

EEB GRADUATE HANDBOOK

2024-2025



FOR MSC &
PHD STUDENTS

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WELCOME to New Graduate Students in EEB

On behalf of the EEB Graduate Office

Welcome to the Graduate Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB) at the University of Toronto! We hope that your graduate studies will be scientifically challenging and exciting, that you will experience worthy mentors and collaborators, and that you will build lasting friendships among faculty and fellow students. We are very proud of our department, in large part due to our community of outstanding students like you. We urge you to become involved in the life of our EEB department to help to make it an even more lively and interesting place. We look forward to meeting and interacting with you!

Regards,
Asher Cutter, Professor and Associate Chair of Graduate Studies

On behalf of the EEB Graduate Student Association (EGSA)

Welcome to EEB at the University of Toronto!

As a graduate student in EEB at U of T, you are joining a community of scientists with diverse research interests and backgrounds. We aim to foster an environment ripe for the exchange of knowledge and ideas but also to support each other through times of hardship and stress. Being a graduate student will be an exciting and uniquely challenging experience for many of you, and the EGSA is here to address both these facets of grad life. As the needs of our community change over time, it is the EGSA's aim to serve as a pillar of support for our community, voicing any student concerns to the department faculty and acting as a conduit to other forms of assistance while the necessary changes are being pushed forward.

All graduate students in EEB are members of the EGSA. The EGSA represents students from all campuses (St. George, UTM, UTSC, and the ROM) and is a great resource for assistance with many aspects of graduate school. Throughout the year, the EGSA works with faculty to address matters such as departmental climate, interpersonal issues (with the EEB Allyship Network), graduate student mental health (with the Mental Health Committee), connects EEB students with the graduate community at large through the Graduate Students' Union and CUPE 3902 Unit 1 (the teaching assistants' workers' union), as well as facilitate equity, diversity, and inclusion across the department. We aim to inform our graduate students about departmental and university affairs through emails and EGSA meetings. The EGSA Social Representatives do a great job at hosting several events throughout the year, such as Halloween, winter holidays, and regular bi-weekly hangouts with a mix of low and high-energy activities. Additionally, the Mental Health Committee runs events and workshops aimed at helping grad students navigate resources to manage their mental health. The Student Journal Club/Seminar Series hosts weekly sessions where graduate students can share their research, get feedback from their peers, and engage in discussion about recent papers/current events in science. At the end of each school year, we support the amazing organizing chairs and dedicated volunteer graduate students in running the Atwood Colloquium in Ecology & Evolution. This event brings together all campuses to showcase research and feature three guest speakers. This includes two speakers selected by the faculty and the

Atwood lecturer, an outstanding senior scientist selected by the graduate students (you!) through the help of the Atwood lecture chair.

We are excited to have you as a part of this community and look forward to your active involvement. **Be sure to attend the first EGSA meeting on September 6th (12-1pm)** to find out what we are up to and all the exciting things we've got planned for the upcoming year! This year our meetings will be hybrid and across the three campuses to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate either virtually or in-person. These EGSA meetings and social gatherings are a great way to contribute to and get involved in the department. We hope that you will enjoy your time as a graduate student in EEB as you continue to meet friends, make professional contacts, and develop skills that you will take with you to the next stage of your career.

For more information on the EGSA, please see:

- [The EGSA website](#)
- The EGSA section on the [departmental website](#)
- [The EGSA anonymous feedback form](#)
- For access to the EEB grad Slack channel email louisa.bartkovich@mail.utoronto.ca

Again, welcome to EEB! We look forward to getting to know you!

EGSA Co-presidents 2024-2025
[Louisa Bartkovich](#) and [Jessie Wang](#)

GRADUATE CONTACTS

EEB Tri-Campus Graduate Chair

Prof. Joel Levine
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Associate Chair of EEB Graduate Studies

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EEB Graduate Program Administrator

Kitty Lam
Earth Sciences Centre, Room 3045-B
Phone: 416-978-7172
Email: gradadmin.eeb@utoronto.ca

EEB Communications & Graduate Coordinator (MSc defenses and PhD appraisal exams)

Fazia Khan
Earth Sciences Centre, Room 3045-A
Phone: 416-978-0004
Email: grad.eeb@utoronto.ca
Email for MSc defenses and PhD appraisal exams: grad.eeb@utoronto.ca

Ecology & Evolutionary Biology Graduate Student Association

Co-Presidents (2024-25): Jessie wang and Louisa Bartkovich
Website: <http://www.eeb.utoronto.ca/grad/egsa.htm>

EEB Graduate Studies Website: <https://eeb.utoronto.ca/>

School of Graduate Studies (SGS), Student Services Office

Website: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current-students/>
63 St. George Street, Room 102
Phone: 416-978-6614

Note for almost all situations, you should contact Kitty Lam and she will deal with SGS for you. Kitty will let you know who to contact at SGS if you should contact them directly.

Graduate Student Union

Website: <https://www.utgsu.ca/>
16 Bancroft Avenue
Phone: 416-946-8699

****For many other U of Toronto services available to EEB graduate students, please see "APPENDIX D: Campus Life" at the end of this handbook ****

IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES

Link to: [SGS Sessional Dates](#)

It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all relevant deadlines.

2024

September 1	Deadline for payment of tuition fees if you are not deferring them.
September 3	Some graduate courses begin (check the EEB Grad Course webpage for details on dates/times).
September 11	Summer Session Grades available for viewing by students on the SWS (ACORN). <i>Please check your academic record and ensure all information is accurate</i>
September 13	Last date to register without a late registration fee.
September 16	Final date to submit the final version of a Ph.D. thesis to SGS to avoid fee charges for 2024-2025 (note that after that date, the tuition fees are pro-rated monthly in the last year)
September 18	Final date to add full-year and Fall session courses.
September 30	Final date for receipt of degree recommendation and submission of MSc Thesis for November convocation and to avoid fee charges. <i>(Approval of Corrections to MSc Thesis form must be submitted to the Graduate Office by September 28)</i>
September 30	Final date to submit final Ph.D. thesis to SGS (ProQuest) for Fall Convocation.
October 28	Final date to drop September session full-year or half-courses without academic penalty.
November	Fall Convocation Information and Dates are posted at www.convocation.utoronto.ca
December 20	Recommended tuition fee payment deadline for all tuition fees billed for the 2024 tax year for students who want eligible 2024 tuition fee payments to be reported on the 2024 calendar T2202 tax certificate
December 24	University closed for winter break from Tuesday, December 24 to Friday, January 3 inclusive.

2025

January 6	University re-opens
January 6	Most formal graduate courses begin (check the EEB Grad Course webpage for details on dates/times) and seminars begin this week or the following week.
January 15	Final date to submit Doctoral thesis without fee payment for January (fees are pro-rated monthly for the last year in the program – see details below)
January 15	September (Fall) Session Grades available for viewing by students on ACORN. <i>Please check your academic record and ensure all information is accurate.</i>
January 17	Final date to register for new January registrants.
January 20	Final date to add Winter session courses for half courses.
January 24	Final date to be recommended for March (in absentia) degree conferral. Final date for receipt of degree recommendations and thesis submission for March or June graduation for MSc students, without fees being charged for the Winter

	session. (<i>“Approval of Corrections to MSc Thesis” form must be submitted to the Graduate Office by January 22</i>).
February 28	Final date to drop full-year courses or January session courses without academic penalty. Final date to withdraw from a program without academic penalty.
March	March Graduation <i>in absentia</i> Information is posted at www.convocation.utoronto.ca
March 1	For MSc students with a September start, deadline to MSc-PhD transfer application materials to EEB Graduate Office (CV + statement)
July 1	Deadline to complete approved MSc-PhD Transfer Supervisory Committee meeting (for students with a September start)
July 1	For MSc students with a January start, deadline to MSc-PhD transfer application materials to EEB Graduate Office (CV + statement)
August 31	Final date to submit the final version of a Ph.D. thesis to SGS to avoid fee charges for 2025-2026 (note that after that date, the tuition fees are pro-rated monthly in the last year)
November 1	Deadline to complete approved MSc-PhD Transfer Supervisory Committee meeting (for students with a January start)

*****It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of all relevant deadlines.*****

REGISTRATION and ENROLLMENT

Registration and Fees

Students must register and pay tuition fees at the beginning of each academic year (i.e., in August-September), unless they defer their fees (details on how to defer payment below). Registration must be completed before students attend classes or otherwise make use of university facilities. A student is considered to be registered as soon as they pay their tuition and incidental fees, or make a request to register without payment. A student's registration is normally for the full year (i.e. from September 1st to August 31st). The deadline for registration is listed in the table of "IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES" (above). After the deadline, a late registration fee will be levied. Students can view instructions on the [Student Accounts](#) website, view their account on the Student Web Service known as ACORN (see below for details), and then make payment. Fee schedules are available at www.fees.utoronto.ca.

We recommend that, when possible, students defer their fees to help plan out their finances over the academic year. If a request is made early enough, most students can defer paying some or all of their fees, interest-free, through until the end of the academic year in April. The fee deferral process differs for different groups of students:

- Students *in the EEB "funded cohort"* may submit a request to register without payment online at www.acorn.utoronto.ca. Students in the "funded cohort" are either (1) in the first 12 months of their MSc, (2) in the PhD-U program and in the first 5 years after first registration (for MSc to PhD-U transfer students, this is the date of first registration in the MSc program), or (3) in the PhD program and in the first 4 years (typically after having been admitted with a prior MSc).
- Students *in months 13-16 of their MSc* can defer their fees by submitting a "[Register Without Payment](#)" form to Kitty Lam and she will defer your fees for you (you are not required to submit proof of funding).
- Students *beyond the funded cohort* who are receiving a major award, RA from their supervisor and/or teaching assistantship that cover the minimum payment, may defer their fees by completing the "[Register Without Payment](#)" form and then submitting it to Kitty Lam.
- The "Register Without Payment" form must be submitted to Kitty Lam by email by the deadline the table of "IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES" (above), otherwise the fee deferral will not take place. If you don't defer your fees online on ACORN (SWS) or submit the "Register Without Payment" form, it is assumed that you are registering by making the minimum payment. If you miss the registration deadline and wish to register and defer fees after the registration deadline, you will have to go to SGS to register and arrange for fee deferral. Students registering late like this will be charged a late registration fee.

In March, **you should check your ACORN account to determine whether you have an unpaid balance for your tuition and other fees that you need to pay off before April 30.**

Updating Your Personal Information

Registered students can use the [Student Web Service on ACORN](#) to **enter/update their banking information**. Students who fill this in will have their awards, scholarship, and tuition over-payment refunds **deposited directly into their bank account**, rather than receiving the payment as a cheque. It is

a simple process to add your bank information on ACORN (see the link on the upper left of the UofT Home Page). After you log in, select “Personal Information”, then click on “Direct Deposit”, and follow the instructions. These are the services available:

- View/Change address, telephone numbers, email
- View final grades
- View academic history
- Order transcripts
- Add/request/drop/list courses or waitlist requests
- View personal timetable or My Calendar
- View your financial account information (invoices, account details, payments (e.g. under the green tab "\$ Finances" on ACORN you can see the following: Tuition and other expenses are in: Financial Account > Invoice & Net Cost and Award payments are in: Awards & Aid > "My Awards" tab)
- Update direct deposit details
- Defer payment of tuition (available to students in the funded cohort)
- Print Educational Credit tax forms (T2202A)
- Order convocation tickets
- View activity log
- Change your PIN
- Set your account up for reactivation of PIN

Campus Affiliation

Graduate students may apply for affiliation with one of the U of T Mississauga (UTM) or U of T Scarborough (UTSC) campuses, instead of with the St. George campus, if they meet specific criteria.

Affiliation with UTM or UTSC gives them access to some benefits restricted to one of those campuses. Deadlines for requesting a change of campus affiliation are the same as the registration deadline at the beginning of each term. Retroactive changes are not allowed. Applications can be found here—scroll down to Change of Campus Affiliation: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/academic-progress/student-forms-letter-requests/>

Payments Including RA and TA

For students arriving in September, the first stipend payments will be made at the end of September and monthly thereafter, in accordance with the stipend agreements made in early September. See the stipend form and letter that you will receive from Kitty Lam by mid-September for more details on the amounts and timing of payments. Some allocations in your stipend package will automatically be paid toward your tuition and other fees in September and January payments (e.g. from the University of Toronto Fellowship (UTF) fund source).

Final Year Tuition and Fees

Academic fees paid by doctoral students in the final year of their program are **pro-rated monthly**. The pro-rating is based on the date the completed thesis is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, not

the date of the thesis defense. For a table of monthly charges, refer to the appropriate 'Final Year Doctoral Students' link (domestic versus international, before or after the time limit (PhD: 6 years, PhD-U: 7 years). Note that if last year's schedule is listed, don't worry, as tuition and other fees do not increase much each year: https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/admissions/graduate-fees/#section_4

PhD students who submit their final thesis with all corrections and modifications by the September deadlines listed in the table of "IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES" (above) do not pay tuition for the Fall session but, after this date, the tuition fees increase slightly each month (the deadline is the 15th of each month). Incidental fees are pro-rated differently, depending on the timing in the fall versus winter term (see table of "IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES" for details).

For MSc students, see emails from Kitty Lam for deadlines in September, January, and May to avoid paying fees for the next term.

EEB GRADUATE COURSES

Course Enrolment

Academic advisors, faculty and staff are available to assist and advise students about choosing courses, but it is the student's responsibility 1) to actually enroll in courses, 2) to keep personal and academic information up to date at all times, and 3) to follow all University, SGS, departmental and program regulations, requirements and deadlines. Because the EEB MSc and PhD programs are research-intensive, graduate students have a much lighter course load than undergraduate students. MSc students typically complete the 0.5 FCE course requirement during the first term of the program and PhD students should aim to complete their course requirements during the first two years of the program (1.5 FCE for PhD to complete by end of year 3, 2.0 FCE for PhD-U to complete by end of year 4).

Students are automatically enrolled for their research/thesis activity but must sign up for EEB graduate courses on [ACORN](#) via [SWS](#). Graduate students in EEB can use the Student Web Service (SWS) to view their current courses and to request or drop courses. The Department permits students to use ACORN to enroll in courses as long as they do so within the required deadlines. See the table of "IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES" (above) for details on deadlines for registration and the [EEB Graduate Courses webpage](#) for the dates/times of graduate course offerings.

Each year, an average of about 15 courses are available for EEB graduate students to enroll in as either grad-only or cross-listed grad/undergrad courses or course modules. Not all courses are offered every year and new courses (e.g. Special Topics courses on a specific theme) will be offered in future years. Some course options are restricted to graduate students only. Other course options are cross-listed with undergraduate courses, with graduate students required to complete a modified set of course requirements. Please refer to the [EEB Graduate Courses webpage](#) for a list of current and future course offerings, along with descriptions of their content and, for the current year, the term in which they are offered and, in some cases, the time and location of the classes.

Some courses offered by other departments that might be of interest to EEB grad students are also listed near the end on the EEB graduate courses website. If students wish to take a course offered by another department, see information on the EEB Graduate Student Courses webpage. Note that not all departments will use ACORN for course sign up. Note also that students need permission from their supervisor(s), their Supervisory Committee, and the EEB Graduate Office to take a course (for credit) from another department. See the [EEB Graduate Courses webpage](#) for further information on how to enroll for courses.

EEB Core Ecology and Core Evolution Courses

The EEB Core Ecology and Core Evolution courses cover the fundamentals in the field. These courses are meant to be useful preparation for PhD students for the Question Bank part of the Appraisal Exam. If you have taken two or more 3rd or 4th year undergrad courses in ecology or evolution, then you may have sufficient background knowledge of the field already and the course for that field may not be especially useful for you—discuss whether you should take either of these courses with your supervisor and Supervisory Committee. If you have no or very little background in the field, then you may need to sit in on undergrad lectures or do outside reading before you take one of these courses. However, if you have taken other courses in ecology and evolution (e.g., you have no background in ecology but you have taken courses in evolution, math or biological theory), then ask the EEB graduate office and your supervisor and committee whether you will be equipped to take one of the core courses.

Special Topics Courses

Previous special topics courses include: Parasites in Communities, Natural Selection: Levels and Landscapes, Behavioural Genetics, Field Ecology and Evolution of Ontario Ecosystems. Students are encouraged to find other grad students with common interests and convince one or two faculty members to put on a special topics course that is of mutual interest, then send a short description to the EEB Graduate office for approval.

Beyond Course-based Learning

Your graduate training in EEB centers on research, not course-based learning. You should seek out skills-based and conceptual training in ways other than courses to complement what you learn from your supervisor's lab and courses. For example, informal workshops, journal discussion groups, scholarly book reading clubs, and seminars all contribute to your advanced training in EEB. Some of these kinds of opportunities are available to you even when offered outside of the EEB Department. Be sure to participate in these kinds of activities and, as your experience grows, consider leading one!

GENERAL GRADUATE PROGRAM REGULATIONS FOR MSc AND PhD DEGREES

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS) establishes procedures for the completion of MSc and PhD degrees at the University of Toronto. EEB follows these procedures and has established additional or modified practices; these are detailed under MSc and PhD Program Regulations below. The SGS procedures are available in the online version of the [SGS Calendar](#).

The EEB Department has established a [Statement of Values and Code of Conduct](#). All members of EEB commit to being respectful, inclusive, and professional in our behavior and actions towards other individuals. The Statement and Code outline these values and appropriate behavior in more detail. All UofT students also must adhere to University [policies on academic integrity](#), associated with the [Code of Behavior on Academic Matters](#), the [Code of Student Conduct](#), and policies encompassing [research ethics](#) and [intellectual property](#). Upholding academic integrity also extends to ethical and scholarly applications of generative artificial intelligence (GAI), including as it relates to [GAI in graduate student writing](#) of theses and other academic documents (e.g., articles for peer-review publication, supervisory committee meeting reports, project proposals). We hold ourselves and one another to the highest standards of ethical and professional behavior.

Summary and Highlights of EEB Graduate Programs

A graduate student's primary academic mentor is the faculty research **supervisor** (or, in some cases, students have co-supervisors). In addition, a **Supervisory Committee** comprising the research supervisor (and co-supervisor if relevant) and other faculty members from EEB help guide students through their program of research and study. **Students *must* meet with their Supervisory Committee at least once or twice per year to maintain good academic standing** (see details below).

MSc students must successfully defend their research thesis in an oral exam, in addition to completing course requirements. PhD students are examined on a research proposal and their general knowledge of ecology and evolutionary biology in an Appraisal Examination during the second year of the PhD, as well as completing course requirements, prior to defending their complete research thesis in a PhD Final Oral Examination. The Appraisal Examination also involves a departmental seminar about their research proposal. PhD students should aim to complete all course work by the end of the second year (PhD course completion by end of year 3, PhD-U course completion by end of year 4). Detailed program regulations and deadlines are provided below separately under MSc PROGRAM REGULATIONS and PhD PROGRAM REGULATIONS. Related relevant documents that contain advice and more details about the MSc Thesis Exam, PhD Appraisal Exam, and PhD Final Oral Exam are accessible on the [EEB Grad Student webpage](#).

Departmental Seminars

The academic culture of the department includes a vibrant set of discussion groups and seminar series. **All MSc and PhD students are expected to attend all seminars** in the EEB or Biology departmental seminar series on their campus and to take advantage of discussion groups.

Good Academic Standing

EEB will alert students when deadlines have been missed, but it is the responsibility of the student and supervisor to ensure that each milestone is completed on time, and that appropriate documentation is submitted to the EEB Graduate Office for Supervisory Committee meetings and examinations, as required. **Students who do not meet the deadlines for thesis Supervisory Committee meetings and the Appraisal Exam have not maintained good academic standing.**

Failure to maintain good academic standing may result in ineligibility for external and internal fellowships, lower priority for bursaries, assistantships and travel awards, and may lead to program termination. To maintain good academic standing, courses, the Appraisal Exam (for PhD students) and thesis committee meetings must be completed as required (see program requirements below for details). The below diagram summarizes the expected timing of Supervisory Committee meetings and other milestones in EEB graduate programs:

EEB Graduate Program milestone timeline with September start													EEB Graduate Program milestone timeline with January start														
Year	Fall Term				Winter Term				Summer Term					Year	Winter Term				Summer Term					Fall Term			
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Jan		Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		
1	Choose SC				MSc-PhD Transfer Exam									1	Choose SC				MSc-PhD Transfer Exam								
	1st SCM				2nd SCM										1st SCM				2nd SCM								
	1st SCM				2nd SCM										1st SCM				2nd SCM								
2	MSc Exam													2	MSc Exam												
	3rd SCM														3rd SCM												
	PhD/PhDU Appraisal Exam								PhDU Appraisal Exam						PhD/PhDU Appraisal Exam								PhDU Appraisal Exam				
3	PhDU Appraisal Exam													3	PhDU Appraisal Exam												
	4th SCM														4th SCM				PhD courses complete					PhD courses complete			
4	5th SCM													4	5th SCM				PhD Defence					PhD Defence			
										PhDU courses complete														PhDU courses complete			
5	6th SCM													5	6th SCM				PhDU Defence					PhDU Defence			

*SC=Supervisory Committee, SCM=Supervisory Committee Meeting

The Funded Cohort

Graduate students at the University of Toronto, whether domestic or international, are provided financial support in the form of an annual stipend. They are guaranteed an offer of a minimum stipend while in the “funded cohort”.

- The nominal EEB funded cohort for the MSc program is 16 months in length. If MSc students win external scholarship support or, by agreement with their supervisor, they may extend the MSc program to 24 months.
- Doctoral students admitted through the “ordinary entry” PhD pathway (after completing a research-intensive MSc in ecology and evolutionary biology) are in the funded cohort for 4 years.
- Doctoral students admitted through the “direct entry” PhD-U pathway (typically immediately after having completed a BSc) are in the funded cohort for 5 years.
- Students who transfer from the EEB MSc program to the EEB PhD program are in the funded cohort for the 5 years following their initial registration in the MSc program.
- After leaving the ‘funded’ cohort, some funding may be available, but income levels may drop; students and supervisor(s) should discuss this.

As of 2024-2025, the minimum stipend in the sciences is set by the Faculty of Arts & Science as \$22,250 plus tuition and fees (including UHIP for international students) while they are in the EEB funded cohort. Departments may increase the stipend amount but cannot offer less than this minimum for students in the funded cohort. For 2024-2025, the EEB Extended Minimum Funding Level for students in the funded cohort is \$34,000 plus tuition and fees for PhD students (4 years for PhD and 5 years for PhD-U) and \$30,000 plus tuition and fees for students in the MSc program (prorated for months 13-16).

Personal Time Off Policy

In 2022, SGS created a Personal Time Off Policy that enables graduate students to take personal time off each academic year. SGS and EEB encourage students to use the new policy to support their wellbeing. Under this policy, graduate students can take up to 15 business days per academic year (September to August) in personal time off, in addition to statutory holidays and days designated as University closures or holidays, to support their wellbeing and mental and physical health. The timing of personal time off can be flexible, as long as it does not interfere with their coursework or their grant/scholarship application deadlines. If a student has TA obligations and is considering taking some personal time off, they must follow the requirements with respect to TA responsibilities listed on the SGS webpage that describes the specific details of the policy: Understanding Personal Time Off – School of Graduate Studies (utoronto.ca)

Taking a Leave of Absence

Students may take a leave of absence for one of several different reasons, including health challenges, employment opportunity, parental leave, etc. There is an overview of the guidelines here:

<https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/policies-guidelines/leave-of-absence-policy/>

Please also see the EEB Mental Health Committee's Handbook about taking a leave of absence and/or talk to the EEB Associate Chair Graduate for the full details (some reasons to consider about leaves are not described on the SGS webpage).

For international students:

- As of 2022, UofT does not inform IRCC of any student's status; it is up to students to maintain the proper permits. However, taking even an approved leave of absence of more than 150 days can impact the ability for an international student to qualify for a post graduate work permit. The EEB Graduate Office recommends that you discuss this with a CIE advisor.
- Regarding UHIP while on leave: to maintain UHIP for one term during a leave, you must apply to the UHIP office a month before you begin the leave. You can apply using the leave application form after it has been approved by EEB. In Summer 2023, international students would not be eligible for UHIP while on leave after more than one term on leave (we recommend checking with the UHIP office about this). Also, if you are taking a retroactive leave, the UHIP office indicated that UHIP would likely remain valid when taking retroactive leave; in that case, students will receive a UHIP coverage card for the school year at the beginning of the term and can ask the UHIP office to keep the coverage while they are on leave for the rest of the term.
- In summer 2023, an international student contacted UTGSU about UTGSU Health and Dental Insurance Plan while on leave for Fall 2023. Their answer was as follows: "Please be advised that students on approved leave of absence are eligible to enroll in the UTGSU Health & Dental Plan

for the Fall 2023 semester. Your leave must be approved by the university and you must provide a letter from the university confirming your approved leave of absence. You need to fill out the enrollment form and send it to us by mail along with a cheque and your approved leave of absence confirmation letter. Please contact us during the first week of September 2023 so we can send you the form and instructions to enroll."

Conference Support

To help enable presentation and communication of thesis research results to the broader scientific community, students should apply to as many sources of travel funding as possible. Supervisors are expected to provide some funds to partly offset registration, travel and/or accommodation, although students should not expect to attend a conference every year. Students should expect to plan travel budgets economically by registering in advance for any "early bird" discounted registration fees, seeking shared accommodation and/or travel with fellow students, and comparison-shopping alternative air/train/bus/auto options. Reimbursement of conference travel is subject to UofT financial regulations.

SGS Conference Funds

Students can apply to SGS for funding to cover some of the expenses to travel to a conference during a student's time in their graduate program. Email announcements about applying for the SGS travel award are sent out twice annually. Timing of the application submission is determined by the timing of the conference.

Departmental Conference Funds

- **St. George** students (including **ROM** students) presenting their results at a conference can request a \$400 travel bursary once per year as a Harold Harvey Travel Award. The application should be submitted along with the reimbursement form, receipts, confirmation that they gave a talk or poster to the EEB Graduate Office in ESC. See the form on this webpage after you log in using your UTORid: <https://eeb.utoronto.ca/resources/payroll-expenses-2/how-to-make-expense-reimbursement-claims/>

The form is located in the resources section, under payroll & expenses, submitting expense claims. Also see the information about how fill in the reimbursement paperwork and the relevant forms here: <https://eeb.utoronto.ca/resources/>

- **UTM**: [UTM Conference Travel Grants | Graduate Students \(utoronto.ca\)](#) and email announcements are disseminated to all UTM Biology graduate students and supervisors about the fund application. There are two funds: one for conferences (\$1,000), and another one for workshops (\$500). The conference and the workshop have to be between May 1 of current year to April 30 of next year.
- **UTSC** (\$500): <https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/grad-edu/u-t-scarborough-graduate-student-travel-grant>

Scientific Society Conference Funds

Many of the scientific societies that host conferences provide some funding towards travel. Check the conference information and/or the society's webpage.

MSc PROGRAM REGULATIONS

The objective of the EEB MSc program is to provide students with skills in the generation, critical evaluation, assessment, and communication of data so that they are equipped to proceed with further post-graduate studies and career opportunities. MSc students must demonstrate competence in independent research and would normally plan to author or co-author a paper on their research results for primary publication.

Duration and Registration

Students in the EEB MSc program are funded for 16 months. Students will normally register to start September 1, but may register to start May 1 or January 1. Students whose thesis research will involve a substantial amount of fieldwork should consider starting a pilot project before they register in the program (this must be discussed with the potential supervisor). Students are expected to defend their thesis 12-16 months after registration. Students may extend their time in the program, with funding, if they receive a major scholarship or the supervisor has additional funding available (this must be discussed and confirmed with the prospective supervisor before the student applies to the program).

Financial Support

EEB MSc students are guaranteed financial support for 16 months in the form of a graduate stipend. For students without external scholarship support (e.g. NSERC, OGS, CIHR, Connaught), this stipend is comprised of two phases:

- 1) a twelve-month stipend at the Departmental guaranteed income level, comprised of:
 - a Research Assistantship (RA)
 - a 140-hr Teaching Assistantship (TA)
 - a University of Toronto Fellowship (UTF)
 - and, in some cases, an award from EEB's endowment fund
- 2) an additional four months of stipend prorated at the Departmental guaranteed income level, comprised of:
 - an RA (paid in the last four months of the program when the first registration is September 1; for those who started in May, in the first four months of the program)
 - and 70 hours of TA during the last four months (usually Sept-Dec) if they occur during the academic year

For students with external scholarships, the Teaching Assistantship during the first year is reduced to 70 hours and a "top-up" may be awarded in addition to the guaranteed minimum. If a student would like to consider TA obligations that add up to more than the normal number of hours (140 hours without a scholarship and 70 hours with a scholarship), then they should confer with their supervisor. Further details on financial support are available on the stipend form and stipend letter distributed to students and supervisors by the EEB graduate office in late August/September. Students who do not complete their thesis within 16 months of registration continue to be eligible for TA positions (depending on availability), but are not eligible for any further financial support from the University of Toronto (e.g., no UTF).

Coursework

MSc students must complete 0.5 FCE of graduate course credit. This course requirement may be a single one-semester 0.5 FCE graduate course chosen from available courses or two 0.25 FCE course modules (6-week modules) (see the [EEB GRADUATE COURSES](#) section of this document and on the [EEB web page](#)). The Philosophy and Methods course (EEB1310H) is specifically designed for new students. Other courses also provide important and relevant background. We recommend that new students consult the full course descriptions on the [EEB website](#) and talk to their supervisor(s), and other graduate students about which course options are most appropriate for them.

MSc Supervisory Committee

The student's research supervisor(s) will consult with the student about which faculty members will be useful and appropriate members of the thesis Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee comprises the research supervisor(s) plus two other professors from EEB. One of the committee members may be drawn from faculty in another department or university, with appropriate justification. The committee membership must be approved by the EEB Graduate Office. Complete the online [Supervisory Committee Approval form](#) to set or change the committee membership.

The Supervisory Committee **must meet at least twice** during the 16-month program. During the first Supervisory Committee Meeting, which should be held **no later than 3.5 months after registration**, the student's academic background is reviewed and the proposed thesis research discussed. A second meeting of the Supervisory Committee should be held by the **end of the eighth month** of the MSc program in order to assess the student's academic and research progress, and to make any recommendations for completion of the degree.

Students making outstanding progress and who aspire to pursue a PhD may organize an additional rigorous meeting of the Supervisory Committee known as a Transfer Exam between months 6 to 10 of the MSc program, described below in the section "TRANSFER FROM MSc to PhD PROGRAM". To pursue the Transfer Exam process, the student and supervisor must notify the EEB Graduate Office by the deadline (March 1). Transfer from the MSc to PhD program is not guaranteed.

For all Supervisory Committee Meetings, the student must prepare an oral presentation and a brief, written, progress report on research plans and any research progress. The progress report should include a timeline for completion of the project. Students must ask their supervisors how far in advance of the meeting that they will want to review a draft of the report and presentation, so that they can provide constructive feedback. Students must schedule at least 2 hours for the meeting with the members of their committee, including their supervisor; meetings are usually 1.5 hours long, but may take additional time. See "APPENDIX A: Advice preparing for Supervisory Committee meetings", which provides advice and guidelines on preparing for Supervisory Committee meetings.

For all Supervisory Committee Meetings, the student is responsible for completing [Part A of the online Supervisory Committee Meeting form](#) at least 3 days before the meeting, but preferably 1-2 weeks in advance. An email receipt of the information entered into Part A will be sent automatically to the Supervisory Committee members, with some additional instructions, along with a copy of the uploaded progress report file. The Supervisory Committee will then complete [Part B of the online Supervisory Committee Meeting form](#) at the conclusion of the meeting. An email receipt of the completed Part B will

be sent automatically to all participants in the meeting, as well as to the EEB Graduate Office. The student or a Supervisory Committee member may then add any additional comments to the the record of the Supervisory Committee Meeting by email to the EEB Graduate Office. In the event that the online form does not work, they may use the “old” Word doc form that also is available on the EEB Graduate Student webpage: <https://eeb.utoronto.ca/education/graduate/graduate-handbook/>

Committee meetings can be held in person, remotely on Zoom or Teams, or in a hybrid format. If agreed upon by the participants, participating individuals have the choice of how they would like to attend. The EEB Graduate Affairs Committee recommends that meetings are held in person or hybrid because these meetings are less formal and the discussions flow more easily.

Thesis and MSc Examination

The MSc Examination Committee, jointly recommended by the supervisor(s) and student, consists of:

- the supervisor(s),
- one member of the Supervisory Committee (the other member of the Supervisory Committee is welcome to attend the defense but may not ask questions and may not vote), and
- two other EEB faculty members who are not on the Supervisory Committee.

The EEB Graduate Office will invite one of the two members who are not on the Supervisory Committee to Chair the exam. The exam Chair will also act as a regular member of the Exam Committee. These proposed Exam Committee membership must be sent to the EEB Graduate Office (Fazia Khan grad.eeb@utoronto.ca) for approval, including their status (supervisor, on Supervisory Committee, etc.), after which the student and supervisor will set a date for the exam.

A written thesis following SGS guidelines must first be reviewed and approved for examination by the supervisor(s). The supervisor(s) then must complete the “[Approval of MSc Thesis](#)” form (available on the [EEB grad student webpage](#)) and send it to the EEB Graduate Office before scheduling the defense or circulating the thesis. See the [steps for completing your degree on the SGS webpage](#), including to download the SGS thesis template.

The MSc thesis draft must also be approved by the EEB Graduate Office. Send a draft of the thesis (it does not need to be the final version of the thesis) to Fazia Khan as EEB Comms & Grad Coordinator <grad.eeb@utoronto.ca>, as pdf and word documents, at least 3 weeks before the proposed examination date. If, in your thesis, you use “we” rather than “I”, at the start of that chapter(s), then you should indicate the co-authors of the chapter and describe the contributions of all of the co-authors to the chapter. Note that the main text of the thesis (i.e. the Introduction) starts on page “1”. Additional [guidelines for formatting the MSc thesis](#) are available on the [EEB grad student webpage](#).

The date for the exam should be sent to the EEB Graduate Office at least two weeks ahead of the exam date and, for those defending on the St. George campus, the Graduate Assistant (Fazia Khan, grad.eeb@utoronto.ca) will book the exam room (feel free to make a recommendation if there is a room that you like). For students defending at UTM and UTSC, please speak to your supervisor about who can book an exam room for you. When planning the defense date, keep in mind that the deadline for defending and submitting your thesis to SGS to avoid paying Winter tuition is in January and to avoid paying Fall tuition, it is in September. Check to see if you have an email from Kitty Lam about the deadlines for the current year and, if you don’t have one, email her for the specific dates. Additional [guidelines for setting the MSc exam](#) are available on the [EEB grad student webpage](#).

MSc defenses can be held in person, remotely, or hybrid. Participating individuals have the choice of how they would like to attend. The EEB Graduate Office will circulate the formal announcement to participants. Students can ask Fazia Khan if there is AV equipment in the exam room.

Once the thesis is approved for examination, the student should send it to examiners **at least two weekends** before the exam. The *in camera* examination will consist of a 20-minute oral summary of the thesis research by the student, approximately 1.5 – 2 hrs of questioning by the Exam Committee, and then, after the student has left the room, a discussion by the committee of the student's thesis and performance. The Exam Chair is responsible for **completing the "MSc Exam Report Form"** detailing any required minor or major revisions (form available on the [EEB grad student webpage](#)), and returning it to the EEB Graduate Office immediately after the exam.

The student must complete any required revisions **within four weeks** of the exam. The person designated to approve these revisions (typically the supervisor) should complete the "[Approval of Corrections](#)" form and return it promptly to the EEB Graduate Office (form available on the [EEB grad student webpage](#)). If the student does not pass the thesis exam, one retake is possible **within 2 – 6 months**; if the student fails to pass the second attempt at the exam, then they have failed to meet the required academic standards of the graduate program and may be advised by the EEB Associate Chair for Graduate Studies that they may no longer be eligible to proceed in the program.

Post-defense

Congratulations on your successful defense! Please be sure to attend to the deadlines necessary to avoid paying tuition for the next term, which are listed in the table of "IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES" at the beginning of this Handbook. You will need to submit your final thesis to SGS and the [Approval of Corrections to MSc Thesis form](#) to Kitty Lam by these deadlines to avoid paying these fees. If you finalize your degree at time of year other than January, please ask Kitty Lam for the deadline for that term. Students who finish their MSc degree by the January deadline (see above) can choose to graduate in March (in absentia) or June (convocation). Please let Kitty Lam know your convocation date preference when you submit your approval of thesis corrections form. Please use this link for instructions on how to do this and about other aspects of finishing up: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current-students/program-completion/producing-your-thesis/>

You do not need to send a copy of the final version of your thesis to the EEB Graduate Office. A hard-copy of your thesis also is not required, but you do need to **submit an electronic copy of the final thesis version to the SGS website**. When you submit your final thesis to SGS, it will ask for your degree date. This date is the month (Nov., March (in absentia) or June) and year when you will convocate. Here is the specific link for submitting your thesis to SGS: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/current-students/program-completion/electronic-thesis-submission/>

After you have submitted your final thesis, your fees will be adjusted in your student account. Check your account on ACORN a few weeks after you submit your thesis to SGS to be sure that you have paid for all of your tuition and other fees. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the EEB Graduate Office. Congratulations again!

PhD PROGRAM REGULATIONS

The EEB PhD program aims to train thoughtful and versatile scientists who perform innovative, publication-quality research, think critically, have mastered skills specific to their fields, excel at conveying their ideas and results in both written and spoken formats, and go on to productive careers in their areas of interest and expertise. It provides students with the opportunity to design, conduct, and write about a collection of substantial, inter-related, independent research projects.

EEB PhD students are expected to complete original, independent research programs that make substantial and innovative contributions to their field of research. Normally, it is expected that PhD candidates will produce research to comprise three to five research chapters that are worthy of publication as scientific articles (or equivalent, as determined in consultation with the supervisor and Supervisory Committee). When possible, students ought to write manuscripts and submit for peer-review publication as soon as projects are completed in advance of the Final Oral Examination. Many students publish one or more of their thesis chapters before they defend, but this is not a requirement for graduation. Students must receive approval from their supervisor(s) before submitting a manuscript for publication and members of the Supervisory Committee should be solicited in a timely fashion for feedback on manuscripts that will be included in the thesis (before or during the submission process). See below for further details on the minimum requirements for the thesis.

Duration and Registration

The duration of the PhD program (for the “funded cohort”) is four years for those registering through the “ordinary entry” pathway (typically with a prior research-intensive MSc degree), or five years for those registering through the “direct entry” or “transfer entry” pathway (typically directly from a bachelor’s degree or transferring from EEB’s MSc program). The program duration for students who transfer from MSc to PhD includes the time since first registration in the MSc (see details in the section “TRANSFER FROM MSc to PhD PROGRAM”). The [SGS Calendar](#) program descriptions for EEB describe these admission pathways in more detail. Requests for extensions of program length beyond the funded cohort period will be considered, but will not include guaranteed stipend support. First registration normally occurs in September, although registration starting in January or May also is possible.

Financial Support

PhD students in the “funded cohort” will receive a guaranteed annual stipend (see the sections “The Funded Cohort” and “Duration and Registration” for details of duration of the funded cohort). For students without external scholarship support (e.g. NSERC, OGS, CIHR, Connaught), this stipend is comprised of some or all of the following:

- a Research Assistantship (RA) (i.e. funding provided by supervisor(s) grants)
- a 140-hr Teaching Assistantship (TA)
- a University of Toronto Fellowship (UTF)
- and funding from EEB’s endowment funds (also termed “restricted awards”).

For students with major external scholarships, the Teaching Assistantship is reduced to 70 hours and a “top-up” may be given as supplement above the guaranteed minimum. If a student would like to consider TA obligations that add up to more than the normal number of hours (140 hours without a scholarship and 70 hours with a major scholarship), then they should confer with their supervisor. Details on each student’s funding package are described on the stipend form and stipend letter distributed to students and supervisors by the graduate office in late August or in September.

PhD Students who do not complete their thesis and graduate while they are in the “funded cohort”, but are within the time-limit for their degree, are eligible to receive limited financial support for up to two academic years through the Doctoral Completion Award (DCA) program funded by SGS. Students must apply for DCA awards on an annual basis (Spring/early Summer), and all eligible applicants who are making good progress and are in good academic standing with their program will receive some support. The DCA awards are paid to students in the Fall and Winter terms only. A typical award value is \$2,000 - \$3,000 per term for up to two terms per year. Students holding academic awards with an annual value of \$25,000 or more will receive a nominal DCA amount (\$250 per term), and students holding academic awards with a value lower than \$25,000 will receive half of the typical DCA amount per term (\$1,000 - \$1,500).

The recommended support packages for students out of the funded cohort includes the DCA component (from UofT), a substantial TA component (usually 210 hours), and may include a Research Assistantship (RA) component. Note that some RA support from the supervisor(s) is recommended by the EEB Graduate Office, but is not obligatory for supervisor(s) to provide. Before PhD students leave the funded cohort, an item on the Supervisory Committee meeting report form prompts discussion between student and supervisor about finances and whether any RA will be provided once they leave the funded cohort. All enrolled students are required by the University to pay tuition and fees, even when out of the funded cohort.

Coursework

Students entering through the “direct entry” PhD-U pathway (typically directly from a BSc) must complete 2.0 FCE credits of graduate coursework. Students entering through the “ordinary entry” PhD pathway (typically following a research-intensive MSc) must complete 1.5 FCE credits of graduate coursework. These coursework requirements can be fulfilled by full-semester 0.5 FCE graduate courses and/or 0.25 FCE course modules. Students transferring from the EEB MSc to EEB PhD program must fulfill a total of 2.0 FCE of graduate course credit, with up to 0.5 FCE completed during the MSc period counting toward this total. The Philosophy and Methods course (EEB1310H) is specifically designed for new students. Course selection should be made in consultation with the supervisor and Supervisory Committee with the aim of completing coursework by the end of the second year (PhD course completion expected by the end of year 3; PhD-U course completion expected by end of year 4). See the EEB GRADUATE COURSES section and the [EEB grad course webpage](#) for further details about courses and current course options.

PhD Supervisory Committee

The student’s research supervisor(s) will consult with the student about which faculty members will be useful and appropriate members of their Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee comprises

the research supervisor(s) plus two other professors from EEB. One of the committee members may be drawn from faculty in another department or university, with appropriate justification. The committee membership must be approved by the EEB Graduate Office. Complete the online [Supervisory Committee Approval form](#) to set or change the committee membership.

In the first year, the Supervisory Committee must meet at least twice, with the first meeting taking place in the first term following registration (typically the Fall term) and at least once in the second term following registration (typically the Winter term). Thereafter the committee must meet at least once per academic year. Committee meetings can be held in person, remotely on Zoom or Teams, or in a hybrid format. If agreed upon by the participants, participating individuals have the choice for how they would like to attend. The EEB Graduate Office recommends that meetings are held in person or hybrid because these meetings are less formal, the discussions flow more easily, and it is an opportunity for the student to give their presentation and have a discussion in person, which SGS may require for PhD defenses in the future. During the first committee meeting, the student's academic background is reviewed and possible thesis research discussed. The student should circulate a resume/CV and a transcript or list of previous coursework to Supervisory Committee members before the first meeting.

For all Supervisory Committee Meetings, the student is responsible for completing [Part A of the online Supervisory Committee Meeting form](#) at least 3 days before the meeting, but preferably 1-2 weeks in advance. An email receipt of the information entered into Part A will be sent automatically to the Supervisory Committee members, with some additional instructions, along with a copy of the uploaded progress report file. The Supervisory Committee will then complete [Part B of the online Supervisory Committee Meeting form](#) at the conclusion of the meeting. An email receipt of the completed Part B will be sent automatically to all participants in the meeting, as well as to the EEB Graduate Office. The student or a Supervisory Committee member may then add any additional comments to the the record of the Supervisory Committee Meeting by email to the EEB Graduate Office. In the event that the online form does not work, they may use the "old" Word doc form that also is available on the EEB Graduate Student webpage: <https://eeb.utoronto.ca/education/graduate/graduate-handbook/>

For all Supervisory Committee Meetings, the student must prepare an oral presentation and a brief, written, progress report on research plans and any research progress. The progress report should include a timeline for completion of the project. Students must ask their supervisors how far in advance of the meeting that they will want to review a draft of the report and presentation, so that they can provide constructive feedback. Students must schedule at least 2 hours for the meeting with the members of their committee, including their supervisor; meetings are usually 1.5 hours long, but may take additional time. See "APPENDIX A: Advice preparing for Supervisory Committee meetings", which provides advice and guidelines on preparing for Supervisory Committee meetings.

Students who first registered in September 2024 will have a tentative date for the Appraisal Exam set by the EEB Graduate Office. Students who registered prior to September 2024 can opt in for the EEB Graduate Office to schedule the Appraisal Exam, or should determine the scheduling of the Appraisal Exam with their Supervisory Committee in a regular committee meeting prior to the 14th month in the program. The tentative date scheduled for an Appraisal Exam may be adjusted with agreement by the Supervisory Committee, but the scheduled date should not extend past the program deadlines for completing the Appraisal Exam (see information on deadlines and details in the section below, "PhD Appraisal Examination").

A final Supervisory Committee Meeting should be held approximately four months before the Final Oral

Exam to ensure that the student is adequately prepared, that the thesis is nearing completion, and to discuss potential External Examiners.

Minimum requirements of the written PhD thesis

Normally, it is expected that PhD candidates will produce dissertation research to comprise three to five research chapters that are worthy of publication as scientific articles (or equivalent, as determined in consultation with the supervisor and Supervisory Committee), as well as an Introduction chapter and a final Conclusion chapter. If, for any of your thesis chapters, you use “we” rather than “I”, at the start of that chapter(s), please indicate the co-authors of the chapter and describe the contributions of all of the co-authors to the chapter. Students should review the [SGS Guidelines](#) for the written thesis, including [SGS thesis template](#) files and formatting requirements.

For the Introduction chapter of the PhD thesis, most faculty no longer require an exhaustive literature survey as the opening chapter found in a classical dissertation’s style. However, the student must provide the readers with sufficient background to put their dissertation work in the context of the field. Students should discuss the length and scope of the Introduction chapter with their supervisor and Supervisory Committee. In EEB, the Introduction chapter should be at least 10-15 double-spaced pages long (not including references, figures, tables). Note that the main text of the thesis (i.e., the Introduction) starts on page “1”, along with other SGS formatting requirements. If the student wishes, and the supervisor(s) agrees, the student may write part of the Introduction chapter as a popular science article, as an opinion piece, or as a review article, with the intention of publishing it.

The Conclusion chapter of the PhD thesis should include a series of concluding scholarly statements that link the findings in the research chapters. This chapter, double spaced, is typically 5-25 pages in length.

PhD Appraisal Examination

Doctoral students in the EEB Department must undertake an Appraisal Examination as a required program milestone, typically taking place in the second year. The Appraisal Exam should occur between 14 and 20 months after registration for students in the “ordinary entry” PhD pathway (4 years in the funded cohort) or between 14 and 26 months for students in the “direct entry” PhD-U pathway (including MSc-PhD transfer students, 5 years in the funded cohort). See the document with the full guidelines about the Appraisal Exam on the [EEB Grad Student webpage](#), as well as the separate document with advice in preparing for the Appraisal Exam.

The Appraisal Exam is designed to:

- 1) determine whether the student can think critically, conduct research, and communicate at a level sufficient to produce a quality thesis;
- 2) ensure that the proposed research has sound scientific rationale and feasibility;
- 3) assess whether the proposed research can be completed within the remaining duration of the doctoral program. If completion of all of the proposed components of the thesis in a reasonable amount of time may not be possible, the components should be prioritized so that it is clear which of them could be dropped without compromising the ability of the student to satisfactorily complete the degree.
- 4) ensure that the student has sufficiently broad knowledge in ecology and evolutionary biology to

- recognize and effectively pursue opportunities for research and collaboration in these fields;
- 5) provide constructive feedback on the proposed research (e.g., suggestions on approach, additional scientific literature, methodology, statistics, etc.).

The Appraisal Exam consists of a written proposal, a public seminar, an oral defense of the proposed research, and oral responses to general knowledge questions in the field of ecology and evolutionary biology. The written proposal and seminar should present the conceptual framework of the research, hypotheses or objectives, methods, a timeframe for completion of the research, and analyses of any preliminary data. The private portion of the exam normally lasts 2-2.5 hours. Allow at least 3.5 hours in total for the seminar, questions from the audience, a short break before the *in camera* exam starts, the *in camera* exam, faculty deliberations before and after the exam, and feedback after the exam.

Appraisal Exams can be held in any of the following formats: in person, remotely on Zoom or Teams, and hybrid. If agreed upon by the participants, participating individuals will have the choice for how they would like to attend.

PhD Exit Seminar

All PhD students are required to give a formal “Exit Seminar” about their thesis research at the end of their program. Students have two options for the Exit Seminar:

- 1) The student delivers a 40-50 minute seminar to the EEB Department about their dissertation research no more than two months prior to the Final Oral Exam defense, and also delivers a brief private seminar (maximum 20 minutes) to the Final Examination Committee at the start of their FOE defense;
- 2) The student delivers a 40-50 minute seminar to the EEB Department on the day of the Final Oral Exam, or the day prior, for which the entire Final Examination Committee must attend the Exit Seminar, including attendance by the External Examiner.

The Final Oral Exam (FOE) booking form, available on the [EEB Grad Student webpage](#), allows students to indicate the selected option as well as the date and time of the Exit Seminar. SGS will notify the Chair of the Final Oral Exam about the arrangement and give them the option of attending the seminar (the FOE Chair is not required to attend the Exit Seminar). Students should seek advice from former graduate students and their supervisor(s) about the two options. The student should communicate the Exit Seminar date and time to both the EEB Graduate Office and the local campus seminar coordinator well in advance to arrange room booking and distribute announcements. The [EEB Grad Student webpage](#) includes documents with guidelines, timelines, and advice for setting the Final Oral Exam and Exit Seminar.

Final Thesis and Final Oral Examination

The Final Oral Exam (FOE) thesis defense is conducted by the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). The core components of the FOE are 1) the written thesis, 2) the Exit Seminar, and 3) the oral defense and discussion of the dissertation research to the Final Examination Committee. A summary of the requirements for the written thesis itself are given above in the section, “Minimum requirements of the written PhD thesis”. A summary of the requirements for the Exit Seminar are given above in the section, “PhD Exit Seminar”. A checklist of the steps in setting up and completing a Final Oral Exam and some other useful documents are listed on the [EEB Graduate Student webpage](#) (scroll down to the section of

PhD Defenses). The [SGS website](#) also provides information about completing your program, including information about how much tuition is charged in the final year of your program, etc.

Approval of the written thesis

Prior to submitting a written thesis for a defense, it must be approved for examination with the “PhD Assessment of Thesis” form (available on the [EEB Graduate Student webpage](#)) by the supervisor and one member of the Supervisory Committee. Normally, the member of the Supervisory Committee who will serve on the Final Oral Exam (see below) should be the individual to approve your thesis for examination. If the student has co-supervisors, then approval by both co-supervisors is sufficient and no other member of the Supervisory Committee is required for approval of the thesis for examination.

The Final Oral Exam Committee

The Final Oral Exam (FOE) committee must comprise at least 5 voting members and no more than 6 voting members. The student should discuss potential External Examiners and other exam committee members with the supervisor(s) and the Supervisory Committee; details about External Examiners are summarized below in the section, “The External Examiner”. The student must not contact or communicate with the External Examiner about their thesis defense before the FOE. The Chair of the Final Oral Exam is a faculty member chosen by SGS from outside the A&S faculty. The FOE Chair is responsible for assuring that the exam proceeds according to SGS rules and regulations. The FOE Chair is not an examiner and does not vote, though occasionally they will ask a question of the student. SGS will cancel the FOE if the committee does not meet quorum requirements at the time of the FOE. The overall composition of the FOE committee may use one of two models:

- 1) In Model 1 (updated version of the ‘Traditional’ Model), the FOE committee is comprised of:
 - an External Examiner;
 - the supervisor/co-supervisor(s);
 - **one or two** members of the Supervisory Committee;
 - and **one** other professor from EEB or a related department at UofT, colloquially known as the “internal-external” who is not a member of the Supervisory Committee.
 - If either the external or the “internal-external” is unable to attend the defense, then SGS will cancel the FOE. Therefore, we recommend that the student confirm a second EEB faculty member not on the Supervisory Committee to fill in as a backup if either the external or the “internal-external” is unable to participate in the FOE (virtual or phone participation is permissible). Please ask the backup person to 1) reserve the evening before the defense, 2) reserve the time before and during Exit Seminar and FOE on the day of the defense, 3) read the thesis, and 4) attend the Exit Seminar and FOE. Do not list the ‘backup’ person on the exam Booking form. If the backup person is needed for the FOE, immediately contact the EEB Associate Chair Graduate and Angelique Plata (sgs.vdeanea@utoronto.ca) to ask permission to make the replacement.

- 2) In Model 2, the FOE committee is comprised of:
 - an External Examiner;
 - the supervisor/co-supervisor(s);
 - **one** member of the Supervisory Committee;
 - and **two** other professors from EEB or a related department (i.e. “internal-externals”).
 - In this committee configuration, normally, the student and supervisor(s) will select only one Supervisory Committee member to sit for the FOE. It is acceptable for two members

of the Supervisory Committee to serve as voting members of the FOE, provided that the total size of the FOE committee does not exceed six voting members. Supervisory Committee members may be invited to attend the FOE as non-voting participants, but will oftentimes decline the invitation.

The External Examiner

The External Examiner of the thesis is an academic expert in an area pertinent to the dissertation research and who has only an “arms-length” relationship with both student and supervisor. That is, the External Examiner must not have published with or been a collaborator on a grant in the last 6 years with the student or supervisor(s), and must not be a former student or supervisor of the supervisor(s). After discussion between the student and supervisor(s), the supervisor(s) nominates a potential External Examiner using the “[Choosing & Nominating an External Examiner for a Final PhD Exam](#)” form on the [EEB Grad Student webpage](#). The EEB Graduate Office and SGS must approve the External Examiner as well as the other FOE committee members. Pre-approval of an External Examiner can be made several months before the FOE is scheduled. Normally, External Examiners will be an Associate or Full Professor and have supervised at least one PhD student who has completed their degree. The student must not contact or communicate with the External Examiner about their thesis defense before the FOE. The External Examiner provides the EEB Graduate Office a written assessment of the thesis two weeks before the FOE, which is then shared with the student so that they can prepare responses to the points raised in the assessment.

Exam Scheduling Logistics

The Exit Seminar and FOE may take place on any of the UofT campuses; Final Oral Exams on the St. George campus usually make use of the comfortable SGS facilities in [Room 111 of 63 St. George Street](#).

At least seven weeks prior to the intended FOE date, submit the following information and materials to the EEB Graduate Office (see the [EEB Grad Student webpage](#) for relevant forms):

- the name of the external nominee,
- the [Approval of Thesis form](#),
- suggestions for FOE committee members,
- the date of the exam (via the “[PhD Final Oral Exam Booking Sheet](#)” form),
- a current CV for the student including publications and presentations,
- and a one-page, double-spaced abstract with thesis title.

We recommend that, before you submit the booking form, you propose the timing of the Exit Seminar and FOE to the seminar co-organizer on the campus where they will take place in case there are any potential problems with the timing (also see the PhD checklist doc). For the St. George campus, the EEB Graduate Office will book a room for the FOE and must be informed of any special requirements for equipment or venue. Schedule the meeting to last at least 4 hours after the start of the defense.

The student must participate in person or via an SGS-approved remote technology. SGS expects all members of the Examination Committee to be present in person or via an SGS-approved remote technology. The SGS webpage for Final Oral Exams includes details and any updates.

At least six weeks before the FOE date, the student must:

- provide the EEB Graduate Office (Kitty Lam) with a Word document and a pdf of the written thesis for the EEB Graduate Office to send to the External Examiner. If the External Examiner would prefer a paper copy of the thesis, then the EEB Graduate Office will courier it to the

external.

- provide the other FOE committee members an electronic copy of the thesis, and enquire whether they would prefer a hardcopy and/or a PDF and/or a file in another format.

Letter Confirming Completion of Degree Requirements

If you will urgently require a letter confirming that you have completed your degree (i.e., in less than 2-3 weeks), then you must request this letter with an SGS form after you submit the final version of your thesis to SGS and before your convocation.

If requesting a confirmation letter after your convocation, you must request the letter through the Convocation Office. It can take 15-20 (or more) business days to receive the letter and, apparently, it has the date the degree was conferred but not the date of the completion of program requirements. For international students, please contact an expert at IRCC or CIE to make sure that the letter that you get from SGS is the appropriate paperwork for the position or permit for which you are applying (e.g., check IRCC's requirements for the post-graduate work permit application).

Post-defense

Congratulations on your successful defense! Please be sure to attend to the deadlines necessary to avoid paying tuition for the next term. See all of the steps in completing your degree here: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/academic-progress/program-completion/>

Students are required to submit their final thesis of record in digital format, after their FOE and with any revisions to their thesis. Your degree will not be completed until SGS receives an email from your supervisor(s) saying that all revisions have been completed. You do not need to send a copy of the final version of your thesis to the EEB Graduate Office. A hard-copy of your thesis also is not required, but you do need to **submit an electronic copy of the final thesis version to the SGS website**. When you submit your final thesis to SGS, it will ask for your degree date. This date is the month and year when you will convocate (November; March, in absentia; or June).

After you have submitted your final thesis, your fees will be adjusted in your student account. Check your account on ACORN a few weeks after you submit your thesis to SGS to be sure that you have paid for all of your tuition and other fees. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the EEB Graduate Office. Congratulations again!

TRANSFER FROM MSc to PhD PROGRAM

One pathway for admission into the EEB PhD program is via transfer from the EEB MSc program for students with strong research potential and who are making excellent research progress. To be considered for transfer to PhD, the student must:

- 1) submit transfer application materials to the EEB Graduate Office within the required timeframe,
- 2) receive approval by the EEB Graduate Office to proceed with a Transfer Exam as part of a Supervisory Committee meeting,
- 3) be recommended for transfer by the Supervisory Committee at the conclusion of the Transfer Exam,
- 4) be available for the possibility of an interview by the EEB Graduate Admissions Committee.

In advance of a Supervisory Committee meeting that also serves as a Transfer Exam, the supervisor will indicate to the student that the Supervisory Committee members will consider the merits of transfer to the PhD, and discussion at the meeting should consider both the student's ambitions and academic potential. No special procedures are required at the transfer-consideration committee meeting other than a thorough, rigorous assessment of the student based on the written research report (which should include a summary of progress-to-date and some possible directions for research projects), past performance, and the potential to complete an excellent PhD project. While completing Part B of the online Supervisory Committee Meeting form at the conclusion of the meeting, the Supervisory Committee will indicate on the form whether or not they recommend transfer to the PhD program.

See the relevant deadlines in "IMPORTANT DATES and DEADLINES". In brief, the MSc-PhD transfer process timeline for MSc students who start in September is:

- 1) Submit transfer application materials (CV + statement) no sooner than March 1 (i.e. at least 6 months into the MSc program) and no later than June 15 (dates shifted to July 1 and October 15, respectively, for MSc students who start in January).
- 2) If transfer review may proceed to the next step, then complete Transfer Committee Meeting prior to July 1 (deadline of November 1 for January-start MSc students).
- 3) Final decisions on transfer applications will be delivered by July 31 (December 1 notification for January-start MSc students).

Additional Details about MSc-PhD Transfer Process

First, students supported by their supervisor in the decision to apply for transfer to PhD must submit the following application materials to Kitty Lam in the EEB Graduate Office (timelines given above):

- 1) an updated CV,
- 2) a Transfer Statement (maximum 2 pages) that describes why the transfer is being requested and that provides a general description of what additional kinds of projects will be conducted if the transfer occurs. This statement should convey how the scope of future work is suitable for a PhD thesis. It may, for example, summarize the student's inspiration and rationale for transferring, outline the ideas and motivation for 3-4 project chapters, identify the kind and scope of data to collect and/or analyze, and indicate the link or change of focus between the current MSc project and the future projects. The scholarly depth of this brief statement is shallower than expected for an Appraisal Exam PhD thesis proposal.

Next, the Associate Chair Graduate (and/or Graduate Admissions Committee members) will review

these transfer application materials in light of the number of available PhD spots, and inform the student and supervisor(s) whether they have been approved for a Transfer Committee Meeting. The EEB Graduate Office may require revision of the Transfer Statement and/or an interview prior to proceeding to or following the Transfer Committee Meeting. The Transfer Committee Meeting is comprised of the student's usual thesis Supervisory Committee members.

The student will provide their Supervisory Committee with a copy of the Transfer Statement prior to the Transfer Committee Meeting, in addition to preparing their usual progress report document and presentation. The Supervisory Committee and student should discuss the current project and the potential future directions during the Transfer Committee Meeting. The committee will assess the potential for the student to carry out successfully a set of projects appropriate in scope for a PhD dissertation in the time available. Note that "meets expectations" for the MSc program in previous Committee Meetings is a necessary, but not sufficient, requirement for recommendation to transfer to the PhD program and, in the meantime, students should maintain their existing MSc research plan and completion timeline.

If the Supervisory Committee recommends approval of the transfer request, then they will complete the standard Supervisory Committee Report Form, and also indicate in Part B of the online Supervisory Committee Meeting form at the conclusion of the meeting their recommendation for the student to transfer to the PhD program.

The Associate Chair Graduate will review all transfer applicants as a group following their collective Transfer Committee Meetings. If the number of positive recommendations from Supervisory Committees must be restricted due to space constraints into the PhD program, then applicants will be reviewed by the Graduate Admissions Committee and may require a student interview prior to approving any transfers to PhD. If the student receives final approval from the Associate Chair Graduate, then the student must complete and submit a SGS Program Transfer Form to the EEB Graduate Office.

Note that MSc students considering a transfer should apply for Fall/Winter TA positions in case of successful transfer to PhD, and also take account of the timeline for applying for relevant external scholarships (e.g. NSERC CGS/PGS-D). Should the transfer not proceed, either at the Transfer Committee stage or the EEB Graduate Office review stage, then they must inform the TA coordinator for their campus as soon as possible if they will not TA in the Winter term. MSc students who do not transfer will complete their MSc as originally planned and are eligible to apply to the EEB PhD program in the standard manner. Should the transfer proceed, then transfer-PhD students will be considered part of the "direct-entry PhD-U" cohort with an effective start date corresponding to when they entered as a MSc student, with 5 years in the "funded cohort" from that start date, and with corresponding expectations for the timeline to complete the Appraisal Exam and dissertation defense.

APPENDIX A: Advice preparing for Supervisory Committee meetings

Ask your supervisor(s) and Supervisory Committee members for their thoughts on the purpose of the progress report document, and what they want to gain from reading it. For Supervisory Committee meeting oral presentations and written reports, your supervisor and Supervisory Committee members are the best source of advice. Here is a description of the typical EEB Supervisory Committee meeting report and talk.

- The goals of the written report and meeting are to help your Supervisory Committee assess your goals and plans and, for later meetings, your progress so that they can provide constructive feedback to you. In the first 1-2 paragraphs of your report, describe the big picture, your question(s) and/or hypotheses. Then describe methods (proposed or utilized) and, when available, results. Include a concluding paragraph on possible implications and broader contributions to the field.
- A written report for a regular Supervisory Committee meeting should be 5-10 double-spaced pages (**max 10 pages of text**, but a few additional pages for figures, tables, and references can be included). Extra material can be appended as a supplement, but students should assume that the supplement will not be read. The written report provided for the first Supervisory Committee meeting typically will be shorter (e.g., 4-5 pages of text) than subsequent reports.
- Include a timeline with every Supervisory Committee meeting report, even if very tentative (e.g., a Gantt chart, youtube instructions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_u_jm1211D4 ; see also the example timeline diagram provided below).
- Send a copy of your CV and your previous committee meeting report form to your Supervisory Committee. Include the time and location of your committee meeting at the top of your report and in the subject line of your email to your committee.
- You should assume that your committee members will have little memory of previous committee meetings and reports. Your report should help them to recall your project and previous discussions.
- The report should be well written and students can expect to do several rounds of revisions with their supervisor before sending it to committee members. You should give your supervisor sufficient time to provide feedback: at least 10 days, before it has to be distributed to the committee. You must give your Supervisory Committee members at least 3 full business days to read your report, but preferably 1-2 weeks.
- Prepare a 15-20 minute presentation for the first Supervisory Committee meeting (typically 20-30 minutes of material for later meetings), but expect to be interrupted for questions and discussions throughout your presentation. The presentation should reflect the material in your report. We recommend that students get feedback on practice talk versions their oral presentation from their supervisor(s) and/or in a lab meeting and/or with graduate students and/or postdocs in the department before they meet with their committee.

You should book a 2 hour timeslot for the meeting, but some meetings will take less time than this. When you are scheduling your meeting, it can be useful to first ask committee members for their general availability in specific weeks and then, once narrowed to 1-2 week range, to ask them to fill in a doodle/when2meet poll for specific times. Note that polls with excessive time options are a hassle, so aim to keep them short. If a committee member has not answered within 3-4 days, ask your supervisor if you may send them a reminder email with the link; if you pass them in the hall or lunchroom, don't be shy to ask them with an in-person reminder.

Discussions during the committee meetings can include recommendations for courses to take or audit, suggestions about how to get statistical advice, etc. Take advantage of the expertise of the members of your committee!

The below diagram illustrates an example timeline. We recommend that you also include conferences, fieldwork, etc. as well.

	2021	2022		
	Fall	Winter	Summer	Fall
CH1: Are cities a refuge for non-native bee diversity?				
Data compilation				
Data analysis				
Writing				
CH2: The application of 3-D urbanization metrics to ecological gradient analysis				
Data compilation				
Data analysis				
Writing				
CH3: Impact of urbanization on bee diversity and pollination service in community gardens				
Process samples				
Data analysis				
Writing				
CH4: Automated mapping of native wildflower abundance and phenology using drone imagery				
Data collection				
Data analysis				
Writing				
Administrative				
Thesis defence				

APPENDIX B: For EEB Graduate Students in Need of Help

Hierarchy of Help

If you have personal, academic, supervisory, or financial problems, this Appendix summarizes some of the people and offices with supportive staff who can (and want to) help. Here's a breakdown of who to talk to and when. Thanks to members of the EGSA for the original version of this document.

First Layer

Depending on the nature of your problem, first try to connect with the following resources for resolutions.

Financial

Ask your supervisor.

Ask Kitty Lam (who may refer you to someone else in EEB who can help, depending on the issue).

Deadline Extensions/Accommodations/other questions about EEB and SGS rules/regulations

- See Appendix C in this Handbook for examples of accommodations that have been granted
- Depending on the issue, first, discuss the issue with your supervisor and/or the EEB Associate Chair Graduate (gac.eeb@utoronto.ca)—EEB/SGS may not require a diagnosis/medical note. Depending on their advice, you may want to register with Accessibility Services—until recently, they have not had a lot of experience with graduate students but they can offer suggestions about the kinds of accommodations that might be useful (e.g. for appraisal and final exams, course assignments) and you can discuss those with the Associate Chair Graduate. The EEB Mental Health Committee has put together an excellent summary about what they can offer—see Appendix C in this Handbook.
- TAs requiring accommodations would need to connect with Health and Wellbeing.

Advice about academic or interpersonal issues

- e.g. about an issue with your supervisor, like whether what you have done on a project is sufficient for the thesis and/or a manuscript, or general advice about graduate school (note: you are not required to use resources in the order listed)
- Member(s) of your Supervisory Committee. Before you begin the conversation, you may ask them if they are willing to keep the conversation confidential.
- For guidelines on responsibilities of supervisors and students, see these SGS webpages: Supervision Support – School of Graduate Studies (utoronto.ca)
- On intellectual property, co-authorship - see the previous item and this webpage: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/policies-guidelines/ip-for-graduate-students-supervisors/>
- Advice from a new SGS office specifically about grad student-supervisor interactions. The director at this office: **SGS Centre for Graduate Mentorship and Supervision (CGMS)—Centre for Graduate Mentorship & Supervision – University of Toronto (utoronto.ca)** said: If the student feels comfortable connecting with their department first, they can do so. If they don't feel comfortable and want to ensure confidentiality, they can come to us first. In the event they come to us first and we feel we require a departmental perspective or involvement, we will recommend this to the student. At times we are perfectly positioned to provide the student

with pathways/options, and other times we will be transparent and let them know when their question falls outside of our scope, and we require departmental involvement. This can include research specific questions, department specific questions (i.e., not related to general SGS guidelines), etc. Short answer about who to see first: it's up to the student! Our preference is for the student to pursue what is most comfortable. Worst case scenario—if they land with us first but they should be consulting with their department, we will tell them that their department is the more appropriate pathway.

Counselling and Psychological Services

- 1) Graduate Wellness Services at SGS – School of Graduate Studies (utoronto.ca) (this includes mental health services)
- 2) Some students prefer to access resources that are off-campus if they are uncomfortable about talking to U of T people if there are implications for their graduate program (there are not, unless you tell them that you are planning to harm yourself or others) (see the list below for some off-campus options).
- 3) UofT Telus Health Student Support (available in 146 languages) or 24/7 call 1-844-541-9700
- 4) Other resources:
 - Good2Talk: 1 (866) 925-5454 (for 24/7 access to a counsellor)
 - Gerstein Centre: (416) 929-5200 (for 24/7 access to a counsellor)
 - Distress Centre: (416) 408-HELP (4357) (for 24/7 access to a counsellor)
 - Assaulted Women's Helpline: (416) 863-0511
 - Central Intake Shelter (Housing): (416) 338-4766
 - CAMH ER – Open 24/7 for urgent concerns related to mental health/addictions and located at 1051 Queen St West.
- 5) See the EEB Mental Health Committee (MHC)'s Mental Health Handbook with advice and places to get help. It is posted here: Resources – Mental Health Committee (utoronto.ca) and it is updated annually.
- 6) Ask members of EEB's MHC (they send regular emails about events they are hosting) if they have any other suggestions.
- 7) Note that there is some coverage for counselling/therapy through OHIP/UHIP, CUPE and UTSGU benefits. See the EEB Mental Health Committee (MHC)'s Mental Health Handbook (above) for information about coverage, submitting claims, etc.
- 8) **The Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre: helps and supports students, staff and faculty at the University of Toronto who have been affected by sexual violence or sexual harassment.** The Centre offers confidential, non-judgmental, client-centred services. They are here to help you understand, access and navigate supports such as counselling, medical services, academic or workplace accommodations, financial aid and legal aid. The Centre also works to end sexual violence on campus through training and education. See their website for details: <https://www.svpscentre.utoronto.ca/> Call 911 if you or someone else is in immediate danger. To contact them: they operate 9-4 July and Aug and 9-5 the rest of the year.
Email: svpscentre@utoronto.ca **Phone:** 416-978-2266
- 9) **EEB Allyship.** This is an informal avenue for support that can provide advice about resources: The EEB Allyship Network is an inclusive, vetted, and trained support network that is dedicated to listening and providing resources. We stand beside community members that have experienced unwanted or unwelcome behavior.

Second Layer

Proceed here if you haven't had success with any of the resources/people in the First Layer and/or you are uncomfortable with talking to them.

EEB's Associate Chair Graduate

Asher Cutter (gac.eeb@utoronto.ca) May be able to help with academic, financial and/or other problems. Ask them to keep comments/questions confidential.

Other faculty members who have been the EEB Associate Chair Graduate

These faculty members have experience helping and supporting students (e.g. Helen Rodd, Aneil Agrawal, Don Jackson). Note: Students should feel comfortable approaching them about supervisory issues because they, like the EEB Associate Chair, can keep the discussion confidential and can help thinking about a problem from a supervisor's perspective.

Third Layer

Proceed here if you haven't had success with any of the resources /people in the previous layers and/or are uncomfortable with asking them for advice.

EEB Tri-campus Chair of all EEB graduate students

- **Joel Levine** (joel.levine@utoronto.ca)
- Also, for students at UTM or UTSC: the **UTM Biology Chair** (July 2024: Steven Short (or check this webpage: [Our People | Biology \(utoronto.ca\)](#)) or **UTSC Biological Sciences Chair** (biochair.utscc@utoronto.ca)
- These are all great individuals with big hearts, but they can be pretty busy so you might want to try to get advice from at least one of the levels above this first. If you would like the conversation to be confidential, let them know when you begin the conversation.
- If you are not satisfied with the assistance you have received from support provided in this layer or earlier layers, you can contact the [EEB Graduate Student Departmental Academic Appeals Committee](#) about appeals for appraisals, defenses, and other things. The members of the committee are listed on the [EEB website](#).

Fourth Layer

Resources offered by SGS.

SGS Student-Supervisor Conflict Resolution Office

[My Supervisory Relationships – School of Graduate Studies \(utoronto.ca\)](#)

SGS Vice-Dean of Graduate Students

Usually, you would talk to either an EEB or Biology Department Chair or the EEB Associate Chair Graduate before contacting this SGS Vice-Dean, or you will need to have an explanation for why you haven't talked to one of them yet about the problem. To make an appointment - sgs.vicedeanassistant@utoronto.ca

If you are not satisfied with the assistance you have received from this or earlier layers, you can contact the SGS Academic Appeals Committee. Graduate students registered in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS), may appeal substantive or procedural academic matters, including grades, evaluation of comprehensive examinations and other program requirements; decisions about the student's continuation in any program; or concerning any other decision with respect to the application of academic regulations and requirements to a student. For details, see this webpage: Graduate Academic Appeals – School of Graduate Studies Faculty & Staff (utoronto.ca)

Fifth Layer

For rare, specific situations for graduate students

U of T's Ombudsperson

e.g. for academic misconduct by your supervisor (see previous layers for other resources for support (e.g., with respect to you and your supervisor) <https://ombudsperson.utoronto.ca>)

APPENDIX C: Notes on Accessing Accommodations through Accessibility Services

(compiled by the EEB 2023-2024 Mental Health Committee including Jenny Carpenter – July 2024)

Overview

In this Appendix, we hope to illuminate the process of gaining accommodations in graduate school, including how to register with Accessibility Services. This section also aims to provide general information about what kinds of accommodations are available, some of which may be requested even without registration with Accessibility Services.

Accessibility Service can work with students with any kind of impairment or disability including but not limited to:

- **Chronic Health Conditions:** Any conditions that last for more than three months e.g. bowel diseases, epilepsy, migraines,
- **Mental Health Conditions:** Either permanent or temporary e.g. anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders,
- **Sensory Disabilities:** Relate to vision and hearing e.g. low vision/legally blind and D/deaf/deafened or hard of hearing,
- **Physical Disabilities:** Either permanent or temporary e.g. mobility/functional challenges, broken limb, and
- **Neurocognitive and Learning Disabilities, Acquired Brain Injury or Concussion, Temporary Physical Injury.**

Terminology

Accessibility Services: A University of Toronto service made up of a variety of different teams designed to help students with disability-related barriers to school.

Accessibility Advisor (sometimes called Disability Counsellor): This person works as a case manager for individuals registered with Accessibility Services. A well-informed advisor should be able to provide you with all the necessary steps from obtaining a diagnosis, identifying what accommodations are helpful and obtaining those accommodations, including steps on how to get external funding for each of these steps. Please note that, until recently, Accessibility Services was targeted mostly to undergraduate students but, if your Accessibility Advisor isn't sure what is involved with helping graduate students, let the EEB Associate Graduate Chair/Grad Coordinator know. In some cases, EEB can provide accommodations without involving Accessibility Services.

Learning Strategist: This person (affiliated with Accessibility Services (AS) but open to people who are not registered with AS) is trained to help people develop good studying and learning skills such as time management, effective note taking and exam preparation. They are available for individual appointments as well as group learning sessions. This service is often most helpful for undergraduates or people adapting to recent impairment, while many graduate students report limited benefit as many have developed or attained these skills as an undergraduate.

Learning Technologist: This person works with students registered with Accessibility Services to connect

them to technologies that would help them with their disability. The kinds of technologies that are available often depend on what your assessment, doctor or diagnosis say that you need. They should also help get grants to pay for these technologies. For example, they may connect you with speech-to-text software provided by the university or tell you which grant you can use to apply for noise cancelling headphones (and which brands may provide sufficient noise cancelling).

Letter of Accommodation: This is a formal letter provided by Accessibility Services, which details the areas where students have requested accommodations. This can be sent to course instructors, committee members, supervisors, the Associate Graduate Chair, Grad Coordinator, or anyone in a position to grant such accommodations. The letter does not state the disability of the student but, in most cases, the name of the student requesting assistance is not anonymous.

Test and Exam Services: This arm of Accessibility Services is responsible for providing accommodations during test or exam periods, such as private rooms, increased time, specialized reading equipment and more. For accommodations during EEB appraisal exams and defences, see the EEB Grad Handbook; these can include breaks between each round of questions and memory aids.

The Process of Accommodation

Step One: Diagnosis

It should be noted that most Accessibility Services programs require individuals to obtain a diagnosis, whether this is for a temporary or permanent impairment. However, for many learning and neurocognitive (such as ADHD, autism, etc.) disabilities, Accessibility Advisors are generally trained to refer people to the appropriate place to obtain a diagnosis. In general, the purpose of the assessment is to provide a Certificate of Disability that states the student is officially impaired. The impairment can range from physical injuries to mental illness to a learning disability.

You can contact Accessibility Services to make an appointment with an Accessibility Advisor and describe to them your area of struggle. Depending on your issues, they can then refer you to several services that can provide sufficient assessment. Many of these recommended services may be very expensive, but there are a variety of grants that cover these fees. Students should request information from the Accessibility Advisors and peers about which grants will cover the testing. Generally, the more expensive tests are recommended for their thoroughness, but less expensive options are adequate to gain a Certificate of Disability. For example, you can obtain a diagnosis at the ADHD clinic (which may cost up to approximately CAD\$2000), or by your General Practitioner (GP) (which is free). Indeed, often a letter by a GP is sufficient proof of disability, however, GPs may not be thorough in their listing of potential accommodations that may benefit students, unless that student knows enough to ask the GP what to write about ahead of time. For example, “the student struggles to focus and is distracted by loud noises, they may benefit from a quieter study environment”, or “the student has difficulty with visual tracking while reading.”

The goal of the diagnosis process is to have a written statement by a doctor (or similar professional) that can both certify the student is disabled and provide a list of areas or accommodations where the student needs help. You can learn more about the diagnosis requirements for learning disability and ADHD on the [Student Life website](#).

Step Two: Registration

To register for Accessibility Services, you must fill out the student in-take form on their website. The in-take form requires a written statement of disability from a professional that should also speak to what accommodations may be helpful (see above). You will then be assigned an Accessibility Advisor (if you have not been already) and scheduled to have an in-take appointment. All steps are also outlined on their website here: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/register-with-accessibility-services/>

Step Three: In-take and Applying for OSAP (if domestic)

After you have registered with Accessibility Services you will be scheduled for an in-take appointment that can range from 45-60 minutes. The Accessibility Advisor will first note a) the problems and difficulties you have experienced, b) the requirements of your degree, and c) where you foresee that there will be challenges for you in completing your work. This is the stage where you and the advisor will work out what the next steps are and often include establishing what accommodations you plan on requesting, what funding you should apply for to acquire these accommodations (if applicable), and drafting the letter of accommodation.

The most likely next step that an advisor will take, is to have you apply for funding. If you are a domestic student, this will most likely be to apply for OSAP. This is because eligibility for many grants depends on OSAP eligibility, including some that are only available if you are *not* OSAP eligible, therefore it is important for them to have a record of this. NB: You do have to accept any loans at this point and there is a \$2000 federal grant for students with permanent disabilities available through OSAP. If you are an international student (who is therefore ineligible for OSAP) they may suggest applying for other grants such as the SGS Accessibility Grant (which is open to both domestic and international students according to their website).

Next, your advisor may propose several potential accommodations and refer you to a Learning Technologist. While the advisor writes a list of accommodations that the university and course administration should provide, the Learning Technologist's job is to assist you in acquiring technology that you need to complete your degree.

Some advisors may suggest checking in with a Learning Strategist. Learning Strategists hold both group sessions (composed almost entirely of undergraduates), but are also available for one-on-one sessions. If you feel that you do not have good study habits or time management practices, one-on-one sessions may be helpful. However, if you feel this would be a waste of time for you, it is prudent (and within your right) to let your Accessibility Advisor know.

By the end of this appointment, your advisor should book another follow-up appointment to check in about a number of things: The progress they have made with the draft of the letter of accommodation, including who to send it to and whether you wish to send it yourself, your progress with respect to acquiring funding for any accommodations you require, and a final list of accommodations you feel comfortable requesting and from whom.

Additional Notes on Funding

If you are OSAP eligible there is often a \$1600 (per term) grant (Bursary for Students with Disabilities) that you may be able to claim to fund accommodations in addition to a \$2000 (per year) federal grant for disability that can be used for anything. If not eligible for OSAP, funding is more likely to come from the SGS Accessibility Grant, which is intended to provide a short-term grant only. An Accessibility Advisor should be able to tell you which grants you need to apply for, and grants can be filled out by the

advisor and simply signed by you.

Final: The Letter of Accommodation

The letter of accommodation is the key feature (outside of funding for assistive technologies) that Accessibility Services provides at the graduate level. Test and Exam services can help with the few tests given during graduate courses, and an Accessibility Advisor can be brought on to support you through other assignments, such as requesting formal extensions. Mainly the accommodations required by graduate students are often interpersonal or technology based, and so the letter serves as a formalized proof to request those. The letter can be emailed to your supervisor, your committee, and/or course instructors. You should be provided a copy of this letter (even if you prefer Accessibility Services to send it on your behalf) as an official stamp of approval for requesting any accommodations you require. Many of these accommodations may be things that you can informally ask of your supervisor or Associate Graduate Chair/Grad Coordinator, however, the letter serves as an official and expansive document to ease this process.

Examples of Accommodations

But what accommodations are available? Is there something that can help once you are beyond tests and assignments and into the research phase of your graduate studies? There are a variety of situations where accommodations can be provided, including on assessments, such as committee meetings, appraisal exams and defences, around interactions with your supervisor, and for your daily life, including additional technologies. A non-exhaustive list of common accommodations is provided:

Appraisal Exam, MSc Defense, and Committee Meetings:

- extra time to answer questions
- a request that questions be written down in addition to verbally stated
- the ability to have blank paper to write out thoughts during question time (this is always allowed during defenses)
- a formal request to take a break between questions so that they do not become overwhelming
- a chair (or the ability to sit while giving the presentation aspect of the public facing seminars)
- the use of an aid sheet or dictionary during oral examinations.
- for accommodations during a PhD defense, ask the EEB Associate Graduate Chair/Grad Coordinator

Supervisor-Student:

Note: In general, if there is something your supervisor could be doing that would help you understand what they are saying or asking you to do, there is a good chance some version of this can be formalized in a letter of accommodation. If you feel comfortable, you can also simply ask your supervisor for these things. Most supervisors will comply with informal requests, but the authority of an official letter can be helpful if conflict arises and/or if it would help you reflect on requests that would be truly helpful.

Examples of helpful requests include:

- You can request weekly meetings that are not about reporting new results, but instead focus on frequent check-ins or accountability that provide a better environment for student learning.
- The ability to take notes during meetings (this may seem obvious, but this is a formalized recognition that students may pause conversations and meetings to write notes no matter the speed at which they write. Recognising how notetaking impacts the notetaker can remove pressure to keep conversations going as one falls behind with notetaking).

- Livescribe pen, a smart pen that records parts of conversation as you write and can play back the recordings matched to the section of notes you took.
- Any formal request for preferred means of interaction including: Needing instructions to be provided more explicitly, preferring instructions be written out, or provided in email after meetings, setting clear and unambiguous deadlines during meeting etc.
- Making explicit there may be days lost due to illness

Daily Life:

Purchasing technology: Many of these technologies listed below can be purchased by the student alone, but they need not be. There is funding available both through Accessibility Services, and, potentially, through EEB department grants (such as the technology grant). While the Associate Graduate Chair/Graduate Coordinator may not know much about “funding accommodations”, if you specify what the accommodation is (ex. noise cancelling headphones) they may be able to direct you to which grants would be appropriate.

- Noise Cancelling Headphones (if you struggle with focus)
- Speech to Text software Kurzweil 3000: Which has additional annotation features and is suitable for academic texts
- MindView 8: Mind mapping software for written expression
- Dragon Natural Reading: Speech recognition software for writing
- A private carousel in Robarts library for quiet study
- More ergonomic office furniture
- Professional personal coaching for soft skills. While student-directed, these one-on-one sessions can include skills such as email writing, organization, practicing effective communication, presentation critique, how to answer questions effectively and more.
- Training in using OneNote for effective recording and annotation.

Support Groups and Peer Support

Accessibility Services also provides peer support and accountability groups:

- <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/peer-connections/>
- <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/adhd-group/>
- <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/accessibility-services-study-hubs/>

Other links:

Additional information on Accessibility Services can be provided here:

- [AS Demystifying Academic Accommodations Booklet https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/AS-Demystifying-Academic-Accommodations-Booklet_July_2017_AODA-1.pdf](https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/AS-Demystifying-Academic-Accommodations-Booklet_July_2017_AODA-1.pdf)
- [Chronic health, mental health, sensory disabilities and physical disabilities](https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/chronic-health-mental-health-sensory-disabilities-and-physical-disabilities/)
- <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/chronic-health-mental-health-sensory-disabilities-and-physical-disabilities/>
- [AS Graduate and Professional Program Student Handbook](#)

APPENDIX D: Campus Life

St. George Campus Services + ROM Services

Most of these services are available to all graduate students based at all campuses.

- [Academic Success Centre](#)
- [Accessibility Services](#)
- [Athletics and Recreation](#)
- [Career Centre](#)
- [Centre for Community Partnerships](#)
- [Centre for International Experience](#)
- [EEB Payroll information](#): how to submit expense reimbursements, etc. (note: you have to Log in and then you will be taken to pages for the various resources)
- [Family Care Office](#): including childcare and lots of advice about maternity leave, etc.
- [First Nations House](#)
- [Graduate Student Initiative Fund](#)
- [Graduate Wellness Portal](#)
- [Hart House](#)
- [Health and Wellness](#)
- [The Institutional Equity Office](#)
- [Mental health resources in EEB](#) and at the U of T put together by EEBers (note: you have to Log in and then you will be able to click on the Mental Health and Wellbeing page)
- [Office of Convocation](#)
- [Student Accounts](#)
- [Student Housing](#)
- [Student Life](#): information about Health and Wellness including appointments with physicians, Programs for students on coping skills, etc., Services like Navi (for navigating mental health supports), etc.
- [Ulife](#): a large and diverse directory of student clubs, organizations, activities and opportunities
- [University of Toronto Students' Union](#)

Scarborough Campus Services

- [Academic Advising and Career Centre](#)
- [Athletics and Recreation](#)
- [Child Care](#)
- [Centre for Teaching and Learning](#)
- Graduate Student Administrative Support: Lucy Pickering (lucy@utsc.utoronto.ca)
- [Graduate Students' Association at Scarborough](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Parking Services](#)
- [Research and Graduate Studies](#)
- [UTSC International Student Centre](#)

Mississauga Campus Services

Graduate Student Administrative Support: TBD.

- [Academic Skills Centre](#)
- [UTM Association of Graduate Students](#)
- [UTM Career Centre](#)
- [Child Care](#)
- [Graduate Housing On-Campus](#)
- [International Centre](#)
- [Off-Campus Housing](#)
- [Parking](#)
- [Physical Education, Athletics, and Recreation](#)
- [Shuttle bus to St. George campus](#)
- [Transit passes](#)