

Quantitative and Systems Biology Bylaws

Revision date(s): April 12, 2022

Graduate Council Approved: April 25, 2022

Article I. Objective

- A. Degree(s) offered by the program: M.S. and Ph.D.
- B. Discipline: Biological Sciences
- C. Mission: The QSB Graduate Group ("the Group") is comprised of members who share the common interest of studying biological systems using contemporary analytical and quantitative approaches. The Group is responsible for establishing standards and requirements for the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees and certifying satisfactory completion by candidates. The Group function is to provide a focus for graduate training in the biological sciences by intentional adoption of quantitative and systems biology approaches and by facilitating the research interactions of graduate students and faculty. Contemporary biology is an interdisciplinary enterprise that draws on the life sciences, physical sciences, chemistry, engineering, mathematics and computer science. The Group was founded without departmental and institutional boundaries, allowing for the development of a unique graduate group in which cell biologists, bioengineers, evolutionary biologists, ecologists, mathematicians, computer scientists, and others can interact easily and regularly, fostering new ideas and exciting research collaborations.

Article II. Membership

- A. Criteria

Membership is independent and separate from academic appointments. QSB membership shall be open to UC Merced Senate faculty who are actively involved in scientific inquiry and scholarship in the biological sciences, including but not limited to the disciplines of biochemistry, cell biology, molecular biology, biomedical engineering, ecology and evolution, and computational biology. Membership may include other UC Senate faculty from sister campuses. Membership shall also be open to individuals from outside institutions (other universities, national laboratories, etc.) who hold adjunct faculty positions in departments at UC Merced.
- B. Types
 - 1. Core Members

Members of the UC Merced senate faculty wishing to be appointed to the graduate faculty in the Group must submit a written request to the Chair indicating their interest in participating in the Group. This should be accompanied by a current CV. Materials will be evaluated by the Executive Committee for the appropriateness of the appointment to the QSB graduate faculty. The Executive Committee will make a recommendation to the Group, and applicants will be admitted to the Group if their application receives a majority vote of the full Group. Core Members will be expected to actively participate in the Group, especially if they serve as faculty advisors to QSB graduate students. Non-UC Merced faculty who are adjunct faculty in a UC Merced department shall undergo the same process for Core membership in the Group.

2. Affiliate Members

Affiliate membership is open to faculty who wish to serve, or are actively serving, on a QSB graduate student's Doctoral Committee. Affiliate members should be proposed by the Chair of the relevant student's Doctoral committee to the Executive Committee who will then follow the same procedure as that for electing Core Members. If faculty member is elected, Affiliate membership lasts only for the duration that the member is participating in the graduate student's Doctoral Committee; they have no other duties nor rights.

C. Review of Membership

A periodic review of the membership of the Group by the Executive Committee will survey the plans of individual members and will review inactive members. Inactivity is defined as no graduate student mentorship over a three-year period. The committee will make a recommendation to the group for continuation or revocation of membership based on activity and consultation with the individual, and a two-thirds vote of the full group will be needed for revocation.

D. Membership Appeal Process

Applicants denied membership may appeal to the Dean of Graduate Division.

Article III. Administration

The Executive Committee will consist of eight members who will serve rotating terms of three years. The eight members will act as Group chair, Educational Policy Committee chair, Recruitment Committee chair, Admissions Committee chair, Awards and Fellowship Committee Chair, Seminar Committee Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The Group chair will serve as an *ex officio* member of all Committees. It will be the responsibility of the Executive Committee to prepare a slate of nominees that will be put before the membership for election to serve on the Executive Committee. Members can be re-elected and serve two consecutive three-year terms but must sit out one election cycle before running for a third term. The Executive Committee will make appointments to the standing committees from the membership of the Group.

Article IV. Graduate Group Chair

A. Nomination Process

The Executive Committee will name a nominating committee of three members who will solicit the names of nominees for the Group chair. The names of nominees indicating a willingness to serve will then be submitted to the Group's faculty and students for comments. All comments will remain confidential and a vote will be taken electronically of the Core members of the Group. The Nominating Committee will forward two names to the Dean of Graduate Studies along with comments and voting results received for the nominees. The Committee may express a preference and should indicate the basis for the determination. After interviewing the nominees, the Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the candidate's Academic Dean, will submit the recommendation to the Chancellor for appointment. The normal term of appointment will be three

years.

B. Duties of the Chair:

- Oversee the progress of graduate students through the program, including satisfaction of degree requirements and advancement to candidacy, in coordination with group advisors, faculty and staff
- Represent the Group faculty in all matters related to the degree program(s) to the lead dean, the graduate dean, Graduate Council, and School Executive Committee(s)
- Determine resource needs and administer program budget, in consultation with Group faculty, lead dean, and graduate dean
- Oversee graduate student recruitment, graduate program website, admissions, and financial aid, in consultation with Group faculty, lead dean, and graduate dean
- Determine graduate course offerings each semester, including curriculum changes, in consultation with Group faculty, and school staff and faculty involved in course scheduling and teaching assignments
- Determine graduate course resource needs for equipment, staff support, and other resources, in consultation with faculty and lead deans
- Serve as graduate Group Faculty Accreditation Organizer by overseeing annual program assessments and periodic program review, to monitor and maintain academic excellence
- Consult with deans in selecting and reviewing graduate support staff
- Coordinate participation of the graduate Group in School and University program activities, including graduate student fellowship and award programs
- Develop and maintain a plan for promoting diversity among matriculated graduate students
- Manage and respond to program feedback and inquiries from faculty, students, staff, and reviewers

C. Vice Chair

A Vice Chair, if requested by the Chair, shall be nominated by the QSB Chair and approved by the Executive Council and Graduate Dean. The Vice Chair may be a member of the Executive Committee. The role of the Vice Chair shall be to assist the Chair in QSB duties (see Article IV B above). The division of labor shall be agreed on *a priori* by the Chair, Vice Chair and Graduate Dean. The length of the term for a Vice Chair shall be one year, renewable at the beginning of each cycle.

Article V. Committees

The Executive Committee and Graduate Group chair will appoint members to the following standing committees at the beginning of Fall term. The Executive Committee and Chair may choose to not constitute a particular committee as a separate body, in which case the Executive Committee and Chair will assume the responsibilities of that committee. Committee formation and appointments will be reviewed on an annual basis.

A. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee (EC) will consist of eight voting members who will serve rotating

terms of three years. The eight members will act as Group Chair, Admissions Committee Chair, Educational Policy Committee Chair, Recruitment Committee Chair, Seminar Committee Chair, Awards Committee Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The Group Chair will serve as an *ex officio* member of all Committees. Members can be re-elected and serve two consecutive three-year terms but must sit out one election cycle before running for a third term.

B. Admissions Committee

The Admissions Committee will consist of three to five faculty members and is charged with reviewing applications for admissions, making recommendations for admissions to the QSB Chair and Dean of Graduate Studies, exploring graduate student support mechanisms, and allocating intramural financial assistance.

C. Educational Policy Committee

The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) will consist of two to three faculty members and is responsible for establishing and guiding the educational Groups of the Group. The EPC will periodically conduct reviews of the Groups, including the five-year review. The EPC in consultation with the group faculty will determine changes in requirements of the QSB Graduate Group. The EPC acts as a liaison with QSB-relevant departments and graduate groups to coordinate teaching plans.

D. Recruitment Committee

The Recruitment Committee will consist of two to three faculty members and is charged with the development of recruiting materials for the Group, promotion and representation of the Group to prospective students, and identification and coordination of recruitment partnerships between QSB and other institutions.

E. Seminar Committee

The Seminar committee will consist of two to three faculty members and graduate students and is charged with organization of the weekly QSB seminar series. This entails soliciting speakers from QSB faculty and coordinating the seminars together with the SNS staff. The Seminar Committee shall also be responsible for organizing the scientific program of the Annual QSB retreat.

F. Awards Committee

The Awards committee will consist of two to three faculty members and is charged with soliciting applications and/or nominations for various awards such as fellowships, travel awards, and retreat awards, and with evaluating the nominations and applications that it receives.

G. Secretary

The Secretary is not responsible for a committee, however, as a voting member of the Executive Committee, serves a critical role in its governance. The Secretary shall keep records (including minutes from faculty and Executive Committee meetings). The Secretary shall also help to update the content of the QSB website.

H. Treasurer

The Treasurer is not responsible for a committee, however, as a voting member of the

Executive Committee, serves a critical role in its governance. The Treasurer shall keep track of all funds of the Group and prepare periodic financial reports. The Treasurer shall also provide budgetary oversight of fiduciary matters concerning operation of the Group (e.g., QSB seminar, QSB retreat) and of dispensation of graduate student fellowships and awards.

Article VI. Student Representation

A graduate student representative will be included in all deliberations that revolve around issues having to do with educational policy and curriculum. The Group chair will choose the student representative from the QSB Graduate Group after soliciting all active graduate students in the Group for their interest. Students will serve a one-year term and can be reselected for a second term. The Chair of any committee with student members must excuse the student representatives from meetings during discussion about other students, applicants, personnel actions or disciplinary issues relating to faculty, during rankings of existing students for funding, for disciplinary issues related to students, and other executive session discussions at the discretion of a committee Chair.

Article VII. Graduate Advisors (Major Advisors)

Core faculty members will serve as advisors to QSB Masters and Ph.D. students. Advisors are selected by the respective QSB students. Direct admission students usually select their graduate advisor prior to accepting admission. Rotation track Ph.D. students perform laboratory rotations and select an advisor from the rotations. Regardless of admissions track, each student will discuss research interests and possible projects with faculty in the program as early as possible. Selection of a graduate Advisor-advisee pairing must be mutually agreed upon, is subject to approval by the Graduate Program, and must occur before the student's advisory committee can be constituted. The student and the advisor together will develop a research topic, and research will normally occupy a majority of the student's time after the first year of residence. In some instances, the student may choose to be co-advised by two QSB core faculty members whose research expertise complements the research to be carried out by the QSB student. Rotation track students will be assigned to a first year advisor when they first enroll.

Article VIII. Meetings

A. Notification of Meetings

The Chair shall call two general membership meetings per year via email. The meetings will be in-person and broadcast electronically or recorded for faculty that are away from campus. Faculty petitions for additional meetings will be granted when 20% or more of the Core faculty make the request. One membership meeting will take place during the annual QSB retreat.

B. Order of Business for Meetings

At all regular meetings the suggested order of business shall be as follows:

- Reading of the minutes of the preceding meeting
- Reports from the Chair of the Executive Committee
- Reports from each of the Standing Committees

Old Business
New Business

Article IX. Quorum and Voting

A. Quorum.

Two-thirds of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum for Executive Committee meetings. For a duly called QSB faculty meeting, a quorum shall be 50% of the membership.

B. Voting.

For voting within the Executive Committee, a two-thirds majority is required for an action to be approved. Issues that require polling of the membership require voting by a quorum (at least 50%) of the total membership. A positive or negative decision requires a simple majority of the vote. Voting will be carried out using online polling software approved by UC Merced.

Article X. Amendments

Amendments to these bylaws may be made in accordance with the graduate program's quorum policy in Article IX. Program members may propose amendments by petition to the Graduate Group Chair. The Chair, or relevant program committee, may ask for revisions from the faculty who submitted proposed amendments before forwarding the revisions to the membership for review and voting. Quorum, voting and passage are prescribed in Article IX. All amendments and revisions must be submitted to the Graduate Council for review and approval; changes in the bylaws will become effective upon approval by the Graduate Council.