

Written/Oral Exam Protocols

1. Incoming graduate students will take a written exam on 9 introductory biology topics (cell biology, cell physiology, biochemistry, microbiology, genetics, ecology, evolution, animal diversity, plant biology, physiology) during their first semester of enrollment in the thesis graduate program. The written exam will be administered by the graduate coordinator within the first month of a student's enrollment in the program. The written exam will serve as an assessment tool and the scores on individual subject areas will be provided to the students' committee for the development of an appropriate degree plan. Also, the overall results of the written exam and the scores on the individual subject areas will be used by the committee to develop a list of focal subject areas to be addressed on the oral exam.
2. The student will form a thesis committee by the end of the first semester.
3. The thesis committee will provide the student with a list of several testable introductory biology subject areas for the oral exam before the end of the first semester based on discussions with the student, the presentation of a preliminary outline or the thesis proposal to the committee.
4. The oral exam is based on any subject areas determined by the committee in advance, a written thesis proposal and an oral presentation of the thesis project to the thesis committee. The oral exam must be taken and passed by the end of the second semester of enrollment in the MS thesis graduate program. The oral exam is graded as pass/fail. If the oral exam is not passed by the end of the second semester, the committee and the graduate coordinator have the right to remove the student's assistantship and withdraw the student from the program.
5. The thesis proposal, developed with the thesis advisor, must be provided to the thesis committee two weeks prior to the oral exam.
6. Students who do not perform satisfactorily on the oral exam will be given a second opportunity to pass the oral exam. The time frame for the re-take of the oral exam will be determined by the thesis committee. If a student does not pass the second attempt of the oral exam, the committee can offer remediation to the student including, but not limited to additional coursework, a re-take of the oral exam, or teaching responsibilities. Alternatively, in some cases, the student may be withdrawn from the MS thesis program and lose their assistantship or transfer to the non-thesis program and lose their assistantship.