**SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPROSPECTUS AND PROSPECTUS**

**Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology**

This document describes suggested guidelines for preparation of the preprospectus and prospectus required for advancement to PhD candidacy in EEB. Prior to writing the preprospectus and prospectus, each student is responsible for obtaining approval from her/his advisor and committee that these suggested guidelines are in accordance with the goals set forth by the entire committee.

## PREPROSPECTUS

The preprospectus is a document that describes the student's main research topic and questions to be studied for the thesis, their relevance within EEB, and the approaches (e.g., methods) used to address the topic/questions. The preprospectus may contain similar elements as the prospectus, as described in detail below. However, the preprospectus is expected to be a less-detailed and shorter document, especially because no preliminary data may exist at the time a student writes the preprospectus. A suggested length for the preprospectus is 4 to 5 pages, single spaced.

## PROSPECTUS

**PROJECT SUMMARY:** A brief (half to one page) summary should describe the objectives, methods and significance of the proposed research. This may include a brief description of the general research topic and its importance, a statement regarding the novelty and general relevance of the study (i.e. the intellectual merits), the general methods or approach to be used and a list of the key objectives of the proposed study.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** (suggested length: 8 to 10 pages, single spaced). The project description should address the following general issues: What is the general topic and specific problem being addressed? Why is the problem important and interesting? How will you address the problem? If you complete the plan, how will that bring us closer to an answer to the problem? Is the proposed plan feasible and likely to be successful? The following are suggestions for sections that may be included in your proposal, and possible issues you may want to address. These are merely suggestions that should be adapted to the details of each individual project and the requirements of your dissertation advisor and thesis committee. Note: It is often useful to use headings and subheadings to create logical structure in your proposal.

**Introduction**

Introduce the general topic
Explain why the topic is generally important and interesting (within the context of EEB)
Establish why the proposed research is novel and of general relevance within EEB
Briefly describe how you will address your question and state your hypotheses if appropriate.

**Statement of key research objectives:** Describe the key research objectives as outlined in your proposal

**Background on the study system and methods to be used:** Describe the necessary background information on your study system that is relevant to your proposed research. In particular, review the theory and background knowledge relevant to the study, describe what is known on this topic about your species/system (and why it is a good choice), and describe how the general question can be addressed by the proposed study. In this section, be certain to connect the general relevance and objectives back to the specifics. If appropriate also detail the methods to be used in your proposed research. You may find some of this fits better within the section on proposed research.

**Description of proposed research and progress to date:** This section should give detail on each of the proposed components, their connection to the listed research objectives, the methods to be used, the data that will be obtained and the possible specific and general inferences that can be made from possible outcomes. It is often useful to give examples of how the data could be graphed or analyzed. Review progress and preliminary results accomplished to date on the proposed research. Ideally show that the proposed research is feasible and likely to yield results based on what you (and others) have done so far. Explain possible outcomes and how you would interpret them both specifically and generally. The description of proposed research should not only identify the specific questions to be addressed and the methods to be used, but it must also connect the proposed research and the possible outcomes back to the key objectives and how these will inform the general study topic.

**Timeline for the proposed work:** Give a realistic timeline for its completion. It is often useful to list possible papers/chapters that will arise from the proposed research.

**FIGURES and TABLES:** It is often useful to use figures or tables to aid in conveying experimental design, characteristics of the study organisms, or possible experimental outcomes.

**REFERENCES**