

2026-27 GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK



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This handbook has been curated specifically for the 2026 graduate student cohort in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Michigan.



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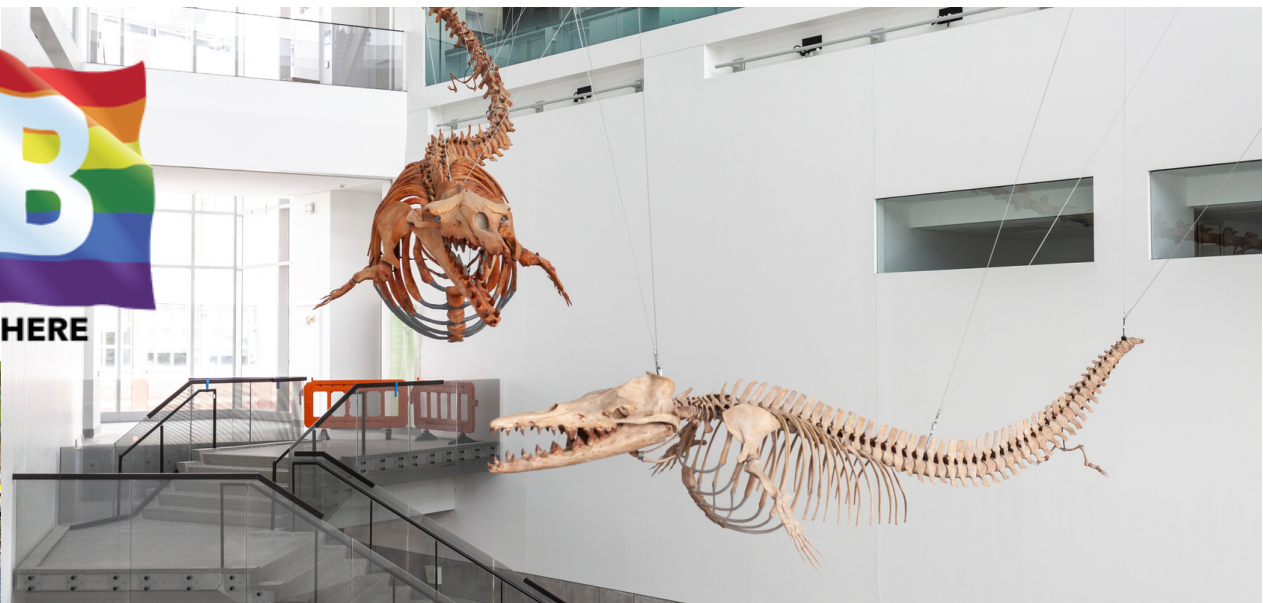
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REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

When do I register for classes?

Incoming students will register for classes after attending an Initial Counseling Session with their advisor and members of the EEB Graduate Office during the summer before their department orientation. In all other terms, students should register for all necessary coursework before the start of the term in order to avoid any late registration fees.

How many credit hours do I need to register for?

Students who are appointed as Graduate Student Assistants (GSAs) must register for a minimum of 6 credit hours per term. This includes Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs), Research Assistants (GSRAs), and Curatorial Assistants (GSCAs).

Students on fellowship must register for a minimum of 8 credit hours per term.

How do I register for classes?

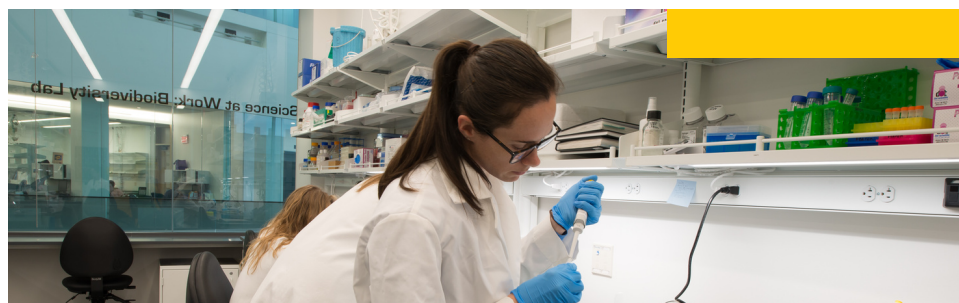
Registration is typically available three weeks before the end of the current term. In order to make course selections, students can login to “Student Business” in Wolverine Access. The EEB Graduate Office will create electronic permissions (overrides) for all independent study courses (EEB 700, 730, 790, 995, etc.) and other courses that require special permission.

Rackham Policy: [Registration](#)

[Office of the Registrar](#)



See “Course Requirements” specific to your program for additional information.



Student Financial Services

UNIVERSITY BILLING

STUDENT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Student Financial Services (um-sfo@umich.edu) manages student account billing and collection at the University of Michigan.

TUITION

Tuition bills are generated once you register for classes and will show up on your student account. Tuition waivers for GSAs and fellowships are credited directly to your account **approximately three weeks into the term**. Be patient - especially during fall when there are many new GSI appointments to be loaded into the system.

MANDATORY FEES

Mandatory fees (\$246.89 for the 2026-27 academic year) are **not covered by the department**, so it is your responsibility to pay these fees by the due date to avoid being assessed late fees. *Some* fees may be covered by GSA appointments.

LATE REGISTRATION FEES

A late registration fee will be assessed to your student account if you do not register for necessary credit hours by the first day of the term. Late fees continue to accrue if not paid on time.

PAY & BENEFITS

PAYDAY

- **Graduate Student Assistants** (GSIs, GSRAs, GSCAs) are considered university employees and are paid via the [Payroll Office](#) once a month **on the last working day of the month**. Income taxes are withheld from your paycheck.
- Students on **fellowship** are paid via the Financial Aid Office once a month **on (or around) the second Friday of the month**. Students on fellowship may be required to pay estimated quarterly taxes on their fellowship income, but should consult with a tax professional regarding any tax-related questions.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

All students should set up Direct Deposit through Wolverine Access -- “Student Business” or “Employee Business.”

BENEFITS

GSAs and students on fellowship enroll in the [GradCare](#) health insurance plan. Incoming students should receive an email from the [Benefits Office](#) (734-615-2000) with instructions for enrolling in benefits coverage once their initial appointment is confirmed.



TEACHING & THE GRADUATE EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATION (GEO)



GEO CONTRACT

The Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) is the legal bargaining unit that represents graduate instructors and assistants at the University of Michigan. For information about the teaching contract, see the [GEO website](#), or contact Lindsay Stefanski for detailed information regarding teaching regulations.

PROGRAM IN BIOLOGY

The [Program in Biology](#) (PiB) coordinates the hiring of all GSI positions for the Biology, EEB, and MCDB courses that require teaching assistance. GSIs are hired for fall, winter, spring, and summer terms, and the applications open twice per year (in October for winter, and in mid-February for spring, summer, and fall).

ASSIGNMENT PRIORITY

EEB is committed to having courses staffed with competent, knowledgeable, and conscientious GSIs. PiB uses a set of placement priorities, agreed upon by the faculty in EEB and MCDB, when determining GSI course assignments. They are ranked below in order of importance (and the same structure applies for students in MCDB):

1. In-unit PhD students, Frontiers Master's students, and EEB MS students with RMF funding
2. Students from in-unit labs, but out-of-unit PhD programs
3. In-unit EEB MS students who are doing thesis research
4. Out-of-unit PhD students
5. Out-of-unit master's students

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT INFORMATION

ADDITIONAL COURSE REQUIREMENT: ELI 994

International students who attended an undergraduate institution where the medium of instruction was not English may be required to attend a three-week workshop (ELI 994) sponsored by the English Language Institute (ELI) and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT). This intensive workshop begins in mid-July for incoming students who intend to teach as a GSI during their first fall term. Please be advised:

- Credit for this course may be counted towards minimum credit hour requirements for EEB graduate programs
 - ELI 994 cannot be used to fulfill the cognate credit requirement since the content is not related to the field of study (see “Course Requirements” specific to your program for additional information)
- International students who attended a graduate institution (and earned a graduate degree) where the language of instruction was English only may be eligible for a waiver from ELI

DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

- eeb.international@umich.edu
 - MCommunity group for the EEB international community (*contact the Graduate Office to opt in to the list!*)
- Verification letters - needed for travel and housing and can be requested from eeb.gradcoord@umich.edu
- GREEBs International Student Representatives

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- **International Center** | icenter@umich.edu
 - The International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) team offers [drop-in advising](#)
- [Rackham Resources](#)
 - [Rackham International Student Fellowships](#)
- Student Legal Services
- Tax services available

LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Full-time enrollment required to maintain visa status
- International student fee for EEB MS students (\$500 in full terms of enrollment)
 - Covered for students on GSI appointment
- SEVIS fee reimbursement form - return to Kim Pavuk



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



THE GRADUATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of high standards and broad orientation of graduate scholarship within EEB. The committee is composed of the Associate Chair for Graduate Studies, the Senior Graduate Coordinator, two faculty members, and one graduate student. Oversight of graduate student affairs, including those related to funding, program status, and student progress are the responsibility of the GAC. It is the responsibility of the student to petition the GAC regarding any decision related to departmental graduate affairs. Review can be initiated by sending an email to the Senior Graduate Coordinator, who will forward the petition to the full committee (except where conflicts of interest may arise). All petitions are reviewed by the GAC, usually in association with the recommendations of other EEB committees, the student's advisor, faculty members, and the department chair. After a decision is reached, the student is notified (usually via email) unless a review or vote by EEB faculty is warranted.



LAB & RESEARCH SAFETY

Lab Safety Officer Jen Grover is here to assist research labs with safety planning and compliance by providing information and consulting on research related safety issues.

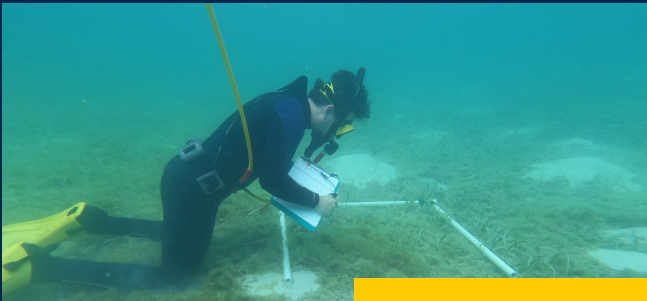


INFOREADY REVIEW

Students can submit departmental forms through [InfoReady](#), including committee formation and meeting forms, and applications for department-awarded research funding.

Jen Grover, LSA Lab Safety Officer
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PhD PROGRAM



The goal of the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology doctoral program is to train the next generation of biologists who study the origin of earth's biodiversity and the complex biotic and abiotic interactions that structure populations, communities, and ecosystems.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS

OVERVIEW

PhD students must complete **18 credit hours** to advance to candidacy

- Must be graded: B- or better, or “Satisfactory” for S/U coursework
- Must be graduate-level (400+)
- Must be completed during the first year of the program
- Must be approved by the student’s advisor and the EEB Graduate Office

COURSE CHECKLIST:

FALL, YEAR 1

- **EEB/MCDB 499**
Responsible Conduct of Research & Scholarship
(1 credit hour)
- **EEB 548**
Principles of Ecology
(4 credit hours)
- **EEB 700**
Independent Study
(1-8 credit hours)
- **EEB 701**
Tools for Navigating Academia
(1 credit hour)
- **EEB 801**
Supervised Teaching
(1 credit hour)

WINTER, YEAR 1

- **EEB 516**
Principles of Evolution
(4 credit hours)
- **EEB 730**
Preliminary Examination, Step 1
(1-8 credit hours)
- Recommended:
- **Cognate requirement***
(3+ credit hours)

Total (combined) credit hours for fall & winter of Year 1 must meet or exceed 18 credit hours

***Cognate requirement:**

- Completion of 3+ credit hours outside of EEB
 - Counted towards the required 18 credit hours only if completed during the first year
 - May be completed after Year 1
 - May be cross-listed in EEB
 - May be satisfied with approved coursework from the student’s master’s program
- Must be relevant to the field and/or student’s proposed research

“Continuous Enrollment” requirement:

- After reaching candidacy, PhD students must register for **EEB 995** (8 credit hours) each fall and winter term until final completion of degree requirements
 - Must also be registered if defending the dissertation in a spring/summer term (unless utilizing the winter grace period)

Additional course information: [LSA Graduate Course Catalog](#)

ADDITIONAL COURSEWORK AFTER REACHING CANDIDACY:

- May be taken as a visitor (auditor) rather than for credit (requires instructor permission)
- Candidates who enroll in more than 12 credit hours in a given term may be assessed additional tuition per credit hour at their own expense

RACKHAM POLICY 3.5.2:

ACADEMIC PROBATION & DISMISSAL

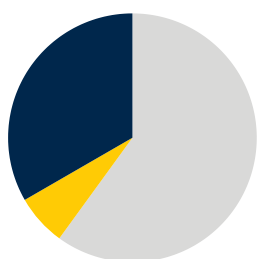
- Rackham graduate students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (B) or better, or be placed on academic probation
- See “In Good Standing” policy within the EEB PhD Program

Rackham Policy: [Registration and Enrollment for PhD Programs](#)

Rackham Policy: [Coursework, Grading, and Academic Standing](#)

FUNDING PACKAGE

Students in good standing in the EEB doctoral program are eligible for five years (ten academic terms and four summers) of funding. A fifth semester of summer support may be available, if needed. Funding includes an annual stipend of at least **\$43,788** (the 2026-27 typical appointment rate is \$14,596 per term), a full tuition waiver (fall & winter terms), and year-round health insurance coverage. Health insurance is available for any dependents.



THE “STANDARD” FUNDING PACKAGE

Components of the funding package generally include the following:

- **Assistantship support:** Nine fall or winter terms (likely as a GSI)
 - Students are required to teach as a GSI for at least two terms
 - Students may apply for GSCA positions after reaching candidacy
- **GSRA support:** Project grants may be available for some students (speak with your advisor for more information)
- **Department fellowship support:** One fall or winter term (in Year 2, after reaching candidacy) and four summer terms

LIMITATIONS

- **The Ten-Term Rule:** The College of Literature, Science, and the Arts has imposed a 10-term limit on GSI positions.
- While on a fellowship, a student cannot also accept a GSA appointment of 25% (0.25 FTE) or higher. Students may petition the Graduate Affairs Committee for an exception if the appointment will significantly benefit their graduate training or research.
- All students are encouraged to seek external sources of funding such as sponsored grants, paid internships, or sponsored fellowships. These funding opportunities are prestigious and provide valuable experiences. Individuals receiving external funding are subject to the department’s **Substitution Policy** (see below).

THE SUBSTITUTION POLICY

Students cannot receive both departmental support and an external fellowship or traineeship at the same time. External fellowship funding will be supplemented by the department (or Rackham, in some cases) to achieve the guaranteed stipend rate of the current GEO contract, as necessary. External fellowships and traineeships are not supplementary to the standard funding package, but substitute for elements of the package as follows:

1. Any external funding first substitutes for department fellowship support (i.e. a 1-year award would substitute for both the fall and winter terms, as well as 1 summer term);
2. Any additional external funding then substitutes for GSRA support (i.e. a 2-year award would first substitute for department fellowship support as listed above and then substitute for both the fall and winter terms, as well as 1 summer term, of GSRA support unless waived by the advisor);
3. Any external funding exceeding two full years of support would subsequently substitute for assistantship support during the fall and winter terms. Summer funding would continue to substitute first for department fellowship support and then for GSRA support.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION TIMELINE

FALL, YEAR 1

THE SECONDARY ADVISOR

Students should identify their secondary advisor **by the end of the fall term**. The secondary advisor is not necessarily a co-advisor, but typically becomes a member of the dissertation committee and serves as an alternate resource to discuss progress and seek feedback during the entire preliminary examination timeline.

WINTER, YEAR 1

STEP 1: THE 730 PAPER

The 730 paper is written as a part of the EEB 730 course (taken with the primary or secondary advisor). It is typically expected to be completed by **May 15** unless other arrangements have been made.

SUMMER, YEAR 1

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Students are expected to achieve candidacy **prior to the start of the fall term of their second year**. Candidacy is achieved when the student has completed relevant course requirements and Step 1 of the preliminary examination, and has submitted official transcripts to Rackham for all degree-granting institutions.

FALL, YEAR 2

COMMITTEE FORMATION & PRE-EVALUATION MEETING

Students identify their preliminary dissertation committee **by the end of the fall term** following [Rackham requirements](#). A [committee worksheet](#) should be submitted to the Senior Graduate Coordinator for approval. After submission, students are required to meet with the committee **at least two months before** proceeding with any portion of Step 2 of the preliminary examination.

BY THE END OF WINTER, YEAR 2

STEP 2: THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL, SEMINAR, AND ORAL EXAM

The Step 2 timeline is as follows:

1. The Dissertation Proposal is submitted **at least ten days before** the Oral Examination.
2. The Seminar should be publicized and subsequently presented **at least three days before** the Oral Examination. The Seminar and the Oral Examination cannot be on the same day.
3. The Oral Examination must be scheduled during a 3-hour time slot with the entire preliminary dissertation committee. It should be completed **within four weeks** of when Step 2 was initiated.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION: STEP 1

START

THE 730 PAPER

The 730 paper is written as part of the EEB 730 course, typically taken with the primary or secondary advisor in the second semester of the first year. The format of the paper is flexible (e.g., review article, data-based manuscript, new conceptual framework), but the length and content of the work should be confirmed by the student with their advisors. The submission should:

- Highlight key concepts in ecology and/or evolution and display understanding of both broad and specific knowledge in the student's field and subfield.
- Make use of critical papers identified by the primary and/or secondary advisor and student together, but with the majority of references identified by the student.
- Prepare students for their lab or field research starting typically in their first summer in the program. This document might also provide a foundation for the introduction to either the dissertation proposal or the final dissertation.

The Associate Chair for Graduate Studies will review all 730 papers and provide additional feedback to both students and advisors to help maintain consistency with the preliminary examination process. The primary and secondary advisors will write an evaluation of the paper using a standardized rubric ([see additional policies](#)) and submit a grade (S/U).

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

PRIOR TO THE START OF FALL, YEAR 2

- ☐ Satisfactory completion of at least 18 credit hours of in-residence, graduate-level coursework (400-level or above) including required program coursework
- ☐ A minimum GPA of 3.0 ("B" average) or above
- ☐ Satisfactory completion of Step 1 of the preliminary examination
- ☐ Submission of official transcripts to Rackham for all degree-granting institutions (with evidence of degree conferral)
- ☐ Teaching as a GSI for at least one term
- ☐ Demonstrated proficiency in research

When all noted requirements are met, the Senior Graduate Coordinator submits a candidacy e-form to Rackham prior to the start of the fall term of the student's second year (typically around August 1).

After receiving notice of approval via email, the PhD candidate may then proceed to the next steps in the Preliminary Examination timeline.

COMMITTEE FORMATION



The preliminary dissertation committee is formed by the student and their advisor(s) (who serve as chair/co-chairs of the committee), and should represent both breadth in EEB and expertise in the student's research area as much as possible. Committee membership can change over time as research interests evolve, but is subject to Rackham regulations and department approval. See [additional policies](#) for the department's "Change of Advisor" policy. Please note: the dissertation committee is not formally established with Rackham until after the successful completion of Step 2 of the preliminary examination process.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

1

Evaluation of all portions of Step 2 of the preliminary examination process

Advice concerning the conduct of the dissertation research

2

Regular monitoring of research progress during committee meetings.

Advice on additional aspects of professional development

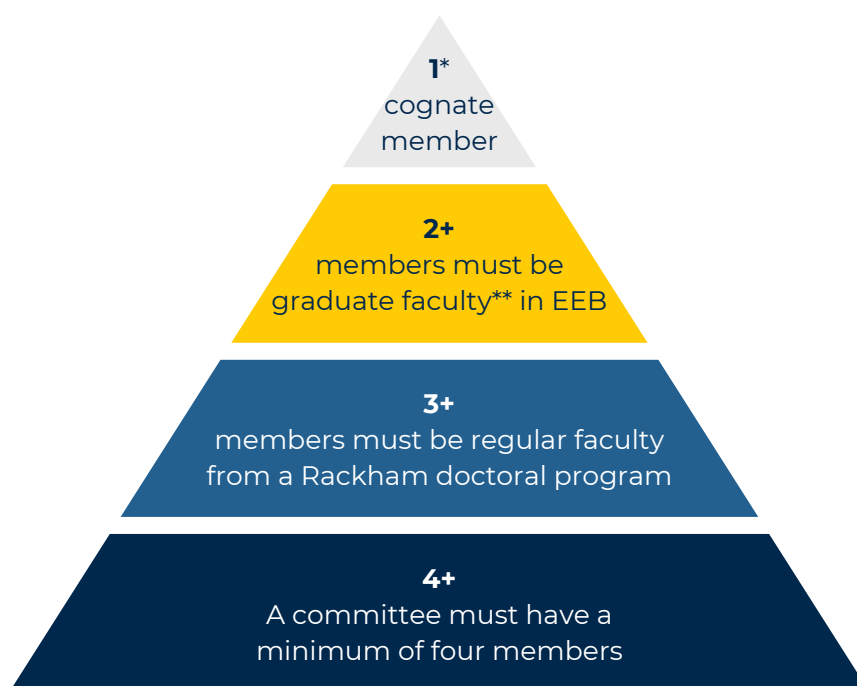
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5

Administration of the oral defense of the dissertation

Certification that the completed dissertation meets the requirements for degree conferral

6



*The cognate member must have at least a 50% appointment in a Rackham doctoral program outside of EEB.

**For committee purposes, "graduate faculty" are persons who are tenured or tenure-track instructional faculty holding an "unmodified" (i.e. not visiting or adjunct) appointment at the University with an earned Doctorate

Required Form: [Dissertation Committee Worksheet](#)

Rackham: [Guidelines for Dissertation Committee Service](#)

Rackham: [Quick Reference Chart for Membership on Dissertation Committees](#)

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION: STEP 2

THE PRE-EVALUATION MEETING

Students are required to meet with their approved dissertation committee **at least two months before** initiating any of the three components of Step 2 (the dissertation proposal, public seminar, and oral examination), and meeting even earlier is recommended. In most cases, this meeting should occur after successful completion of the 730 paper and no later than the end of the fall term of the student's second year. The pre-evaluation meeting requires the following written materials, which should be distributed to the committee (electronically) **at least two days before** the meeting:

- a 1-page, updated CV
- a 1-page description of the student's background and research interests

The committee will use these materials to guide the conversation. The time and location of the meeting should be arranged by the student.

The purpose of this meeting is to highlight any areas for improvement in the student's formal (e.g., coursework) or informal preparation for the oral examination. If the committee believes the student is deficient in a particular area, the committee should suggest ways to remedy the deficiency **before** the oral examination. The student may also discuss topics for the dissertation proposal and public seminar, and the meeting should be used to provide a "feel" for the oral examination.

THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

The dissertation proposal is the written portion of Step 2. It should reflect the student's dominant research interests and provide an introduction to the topic, research questions or hypotheses, proposed methods for answering the research questions, and preliminary results or analyses. The proposal is intended to develop the student's skills in analytical thinking, formulating research ideas and questions, and preparing manuscripts. The research topic should be developed with the primary advisor(s), should address an issue of broad ecological or evolutionary interest, and must be original (e.g., not a revised master's or Honors thesis). Proposals that are catalogs of the literature or factual knowledge are unacceptable.

The proposal should be prepared in a format suitable for submission to the [National Science Foundation](#), including:

- A **Project Summary** (no more than one page in length) that clearly distinguishes the "Intellectual Merit" and "Broader Impacts" of the research
- A **Project Description** (8 to 12 single-spaced pages in length, excluding references) with figures and tables included in the body of the proposal

University resource: [Sweetland Center for Writing](#)

○○○PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION: STEP 2

THE PRELIMINARY SEMINAR

The preliminary seminar is the first verbal portion of Step 2. It is intended to develop the student's skills in organizing concepts, results, and visual materials for use in oral presentations. It also allows for the practice of public speaking in front of an audience of interested and knowledgeable peers. The seminar may focus on one or more research projects, and may be narrower than the dissertation proposal.

During the seminar, the student must:

- place the specific project or topic into a broader scientific context as part of the Introduction
- present the rationale for scientific questions or hypotheses that will be answered or tested
- describe the methods used or proposed
- place any preliminary results within the broader scientific context originally described
- provide the overall framework of future research

The seminar is open to the public, and should consist of a **35-40 minute presentation** followed by a **10-15 minute Q&A period**.



Students are encouraged to receive feedback on practice seminars from other students, postdocs, and faculty. It is expected that all advisors attend **at least one** practice talk for their student and provide feedback prior to the formal seminar.

THE ORAL EXAMINATION

The oral examination is the final portion of Step 2, and is not open to the public. It is intended to further develop the student's ability to discuss science with interested and knowledgeable peers. While there is no standardized format for the exam, students should consider discussing expectations with their primary advisor(s) beforehand and should also consider resolving any deficiencies identified during the pre-evaluation meeting.

During the oral exam, the committee may ask:

- questions related to the student's dissertation proposal and preliminary seminar
- questions addressing related topics in ecology and evolutionary biology beyond the defined scope of the proposal

Students are expected to demonstrate a general knowledge of biology, a good understanding of historical and contemporary ecology and evolutionary biology, and stage-appropriate knowledge in the topic of their proposed dissertation. Oral exams are typically **2-3 hours** (a 3-hour timeslot should be scheduled with the full committee). The time and location of the oral exam should be arranged by the student following the limitations set forth in the Preliminary Examination Timeline. It is the responsibility of the committee to submit evaluations ([see additional policies](#)) for all components of Step 2 in a timely manner.



COMMITTEE MEETINGS & MENTORING

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

After successful completion of all components of the preliminary examination, students are expected to formally meet with their committee at least **once per academic year for a 2-hour meeting** (or twice per year in two 1-hour meetings). Students who have not held a formal committee meeting in the preceding 12 months are ineligible for department awards and fellowships.

MEETING REQUIREMENTS

The time and location of the meeting should be arranged by the student. The suggested format for the meeting is the preparation of a brief presentation followed by discussion with the committee. **At least three days before** the meeting, students must complete the following:

- a **Pre-Meeting Summary** (one page in length) of dissertation progress and a brief overview of plans for the next six months and beyond
- submission of the **PhD Candidate Committee Meeting Form** to the Graduate Office (available on [InfoReady](#))
 - *The committee will provide an evaluation and feedback using the InfoReady form (see Appendix E).*

Following the meeting, students must complete the following:

- a **Post-Meeting Summary** (one page in length) which captures what was discussed in the meeting and includes a revision of plans moving forward
 - *Instructions for uploading this summary to InfoReady will be provided after the committee submits a meeting evaluation.*



**MENTORING
AND ADVISING**

RACKHAM'S FACULTY COMMITTEE ON MENTORING

[MORE \(Mentoring Others Results in Excellence\)](#) is Rackham's faculty committee on mentoring, which provides faculty with effective tools and practices for mentoring graduate students in an effort to improve retention, productivity, and overall student success. The Graduate Office recommends visiting the MORE website for mentoring **workshops** and **resources**, as well as a collection of **sample mentoring plans!**

Rackham: [Graduate Student Mentoring Guide](#)



PROGRAM CHECKPOINTS (YEAR 3 & BEYOND)

YEAR 3



WRITING PROGRESS

Give a draft of **any part** of your dissertation to your advisor for review

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Present **relevant research progress** at a conference or workshop

GRANT SUBMISSION

Apply for **research awards**, including a [Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant](#)



YEAR 4



WRITING PROGRESS

Give a complete draft of **multiple chapters** of your dissertation to your advisor for review

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Present a **dissertation chapter** at a conference or workshop

RESEARCH PUBLICATION

Submit dissertation research for **first-author publication** to a relevant peer-reviewed journal

FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

Apply for **competitive** fellowships through [Rackham](#) and [the department](#)

SET A DISSERTATION DEFENSE DATE

Plan ahead when setting your dissertation defense; committee members may occasionally take sabbatical leave (or travel for other appointment-related research) for extended durations

PLAN FOR GRADUATION

Keep an eye on Rackham's [Doctoral Degree Deadlines](#) (which shift annually) and take into consideration any restrictions related to **commencement participation**

These checkpoints are recommendations made by the EEB Graduate Office and are included in the Annual Student Activity Report. All milestones vary by student and individual goals should be set by each student and their primary advisor(s).

DISSERTATION DEFENSE



Once the full dissertation is ready and initially approved by all members of the dissertation committee, the student must present an oral defense of the dissertation. **Students should meet with the Senior Graduate Coordinator** when they are ready to move towards completion of this checkpoint.

COMPONENTS OF THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE

The dissertation defense consists of a **public seminar** and a **final oral examination**. Defenses are typically 2-3 hours (a 3-hour timeslot should be scheduled with the full committee). The time and location of the defense should be arranged by the student well in advance. The Senior Graduate Coordinator will provide more details once a date has been scheduled.

DEFENSE TIMELINE

Students are expected to defend their dissertation **by the end of their guaranteed five-year funding package** (before the “grace period” deadline of the spring/summer term of Year 5). An electronic copy of a final draft of the dissertation must be presented to the dissertation committee **at least two weeks before** the defense. Students are also expected to complete all Rackham requirements as they become relevant (see Dissertation Timeline link below).

LIMITATIONS

If a student does not defend their dissertation **by the end of their sixth year** of continuous enrollment in the program, they must submit a petition to the Graduate Affairs Committee and are given notice that their dissertation committee may be dissolved if adequate progress is not being made. Students whose committees are dissolved can defend their dissertation in a later term only if their committee agrees to reconvene and support the defense.

AFTER SETTING A DEFENSE DATE...

- ✓ Notify the Senior Graduate Coordinator
- ✓ Schedule a **pre-defense meeting** with Rackham
- ✓ Apply for graduation

AFTER THE DEFENSE...

- ✓ Make sure your advisor submits the **Final Oral Examination Report** within 48 hours of the defense
- ✓ Arrange for a **post-defense submission** with Rackham
- ✓ Complete online submission of the final dissertation (with any necessary revisions) **by 5:00pm on the deadline day.**

Rackham: [Formatting Guidelines](#)

Rackham: [Completing the Doctoral Degree Requirements](#)

Rackham: [Dissertation Timeline](#)

MASTER'S PROGRAMS



DESCRIPTION & GOALS

FRONTIERS MASTER'S PROGRAM

The Frontiers Master's Program in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Michigan (EEB Frontiers M.S.) is a bridge-to-PhD program that aims to prepare students to excel in top-rated PhD programs in ecology and evolution who might not otherwise have considered it. Students take graduate-level courses on both broad and focused themes, complete a research project (that includes a written and defended thesis) with a supportive research mentor, develop teaching skills and experience, and receive mentoring and advice from the faculty program director and staff committed to enhancing the diversity of the discipline. The Frontiers Master's Program is fully-funded and supported by the Rackham Graduate School; College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; and the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

Students in the Frontiers program will be provided a special admissions process for application to the PhD program after completion of the master's degree and an option to transition early to the PhD program without completing the master's degree and/or thesis where appropriate. It is anticipated that students will complete the program in approximately 4 academic terms and two summer terms, including an initial summer term of a field course and lab experience.

EEB MASTER'S PROGRAM

Outside of the Frontiers program, the EEB Master's degree program (EEB M.S.) is flexible and serves a variety of career objectives, such as teaching at secondary schools, employment in a variety of research-oriented jobs, interpretive work in parks and nature centers, preparation for further professional training, or future study within a Ph.D. program. In EEB, M.S. students usually undertake a course of study that includes both graduate coursework and research which results in development of a M.S. thesis (i.e. a "thesis-based" M.S.). An M.S. degree can be earned through graduate coursework alone, but this is less common for those admitted directly to the EEB M.S. program.

The M.S. degree is NOT a prerequisite for admission to the EEB doctoral program, nor is it intended as probationary admission to the doctoral program. It is anticipated that earning the M.S. degree within EEB will take approximately 4 academic terms, or two years.



GOALS FOR MS STUDENTS

- To have a general understanding of the major concepts in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.
- To gain detailed knowledge in a specific field of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (e.g., ecosystem, community or population ecology, systematics or macroevolution, evolutionary genetics, etc.).
- To be proficient in research via the scientific method, (e.g., developing hypotheses, experimental design, methodology appropriate for the specific field, data analysis and interpretation of results), conduct research according to the highest ethical standards, and to make a significant contribution to their specific field.
- Be able to give a clear oral presentation of research, broadly accessible to an audience of biologists.
- Proficiency in writing to support research, including developing a research proposal and publications of research results.
- Develop proficiency in undergraduate teaching in a subject of biology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

OVERVIEW

Within EEB, an M.S. degree requires completion of 24 (25 for students in the Frontiers program) graduate credit-hours in EEB and other science-related courses, including the following requirements:

Election of courses to be determined in consultation with the faculty advisor or thesis committee, based on the goals of the individual student.

Only graduate-level courses (numbered 400 and above) can be included in the required credit toward the program.

At least 16 credit hours must be selected from courses in the department of EEB.

No more than six (6) credit hours of independent study research coursework (i.e. EEB 700/730/790) may be included in the required minimum 24 (or 25) credit hours.

EEB 801: Graduate Student Instructors teaching in EEB for the first time are required to take EEB 801.

EEB 701: Students in the Frontiers program are required to complete EEB 701 - Navigating Academia during the fall term of their first year and it is strongly recommended for all other master's students. This course is designed to develop skills in discourse about science in an informal setting - with colleagues and speakers from the weekly departmental seminar series.

Credits must add to 24 in two different ways:



while also fulfilling:



= **24** for **EEB MS**

+ **EEB 701**

= **25** for **Frontiers MS**

Rackham Policy: [Registration and Enrollment for Master's Programs](#)

Rackham Policy: [Coursework, Grading, and Academic Standing](#)

THESIS COMMITTEE

During the winter term in the first year, students form a thesis committee in consultation with their advisor. As the Rackham Graduate School has no governance over the development, oversight or completion of M.S theses, all thesis-related requirements are at the discretion of the EEB department, the graduate affairs committee and graduate chair or the Frontiers Program and its director. In turn, the department relies upon the student's advisor and thesis committee for setting appropriate research goals, timelines and formatting, and the decision that the written thesis is completed.

Recommended committee structure:

Advisor
+
Another EEB faculty member
+
A faculty member from another department

The thesis committee is charged with the oversight of a student's thesis activities. The entire committee is intended to be a resource upon which the student may draw throughout their course of study. It should guide and encourage the student in the design and execution of all aspects of the research program and written dissertation work. The thesis committee is responsible for (1) providing advice concerning the conduct of the thesis research, (2) monitoring progress in research, (3) providing advice on other aspects of professional development, (4) administering the final oral thesis defense, and (5) certifying that the completed thesis meets the requirements for the M.S. degree.

Submit a form for [Frontiers](#) or [EEB MS](#) committee formation to finalize your thesis committee

Meet with your committee in three 1-hour long meetings

- At the end of Year 1
- Fall of Year 2
- At thesis defense

No less than three days before the meeting, students must send their committee members a 1 page (2 pages at the most) summary of progress to date and a brief overview of plans for the next six months and beyond. In addition, in advance of the meeting, students will complete the M.S. Student Committee Meeting Form found on the [EEB InfoReady site](#). This form will provide the committee chair with the committee meeting evaluation form to complete.

Suggested format for the meeting: Student prepares a 15 minute presentation including prior accomplishments and future plans, leaving 35 minutes for discussion with their committee.

Following the meeting, the committee will collaboratively complete the meeting evaluation form with scores and comments inputted by the committee chair for approval of the committee members and the student will prepare a 1-page summary of the meeting, including a clear plan for the next six months, that the advisor agrees is an accurate summary of the committee meeting and agreed upon next steps. This summary must be uploaded via InfoReady. The annual meeting form allows committee members to sign off on having reviewed/approved a student's thesis proposal.

THESIS DEFENSE

Make a plan

The student should work with their committee and the graduate program staff to plan for the thesis defense. Please note that the Rackham Graduate School does not oversee the M.S. thesis defense process, (as it does for Ph.D. students defending their dissertation.) Successful completion of the process outlined below fulfills all requirements necessary for a student to receive a thesis-based M.S. from the University of Michigan, Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology.

Set a date and time

With the approval of their committee, the student should select a date and time for the thesis defense. The deadline to receive final approval of the master's thesis from the committee is the final day of classes in the term the student plans to graduate and defenses should be planned with adequate time to complete any revisions requested by their committee during the defense before then. Upon finalizing the date/time, the student should contact the graduate staff, who will reserve a room for the presentation, and provide the student with the required form(s) for the defense.

At least two weeks
prior to the defense
the student should:

- Submit a final version of their written thesis to their committee
- Provide thesis defense details to the Graduate Office (eeb.gradcoord@umich.edu)
- Complete the Master's Degree Graduate Form at the [EEB InfoReady site](#)

Following the public portion of the defense presentation, the student defends their thesis before their thesis committee, usually in the same room, directly after the thesis presentation. Afterward, the thesis committee decides upon the acceptability of the thesis. The committee may accept the thesis as is, or recommend further work and/or revision, which must then be completed by the student in a timely manner.

Once all suggested changes have been made to the committee's satisfaction and the committee agrees that the written thesis is final and approved, the committee will submit their approval of the thesis and oral defense via InfoReady. The form is then sent to EEB graduate program staff for completion and final approval.

With final approvals in place, when the student "applies for graduation" it will be recommended to Rackham that the student receive a "M.S. Thesis" notation on their final official transcript – thus completing their M.S. degree. (See more on Applying for graduation, below.)

Please note that (unlike Ph.D. students) M.S. students do not have to be registered for classes during the term in which they graduate.

ADDITIONAL INFO

Applying to graduate

Early in their final term, students should “apply for graduation” through the “Student Business” section of Wolverine Access. Application deadlines for each term are published by Rackham and deadline reminders will be sent to students by EEB graduate staff.

To be recommended by the EEB department for graduation with a thesis-based M.S. degree, students must have their committee complete the M.S. Program Graduation Form via InfoReady, where it is then sent to the graduate coordinator for additional signature and approvals.

If a student fails to complete all requirements during the term in which they apply for graduation, the student must reapply for consideration during the term in which the requirements have been met.

Master's diplomas are not distributed at commencement, but are mailed seven to eight weeks later.

Selected Rackham requirements

- The Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies specifies the general requirements for admission and degree programs as well as other general standards. Therefore, in addition to the specific requirements of the EEB program, applicants and students should also be familiar with, at a minimum, the following [Rackham requirements](#).
- Time limit: A student in a terminal master's program is expected to complete all work within five years from the date of first enrollment. Students exceeding this time limit must file a petition for modification or waiver of regulation with Rackham OARD. Petitions must describe explicitly the amount of work remaining and a timeline for completion. A student who fails to complete degree requirements within five years may be withdrawn and required to apply for readmission ([section 3.3.5](#)).
- Residence requirement: The graduate school requirement involves credit hours and should not be confused with state residency requirements.
- Minimum average grade of “B”: An overall grade point average of “B” (3.00) is required for all graduate courses taken for credit and applied toward the Master's degree.
- Transfer of credit: A maximum of six semester hours (inter-University), or half of the program (intra-University and inter-University combined) may be transferred.

GRADUATE FUNDING RESOURCES

The following provides information regarding research funding sources available to EEB graduate students, as well as fellowships that include stipend and tuition funding. This information can also be found on the [EEB website](#).

Please note that students cannot receive a departmental fellowship for stipend and tuition and an external fellowship or traineeship at the same time. Rackham policy also states that Rackham fellowship recipients who are concurrently recipients of other awards (regardless of type or funding source), including assistantships or fellowships, may only receive up to 50% in additional stipend in excess of the established stipend level for that term. Awards for stipend and tuition are subject to the EEB Department [Substitution Policy](#). If necessary, external fellowship funding is supplemented by the department to equal the current, minimum GEO-negotiated GSI stipend. Prospective students who are U.S. citizens or have permanent resident status in the U.S. are urged to apply for national fellowships. International students are urged to apply for financial support from their home countries.



COMPETITIVE DEPARTMENT FELLOWSHIPS

Awarded annually to Ph.D. candidates and do not replace the terms of the department fellowship currently included in the Ph.D. student funding package. The fellowships will be announced together (typically in early January, with a mid-February deadline) and will have a joint application.

EDWIN H. EDWARDS SCHOLARSHIP IN BIOLOGY

*This award is given via a generous bequest of Julia A. Edwards to support current students whose **distinguished performance** is considered worthy of special recognition.*

CARL L. AND LAURA C. HUBBS FELLOWSHIP

*A one-year fellowship for **ichthyology** research students, renewable pending satisfactory progress toward graduation. Available for candidates who have completed one year of teaching and at least one term of curatorial assistantship duties through UMMZ Fish Division.*

HELEN OLSON BROWER MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

*An endowed fellowship for doctoral students to support research with an applied significance to **conservation or wise use of natural resources**. Awardees must send a brief note of thanks and a layperson summary of findings to the Offutt family, the fellowship's sponsor.*

RACKHAM ONE-TERM FELLOWSHIPS

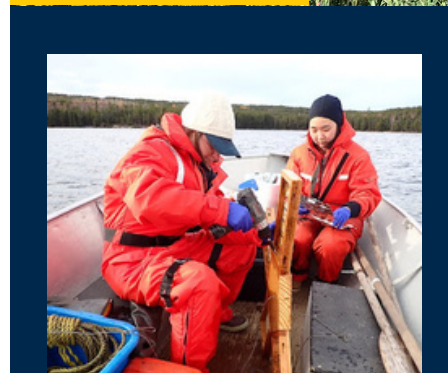
*These fellowships are intended to speed the process of completing the dissertation and should be awarded to students who are **graduating within the next academic year**. This will permit candidates to work full-time on the final stages of their dissertations.*

All fellowships provide at least one academic semester of stipend, tuition, and benefits. In most years we award one Brower, one Hubbs, one Edwards, and four Rackham One-Term Fellowships.

RESEARCH AWARDS

These awards are intended to help advance research and completion of graduate degrees. All EEB graduate students who are actively engaged in research are eligible to apply.

Funding is awarded annually on a competitive basis. Applications and student records are reviewed by the GAC as part of the award process and decisions are based on factors such as promise of research, adequacy of research plans, schedule for use of the funds, and past progress. The competition is typically announced in early January, with a mid-February submission deadline and students can submit one application for multiple awards. Funds become available by May 1 of the year in which they are awarded and are available to students through at least the following August. If funds are not used during this period, or if a student graduates prior to using awarded funding, the funds are retained by the department.



ANNUAL RESEARCH AWARDS

BLOCK GRANT

These awards are supported by funding provided to EEB by the Rackham Graduate School.

CHARLES F. WALKER

A single award of up to \$2,500 is available for graduate student field research in **herpetology**.

WALLS AWARD

The Dr. Nancy Williams Walls Award for Field Research is awarded to graduate students engaged in **field research** with a preference for students studying biodiversity or climate change issues. This award may be used to cover research and travel expenses, and will be based on excellence and merit.

HINSDALE & WALKER

Multiple awards are made each year to support doctoral student research projects. Individual awards typically range from \$1,500 to \$4,000. To be eligible for an award, a graduate student must have achieved candidacy and must be **nominated by a UMMZ curator** who is either the student's dissertation chair or co-chair. No student may receive a Hinsdale & Walker Scholarship award more than twice.

ICHTHYOLOGY

Provides research, travel or other support (including salary supplements) to graduate students in **ichthyology**.

MILLER AWARD

Supports graduate student research in the **UMMZ**, with preference for those students in the field of **ichthyology**.

GEORGE RESERVE

Funds are available to support graduate student **research conducted at the E.S. George Reserve**. Individual awards typically range from \$1,000 - \$6,000, with larger amounts possible under exceptional circumstances. To be eligible, graduate students must have achieved candidacy.

MATTHAEI BOTANICAL GARDENS RESEARCH AWARD.

Funds are available to support **greenhouse or field research by graduate students at the Matthaei Botanical Gardens**. These funds can be used to pay charges required by the Botanical Gardens for use of space or services and for basic supplies related to the growing and care of plants (i.e., pots, soil, etc.). Salaries cannot be funded. If you are interested in applying, complete the [Botanical Gardens Research Facilities and Services Request](#). Note: You are responsible for checking with Catriona Mortell-Windecke (catriona@umich.edu) at the Botanical Gardens regarding requested bench space, timing and any special services related to your research. Individual requests for up to \$1,000 will be considered, although the actual amount awarded per investigator will depend upon the number of requests received and available funds.

DONALD W. TINKLE SCHOLARSHIP

This prestigious scholarship (\$5000) is awarded on the basis of **outstanding performance** as a doctoral student. To be eligible, a graduate student must have been admitted to candidacy, must be **nominated by a UMMZ curator** who is either the student's dissertation chair or co-chair, and must not have won this award previously.

Find external funding sources on the EEB website:

<https://lsa.umich.edu/eeb/graduates/current-students/external-funding.html>

NON-COMPETITIVE AWARDS

APPLICATIONS FOR THESE AWARDS CAN BE
COMPLETED YEAR ROUND

CONFERENCE TRAVEL AWARD

Each fiscal year, EEB graduate students may apply for one grant of \$400 for travel to a conference at which the student presents a paper or a poster. Please complete the [Request for Graduate Travel Allowance](#) and submit it to the graduate office for review and approval prior to the conference. Once your advisor has approved the request, awards are typically disbursed through the student financial aid system once a month. An additional \$400 will be contributed for a second trip in the same fiscal year provided the thesis advisor contributes as much or more to that trip.

RESEARCH SUPPLY AWARD

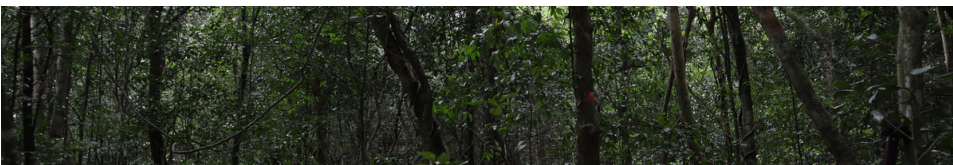
EEB graduate students may apply to the department for up to \$250 each fiscal year for equipment or supplies. Please complete the [Request for Graduate Research Supplies](#) for review and approval by the graduate office. Copy charges and costs associated with publications (page charges or reprints) are not applicable.

EEB FIRST PAPER AWARD

EEB encourages students to publish papers on their research during their career in the department. To acknowledge a student's first, first-author publication as an EEB graduate student, the department will award a \$30 gift and a certificate of achievement to students who submit their first-author papers to the graduate program staff.

TUITION-ONLY FELLOWSHIPS

Due to the reduction in candidate tuition associated with Rackham's continuous enrollment policy, a number of tuition-only fellowships are available to the department for students who are not in residence, but are working on dissertation writing and do not need to be enrolled in classes. Ph.D. candidates should contact the graduate coordinator for more information and current availability of fellowships. Tuition-only fellowships cannot be used in the term in which the student plans to defend their dissertation.



SELECT RACKHAM FUNDING SOURCES

FOR MORE, VISIT: [HTTPS://RACKHAM.UMICH.EDU/FUNDING/](https://rackham.umich.edu/funding/)

RACKHAM CONFERENCE TRAVEL GRANT

A student is eligible to receive one travel grant award (either domestic or international, but not both) during a fiscal year, which runs from July 1 to June 30, based on the start date of the conference. Awards are up to \$900 for the continental US, up to \$1,150 for Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Europe, and up to \$1,400 for Africa, Asia, South America, and Australia.

RACKHAM GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH GRANT

The Rackham Graduate Student Research Grant is designed to support Rackham graduate students who need assistance to carry out research that advances their progress toward their degree. Students are eligible for one \$1,500 award as a precandidate or master's student and one \$3,000 award as a candidate. Awards are reviewed on a rolling basis.

RACKHAM GRADUATE STUDENT EMERGENCY FUNDS

The Rackham Graduate Student Emergency Fund is intended to help meet the financial needs of Rackham graduate students who encounter an emergency situation or one-time, unusual, or unforeseen expenses during their degree program.

RACKHAM INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AWARDS

Jointly administered and funded by Rackham and the International Institute, these awards support degree-related research outside the United States with no preference for particular fields of study. The maximum award amount is \$10,000. This is a competitive award and fewer than 45% of applicants receive funding. The average award amount is approximately \$6,500.

RACKHAM PREDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship supports outstanding doctoral students who have achieved candidacy and are actively working on dissertation research and writing. It supports students working on dissertations that are unusually creative, ambitious, and impactful. Rackham Predoctoral Fellows are expected to work full-time toward the completion of degree requirements throughout the period of the award, which is one year (three terms). Students must submit an application to the department through a process announced in advance of the Rackham deadline. The department will review applications and then can nominate up to 4 students to Rackham. Approximately 240 students are nominated by all departments every year and Rackham expects to provide a minimum of 85 fellowships.

TRACKING AWARDS

EEB RESEARCH AWARDS

Students who receive a departmental research award will be given a six-digit shortcode to use when spending funds or seeking reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses. Expenses can be tracked by going to:

Wolverine Access > MReports > Research > Summary of Projects > Project #

Balances for all awards will be visible in MReports as they are processed by the business office. Take care when placing multiple orders at once to account for the processing delay. If you are unable to access MReports, email eeb.gradcoord@umich.edu to restore your access.

CONFERENCE TRAVEL AWARDS

Both EEB and Rackham travel awards will be disbursed to students as fellowship payments. No documentation of travel expenses is required.

RACKHAM RESEARCH AWARDS

Students who receive Rackham awards to support their research can choose whether to hold those funds on a shortcode or to have the funds disbursed to them as a fellowship.



SPENDING AWARDS

Marketsite

Your first stop is M-Marketsite, which you can find through Wolverine Access. Add what you need to a cart and assign that cart to Diane Overholt (doverhol)

OPS

To order something that isn't on Marketsite, you can use the [Online Purchasing System](#), or OPS. The first time you use it, you will need to identify your department as "BIO."

MiCORES

Many lab services run through the MiCORES system. Have your PI add your shortcode into the system, and place your order. If you have any trouble, contact ITS.

Reimbursement

If you need to make purchases out of pocket, check with the grad coordinator first to make sure it's an allowable expense. Then, provide any receipts to the grad coordinator within 30 days of purchase, along with the shortcode you wish to use.

Hire some help

You can pay someone to help with your data collection and other research tasks, either at UM or in the field. Contact the graduate coordinator to learn how.

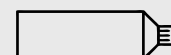
DON'T BUY:



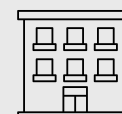
Office supplies for general use. These are available in 2247 BSB.



Clothing - unless it's super specialized for your research, like diving gear



Sunblock and other personal items, with the exception of first aid kits



Childcare or rent - Rackham has specific funding sources for this



Replacement MCards - this seems to be a real sticking point with them

TIPS FOR USING...

Marketsite

A step-by-step guide to placing a Marketsite order is [available through MyLINC](#).

- Follow steps 1–14
- Do not click “Return Lines to ePro”
- Add the room number of your lab in the “Attention” field
- Click “Assign cart”
- Assign the cart to Diane Overholt by searching for her username: doverhol

CTP Lightning

All UM employees must book airfare through Lightning

In Wolverine Access, search for “travel booking” or “CTP,” then navigate to the CTP homepage. Click “Lightning” on the left hand menu, and search for your own name to add yourself as the traveller. If you don’t see your name, you may need to set up a profile on the CTP main page.

If you are on fellowship, you may not be able to set up a Lightning profile, and will need to have the graduate coordinator book through Lightning for you.

Lightning mostly works the same as any other travel booking site, but when you get to the end and have to select a payment method, you will select the University’s Mastercard that is pre-loaded as a choice. Send a copy of your booking to the graduate coordinator along with the shortcode you want to use to get your expense report started.

You can use Lightning to book:

- Airfare
- Hotels
- Rental cars
- Trains



Expense Reimbursement

Always provide:

- A shortcode - usually from one of your research awards, but sometimes (with permission) from your PI
- Receipts - photos are fine; take them as you go. No receipts needed for travel meals or gas for your own vehicle*
- The business purpose:

Receipts should include:

- Vendor name
- Transaction date
- Full amount paid, including any tip

Submit receipts within 30 days of purchase

Hosting

When you buy food or drinks (non-alcoholic) for others, such as your big sibs/little sibs, or a recruit

Provide: List of attendees

Thesis/dissertation research

Research expenses that aren't travel-related

Provide: Research purpose

Research travel

The cost of driving, flying, staying somewhere in order to do research

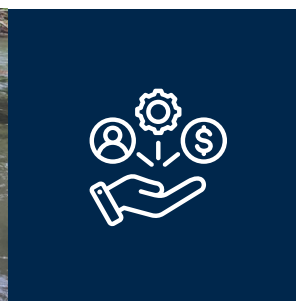
**Provide: Dates
Research purpose**

Conference travel

Travel expenses for attending a conference you're presenting at

**Provide: Dates
Conference name**

Please note that all flights must be booked through CTP Lightning (in Wolverine Access)



*Why don't I need to keep receipts for travel meals or gas?



When you're traveling, meals are reimbursed as a per diem, at a rate that varies city by city. The rate is usually pretty high, but you can claim a partial per diem to stay closer to your actual expenses.

Search domestic per diem rates:

<https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

and international per diem rates:

https://allowances.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp?

If you drive your own car, you will be reimbursed for your mileage, at the rate of \$0.76/mile in 2026. This includes the cost of fuel and the wear and tear on your vehicle. **If you rent a car, you should keep your gas receipts and get reimbursed.**

