

# Plant Biology Graduate Group

## New Student Handbook

### 2014 - 2015

Welcome to the Plant Biology Graduate Group (PBGG) at UC Davis! We hope that you will find this guide useful as you begin your studies, and throughout your graduate career. In it you will find information about the PBGG's processes and people, financial support, registration, financial aid, and campus resources.

This guide touches only briefly on the policies and procedures regarding graduate studies at UC Davis. The Office of Graduate Studies' *Graduate Student Guide* and *Adviser's Handbook* offer additional information and more details about policies, procedures and campus resources. Both publications are available on Grad Studies' "News and Publications" website: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/publications/>.

#### **The Basics – The Who and What of the PBGG**

##### ***What Is a Graduate Group?***

The PBGG is an interdisciplinary graduate group comprised of over eighty faculty members and over fifty students. A "graduate group" is an independent, self-governing organization of faculty members from across the campus that sponsors a graduate degree program. Thus, the PBGG is an interdepartmental and intercollegiate unit, allowing students to take advantage of plant biologists from across the campus. PBGG members hail from nine different departments spanning three of UC Davis' four colleges.

So, what does this mean for you as a student? It means that you have the opportunity to engage in collaborative learning and research that extends across disciplinary and departmental lines. Since faculty members can accept students from multiple groups, you might be working side by side in the lab with a student who is in the Genetics program, or taking a course with colleagues who work in labs housed in the departments of Plant Sciences, Plant Biology and Viticulture and Enology. It also means that you have lots of options when it comes to choosing a lab at the end of the rotation program. Once you choose a lab, you will become a member of that department, in addition to remaining a member of the PBGG. The people in your "home department" will assist you with many of your needs, as they do for your major professor. This may include hiring you as a graduate student researcher, ordering research supplies, processing reimbursements for you, providing you with a mailbox, adding you to their listserv, and inviting you to their departmental social events. The PBGG handles just about everything else, including all academic matters (advising, degree certification, etc.), nominating you for campus fellowships, and (most importantly) inviting you to *our* social events.

##### ***Who Does What in the PBGG?***

The PBGG is administered by the PBGG Executive Committee, a group of ten faculty members and one student who are either appointed by the previous year's Executive Committee, elected by the faculty (faculty members) or elected by the students (student representative). The Executive Committee and its affiliated committees (Admissions, Educational Policy, etc.) set the policies and make the decisions that govern the Group. All of our committees and their various duties are laid out in our bylaws: [http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/sites/default/files/files/graduate\\_program/bylaws/gpbi-bylaws.pdf](http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/sites/default/files/files/graduate_program/bylaws/gpbi-bylaws.pdf).

The **Chair of the Plant Biology Graduate Group** serves as chair of the Executive Committee and makes many of the day-to-day decisions involved in the administration of the group. The Chancellor appoints the Chair based on nominations and recommendations from the Group and from the Dean of Graduate Studies. The PBGG Chair is Dr. Kentaro Inoue ([kinoue@ucdavis.edu](mailto:kinoue@ucdavis.edu), 530-752-7931) of the Plant Sciences department.

The **PBGG Master Adviser** is another important resource. The Master Adviser chairs the Advising Committee, the committee comprised of all of the PBGG's academic advisers. The Master Adviser assigns advisers, answers academic questions for both you and the advisers, coordinates the assignment of qualifying exam committees, works with the advisers to annually evaluate your progress, and serves as the main academic liaison between the PBGG and the Office of Graduate Studies. The Master Adviser also signs any form that ultimately ends up at the Office of Graduate Studies (applications for Filing Fee, Advancement to Candidacy, etc.). Dr. Stacey Harmer ([slharmer@ucdavis.edu](mailto:slharmer@ucdavis.edu), 530-752-8102) of the Department of Plant Biology is the PBGG Master Adviser.

Your **academic adviser** is a faculty member in your area of specialization assigned to you by the Master Adviser. Your adviser helps you plan your coursework, monitors your academic progress, assists you if you are having academic difficulty, and serves as a resource for you on all academic matters. Your adviser guides you through satisfying your degree requirements, while your major professor (see below) guides your research. As mentioned above, the Master Adviser, not your academic adviser, signs forms that go to the Office of Graduate Studies. Though you should discuss whatever it is that you're doing with your academic adviser, the Master Adviser must sign the form that lets you do it.

You select your **major professor** either at the beginning of your studies, or, if you do rotations, at the end of the rotation program. Your major professor serves as your primary mentor and guides your dissertation research. Your major professor also chairs your dissertation committee (see below). Your academic adviser, the PBGG Master Adviser, the PBGG Chair and your fellow students can help guide you in choosing a major professor.

The Office of Graduate Studies' Mentoring Guidelines provide some additional guidance on the expectations for faculty-student mentoring relationships:  
<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/gradcouncil/mentoring.pdf>.

The **PBGG program coordinator/student affairs officer** is your first point of contact for anything and everything PBGG or University related, or even life-related. She can answer your questions or refer you to the person or office that can (except for that whole meaning of life question – if you find out the answer to that one, let her know). The PBGG program coordinator is available on weekdays from 7:00am – 12:00pm and 1:00pm – 4:00pm. No appointment is necessary, come by anytime. The PBGG coordinator is located in Life Sciences 227D, in the basement of the Life Sciences building within the College of Biological Sciences Dean's Office. Theresa Garcia is the PBGG coordinator. She can be reached at [tgarcia@ucdavis.edu](mailto:tgarcia@ucdavis.edu) or 530-752-2981.

The **Plant Biology Graduate Student Association (PBGSA)** is an official campus organization, under the campus Graduate Student Association. Students in the Group elect officers each year, and funding comes from student fees. The officers represent you at meetings of the Plant Biology Graduate Group Executive Committee, and campus-wide Graduate Student Association, plan social activities, and put on the Fall Student Colloquium.

## 2012 - 2013 Officers for Plant Biology Graduate Student Association

<b>President</b>	Joe Edwards	<a href="mailto:edwards@ucdavis.edu">edwards@ucdavis.edu</a>
<b>Secretary/Treasurer</b>	Michelle Tang	<a href="mailto:mitang@ucdavis.edu">mitang@ucdavis.edu</a>
<b>Events/Colloquium Committee</b>	Mark Taylor & Nicole Soltis	<a href="mailto:maktaylor@ucdavis.edu">maktaylor@ucdavis.edu</a> <a href="mailto:nesoltis@ucdavis.edu">nesoltis@ucdavis.edu</a>
<b>GSA Representatives</b>	Cade Guthrie & Iniyan Ganesan	<a href="mailto:cdguthrie@ucdavis.edu">cdguthrie@ucdavis.edu</a> <a href="mailto:iganesan@ucdavis.edu">iganesan@ucdavis.edu</a>
<b>Admissions Representatives</b>	Mark Lemos & Allie Gaudinier	<a href="mailto:mslemos@ucdavis.edu">mslemos@ucdavis.edu</a> <a href="mailto:agaudinier@ucdavis.edu">agaudinier@ucdavis.edu</a>
<b>Recruitment Co-Chairs</b>	Jenna Gallegos & Destiny Davis	<a href="mailto:jegallegos@ucdavis.edu">jegallegos@ucdavis.edu</a> <a href="mailto:desdavis@ucdavis.edu">desdavis@ucdavis.edu</a>

Your home department may also have graduate student associations or clubs that you can join, regardless of your graduate group affiliation. Check out their websites and department offices or check-in with your lab mates to find out what's available when you join a particular department.

### **Starting Out – Choosing Classes and Rotations**

Soon after you accept the PBGG's offer of admission, you begin working with your academic adviser to map out your coursework. Once you choose one of the PBGG's four areas of specialization, the PBGG Master Adviser assigns you to an academic adviser with expertise in your area of specialization. Your adviser examines your academic record and contacts you to start planning your coursework. If your adviser identifies any deficiencies, these classes are among the first that you'll work on completing, even before arriving at UC Davis, if possible.

The PBGG admits most students uncommitted to a major professor. These students have the option of either completing the PBGG rotation program in their first year or joining a major professor's lab from the outset. Alternately, some PBGG students are admitted directly into a major professor's lab. Your admission letter specifies whether you have the option to do rotations or whether you were admitted directly into a lab.

If you have the option of doing rotations and choose to do rotations, you have the opportunity to work in different labs for five weeks each during Fall and Winter Quarters. The rotation program has a threefold purpose: one, to help you find a major professor for Spring Quarter and beyond; two, to allow you to experience the wide range of research conducted by PBGG faculty members; and three, to make connections that will often be useful in the future. Rotations are your chance to try something new and different and to engage in research that you hadn't even conceived of before. So that you experience the full range of possibilities, you are required to complete two five week rotations per quarter. Before Fall Quarter begins, the PBGG coordinator sends you a list of faculty members who have indicated that they are able to host students for rotations. Take a look, and if you find anyone that you're interested in working with, contact him or her to discuss setting up a rotation. If you're not sure who you want to rotate with, your academic adviser, the Master Adviser, or the PBGG Chair can guide you.

## **Registration**

Before you arrive at UC Davis, the Office of the University Registrar sends you an email with instructions on how to use UC Davis' online course registration system, SISWEB. As a graduate student, you may use SISWEB to register or to change your schedule anytime that the system is open. No appointment is necessary. You must register in at least 12 units by the Registration Fee Payment Deadline. The calendar on the Registrar's website lists the quarterly registration deadlines, the times during which SISWEB is operational, and those all-important holidays:

[http://registrar.ucdavis.edu/html/academic\\_calendar.html](http://registrar.ucdavis.edu/html/academic_calendar.html).

The Registrar's main website offers a wealth of other information on everything from grading and academic policy to course descriptions and forms. You can find it all here: <http://registrar.ucdavis.edu>.

### ***Deciphering Course Numbering***

Like most universities, UC Davis' course numbers indicate the level of the course. Courses numbered 200 – 299 are graduate level courses, while courses numbered 100 – 199 are undergraduate, upper-division courses. You may take some 100 level courses to fulfill your deficiencies and/or to satisfy some of your specialization requirements. If you do take any undergraduate courses to fulfill your deficiencies, you must take them for a letter grade. Most of your courses will probably be at the 200 level though. Courses numbered 1 – 99 are undergraduate, lower division courses. You may take these if you wish, in consultation with your adviser, but they won't count towards your degree.

One course number that you will become very familiar with is PBI 299. This is the course number for research units. You enroll in your major professor's section of this course number to reflect the research you are conducting in his or her lab. This is a variable unit course, meaning that you can enroll in 1 – 12 units of the course depending on your needs. While you're completing your coursework, you only need to enroll in enough units of PBI 299 to get your total number of units up to 12. Once you complete your coursework requirements, you will most likely enroll in 12 units of PBI 299 and nothing else (unless of course you see some delightful Underwater Basketweaving course that you really want to take). Each faculty member has a section of PBI 299 assigned to him or her, but you won't see these course registration numbers (CRNs) on the online class schedule. Before each quarter starts, the PBGG program coordinator emails out a list of all PBGG faculty members' CRNs for you to use to register in their sections of PBI 299.

Another course number that you may use frequently is PBI (or PLS, or MCB, etc.) 298. These courses are "group study" courses that many faculty members use for their lab meetings. Once you join a lab, you attend these meetings with your lab-mates to discuss what's going on in the lab and to keep each other updated on your research and projects. Some faculty members have you enroll in their 298 for this meeting, and some don't. Check with your major professor to see if he or she has a 298 for lab meetings.

### ***Taking a Break or Finishing Up: Leaves and Alternate Registration***

The University offers several options for you to change your registration status depending on your situation. Each has a slightly different process and different situations in which you would use them. Consult with your adviser if you are considering any of these options.

If you find that you need to take a break from your studies due to illness, family emergencies, or just to re-evaluate your educational goals, then the **Planned Educational Leave Program (PELP)** might be for

you. PELP allows you to put your studies on pause for one to three quarters while you resolve the issues affecting you. When you return, you pick up right where you left off.

As indicated by the name, you *plan* to PELP (yes, we use it as a verb, and yes we know it's not *technically* a verb). If, after talking with your adviser, you decide you want to PELP, email the PBGG program coordinator at least a couple of weeks before the quarter that you want to take your leave begins. The program coordinator emails you the form; you fill it out and email it back. The program coordinator then forwards it to the Master Adviser. Once s/he approves it, the program coordinator forwards the form to Grad Studies, and if they approve it, they forward it to the Registrar's Office, who officially puts you into the system as on leave. Whew! As you can see the process takes multiple steps, so the more notice you can give the better. Of course, if something dire happens and you need to PELP right before or even after the quarter begins, we can work to make it happen. Just be aware that the University has a sliding scale for refunds – the later in the quarter that you PELP, the less of your money (or you major professor's money) that you get back.

If you have advanced to candidacy and have the need to conduct research outside of California for a quarter or more, registering *In Absentia* may be right for you. Registering *In Absentia* allows you to maintain your registration status, but since you will be away and won't be using most University services, you don't have to pay full fees. To register *In Absentia*, you must complete the *In Absentia* Registration Form found on Grad Studies' forms website: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/>. It requires the signature of both your major professor and the Master Adviser. The form must be turned into Grad Studies by the Registration Fee Payment Deadline for the quarter during which you want to register *In Absentia*, so again, time is of the essence in securing the necessary approvals.

If you have completed all of your degree requirements, except for the actual filing of your thesis or dissertation, and are only waiting for your committee members to review and approve of your masterpiece, you may qualify for **Filing Fee** status. Going on Filing Fee allows you to pay a drastically reduced fee instead of the regular registration fees while your committee reviews your thesis or dissertation and while you make revisions. Your research and the vast majority of your writing must be complete for you to go on Filing Fee. You must have only reviews and revisions left to do in order to go on Filing Fee. This is important! Grad Studies is cracking down on the number of quarters of filing fee that they will approve, so don't plan to go on Filing Fee unless you're only a quarter away from finishing. If it ends up taking more time than that, they *MAY* approve another quarter, but there are no guarantees, so don't bank on being able to go on filing fee for more than one quarter. If Grad Studies doesn't approve additional quarters of filing fee it's not the end of the world, but you will have to register and pay full fees again. To apply for Filing Fee, you must complete the Filing Fee Application found on Grad Studies' website (see above). Both your major professor and the PBGG Master Adviser must sign the form before Grad Studies will accept it. The PBGG Master Adviser will not sign your application unless your most recent progress report indicates that you are very close to finishing your degree (i.e., within a quarter). As with PELP and *In Absentia*, allow plenty of time before the quarter starts to get the signatures and file the application.

Each of these statuses can have an impact on your ability to work as a GSR or TA, on your health insurance, on your fellowships and financial aid, and on the availability of campus services. Read about each carefully on Grad Studies website: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/> and consult your academic adviser if you're thinking about applying for any of them.

## **Residency**

The Registrar's office also performs another important function: determining who is and is not a California resident for tuition purposes. Being determined a "resident for tuition purposes" takes a lot more than just living in California. There are steps that you must take to establish legal ties to California and to sever your ties with your previous home, such as (but not limited to) getting a California driver's license and paying California income taxes. You need to start taking these steps immediately upon your arrival in California. At the end of your first year, you must file a petition to establish residency. *You do not get reclassified automatically.*

Take a look at the Registrar's residency website: <http://registrar.ucdavis.edu/html/slr.html> to see the whole process and what you must do to establish residency. The process can require a lot of documentation, so be sure to hold on to all of the relevant documents as you gather them through the year. Also, don't hesitate to contact the Residence Deputies if you have questions. The process can be quite complicated and since they are the ones who will make the final decision, they really are the best source of information. You can reach them at [ResidenceDeputy@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ResidenceDeputy@ucdavis.edu) or, 530-752-4749, 530-752-5029 or 530-754-9620.

If you are a domestic student, but not a California resident for tuition purposes, the University of California charges you an additional \$5,034 *per quarter*. They call this "non-resident supplemental tuition" or NRST. In your first year, there is no avoiding it, so either the PBGG or your major professor will pay it for you. If you fail to establish residency after your first year though, there are no guarantees that the PBGG or your major professor will cover it for you, so save yourself \$15,000+ and do what you need to do to become an "official" Californian.

If you are an International student, it is not possible for you to establish California residency for tuition purposes. The University charges you non-resident supplemental tuition (that extra \$5,034 per quarter) for almost your entire graduate career. Once you advance to candidacy, the University grants you a brief respite by waiving your NRST for three calendar years. If you are not done with your degree once the waiver runs out, your NRST returns.

## **Forms, Forms and More Forms**

This being the University of California, there is a form for just about everything you do: filing for alternate registration as discussed above, advancing to candidacy, etc. etc. For the most part, these forms are on the Office of Graduate Studies' website: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/>. If the form is on that website and thus will ultimately end up at Grad Studies, the Master Adviser, not your academic adviser, signs as the "Graduate Adviser." Otherwise, Grad Studies will return the form to the PBGG coordinator (via campus mail, which takes FOR-EV-ER), who then returns it to you.

After discussing your plans with your academic adviser, take your form to the Master Adviser for signature. Once the Master Adviser signs your form, either make a copy of it and send it via campus mail to the PBGG coordinator or bring the form to the PBGG coordinator. The PBGG coordinator makes a copy for your file and forwards the original to Grad Studies. Once Grad Studies approves your form, the student affairs officer there emails you a copy of the approved form.

## **Financial Support**

As a PBGG student, you have several sources of support available to you. The letter that you received from the PBGG before your arrival on campus outlines how you will be supported for your first couple of quarters. Once you join a lab, you and your major professor are responsible for figuring out how you are going to be supported and for pursuing your options. You should communicate with your major professor regularly about where your support will come from each quarter. You should also attempt to have plans for your support at least a year in advance so that you can be on the lookout for other forms of support if your major professor is not able to hire you as a GSR (see below). Early in Spring Quarter, when you're completing the student support survey with your progress report, is a good time to have a discussion about the upcoming year. Other PBGG members and the PBGG program coordinator are of course available to help you if you have questions, and as explained below, are sometimes involved in the process.

UC Davis requires you to file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to receive just about any funds from the University (fellowships, travel awards, etc.), so plan on submitting a FAFSA online every year, whether or not you plan to take out any student loans. The priority deadline for California is March 2, but you can still file a FAFSA after this date.

### ***Research Assistantships (GSRs)***

At UC Davis, "research assistantships" are referred to as GSRs. "GSR" stands for "graduate student researcher" which is the title that your major professor/hiring department hires you as. Your major professor is usually the person who hires you as a GSR, and the staff in his or her home department processes the paperwork to actually hire/appoint you. When your major professor hires you as a GSR at least 25% time, you receive full fee and tuition remission as a benefit of that employment. This means that your fees (including health insurance) and non-resident tuition (if applicable) are paid for from your major professor's grant. You also receive a stipend proportionate to the percentage that you are appointed at. The PBGG's compensation plan specifies that you receive a particular stipend. Your hiring department should hire you at the appropriate percentage and step (salary grade) so that your appointment, or combination of appointments (say, if you're a TA as well), will generate that stipend. The University pays monthly, so you receive three checks per quarter, each around the first of the month.

To serve as a GSR, you must be a full-time registered student (12 units) with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Appointments may exceed 50% time only between quarters or during the summer, depending on the availability of funding.

### ***Teaching Assistantships (TAs)***

Gaining an appointment as a teaching assistant (TA) is another way to garner support for your graduate studies. TA-ships also provide an excellent outlet for getting teaching experience and serve as a way to review for your qualifying exam (QE). When you TA (another acronym we use as a verb around here), you assist the instructor of a course. Most require some combination of at least two hours of office hours per week, class attendance, lecturing, leadership of discussion or laboratory sessions, grading of exams/papers/assignments and leading review sessions. Specific requirements depend upon the course, the professor, and the number of TA's per course.

If you are hired at least 25% time, the TA-ship pays a stipend and the majority of your in-state fees. The TA stipend is generally lower than the GSR stipend. Your major professor may cover the difference for



you, but not always, so again, discuss his or her ability to fund you, and plan accordingly. The TA-ship pays your health insurance, your student services and health fees, and your tuition, but it does NOT pay what the University calls “local fees.” These are things like the GSA and Memorial Union fees. In 2011 – 12, these fees totaled approximately \$260, and will likely be about the same in 2012 -13. You are responsible for paying this portion of your fees, either from your own funds or through your major professor. TA-ships also **DO NOT** pay non-resident supplemental tuition (that approximately \$5,000 per quarter that you will be charged if you don’t establish residency).

Since the PBGG is a graduate group, not a department, the PBGG does not hire TAs directly. You must apply for TA-ships through the departments that offer them. Each department’s process is a little different, but in general, you should begin looking for TA-ships about a year in advance. The best way to do this is by looking at each department’s website and/or by contacting the department TA coordinator. It is also helpful to speak with the professors of the courses you wish to TA. They may be able to assist you in the process, or give you further information about their specific course/teaching requirements. Most departments will require that you submit your UC Davis transcripts, undergraduate transcripts, GRE scores, and references with your application.

PBGG students regularly obtain teaching assistantships through the departments of Plant Biology, Evolution and Ecology, Plant Sciences, Molecular and Cellular Biology and Land, Air and Water Resources (LAWR). As of July 2012, the following people are the TA coordinators for the given departments:

Department	Contact	Email	Phone	Website
Plant Biology	Lisa Blake	<a href="mailto:lmlake@ucdavis.edu">lmlake@ucdavis.edu</a>	530-752-6736	<a href="http://www-plb.ucdavis.edu/">http://www-plb.ucdavis.edu/</a>
Molecular & Cellular Biology	Julie Evans	<a href="mailto:jmeevans@ucdavis.edu">jmeevans@ucdavis.edu</a>	530-752-0202	<a href="https://www.mcb.ucdavis.edu/advising/otap/">https://www.mcb.ucdavis.edu/advising/otap/</a>
Plant Sciences	Lisa Brown	<a href="mailto:lfbrown@ucdavis.edu">lfbrown@ucdavis.edu</a>	530-752-7738	<a href="http://www.plantsciences.ucdavis.edu/plantsciences/grad_students/pdf/TA.Application.pdf">http://www.plantsciences.ucdavis.edu/plantsciences/grad_students/pdf/TA.Application.pdf</a>
LAWR	Merlyn Potters	<a href="mailto:mmpotters@ucdavis.edu">mmpotters@ucdavis.edu</a>	530-752-1669	<a href="http://lawr.ucdavis.edu/index.htm">http://lawr.ucdavis.edu/index.htm</a>
Evolution & Ecology	Sherri Mann	<a href="mailto:smmann@ucdavis.edu">smmann@ucdavis.edu</a>	530-752-1274	<a href="http://www-eve.ucdavis.edu/eve/pbg/ta.htm">http://www-eve.ucdavis.edu/eve/pbg/ta.htm</a>

These are just a few of the departments with TA-ships though. You should apply for any and all subjects that you feel qualified to teach.

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) offers a number of events and resources to help you improve your teaching skills and become the best TA ever. The CETL’s annual TA Orientation is an event that you *must* attend if you are going to TA. They only offer it once a year in the fall, so even if you just *think* that you’re going to TA for the first time in a given year, you should attend. Check out their website for more details about TA Orientation and CETL’s other resources: <http://cetl.ucdavis.edu/>.



### ***Internal UC Davis Fellowships***

The Office of Graduate Studies awards a variety of fellowships to graduate students. The PBGG strongly recommends that you apply for these fellowships every year. Some fellowships will pay your fees, tuition and stipend, while others provide you with funding for your research. The individual fellowships are described in detail on the fellowship application itself and on Grad Studies' website:

<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/prospective-students/financial-support/about-internal-fellowships>.

The application for these fellowships is completely online. It opens during Fall Quarter and closes on December 1. The application requires you to include your GPA, transcripts, three letters of recommendation, a personal statement essay, a personal history essay, and a list of your awards and publications. To apply for most of the fellowships, you simply have to check a box on the application to indicate that you want to apply for that fellowship. Read the brief fellowship descriptions, and if you think that there's a chance that the criteria apply to you, check the box. Several graduate fellowships give preference to you based on your area of research and/or to the location of your previous education. Since these fellowships have such specific requirements, you should definitely apply if you fit the description. Even if you're not from one of these locations, if the rest of the fellowship criteria fits you (i.e. it's in your area of research), apply anyway. For some fellowships, you have to compose a brief statement about why you think you are eligible. The application indicates where this is necessary.

Once you submit your application, the PBGG Admissions and Fellowship Committee reads it and ranks it relative to other PBGG students' applications. The PBGG forwards those rankings to Grad Studies. Grad Studies' Graduate Student Support Committee, comprised of faculty members from across campus, then reads the applications and ranks them relative to all campus applicants to choose the winners. Grad Studies usually sends letters to the winners late in Winter Quarter or early in Spring Quarter.

Your home department may also have fellowships available to students studying with major professors in that department. These fellowships may offer tuition, fee and stipend support or research support. Check with your major professor, lab-mates or the staff in your department to see what's available.

### ***Travel Awards***

The Office of Graduate Studies puts out a call for applications for travel awards twice a year. These awards provide students who are at or near the end of their graduate studies with funds for travel to present at research conferences. The PBGG program coordinator circulates the call and students return applications to the PBGG. The PBGG Fellowship Committee ranks the applications and forwards the top three to Grad Studies. Grad Studies ranks the applications relative to all campus applicants and chooses the winners. More information can be found on Grad Studies' website:

[http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/ssupport/internal\\_travel.html](http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/ssupport/internal_travel.html).

The campus Graduate Student Association (GSA) also offers an award that supports travel to conferences, professional meetings, and professional development meetings. Unlike Graduate Studies' travel awards, you do not have to be presenting at the conference in order to be eligible for the award (but it helps!). See the GSA's Travel Awards website for more information:

[http://gsa.ucdavis.edu/Travel\\_Award](http://gsa.ucdavis.edu/Travel_Award).

Individual departments also may offer travel awards for graduate students. Check with your major professor or home department office to see what opportunities are available in your department.

### ***Jastro Shields Awards***

The Jastro Shields award provides research or stipend, fee and non-resident supplemental tuition support to students whose major professors are appointed through the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. The College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences allocates a portion of their Jastro Shields endowment to the PBGG each year. The PBGG then puts out calls for applications for the research award and the student support award (usually at different times during the year). The research award provides up to \$3,000 to purchase research supplies. For this award, you are asked to compose a research proposal and a budget. The student support award may cover some or all of your fees, tuition and stipend for a quarter or more. The application for the support award varies. For both types of award, the PBGG reviews the applications and chooses the winners.

### ***External Funding***

A wide variety of private foundations, state, Federal and local government agencies and nonprofits offer fellowship and grant support. The Office of Graduate Studies maintains a website that includes both potential sources of support and resources for writing killer grant proposals. Grad Studies is also responsible for reviewing and approving proposals submitted to outside entities. They provide the “institutional signature” necessary on some applications. See their website for more details: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/current-students/financial-support/external-fellowships>.

The campus Office of Research also lists several funding search engines on their website, as well as resources and guides to help you develop proposals: <http://www.research.ucdavis.edu>.

PBGG students in the past have been particularly successful at winning National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships and Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants. The PBGG highly encourages students to apply for both of these programs. The PBGG dedicates class time during PBI 292, the first year journal club, to assist students with their applications. Applications for these awards are generally due during Fall Quarter. Visit NSF’s website for more information: [http://www.nsf.gov/funding/education.jsp?fund\\_type=2](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/education.jsp?fund_type=2).

### ***Financial Aid***

UC Davis’ Financial Aid Office has a unit dedicated to graduate student financial aid. They determine your eligibility for federal, state and University need-based aid and assist you with the administration of those awards. Grants and both subsidized and unsubsidized loans are available through the Financial Aid Office. See their website for the details on all of the available loans: <http://financialaid.ucdavis.edu/graduate/Types/index.html>.

Financial Aid also offers short-term and emergency loans if you find that you suddenly come up short. The application for these types of loans is available online: <http://financialaid.ucdavis.edu/undergraduate/types/STL.html>.

The Financial Aid Office also determines your eligibility for Work-Study. The Work-Study program pays a portion of your fees and stipend when your major professor hires you as a GSR. The PBGG receives an allocation of Work-Study “units” each year. Each unit is an indicator of how much of your fees and stipend Work Study will pay. The PBGG puts out a call for applications for Work-Study in late spring or early summer for the following year. Once the PBGG awards its Work Study units, the PBGG passes the names of the awardees on to the Financial Aid Office. The Financial Aid Office then makes the final determination of eligibility and posts the award to your account. Once it’s posted, the award basically allows your major professor to hire you at a discount!

## **Progress Reports**

The Office of Graduate Studies requires that you complete a progress report each year to make sure that you are completing your degree in a timely fashion and to identify and remedy any potential problems. If you want to go on Filing Fee in the coming year, the progress report is doubly important since it must indicate that you will be close to completing your degree at the time that you want to go on Filing Fee. In addition to the Grad Studies progress report, the PBGG requires that you complete additional forms as a part of the progress report process. Every spring, your major professor, academic adviser, and dissertation committee (if applicable, see below) review your degree progress and work with you to complete your annual progress report.

In late April, the PBGG program coordinator sends you the progress report form, the student support survey and a dissertation report form. You meet with your major professor, academic adviser and dissertation committee (if applicable) to discuss your progress and remaining requirements, and then return the forms with the appropriate signatures to the PBGG program coordinator.

The process for completing the forms is slightly different depending on whether you have advanced to candidacy (i.e. passed your qualifying exam and filed the advancement to candidacy petition).

If you have NOT advanced to candidacy, you only need to complete the progress report form and the student support survey. You DO NOT have to complete the dissertation report form if you have not advanced to candidacy. First, take these forms to your major professor and discuss your progress with him or her. This is a good opportunity to talk about your work in the lab, potential dissertation topics, courses that he or she recommends, and your target completion date. This is also a good time to talk about how you're going to be supported financially in the coming year. Your major professor may not know yet if he or she will be able to offer you a GSR-ship, so make your best guess when completing the student support survey form. Once your major professor signs these forms, take them to your academic adviser for his or her signature. Your academic adviser can offer you additional guidance on your remaining degree requirements and suggestions for courses. Once you have both signatures, return the form to the PBGG program coordinator.

If you HAVE advanced to candidacy, there is an additional step that you must take. You must meet with your entire dissertation committee (see below) and get their signatures on the dissertation report form. The purpose of this meeting is to keep you in contact with your dissertation committee so that when it is time to file your dissertation, you can do so more quickly. Keep in mind that meeting with your committee once a year is the *minimum* requirement. Many students, especially those considering major changes to their research plans or those close to finishing their degree requirements, meet with their committees more than once a year. If you get your committee members' comments early and often, you'll have fewer revisions to make later. Start working on arranging a meeting as soon as the call for progress reports comes (or even before!). Once you obtain your committee's signatures on the dissertation report form, your major professor signs your progress report and support form. Take all three forms to your academic adviser for signature, then on to the PBGG program coordinator.

If you try and try and TRY for weeks and can't get your entire dissertation committee together before the deadline, you have two options. You may submit a provisional form with the signatures of both your major professor and your academic adviser. This form must be followed up by the final form with the

signatures of your entire committee within one month of the original deadline. Alternately, you may meet with each of your committee members separately and get their signatures that way.

At these meetings, your adviser and major professor decide whether you are making “Satisfactory,” “Marginal” or “Unsatisfactory” progress. If your progress is Satisfactory, great! If your progress is Unsatisfactory, your progress report will be forwarded to the Office of Graduate Studies. You’ll then receive a nasty letter from Grad Studies and be placed on Academic Probation. You, your adviser, and your major professor will develop a plan to get you back on track. As long as you follow the plan and complete the required work within the timeframe specified in the plan, you’ll be back in good standing. If your progress is Marginal, your report will be forwarded to Grad Studies, but you won’t be placed on probation or receive an unfriendly letter. You will still compose an agreement with your adviser and major professor to improve your progress to avoid further marginal reports.

### **Specialization Areas**

The PBGG has four areas of specialization: Cell and Developmental Biology, Molecular Biology, Biochemistry and Genomics, Systematics and Evolutionary Biology, and Environmental and Integrative Biology. You choose one of these four areas and focus your studies in that area. You take two to three courses applicable to that specialization. See the “Degree Requirements” at the end of this document for the details on the specialization requirement and the courses available for each area.

Though you were asked to select a specialization area before beginning your studies, this choice is not set in stone. Talk with your adviser about which specialization best fits your interests. Keep having this discussion with him or her as you become more and more immersed in the subject matter through the core course and your rotations. If you find that a different specialization area better fits your interests, you may be able to change areas.

### **Qualifying Exams**

Once you complete your coursework, your next step is to take your qualifying exam (QE), an exam that has both a written and an oral component. Five PBGG faculty members conduct the exam, usually at the end of your second year or the beginning of your third year. These faculty members are known as your QE Committee. Each of your committee members tests your knowledge of a particular subject area. The Chair and one other member of your committee examine you in your specialization area. One member examines you in general plant biology. Two additional members each examine you in one of two areas of plant biology outside of your specialization area. A list of suggested topics for these areas is included in the PBGG “Degree Requirements” to help you choose these two areas. If you are pursuing a designated emphasis, one of your committee members also examines you in the designated emphasis area. All of your committee members may be from the PBGG membership.

In mid-Fall, you complete the PBGG Ph.D/MS Oral Exam Committee Nomination Form (found on the PBGG website:[http://pbi.ucdavis.edu/local\\_resources/downloads/QENomination2007REVSep2011.pdf](http://pbi.ucdavis.edu/local_resources/downloads/QENomination2007REVSep2011.pdf)). On this form, you indicate who your first and second choice committee members are for each exam area. Though your major professor is not allowed to serve on your QE Committee, you should discuss your choices with him or her and with your academic adviser. Once your academic adviser signs your nomination form, return it to the PBGG program coordinator. In late Fall, all of the PBGG academic advisers meet to assign the committees based on everyone’s nominations. The advisers do their best to

balance the committee with members that you want, but they also spread the examinations equally amongst the faculty so that no one faculty member is conducting lots of exams. After the advisers' meeting, the PBGG program coordinator or Master Adviser emails you to confirm your committee. If you are not satisfied with your committee, you may consult with the Master Adviser.

Once the Master Adviser confirms your committee, you may begin working with your committee members right away to prepare for your exam. As soon as the Master Adviser contacts you, you should begin working with your committee to schedule your exam. You cannot take your exam until Grad Studies formally approves of your committee (see below), but coordinating that many people can be difficult, so get an early start. **DON'T WAIT** until you feel like you've studied enough to start scheduling your exam. Set a date early. If scheduling your exam becomes a major problem, consult your committee chair and enlist his or her assistance. The PBGG coordinator can help you find a room when you select an exact date and time.

Though you and the PBGG nominate your committee, the Office of Graduate Studies actually approves of and appoints your committee. When you finish your coursework, fill out the Office of Graduate Studies' Qualifying Examination Application (found on their "Forms" site: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/>). As with any form that ultimately goes to Grad Studies, have it signed by the Master Adviser and bring it to the PBGG coordinator before turning it into Grad Studies. If you are pursuing a designated emphasis, you must also have the director of the designated emphasis sign the application. Once Grad Studies approves your committee, the student affairs officer at Grad Studies emails a series of materials related to the exam to you and your committee chair. This means that your committee is official in the eyes of the University and you're ready to take your exam (administratively speaking anyway). Completing the Office of Graduate Studies' Qualifying Exam Application is ***ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE***. If you do not submit this form to Grad Studies and get it approved, your committee will not be official and your exam may be considered invalid if you take it. After you turn in your form, you should receive the approval materials from Grad Studies in two to three weeks. It is YOUR responsibility to follow-up with Grad Studies (with the PBGG coordinator's assistance if necessary) if you do not receive your approval email within a month of turning in your form.

More information about the format and content of the exam can be found in the PBGG Degree Requirements on the PBGG website or at the end of this handbook.

### **Choosing Your Dissertation Committee and Advancing to Candidacy**

After passing your QE, you are eligible to advance to candidacy. To do this, you must decide who you want to serve on your dissertation committee. In addition to your major professor, who will chair your committee, you choose two additional committee members. If you are pursuing a designated emphasis, one of your committee members must be a member of the emphasis and evaluate your dissertation accordingly. Your dissertation committee members will determine what requirements you must fulfill before they sign off on your dissertation. These requirements are usually noted on your annual progress report, and may include completion of specific experiments and submission and/or publication of manuscripts to report your findings.

After you pass your QE, the PBGG expects you to celebrate briefly, then to get right back to business and get your committee appointed within one month of passing your QE. Consult with your major professor and academic adviser to choose your committee members. Once all of your committee members have agreed to serve on your committee, fill out the Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Plan B

form (found here: <http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/forms/>) and have your major professor and the Master Adviser sign it. Take the form to the Cashier's Office to pay the candidacy fee, then to the PBGG coordinator, then finally on to Grad Studies. If and when Grad Studies approves your committee, the student affairs officer there will email you and your dissertation committee chair (major professor) a copy of the approved form. You then are considered "advanced to candidacy" and ready to whip out that dissertation.

Once you advance to candidacy, the PBGG expects you to present at least one "in progress" seminar on your dissertation research during the PBGG's Tuesday Seminar Series (PBI 291). This is an opportunity for you to practice presenting your research and placing it in context in the broader field of plant biology. The seminar is also a chance for you to receive feedback from your peers and your dissertation committee (who you should invite to your presentation!). For these reasons, the PBGG encourages you to present more than one seminar in the series.

The PBGG's general requirements for your dissertation and in progress seminar can be found in our degree requirements.

### **Finishing Up and Graduating**

The PBGG follows UC Davis' dissertation Plan B. This doesn't mean it was our back-up plan. It's our one and only plan that specifies what you must do to graduate. In addition to completing your coursework, passing your QE, and filing your actual dissertation, under Plan B, you must present a public exit seminar. Your dissertation committee may also elect to conduct a final oral examination.

Once you complete your dissertation, you organize your exit seminar. This is your chance to formally and publicly present your research and to show off everything that you've spent the last several years of your life doing. Your dissertation committee chair verifies that you have successfully completed this requirement by signing your dissertation. The PBGG highly recommends that you conduct your exit seminar during the PBGG Tuesday Seminar Series (PBI 291), but you may choose an alternate venue if you want. It is up to you to make sure that all of your committee members attend. If you need assistance finding a room for your seminar, the PBGG coordinator can help you book a room.

Actually filing your dissertation with the Office of Graduate Studies is usually the last thing you do to satisfy your degree requirements. Grad Studies sets and enforces the policies, procedures and deadlines involved in filing your dissertation. Check their website for the formatting guidelines and deadlines: [http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/students/degree\\_candidates.html](http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/students/degree_candidates.html). Fortunately for you, you file your dissertation electronically – no expensive fancy paper required. Once you're ready to file, you make an appointment with the student affairs officer at Grad Studies who will walk you through the final steps to graduation. You may choose to walk at Grad Studies' Commencement Ceremony in June, or you may not, either way YOU'RE DONE!!!!

### **Campus Resources and Recreation**

#### ***Plant Growth Facilities***

<http://cef.ucdavis.edu/>

The College of Biological Sciences supports three plant growth facilities: the Botanical Conservatory, the Research Greenhouses and the Sciences Laboratory Building Greenhouse. The Office of Research

supports the Controlled Environment Facility. These facilities offer greenhouse space, lath houses, growth chambers and contained outdoor growing areas. The Plant Growth Facilities are available to you for research projects.

Individual departments and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences offer additional greenhouse space and plant growth facilities. Check-in with your major professor to see if these facilities might be useful for your research.

### ***Statistical Laboratory***

<http://anson.ucdavis.edu/stats-lab/services>

The Department of Statistics' Statistical Laboratory provides a statistician who is available for consultations concerning design of experiments or sample surveys, statistical analysis of experimental results and the assembly and management of databases. This service is free to graduate students involved in degree-related research. Visit the Department of Statistics' website to find more details about the lab and to make an appointment.

### ***Safety Services***

<http://safetyservices.ucdavis.edu/>

While working in the lab, you may encounter hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials, and other potentially dangerous substances or conditions. UC Davis Safety Services offers publications and trainings to instruct you on the safe handling of these materials. Check with your major professor, lab manager or department safety coordinator to find out what materials you will be using and which trainings you need to complete.

### ***Computer Labs***

<http://clm.ucdavis.edu/>

Information Educational Technology (IET) operates a series of computer and media labs where you may use a computer, print and scan. Many are designed for both academic instruction and general computing use. They are available on a drop-in basis when they're not reserved for classes. Visit IET's website to view the labs' locations and hours.

### ***University Writing Program (UWP)***

<http://writing.ucdavis.edu/programs-and-services/coaching-faculty-and-graduate-students-as-writers>

The University Writing Program provides writing workshops and individual writing consultations to graduate students. The writing workshops focus on specific aspects of academic writing and are adapted to meet the needs of any field. They also can be designed for particular audiences (i.e., for TA's correcting and evaluating student papers).

Visit UWP's website to check out all of their services and to schedule an individual consultation. Most workshops are offered through the Office of Graduate Studies' Professional Development series, so watch your email for workshop announcements.

### ***Student Health and Counseling Services***

<http://shcs.ucdavis.edu/>

*Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)*

530-752-0871 – call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to talk to a mental health staffer



Confidential counseling services are available at no cost to registered graduate students. As a graduate student, you may encounter new and intense stressors. Some common issues of concern include academic performance, anxiety about completing your dissertation or QE, self-identity, self-esteem, and conflicts in relationships with friends, professors, committee members, etc. SHCS offers individual counseling, group counseling, wellness clinics, career counseling and other services. To utilize SHCS' services, call their 24 hour line at 530-752-0871 or drop-in at their office in 219 North Hall (on the quad).

### ***Health Services***

530-752-2349

Primary and urgent medical care is available to all registered students, regardless of insurance, at the Student Health and Wellness Center on La Rue Road. You pay a small fee for most services. Visit the Student Health and Counseling Services website for details. The SHCS website also provides information on the UC SHIP student health insurance plan.

### ***Campus Recreation***

<http://cru.ucdavis.edu/>

Campus Recreation offers a bevy of opportunities for you to take a break from your studies. The campus gym, the **Activities and Recreation Center (ARC)**, has a climbing wall, indoor track, basketball courts, multi-activity courts and dance studios in addition to cardio and weight equipment. Campus Rec also offers dance, martial arts, and other fitness classes.

Campus Rec operates a number of other facilities and programs to help you relax, stay fit, and try something new. Pools, athletic fields and tennis courts can all be found on campus. For those with a love of horses, the campus **Equestrian Center** offers riding lessons, boarding and an indoor riding arena. If you're looking for an adventure beyond campus, **Outdoor Adventures** hosts backpacking, rafting, kayaking and other excursions and classes in the great outdoors. Closer to home, you can learn how to do everything from glass bead-making to welding at the **Craft Center**. If you have a competitive side, Campus Rec hosts both **intramural and club sport teams**.

### ***Memorial Union Games Area***

<http://cru.ucdavis.edu/content.cfm?contentID=40>

Under the Bookstore in the depths of the Memorial Union sits UC Davis' very own bowling alley. The lanes are open to students and the general public for both daily and league play. Like any good bowling alley, UC Davis' facility also has billiards and a plethora of video games.

## **Important Phone Numbers and Websites**

### **Office of Graduate Studies**

250 Mrak Hall  
530-752-0650  
<http://gradstudies.ucdavis.edu/>

### **Registrar's Office**

12 Mrak Hall  
530-752-3639  
[registrar@ucdavis.edu](mailto:registrar@ucdavis.edu)  
<http://registrar.ucdavis.edu/>

### **Residence Deputy**

Registrar's Office – 12 Mrak Hall  
530-752-0879, 530-752-5029 or 530-754-9620  
[ResidenceDeputy@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ResidenceDeputy@ucdavis.edu)

### **Financial Aid Office**

2100 Dutton Hall  
530-752-9246  
[gradfinaid@ucdavis.edu](mailto:gradfinaid@ucdavis.edu)  
<http://financialaid.ucdavis.edu/>

### **Student Accounting**

2100 Dutton Hall  
530-752-3646  
<http://studentaccounting.ucdavis.edu/>

### **Services for International Students and Scholars**

100 University House  
530-752-0864  
<http://siss.ucdavis.edu/default.cfm>

### **PBGG Office**

227 Life Sciences  
530-752-2981  
[pbi@biosci.ucdavis.edu](mailto:pbi@biosci.ucdavis.edu) or [tgarcia@ucdavis.edu](mailto:tgarcia@ucdavis.edu)  
<http://pbi.ucdavis.edu/>

### **Graduate Student Association**

253 South Silo Building  
530-752-6108  
[gsa@ucdavis.edu](mailto:gsa@ucdavis.edu)  
[http://gsa.ucdavis.edu/About\\_GSA](http://gsa.ucdavis.edu/About_GSA)

### **Student Health and Counseling Services – Counseling**

216 North Hall  
530-752-0871  
<http://caps.ucdavis.edu/services.html>

### **Student Health and Counseling Services – Health**

Student Health and Wellness Center (on La Rue  
Road)  
530-752-2349  
<http://healthcenter.ucdavis.edu/index2.html>

### **UC SHIP – Insurance Services**

Student Health and Wellness Center (on La Rue  
Road)  
530-752-6055  
<http://shcs.ucdavis.edu/insurance/index.html>

### **UC Davis Bookstore**

Memorial Union (Main)  
530-752-6846  
[bookstore@ucdavis.edu](mailto:bookstore@ucdavis.edu)  
<http://ucdavisbookstore.com/home.aspx>