new candidate.

Timeline for Academic Probation/Program Separation

Letters recommending probation will be sent to the Graduate College by the end of the each semester. Unless otherwise specified by the GOC, students have until the end of the following semester to remediate their probationary status. If the student fails to comply with the conditions and timelines for re-instatement, the GOC will recommend to the Graduate College that the student be separated from the program at that time.

Miscellaneous Policies

Guidelines for application to the Ph.D. program for a student admitted to the MS program

A student admitted to the SoLS MS program who subsequently wants to enter a Ph.D. program, without completing the MS degree must in consultation with his/her Advisor solicit the *Change of Degree Form A* from the Graduate Coordinator. It is not available on-line. The student and his/her Advisor complete the *Change of Degree Form A*, which consists of three parts: student petition, advisor endorsement, and signature page. The petition to change degree programs must be approved by the Graduate College before the end of the student's third semester in SoLS Graduate Program.

Guidelines for application to the MS program for a student admitted to the Ph.D. program

A student admitted to the SoLS Ph.D. program who subsequently wants to enter a MS program, without completing the PhD must in consultation with his/her Advisor solicit the *Change of Degree Form B* from the Graduate Coordinator. This change *must* occur before the student starts his/her 6th year (11th semester) in the Program. The student must have a meeting with his/her Advisory Committee, and the Committee must agree with the student's desire to switch Programs. Then, all Advisory Committee members *must* sign the Change of Degree form. The student submits the Change of Degree form to the Graduate Coordinator, the Director of the School of Life Sciences, and the Dean of the College of Sciences for approval. Once it has been approved at the School and College level the student submits the Change of Degree form to the Graduate College for approval. The Graduate College should then amend the student's file to indicate the change in his/her degree program.

Teaching assistant requirements and funding

Ph.D. students are required to teach the equivalent of one academic year as a Teaching Assistant in the undergraduate curriculum. Students in the MS program are not required to teach but are strongly encouraged to participate.

Upon admittance each student receives an acceptance letter which includes details regarding his/her financial support. Students must be in good standing within the MS and Ph.D. programs to receive support from SoLS. As long as a student is making reasonable progress toward completion of his/her degree as determined by the GOC he/she can normally expect 5 years of institutional support as long as funds are available. Students in the program longer than 5 years are not guaranteed support. All graduate students and their faculty advisors are expected to continually seek and apply for funding in the form of fellowships and research assistantships at local, state and federal levels. Graduate Assistantships may be terminated if the student does satisfactorily perform assigned work duties. Assistantships may also be terminated if a student does not make satisfactory progress toward their degree.

A student who passes his/her comprehensive exam on time and is otherwise in good standing becomes eligible for support on a special SoLS GA. SoLS GAs are awarded at a higher stipend level than the regular state-funded GA. The decision to award a SoLS GA is made by the section members in collaboration with the graduate coordinator. SoLS GAs can only be awarded on a yearly basis starting in the fall semester. Thus someone who passes his/her comprehensive exams during the 4th semester (typically spring) is eligible for two years of SoLS GA support and someone who passes his/her comprehensive exams in the 5th semester (typically fall) is eligible for 1 year of SoLS GA support since the SoLS GA cannot begin until the following fall. The number of SoLS GAs available will depend on funding and thus no student is guaranteed a SoLS GA.

Graduate students may hold only one state-funded GA at a time.

Graduate College policy stipulates that international students whose primary language is not English and are Graduate Assistant (GA) or Part-Time Instructor (PTI) GAs are required to receive a score of 550 (213 computerized) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) prior to assuming any type of instructional duties. Students will need to take the exam as soon as they arrive on campus. Students who fail the exam but who will be required to teach at a later date should contact the Director of the English Language Center for guidance. The fee for the exam will be paid by the student. Please see the Graduate College Policy Manual for further regulations.

Employment outside of UNLV

In accord with Graduate College policy, prior to accepting employment (other than a state-funded or self-funded GA) on- or off-campus, you must receive approval from the department chair AND the Graduate Coordinator and then petition the graduate dean for approval. The additional employment should be limited in nature and related to the area of study. As a general rule, outside employment must not exceed ten hours per week. Failure to request approval of the outside employment may result in the state-funded GA being rescinded.

Students funded solely through funds outside of UNLV are not exempt from the requirements of successful progress through the program. Both MS and Ph.D. students will be expected to follow endorsed SoLS guidelines for satisfactory progress. Failure to make satisfactory progress will result in the student being removed from the program.

“On Leave” Status

In extreme extenuating personal circumstances a student in consultation with his/her Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Coordinator/GOC may choose to temporarily delay his/her degree progress and go “on leave”. This is officially done through the Graduate College. As stated in the graduate college handbook “When necessary a student may request approval for a leave of absence from a degree program. During the leave of absence, the student should remain in contact with the department. However, all degree requirements must be completed within the six- and/or eight-year policy as stated previously”. In practice, a letter must be written by the student, stating why the student is leaving and include the time frame of absence as well as a return date. The letter must include a signature by the Student, Graduate Coordinator, Department Chair, College Dean, and Graduate College Dean.

Student and Faculty Grievance Procedures

There are several potential types of difficulties that students and/or advisors may encounter during a student’s tenure in the graduate program. These generally involve conflicts between students or conflicts between the student and the advisor.

Students encountering difficulties within their program should first attempt to resolve any issues that impede a quality education with the individual involved (e.g. another student or faculty member). If this is too uncomfortable or after approaching the person the issue remains unresolved, the student can ask the Graduate Coordinator for advice, possible

resolution and potential mediation. If the grievance is serious enough, a formal complaint can be made by the student. In this case, the Graduate Coordinator and the GOC will serve as arbiters in the conflict.

If the grievance either remains unresolved after discussions with the Faculty Advisor, GOC and Graduate Coordinator or if an appeal is desired, the student (or advisor) can approach the Director of SoLS. If the grievance remains unresolved after this, the grievance will be forwarded to the Dean of the College of Sciences. If the grievance remains contentious, the Graduate Dean is the final arbiter of the situation.

Other policies through Human Resources may also exist.