Welcome
Welcome to the School of Life Sciences! Biology is the study of life and living organisms, including their structure, function, growth, evolution, distribution, and taxonomy. The school’s curriculum meets the needs of students intending to enter the workforce or pursue advanced training in the sciences, medicine, and other professional and technical fields.

Mission Statement(s)

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Biological Sciences within the School of Life Sciences (SoLS) consists of four sectional research concentrations that reflect the scope of modern biology: Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB), Integrative Physiology (IP), Cell and Molecular Biology (CMB), and Microbiology (MB). The degree is research intensive and designed to prepare students for careers in academia, government, and industry as engaged scholars who are experts in their chosen field. Students must complete a minimum of 60 credit hours from a list of core and approved courses within their research section. They must engage in independent research that is novel and exciting culminating with a dissertation that makes an important contribution to their chosen field. As such, it is expected that their dissertation work will be published in peer reviewed journals with the student listed as first author. Successful students are also trained and expected to develop as effective teachers and educators, and each student must serve as a teaching assistant for two semesters as part of the degree program. All students graduating with a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences should be able to:

- Master a critical set of key concepts specific for each sectional concentration
- Gain expertise with key methodologies and experimental techniques specific for each sectional concentration.
- Read, comprehend, and critically evaluate the current published scientific literature.
- Evaluate a scientific question and formulate testable hypotheses.
- Independently design experiments to effectively test hypotheses.
- Generate and collect reproducible data.
- Access up-to-date methods for analyzing and tabulating data.
- Communicate scientific results effectively in oral presentations to general and specialized audiences.
- Communicate scientific results effectively in written reports for publication in peer-reviewed journals.
- Apply and be competitive for extramural monies to fund research.
- Instruct and engage students and members of the community at all levels to appreciate the importance of biology in their lives.

Purpose
The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the UNLV Graduate Catalog, as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: valarie.burke@unlv.edu or GradAssociateDean@unlv.edu.
**Department Graduate Faculty**
A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Faculty must hold either associate or full graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the Graduate Faculty status web page.

**Program Information**
**Doctor of Philosophy in Biology**

Subplans:
- Cellular and Molecular Biology
- Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
- Integrative Physiology
- Microbiology

**Contact Information**
http://www.unlv.edu/lifesciences

**Department Chair**
Dr. Donald Price, WHI 102C, Donald.price@unlv.edu

**Graduate Coordinator**
Dr. Helen Wing, WHI 307, helen.wing@unlv.edu

**Department Main Office**
WHI 101, ph. 702-895-3390, fax 702-895-3956

**Program Requirements**
Program requirements regarding admission, coursework and culminating experience are found in the graduate catalog.

**Advisory Committee Guidelines**
At the start of a student’s first semester, it is his/her responsibility to form an Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is responsible for the development, approval and possible revisions to the student’s Program of Study; for approval of the thesis or dissertation; and for the conduct and evaluation on the comprehensive and/or final examinations. For more information visit: (http://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege or http://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/24/LifeSciences-GradHandbook.pdf)

During the course of the degree he/she must meet with the Committee at least once every calendar year (between January 1st and November 1st). It will be the student’s responsibility to set up a Committee meeting and to organize a time and place. Committee meetings are usually held in either the faculty lounge (WHI 101), WHI 111, or SEB 3265. Room bookings can be made through the appropriate office in WHI or SEB.

The student should consult with his/her advisor (interim or permanent) for suggestions about faculty members most appropriate for the Research Advising Committee. The guidelines for selecting faculty can vary and depend on the advisor’s philosophy about graduate training. The student should keep in mind that the purpose of this Committee is to help them plan their Program of Study (i.e., course work), and guide them in their research. The GOC must approve the Advisory Committee membership. The primary reason for disapproval of Committee composition would be lack of appropriate breadth and/or scientific expertise. Both SoLS and the Graduate College have forms for the formation and, if needed, revision of the Advisory Committee and Proposed Degree Program (course work) that need to be routed through the GOC. Links to both the Graduate College and the SoLS forms are available on the following websites: Graduate College Forms; UNLV School of Life Sciences.
Occasionally, a faculty member who was appointed to a graduate student’s committee may be unable to continue in this function. In this case a request for substitution may be made by the Committee. Changes in the student’s Advisory Committee may also occur because of change in the student’s research interest or focus. Final approval or disapproval in all of these cases is granted by the Graduate College. However, the student should note that changes to the Advisory Committee late in the student’s program are not favorably received. Updated forms and information may be found at: http://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/forms.

Ph.D. Students

The Dissertation Advisory Committee for Ph.D. students will be composed of five members: the Primary Advisor, two or three SoLS graduate faculty (one of which can be an adjunct, affiliate, or emeritus with valid UNLV Graduate Faculty status), a Graduate College Representative (for more information, see “Graduate College Representative” section), and an External Advisory Committee Member (if only two SoLS grad faculty are designated) who is an expert in the field of study and whose primary affiliation is outside UNLV. If a student wishes to have two adjunct, affiliate, or emeritus members on his/her committee, he/she must add those individuals as extra members. It is the student’s responsibility to identify suitable committee members, and after consultation with his/her mentor, to approach them about serving on the Committee.

In some cases a Ph.D. student’s proposed research project may align with the research interests of an adjunct or affiliate faculty member of SoLS. With committee approval, this faculty member may direct the student’s research and serve as the student’s mentor, but he or she cannot serve as the official Research Advisor or the Chair of the Dissertation Advisory Committee. In this case, one of the faculty members from SoLS must chair the committee and assume primary responsibility for the student’s progress.

Selection of Committee Members:

External Advisory Committee Member:

All External Advisory Committee Members must hold a terminal degree (Ph.D. or equivalent) and have been actively involved in research directly related to the student’s graduate project. The involvement of an External Advisory Committee Member on a graduate student’s Advisory Committee is beneficial to the student and SoLS for the following reasons: 1) it is likely to increase the rigor of the graduate student’s training, 2) it will broaden the student’s scientific network, 3) it is likely to increase awareness of SoLS graduate programs on the national scientific stage, and 4) the outside member’s prestige should help the student when soliciting letters of recommendation for the next stage in his/her career.

Frequently, new graduate students may not be familiar with qualified and appropriate External Advisory Committee Members. Consequently, at the first Advisory Committee Meeting the student should consult with their primary research advisor and committee members about suitable candidates.

Once a potential External Advisory Committee Member has been identified, either the student or, in some cases, the primary research advisor should approach the person to see if they are willing to serve on the student’s Advisory Committee. If an appropriate person agrees to serve in this capacity, the student and his/her graduate advisor should submit the external member’s CV along with a letter (template available at: http://sols.unlv.edu/current.html) requesting Committee membership to the SoLS Director or Graduate Coordinator. If the outside member is approved by the SoLS Director and Graduate Coordinator, he/she will be nominated for Associate Graduate Faculty status at UNLV. All outside members serving as “persons of record” must hold valid Associate Graduate Faculty status to sign officially on behalf of the student.
The External Advisory Committee member must agree to participate in the dissertation defense either in person, via audio/video conference. Beyond this minimal expectation, each Dissertation Advisory Committee can decide on the timing and level of involvement of an External Advisory Committee member. SoLS does not finance travel for the External Advisory Committee member to participate.

**Graduate College Representative (GCR)**

The Graduate College Representative must hold Full Graduate Faculty status at UNLV and must come from an academic unit other than SoLS. The principal role of GCRs, as outlined by the Graduate College, is to ensure due process and academic rigor on student committees throughout the University (for more info on the role of the graduate college representative visit: http://graduatecollege.unlv.edu/). However, SoLS requests that the GCR also contributes scientifically by performing as a fully participating member of the student's Advisory Committee. It is SoLS’s policy that the GCR has the right to ask questions during the student’s committee meetings, comprehensive exam, and final defense. The GCR has full voting privileges and as such, should be treated as a full-fledged member of the committee. A list of faculty members with Graduate Faculty status is provided on the following website: https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/graduate-faculty-status

The extent to which SoLS expects a GCR to participate is more extensive than the policies of the Graduate College. To avoid any miscommunication between SoLS and the potential Graduate College Representative, students are asked to formally submit a detailed letter requesting a faculty member to serve as the the GCR. A template for this letter is available at: http://sols.unlv.edu/current.html.

Students should give this letter to their prospective GCR so that the representative is aware of the elevated expectations of SoLS. If the desired representative is unable to make this commitment, the student needs to identify another representative.

**Program of Study and First Advisory Committee Meeting**

The first Advisory Committee meeting (held by October 31st of the first semester of the student’s program) is for the purpose of identifying and outlining a student’s project and determining appropriate course work. A major goal of this meeting is for the student to share their previous academic training and research interests with their committee, so that recommendations about appropriate course work and the Program of Study can be given to the student early in their graduate program. The Program of Study, which outlines the courses the student will complete for their degree, should be thoughtfully prepared and must comply with the regulations of the Graduate College, the SoLS Graduate Program, and the SoLS Research Section to which the graduate student belongs. For this reason the student’s proposed Program of Study must ultimately be approved by the student’s Advisory Committee and documented in writing in a Committee meeting before the appropriate form is submitted to the Graduate College.

While the Program of Study is determined early and updated during annual committee meetings (using the part of the SoLS annual committee meeting form), the Graduate College and the SoLS request that a separate Program of Study form be filed by all graduate students.

**Part 1:** The Graduate College Program of Study form can be found at the following link: https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/forms choose either the Master’s or the Doctoral program form

**Part 2:** The SoLS Program of Study form, Part 2 can be found at the following link: http://sols.unlv.edu/current.html.

**Degree Program Benchmarks**
Guidelines on the Program Benchmarks can be found here and here.

**Program Timeline**
Visit: http://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/study-timeline
Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines  
UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the graduate catalog. Additional college/department/program and/or discipline guidelines regarding professional conduct and ethics.

Annual Review Procedures  
Each spring term, graduate students are required to complete the Graduate Student Annual Review survey. This survey will be sent by the Graduate College to the student’s Rebelmail account. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress while setting goals for the year ahead. All School of Life Sciences students are to complete an annual advising committee form. This form is found at: http://www.schillerlab.net/machform/view.php?id=22

Additional Program Information  
Any other information may also be found in the Life Sciences Graduate Handbook.

University Resources  
Academic Success Center  
The goal of the Academic Success Center is to help students do well academically and complete their studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing, career exploration and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

Alumni Association  
With an alumni base 90,000 strong, the UNLV Alumni Association offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office  
Located in the UNLV Registrar’s Office, the commencement office is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College.

Office of Diversity Initiatives  
The vision of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV’s diversity mission: to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)  
The DRC is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Office of International Student and Scholars  
International Students and Scholars (ISS) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students.
and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

Jean Nidetch Women's Center
The Jean Nidetch Women's Center is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

UNLV Libraries
UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)
The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Conduct
The Office of Student Conduct is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the UNLV Student Code of Conduct by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Office of Veteran Services
The UNLV Office of Veteran Services is staffed with veterans and GI Bill-experienced staff to assist more than 1,000 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office
The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center
This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

University Policies and Procedures
Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- Academic Integrity
- Activation for Military Service
- Change of Address
- FERPA/Privacy Rights
- Health Insurance - Mandatory
- Jeanne Clery Campus Safety and Security Report
- Proof of Immunization
- Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects
- Rebelmail Policy
- Student Conduct Code
- Student Computer Use Policy
- Title IX

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the Graduate Catalog:

- Academic Calendar
- Academic Policies
- Admission and Registration Information
- Degree Progression Policies & Procedures

In addition, the Graduate College website contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

*Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.*

**Handbook Information**

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