

Procedure for Annual Meeting of Advisory and Research Committees in EEB

Created by Leonie Moyle, Feb 2020

Updated by Spencer Hall, Nov 2022

Annual Meeting Structure:

As described in the EEB Program Guide (Box 3, page 5 [[pdf](#)]), EEB graduate students are required to schedule and hold an annual meeting of their Advisor Committee (pre-candidacy) or Research Committee (post-candidacy; see Box 3 for description of differences). They must also hold a 'penultimate' meeting c. 6 months (normally 4-8 months) before the defense date.

Target Audience: All EEB students, and the faculty who advise them

Use with: Grad Guide ([pdf](#)) | Committee meeting form ([doc](#)) | IDP form ([doc](#)) | Sharepoint folder ([link](#))

1. Who attends and who schedules the meeting: At each annual meeting, committee members, the committee chair (major advisor), and the graduate student convene.

(A) *In person:* The student schedules the meeting, books the room, and ensures proper audio-visual equipment is present.

(B) *Electronic:* If the meeting is via zoom, the student creates and distributes the link.

A quorum of committee members is required to attend (three of four or five).

2. Purpose: Then the student either participates in their Qualifying Exam Part I (year 2: [faq](#)) or Part II (year 3: [faq](#)) or the student provides the committee with an update on their research and progress in the EEB program. First year students should also review coursework plans (what has been taken, what needs to be taken to complete the EEB major and chosen minor, and what graduate-level courses may or may not be transferred in a previous MS degree). That update typically takes the form of a presentation but may also be accompanied by documents. The end goal is to demonstrate 'satisfactory progress' toward degree completion as appropriate for expectations at that time. (See Appendix for some possible prompts for dialogue).

3. Student-free time: Before and/or following the exam or presentation, the committee members and chair can discuss the student's research progress, without the student being present in the room.

4. Bulk of the meeting: Committee members, the chair, and the student then reconvene and conclude this portion of the meeting.

5. Discussion of Individualized Development Plan (IDP): Each student should complete and fill out the IDP [form](#), meet with their advisor to discuss beforehand, and distribute it to other committee members (with updated CV) at least one week before the committee meeting. (Follow the directions on the [IDP](#)). This form should be discussed before the advisor-free period at each committee meeting (including the penultimate, not the dissertation defense) except for second year prelim (qualifying exam, part 1).

6. Advisor-free period: In the final portion of each annual meeting, the chair (advisor or co-advisors) will then be invited to leave the meeting.

(A) *Goals of that period:* To provide an automatic mechanism whereby graduate students can seek the advice and input of their collective advisory committee, independently of their advisor. To provide students with additional perspectives, strategies, or advice, on navigating perceived issues or concerns, within a constructive, professional context. To facilitate increased dialogue and strengthen the student-committee

relationship. To proactively address components of the best practices described in College and EEB Mentoring Guidelines.

(B) *Conflict of Interest*: In the event that there is another committee member that has a conflict of interest (COI) with the chair (e.g., as their spouse), this committee member should also leave the meeting at this time, unless the student explicitly requests that they remain.

(C) *Purpose*: The student will then have the opportunity to seek perspectives or input from their non-chair committee members, on topics they feel are relevant to their scientific and intellectual growth, and progression through the program. This conversation can be facilitated by topics addressed on the EEB-IDP, as determined by the student.

(D) *Confidentiality*: Following any discussion, the meeting will conclude. In all cases, the student and the committee members agree that the discussion during this period will be professional and confidential.

(E) *Annual requirement*: This additional period will be a required component of every annual committee meeting (years 1-6+), with the exception of the year 2 meeting (that is, Part I of the Qualifying Exam).

7. Reporting: After the committee meeting, the advisor/committee chair is still required to complete and submit a report as a record of the student's annual meeting, based on the portion of meeting they attended.

- Advisors should use this [form](#).
- It should first be distributed, then approved by committee members. Revisions can be made.
- After approval and be sent to the student, committee members, the Biology Graduate Advisor and the EEB GPD. Students or advisors should place the form in their individualized Sharepoint folder [located here](#).

Note: There is no formal reporting requirement associated with the additional, advisor-free, discussion period. Instead, the student will consider any input received and take action as they deem appropriate. This could include seeking further input on unresolved/remaining issues from those described in the [Who Can Help](#) document.

8. Annual requirement for a committee meeting: An annual meeting with accompanying written report by the Committee Chair (Director) is required to remain in 'good standing' with the EEB Graduate Program. Furthermore, that report must provide evidence of 'satisfactory progress' toward degree completion as determined by the committee.

Students who do not complete this annual requirement and/or do not demonstrate 'satisfactory progress' may be put on Academic Probation by the College Graduate Office. Students then would typically then have one semester to return to 'good standing' or face dismissal from the EEB program and the UGS. (Due process procedures are [described here](#)).

9. Official Formation of Advisory or Research Committees:

(A) *Advisory Committee* (tracked by the College): Students should complete the "Appointment of Advisory Committee" eDoc ([located here](#)) with the College Graduate Office after the first year committee meeting. Changes to the Advisory Committee can be initiated using that associated form.

(B) *Nomination of Research Committee* (tracked by UGS): We normally recommend that students file their "Ph.D. Nomination of Research Committee" form after they become official PhD Candidates (i.e., typically in spring of year 3, after completing all coursework requirements and passing both Qualifying Exams – file the "Nomination to Candidacy for the Ph.D. Degree Application". Changes to the Research Committee are filed on the "Ph.D. Research Committee Change" form. All UGS forms can be found at the [UGS Task Center](#).

(C) *Defense Announcement*: This form must reach UGS no later than 30 days before the defense. It should be filed after the penultimate meeting ("PhD Defense Announcement" at the [UGS Task Center](#)).

(D) Post-defense Signature Collection: The “Defense Signature Collection” form is used after the defense.

Summary:

	Hold a Meeting (1-4,8)	Write a Report (7)	Archive the Report (7)	Distribute CV & IDP (5)	Hold Advisor-Free Period (6)	File form with CGO / UGS? (9)
<i>Year 1</i>	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX (9.A)
<i>Year 2</i>	XX	XX	XX			
<i>Year 3</i>	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX (9.B)
<i>Year 4</i>	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	
<i>Year 5+</i>	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	
<i>Penultimate</i>	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX (9.C)
<i>Defense</i>	XX					XX (9.D)

APPENDIX – Some possible prompts for committee conversations

Some of these topics are also discussed in the IDP. These topics are meant as guides for discussion

Regarding degree requirements

- Which courses has the student completed and what requirements do the courses fill?
- Which courses does the student plan to take next and what requirements do they fill?
- What are the committee’s expectations for the student’s qualifying exam part 1 process? The dissertation proposal? The dissertation and defense? (When appropriate)

Research progress

- What are the student’s active research projects?
- Has the student presented at any conferences?
- Does the student have any publications, including in press? Under review or in preparation?
- What are the student’s research goals for the next year? How can the committee support those goals?

Skill development

- For which skills is the student meeting or exceeding expectations? Falling behind expectations?
- What action plans will the student and the committee employ to improve on these skills?
- Are there any additional skills or plans that should be discussed?

Possible skills to discussion (see also IDP): Ability to review and synthesize literature; conceptualize a study; develop a hypothesis; design the study to test the hypothesis; conduct the study; analyze data statistically and graphically display data; present a compelling scientific story; writing