**LEARNING PLAN[[1]](#footnote-1)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Student name:** | |  |
| **Date(s) of LP revision:** | |  |
| **Anticipated Graduation date:** | |  |
| **Requesting certification?** | |  |
| **Department:** | |  |
| **Previous Education:** | |  |
| **OGAPS Committee:** | |  |
| **Dissertation/Thesis Topic:** | |  |
| **ABS Field of Disciplinary Depth\*:** | | *choose one: Ecological Functions & Biodiversity*  *OR Communities & Governance* |
| **ABS Field(s) of Multi-disciplinary Breadth\*:** | | *choose one: Ecological Functions & Biodiversity*  *OR Communities & Governance* |
| **Integration\*:** *How do you plan to bridge ecology, culture and governance for effective conservation?* | | |
| **ABS-IGERTfundingproposal_Page_03** | *Scientific Disciplines* | |
| *Institutions & Actors* | |
| *Broader Impacts* | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Advisor:** |  |
| **Advisor comments**  *Please indicate that you have reviewed the learning plan and discuss are any issues on which you would like Curriculum Committee feedback. If the student is requesting certification, please indicate that you believe the learning plan is complete and ready for certification.* | |
|  | |

**ABS COMPETENCIES**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1. ABS Theory and Application: Human-Environment Interactions & Ethics** | |
| *Semester/YR*   |  | | --- | |  | |  | |  | | Theory: ABSI core course (Table 2) AND  Application: ABSII core course (or approved substitute) AND  Regular attendance (>60%) at ABS Seminar Series while on campus (record on sign in sheet) |
| *Explain how this fits into the general ABS Learning Path and any variation from Table 2:* | |
| **2. Interdisciplinary Breadth** | |
| *Course no.*   |  | | --- | |  | |  | | At least one social science graduate course for natural scientists (Table 3) OR  At least one natural science graduate course for social scientists (Table 3) |
| *Explain how this will aid you in achieving this competency and any variation from Table 3:* | |
| **3. Regional Studies** | |
| *Check one*   |  | | --- | |  | |  | |  | | 1. One course on region in which the student plans to conduct research (Table 4) OR  2. The ABS Amazon Field Course (required for NSF-IGERT Trainees) OR  3. Previous significant time spent in region. |
| *Explain how this will aid you in achieving this competency and your thinking on #1 or #3:* | |
| **4. Interdisciplinary Collaboration\*** | |
| *Check off*   |  | | --- | |  | |  | | 1. Publish a collaborative paper in the ABS Perspectives Series OR prepare a collaborate proposal/ manuscript, OR 2. Visit other study sites providing interdisciplinary advice OR; 3. Collaborate with another student on complementary dissertation project   AND   1. One member of dissertation committee should be from an ABS discipline other than the student’s primary discipline. |
| *Explain how you plan to document this competency and your thinking on #1 and #2:* | |
| **5 . Research Design\*** | |
| *Course no.*   |  | | --- | |  | |  | | 1. One graduate course on research design (Table 5) OR  2. Substitute course (e.g. from another institution) |
| *Explain your thinking on choosing the course or substitute course.* | |
| **6. Disciplinary Depth\*** | |
| *Date approved*   |  | | --- | |  | | Courses listed on OGS degree plan |
| *Explain the field which you consider to be your area of disciplinary depth:* | |
| **7. Cross-cultural Skills\*** | |
| *Course/YR*   |  | | --- | |  | |  | | Training in cross cultural communication skills (Table 6)  Other:( e.g. living in different cultures; Peace Corp; Study Abroad course; map of stakeholder perspectives in a study area) |
| *Explain how the course or equivalent substitute has provided you with the necessary cross-cultural skills.* | |
| **8. Language Skills\*** | |
| Course/YR   |  | | --- | |  | |  | | 1. Course work OR  2. Must pass ACTFL Language Exam or equivalent |
| *Explain your thinking on choosing the course or equivalent substitute.* | |
| **9. Communication Skills (Research Presentation)\*** | |
| Date   |  | | --- | |  | |  | |  | | 1. Presentation at Ecological Integration Symposium / ABS Conference OR  2. National-level conference.  AND  3. Lead a session of the ABS journal club and participate regularly when possible. |
| *Explain how your choice fits into your overall ABS Learning Path:* | |
| **10. Applied Research\*** | |
| Check off   |  | | --- | |  | |  | |  | | 1. Complete internship OR  2. Conduct research in conjunction with host country institution/organization  AND  3. Disseminate research results in format accessible for those who might apply the results. |
| *Explain in more detail your plans to meet this competency:* | |

**Learning Plan Tips and Explanations**

**Overall Guidance on Process of Learning Plan (LP) Submission and Review**: Each student working toward certification of completion in the ABS program should submit an annual update of their learning plan, typically in May. Please submit an MS Word version since the Curriculum Committee (CC) frequently will give feedback using Word’s track-change and comments features. Before submitting your plan for CC review, your advisor should review the LP and approve it. As you near completion of your program, you may submit a plan and request certification at any time. Please allow at least one month for review prior to graduation.

Throughout the Learning Plan, we are seeking brief but thoughtful comments about how you seek or sought to develop the competencies of an applied biodiversity scientist. Do not treat the document as simply a way to check off a boxes.

**ABS Field of Disciplinary Depth and Multi-disciplinary Breadth**: By ABS field of disciplinary depth, we mean either “Ecological Functions & Biodiversity” or “Communities and Governance.”

**Integration:** The text in this section does not need to be long, but we are looking for a vision of how your graduate program will cover all aspects of the ABS triangle. As you write this up, give some reflective thought as to how you want to “sell yourself” when you have completed this program. Explain how your accomplishments with respect to these three “pillars” have set a foundation for your career in Applied Biodiversity Sciences. Think of these paragraphs as practicing an interview for your dream job of the future. See Fitzgerald & Stronza (2009).

**Interdisciplinary Collaboration**: By interdisciplinary, we mean crossing over ABS fields of disciplinary depth disciplines of “communities and governance” and “ecological systems and biodiversity.” This means that in some cases working with people outside your department may not be what is being sought or that in some cases this can be achieved by working with people within one department.

**Research Design:** Statistics courses are not sufficient to satisfy this requirement as they address techniques for analysis, but not the discipline-specific norms for defining and answering questions in a scholarly manner. These norms differ for the natural and social sciences. A course in research design helps you learn the jargon and expectations of your “disciplinary depth.” If you want to cross-train, you will need to know the jargon in your areas of “breadth” so you can communicate effectively within interdisciplinary teams.

**Disciplinary Depth**: Here we are looking for a more in-depth explanation of what you see as your area of disciplinary depth, i.e., how you would describe your area of expertise to someone from your own department.

**Cross-cultural Skills:** Neither of the courses listed in Table 6 are currently available, but there may be other appropriate courses within the university. If you have learned to bridge cultures as part of your life experience (e.g. growing up in a different country, a high school exchange student experience, diverse family members), explain how these transferable skills will help you bridge cultural gaps in your study area. Note that cultural gaps include diverse perspectives of stakeholder groups with respect to how they see the world and their place within nature. See Petriello and Wallen (2015); Diaz et al. (2015) <http://journals.plos.org/plosbiology/article?id=10.1371/journal.pbio.1002040>. If you are having difficulty determining how to satisfy this requirement, contact members of the CC.

**Language Skills:** This competency can be achieved through formal education at schools/colleges/universities in the language of your intended study area. If your language skills have been acquired through informal education (e.g. total immersion) you may request an interview with a native speaker who is willing to write a letter assessing your language competency. If English is the language for your study area, then simply indicate this and no further training is required. If you plan to work in a region with a language that you do not speak, it is imperative that you begin early to develop the needed language skills.

**Communication Skills:** For each year you are on campus, please indicate how frequently you attended the Journal Club meetings and, if attendance was not regular, explain why. Though not required, the ABS Peer-Review Workshops provide a valuable opportunity to get feedback on your research and practice in presenting. Presenting your work at the Ecological Integration Symposium is very easily accomplished and all students should be able to accomplish at least this level of presentation.

**Applied Research:**You must do 3 and, in addition, do 1 or 2. Setting up internships or finding an organization to work with is hard, but not impossible. Many organizations are happy to host you if you reach out to them and offer something to them – it can’t be just about you and your research; you have to give them something that they want too.

1. General guidance on the ABS program and learning plan are available online at <http://biodiversity.tamu.edu/files/2012/08/ABS_Certification_Guidelines1.pdf>. Throughout this document an asterix indicates that specific clarifying information is included in the Tips and Guidance section at the end of this document. Students are advised to check the ABS web site for updates of these documents on each revision of their learning plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)