Guidelines for Tracking Student Progress

Program in Ecology

University of Wyoming

January 5, 2018

**Motivation**

The Program in Ecology (PiE) is an interdisciplinary program at the University of Wyoming (UW) leading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Ecology. PiE is expected to produce PhDs with broad perspectives in the fields of ecology and evolution. Detailed descriptions of the program and its mission are at [www.uwyo.edu/pie](http://www.uwyo.edu/pie).

According to the PiE bylaws, student progression through the program is dictated by the following:

* Establish a PhD advisory committee composed of five members (three of which are PiE members) before the end of the second semester of study.
* Submit a Program of Study which includes planned coursework and that was approved by the advisory committee by the end of the second semester of study.
* Submit a high-quality research proposal by the end of the fourth semester of study. The proposal will be evaluated for originality, feasibility, and clarity by members of the student advisory committee, which will be required to approve it.
* Pass a preliminary exam that includes a written and an oral portion no fewer than two weeks but no more than one semester following approval of the research proposal. In case of failure on the first attempt, the student will be allowed to take the exam no later than the academic-year semester following the first examination.
* Present two public seminars. The first will describe the student’s dissertation research and should be delivered before submitting the approved proposal by the end of the fourth semester of study. The second will summarize the student’s completed work and will be delivered in the same semester as the defense.

Since its inception in 2005, PiE has successfully trained 53 PhD students. The average tenure for Alumni was 5.1 years with a range of 3 – 12 years. Ninety percent of students finish in 6 years or less. Currently 51 students are enrolled in PiE, some of which have exceeded the length of studies based on UW guidelines (i.e., have not completed their dissertation more than 4 years since taking their preliminary examination; see “Time allowance and limitations” [www.uwyo.edu/registrar/university\_catalog/grad\_students.html](http://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/university_catalog/grad_students.html)).

**Goals**

Here, we describe procedures that will allow the PiE Graduate Affairs Committee and the Director to properly track student progress. These procedures are designed to ensure fair treatment of students, maintenance of PiE academic goals and standards, judicious use of PiE Graduate Assistantships and compliance with UW guidelines and regulations.

**Procedures**

* 1. No later than the end of the second semester of study (the week of final exams), each student will submit to the PiE Office Associate the signed UW Committee Assignment form.
  2. No later than the end of the second semester of study (the week of final exams), each student will submit to the PiE Office Associate the signed UW Program of Study form.
  3. No later than the end of the fourth semester of study (the week of final exams), the student will submit to the PiE Office Associate the dissertation research proposal. The proposal will be signed by all members of the student’s PhD advisory committee after they have reviewed and approved it. Under extenuating circumstances (e.g., loss of funding, change of research focus, personal circumstances, etc.), a student may delay the submission of the research proposal. Such action will require approval of at least four of the five members of the advisory committee. An explanation letter signed by members of the advisory committee will be submitted to PiE director. The student will be expected to submit the proposal by the following semester. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in referral of the case to the PiE Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC). GAC will evaluate the situation by meeting with the student and advisor and generating a report that will include recommendations for future progress. The report will be submitted to PiE director.
  4. No later than the end of the semester (the week of final exams) following the one in which the dissertation proposal was approved by the advisory committee, the student will submit to the PiE Office Associate the signed UW form indicating successful completion of the preliminary exam. Under extenuating circumstances, a student may delay taking the preliminary exam. Such action will require approval of at least four of the five members of the advisory committee. A letter signed by members of the advisory committee detailing the reasons for the delay and an expected examination date will be submitted to the PiE Director. The student will be expected to pass the exam by the following semester. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in referral of the case to the PiE Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC). GAC will evaluate the situation by meeting with the student and advisor and generating a report that will include recommendations for future progress. The report will be submitted to PiE director.
  5. Each following year, the student will be required to meet with the advisory committee either as a group (preferred) or separately to present progress. At the end of each meeting, the advisory committee will complete and sign a Progress Report Form (see below). This form will be due to the PiE Office Associate by the final examinations week of spring semester. If the student’s progress is deemed unsatisfactory by at least four members of the advisory committee, the student and the chair of the advisory committee will meet with the PiE Director to decide on corrective measures, which will be documented. Failure to meet these measures, in the specified timeframe, will render the student ineligible for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Ecology.
  6. Should the student fail to complete the dissertation within the period outlined in UW “Time allowance and limitations” guidelines, the student will be required to petition the PiE Graduate Affairs Committee and the Director with an explaination for the situation. The Graduate Affairs Committee and faculty advisor may request a 1-year extension on behalf of the student (via a petition to the office of the Registrar), after which, and in the event of failure to complete the dissertation within the new deadline, the student will be no longer be eligible for Doctor of Philosophy degree in Ecology.

Following the procedures outlined here, assuming no exceptions to the time-line, allows each PiE student to complete the dissertation in 6 years or less (the defense can occur anytime in years 4–6). Assuming a student was to need all exceptions to the standard time-line, the degree may be completed in a maximum of 8 years. For cases where a student will need to request a leave-of-absence (for reasons such as serious or chronic illness, family emergencies or other authorized leave, non-university job responsibilities, etc.), the student and advisor will follow the University of Wyoming regulations. To request an official leave of absence, please follow the instructions provided by the office of the Registrar: <http://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/students/graduate_student_forms.html#C-D>

Copies of the forms will be filed with the PiE Office Associate as soon as the request is approved by Academic Affairs.

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University of Wyoming

Progress Report Form

*Type wherever possible; signatures, student status and explanation of decision may be hand written.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | | | W number: |
| Date: | | | |
| Student status: | Satisfactory | | Unsatisfactory |
| Brief explanation of decision: | | | |
| Signatures: | | | |
|  | | Name | Signature |
| Chair: | |  |  |
| Co-Chair: | |  |  |
| External member: | |  |  |
| Member: | |  |  |
| Member: | |  |  |
| Member: | |  |  |
| Student: | |  |  |
|  | | | |
| PiE director: | |  |  |

Received by PiE Office Associate Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_