



## **DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

# **GRADUATE POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL**

This graduate manual is intended for the informational use of graduate students in the Department of Biological Sciences only. Its purpose is to bring together pertinent information essential for Biology graduate students, and is meant to supplement and to clarify guidelines for graduate study published in other FIU publications. This manual is not intended to be a substitute for any of those documents.

The graduate student has responsibility to familiarize him or herself with these policies. Each student must read these policies and sign the statement below. This statement must be submitted to the Graduate Program Secretary for inclusion in the student's file.

**Version 9  
Fall 2016**

**I have received and read the Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual**

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Name

Signature

Date

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*Biological Science is an interdisciplinary field, drawing not only on classical biological themes, but also on a variety of allied scientific fields. At Florida International University, the Department of Biological Sciences offers M.S. and Ph.D. programs emphasizing research excellence in a variety of these fields.*

## **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

To be considered, the applicant must meet the entrance requirements set by the University Graduate School, as well as the Department. These include:

- a bachelor's degree (B.A./B.S.) in a relevant discipline such as Biology, Botany, Zoology, Microbiology, Genetics or Chemistry; or a bachelor's degree in another field and upper division coursework in biology
- a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale during upper division coursework (the last 60 hours of the undergraduate degree) or a graduate degree from an accredited institution
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE): quantitative, verbal, analytical writing sections
- *Two* letters of recommendation are required for M.S. applicants and *three* letters are required for Ph.D. applicants
- a personal statement that includes a justification of why the student wants to pursue graduate studies, any previous research experience, the reason for choosing the FIU Biology Graduate Program, interest in working with a particular faculty member
- a faculty sponsor who must be a tenured or tenure-earning member of the Department of Biological Sciences or have a courtesy appointment in the Department to serve as major professor; *the major professor*, a member of the University Graduate Faculty, will direct the student's research in consultation with the thesis or dissertation committee; applicants are encouraged to contact faculty to find prospective faculty sponsors. Faculty sponsors must submit a memo to the Graduate Committee expressing their willingness to serve as the major advisor for the student. The memo should include an explanation of why the sponsor is interested in that particular student, any form of contact the sponsor has had with the student and if financial support will be available in the form of a RA or GA.

## INTERNATIONAL APPLICANTS

- must demonstrate proficiency in English by achieving a minimum score of 80 on the TOEFL iBT.
- must complete a declaration and certification of financial ability to support themselves while a student (contact the FIU International Students Office for further information):  
<https://internationalprograms.fiu.edu/iss/>
- must have their transcripts translated and certified; information on translation service companies is available on the University Graduate School website: <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/future-students-international.html>

Any applicant who fails to meet these criteria may appeal the admission decision to the Departmental Graduate Committee.

The Graduate Committee (composed of six Biology faculty members with Graduate Status) makes admissions decisions based on the student's qualifications, match to the program, and availability of funding. All admitted students sponsored by faculty members of the Biological Sciences Department are provided with 2 years (MS) and 4 years (PhD) of guaranteed funding in the form of a Teaching Assistantship, Research Assistantship or Graduate Assistantship. Applicants sponsored by faculty members from other Departments with courtesy appointments in the Department of Biological Sciences must demonstrate the existence of funding for at least three years.

## **ADDITIONAL POLICIES**

Once admitted to the M.S. program, students may apply to switch to the Ph.D. track during or after their second term of enrollment. Application is made to the Graduate Committee by submission of a memo from the student justifying the request, along with a memo of support by the major professor. Justification shall include a brief statement of the student's proposed research plan. Also at that time, documentation must be supplied that a dissertation committee (5 members) can be formed. This is accomplished by providing a completed Form D-1 with all signatures as required for a dissertation committee. The University Graduate School's Change of Graduate Degree form also needs to be completed. The Graduate Committee will consider the justification provided by the student and major professor, along with the student's performance in courses taken up to that time in the graduate program. Note that a change in degree level can take place only at the end of the term in which the application is made. Also, Departmental support during the MS program will count against total support during the Ph.D. program, that is, the total Departmental support will be 4 years including time spent in the MS program.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

Prospective candidates must submit an application for admission into the graduate program online and must pay the \$30.00 application fee.

Applicants must also arrange to have official transcripts from all colleges and/or universities attended and test scores (GRE, TOEFL if a foreign student, and ibtTOFEL if a foreign student applying for financial support) sent to the Admissions Office. Transcripts in a language other than English must be translated and certified.

Florida International University has a rolling admissions policy. When the Admissions Office receives the student's application, application fee, transcripts and GRE, TOEFL, and TSE scores, they forward the completed file to the Biological Sciences Department for evaluation. In addition to the information sent to Admissions, the student must have all letters of reference and a letter from their faculty sponsor submitted for the application to be considered complete.

**The Department of Biological Sciences has one application deadline per year, and that is for Fall admissions. Applications for assistantships for the Fall term must be completed by January 5th. Decisions on assistantships for the Fall term will normally be made within eight weeks of this deadline.**

## **THE MASTER'S (M.S.) PROGRAM**

*The M.S. degree is conferred on individuals in recognition of their demonstrated ability to master a specific field of knowledge and to complete a significant and original research project.*

*A "Term" is defined as spring, fall, or summer C terms, with 3 terms offered during the academic year.*

### **THESIS COMMITTEE**

With guidance from the major professor, the student forms a thesis committee to direct the student's research. Thesis committees should be formed by the end of the first term for all full-time students or prior to the completion of 12 credits for part-time students. A student's thesis committee will be composed of no less than three members - two of which must be full-time tenured or tenure earning graduate faculty members from the Department of Biological Sciences. The major professor will chair the thesis committee. A third member must be a member of the University community. Additional members may be selected from within or outside of the Department of Biological Sciences. Scientists that are not FIU faculty members must submit a curriculum vitae for review by the Biological Sciences Graduate Committee. The CV must be accompanied by memos from the student and major professor that describe the expertise brought by the non-FIU scientist. The curriculum vitae will be attached to Form M-1 (formation of a thesis committee) upon Graduate Committee approval. Off campus committee members also must sign the commitment for Non-FIU committee members from the University Graduate School forms list. Under no circumstances may an external research supervisor be the chair of the student's thesis committee. Potential external research supervisors may not be relatives or on-site paid supervisors of a student.

To serve as chair of a thesis committee, a faculty member must:

- be a tenured, tenure-earning, or have a courtesy faculty appointment in the Department of Biological Sciences, and a member of the University Graduate Faculty (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/faculty-staff-grad-das-faculty.shtml>).
- have specialized academic competence in the student's major field.
- have taught a graduate course in the last three years or had a graduate student who graduated in the last five years.
- have published an article in a peer reviewed journal in the last three years or had research funding during the last three years or applied for at least one grant in the last three years.

To serve as a thesis committee member, the faculty member or external research scientist must:

- be a member of the University Graduate Faculty or be approved by the Biological Sciences Graduate Committee if the person is an external research scientist
- have specialized academic competence relevant to one of the major emphases of the student's thesis project.
- have taught a graduate course in the last three years or published an article in a peer reviewed journal in the last three years.

These guidelines may not adequately cover all situations. Therefore, faculty members may make a written appeal to the Graduate Committee. If necessary, an appeal of the Graduate Committee's decision will be made to the entire faculty.

Students should play an active role in the selection of their thesis committee members and must arrange to meet formally with their supervisory committee at least once a year to insure that each thesis committee member is fully informed of the student's progress.

The thesis committee functions to:

- advise the student in all academic and research matters
- formulate a program of study (not required but recommended for M.S. students)
- approve the thesis proposal
- review progress on the thesis research
- prepare and conduct the qualifying examination
- administer the defense of thesis
- render final approval of the thesis

## **THESIS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT (FORM M-1)**

Form M-1 should be completed and submitted to the Graduate Program Director's Office immediately upon formation of a thesis committee. If any member is outside the University, attach a CV and memo from the major professor and a signed copy of the non FIU commitment form.

The composition of a thesis committee may need to be changed at some point during a student's program of study. If this should become necessary, the student must submit to the Graduate Program Director a completed M-1r form. The major advisor should submit a memo explaining why the change is necessary. Should the student request changing of the major professor, the student should submit a written request to the Graduate Committee for approval. Approved requests will require students to file a M-1r form. If the thesis research has changed significantly, a new five-page summary of the thesis research should be submitted with the revised Form M-1r.

## **RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

During their first term, students should write a brief outline of their proposed research project. Full-time students should submit this preliminary proposal to their thesis committee no later than the beginning of their second term; part-time students should submit their proposals upon completion of 12 credits. Students must prepare a formal version of their research proposal and distribute it to each member of the thesis committee prior to the end of their third term in the program, or upon completion of 24 credits. The student should submit the formal version of the proposal prior to the qualifying examination.

A five-page summary of the preliminary proposal must be submitted with Form M-2 after the thesis proposal seminar is presented.

The formal proposal should follow the general guidelines outlined in the Regulations for Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Manual ([http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Proposal\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Proposal_Guidelines.pdf)) and should contain the following sections:

- **Introduction** - statement of the problem/purpose and a review of prior relevant work
- **Materials & Methods** - a technical discussion of the methods and approaches to be used in the research
- **Preliminary Results/Feasibility**



- **Program Schedule**
- **References**
- **Budget** - a description of any special budgetary requirements necessary to carry out the proposed research.

Thesis committee members should review the formal proposal and return it to the student along with their comments no later than two weeks from the date of receipt. After revisions, the student should resubmit the proposal to all thesis committee members for final approval. If necessary, the major professor should poll the thesis committee regarding the acceptability of the revised proposal. If deemed unacceptable to one or more of the thesis committee members, the student or the student's major professor should contact the pertinent thesis committee member(s) to determine the points necessary for approval. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the student and major professor should take the issue to the Graduate Committee for mediation.

The student is responsible for scheduling the presentation of the proposal at a time convenient to the thesis committee members and the faculty of the Biological Sciences Department (during regular business hours). The student must also adequately advertise the proposal seminar at least one week in advance of the presentation. The student must send an electronic version of the proposal announcement to the Graduate Program Director and the Graduate Program Secretary (biograd@fiu.edu). Each student registers for BSC 5931 (Thesis Proposal Seminar) the term after the proposal is successfully presented. After successful completion of the proposal seminar, the major professor should send a memo to the Graduate Program Director (see memo forms at end of document). A completed form M-2 and the 5-page abstract of the research must be submitted to the Graduate Program Director in Biology following the proposal seminar. If the planned research involves recombinant DNA research, vertebrate animals or human subjects, attach copies of completion certificates. All students must submit certificates of completion for the Conduct of Research. The Graduate Program Secretary will make a copy for the file and send the completed form to the College of Arts & Sciences & Education.

Immediately following presentation of the proposal seminar and a public question period, the public audience shall be asked to leave and the committee and major professor will remain for a defense of the proposal and research plan. Students must submit a full proposal to the Biological Sciences Graduate Program Office after it has been approved by the Committee.

## **COURSES**

A plan of study should be determined for each student by the supervisory committee as part of its first formal meeting. The plan of study should include all courses required by the Department, courses that rectify weaknesses in the student's background and those considered essential for the student's particular program of study. Formal course requirements should be met as early as possible and all remedial courses needed to bring the student up to the level of graduating senior undergraduates should be taken during the first two terms the student is in the program. Graduate assistants (GAs, TAs and RAs) may not register for undergraduate credits (4000 or lower) using their tuition waiver. Such remedial courses must be paid for by the student. Students may not audit courses using waivers provided by the College.

### **Core courses required of all M.S. students include:**

- Thesis Proposal Seminar (BSC 5931; 1 credit);
- Introduction to Biological Research (BSC 6457; 3 credits);
- Master's Thesis (BSC 6971; 6 credits)
- Workshops/ laboratories (a minimum of 4 credits over 3 separate courses).
- Quantitative Skills (a minimum of 6 credits in 2 separate courses).

Students must first present their graduate proposal seminar and then sign up for BSC 5931 **the term after the presentation**. The student must take a total of 36 credits; at least 16 credits of electives must be courses offered by the Department of Biological Sciences.

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and must earn a grade of "C" or higher in all courses. A maximum of six credits may be taken at the 4000 level (at the discretion of the student's supervisory committee), but graduate assistants may not register for undergraduate courses using their tuition waiver.

## **QUANTITATIVE SKILLS REQUIREMENT**

To ensure that our graduates have quantitative skills, the Department requires students to take two courses (at least six credits) of graduate level computer programming, statistics, or mathematics. The courses to fulfill this requirement will be decided by the advisory committee, and a memo documenting of the approval of courses outside of the standard statistics, programming, or math by the committee should be placed in the students file.

## **TRANSFER OF GRADUATE CREDIT**

If approved by the thesis committee, the Master's program will accept six term hours of graduate course credit earned from another institution beyond the bachelor's degree, excluding graduate research and master's thesis course credits.

## **QUALIFYING EXAMINATION**

Master's candidates must take and pass an oral qualifying examination to demonstrate adequate progress toward the degree. Full-time students should complete the examination by the end of their first year in the program (first three terms, including summer term); part-time students must complete the examination before 18 credits have been completed. The exam shall cover at least three subject areas specified by the student's advisory committee. The student must be informed of the subject areas at least one month prior to the date of the examination. The form and content of the qualifying examination are determined by the student's advisory committee. Students should meet with all committee members twice before the exam. During the first meeting, the topics and readings should be assigned. Questions regarding the assigned materials can be covered during the second meeting.

A unanimous decision by the thesis committee in all subject areas examined is required to successfully pass the qualifying examination. Failure in any examination area constitutes a failure of the qualifying exam. Passing the qualifying examination may not be conditional; i.e., the student either passes or fails the exam and cannot be passed contingent on the satisfactory completion of courses or submission of research papers.

After completion of the candidacy examination, the student must submit the signed Student Progress Memo – Qualifying/Candidacy Exam to the Graduate office within one week indicating the results (Pass or Fail) with a written summary of the exam.

Students who fail their first qualifying examination can petition the Biological Sciences Graduate Committee for a second examination. If the petition is granted, the second examination must be taken no earlier than one month and no later than four months after the first examination. The second examination may be

either oral or written; the form is at the discretion of the student's thesis committee. Students who fail the second examination are dismissed from the program.

**Master's students earning a grade of A (not A-) in a two-term core area course sequence and Introduction to Biological Research (BSC 6457) may waive the qualifying exam requirement and proceed to the proposal seminar. The core courses include:**

**Ecology and Organismal Biology group: PCB 5423, PCB 5443.**

**Molecular and Cell Biology group: PCB 6025, PCB 6026.**

**A memo indicating that the student earned the appropriate grades must be placed in the student's file by the major professor.**

The term after the student passes the qualifying exam, presents the public thesis proposal seminar, and submits all paperwork through the Departmental Graduate Secretary to the University Graduate School, is the first term the student enrolls in Master's Thesis credit (BSC 6971). A total of 6 credits of BSC 6971 must be completed prior to graduation. The M.S. candidate must be *continuously* enrolled in BSC 6971 (for 1 credit minimally) until graduation. Students will receive IP grades (in progress) until the thesis is defended. Once the thesis is defended, the major professor will issue a final grade of P for MS thesis and this will trigger all IP grades to change (i.e., change IP to P).

## **THESIS**

A thesis must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the guidelines and deadlines established by the University Graduate School and the College of Arts and Sciences and Education. These guidelines are set forth in the Thesis Preparation Manual available from University Graduate School ([http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Graduate\\_Packet\\_For\\_Theses.pdf](http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Graduate_Packet_For_Theses.pdf)).

## **REQUEST FOR THESIS DEFENSE (FORM M-3)**

The thesis defense is a University requirement and, thus, the defense must be scheduled and held to comply with University deadlines. However, students are not required to register for Thesis defense (BSC 5975). The University Graduate School publishes their deadlines for the last date of submission of Form M-3 on their website (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/current-students-calendar-deadlines.shtml>). The College of Arts and Sciences and Education publishes both the University Graduate School and the College deadlines on their website (<http://cas.fiu.edu/graduate/>). A near-final draft of the thesis, a copy of the Thesis Defense Announcement, and a completed M-3 Form must be submitted to the graduate program director **5 weeks** before the date of the defense. The College deadline is 4 weeks before the defense and the University deadline is 3 weeks before the defense. The Dean of our College and the Dean of the Graduate School adhere strictly to the last date of defense deadlines and the 4 and 3 weeks of receipt of document rules, respectively, before them. Thus, the student who does not comply with these deadlines will be forced to reschedule the defense on a new date, which may require enrollment in another term.

Form M-3 states "My signature below attests that I have read the attached thesis and find it provisionally acceptable and ready to defend. The attached defense announcement is an accurate abstract of the thesis." Thus, the student must provide his/her thesis committee with sufficient time to read and comment on the thesis before the Form M-3 submission deadline. Sufficient time is usually two weeks.

## **RESULTS OF THE THESIS DEFENSE (RUBRICS)**

Three rubrics evaluating the contents, written and oral presentation of the thesis must be completed by all members of the committee and submitted to the Graduate Program Office after the thesis defense. The rubrics forms are available in the College of Arts & Sciences & Education Graduate Program website: (<http://cas.fiu.edu/graduate/casgradrubrics08-09.pdf>)

## **FINAL SUBMISSION OF THE THESIS (FINAL ETD APPROVAL FORM)**

When a student successfully defends the thesis, committee members and the committee chair may suggest changes in the content of the final document. When those changes have been completed to the satisfaction of the Committee, one paper copy of the final version of the thesis (for College of Arts & Sciences & Education) must be presented to the Graduate Program Director with the accompanying Electronic Thesis and Dissertation form at least two days before it is due at CASE. The Graduate Program Office will make a copy of the form and submit the thesis to the College who will submit it to the Graduate School.

## **ACTIVE STATUS AND TIME LIMITATIONS**

Active status entitles students to utilize the University's resources. To maintain active status in the M.S. program, students must register for a minimum of one credit per term (summer term included) once form M-2 is submitted and the student has advanced to candidacy. Lapses in enrollment for two or more consecutive terms will result in the student being dropped from the program. All requirements for the M.S. degree, including the successful defense of a thesis, must be completed within six years of first enrollment in the Program, inclusive of any leaves of absence or other interruptions of active student status. Students who do not complete their thesis within this time period may apply for an exception to this rule by filing a Petition for Exception to Graduate Requirements with the University Graduate School. Students must be enrolled in the term in which they graduate and have an overall GPA greater than 3.0.

## **THE DOCTORAL (Ph.D.) PROGRAM**

*The Ph.D. is conferred on individuals in recognition of their demonstrated ability to master a specific field of knowledge and to conduct significant, independent, original research which is documented in a dissertation. The program of study leading to the Ph.D. must include a comprehensive plan to provide a strong background in a specific discipline in the Biological Sciences.*

*A "Term" is defined as spring, fall, or summer C terms, with 3 terms offered per calendar year.*

### **DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**

At the end of the second term or no later than the end of the first year of study (third term, counting the summer term), the student should consult with his major professor on the selection of a dissertation committee to consist of at least five faculty members. Dissertation Committee members from FIU must be members of the Graduate Faculty (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/faculty-staff-grad-das-faculty.shtml>).

- The major professor must be tenured, hold a tenure-earning or courtesy faculty appointment in the Department of Biological Sciences at FIU and have University Dissertation Advisor Status (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/faculty-staff-grad-das-faculty.shtml>), will chair the dissertation committee.
- A minimum of three members of the dissertation committee must be faculty members with at least a 50% appointment in the Department of Biological Sciences.
- At least one dissertation committee member must hold a regular faculty appointment in another department at FIU and must be a member of the University Graduate Faculty.
- The remaining dissertation committee member can be selected from among other members of the Biology or University faculty or professionals with appropriate credentials. Scientists who are not faculty members of FIU must submit a curriculum vitae for review by the Departmental Graduate Committee. The major advisor must submit a memo to the Graduate Committee describing the role the outside scientist will play on the dissertation committee. The curriculum vitae will be attached to Form D-1 (formation of a dissertation committee) upon Graduate Committee approval. A signed copy of the Non FIU commitment form from the University Graduate School is also required with the memo and CV. Under no circumstances may an external research supervisor be the chair of the student's dissertation committee. Potential external research supervisors may not be relatives or on-site paid supervisors of a student.

All dissertation committee members must meet the following requirements:

#### **To serve as chair of a dissertation committee, a faculty member must:**

- be a tenured, tenure-earning, or have a courtesy faculty appointment in the Department of Biological Sciences, a member of the University Graduate Faculty, and have Dissertation Advisor Status (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/faculty-staff-grad-das-faculty.shtml>).
- have specialized academic competence in the student's major field.
- have taught a graduate course in the last three years or had a graduate student who graduated in the last five years.
- have published an article in a peer reviewed journal in the last three years or had research funding during the last three years or applied for at least one grant in the last three years.

To serve as a dissertation committee member, the faculty member or external research scientist must be a member of the FIU Graduate Faculty or be approved by the Departmental Graduate Committee, if an external research scientist:

- has specialized academic competence relevant to one of the major emphases of the student's dissertation project.
- has taught a graduate course in the last three years or published an article in a peer-reviewed journal in the last three years.

These guidelines may not adequately cover all situations. Therefore, faculty members may make a written appeal to the Graduate Committee. If necessary, an appeal of the Graduate Committee's decision will be made to the entire faculty.

The dissertation committee functions to:

- advise the student in all academic and research matters
- formulate a program of study
- approve the dissertation proposal
- review program progress on the dissertation research
- prepare and conduct the candidacy examination
- administer the defense of dissertation
- render final approval of the dissertation

## **DISSERTATION COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT (FORM D-1)**

No later than the end of the first year of study, the student should consult with his or her major professor on the selection of a dissertation committee to consist of at least five faculty members. Form D-1 should be completed by the student and submitted to the Graduate Studies Office immediately upon formation of a dissertation committee.

The composition of a dissertation committee may need to be changed at some point during a student's program of study. If this should become necessary, the student must submit the D-1r form to the Graduate Committee. Should the student request changing of the major professor, the student should submit a written request to the Graduate Committee for approval.

## **COURSES – PROGRAM OF STUDY (FORM D-2)**

The primary requirement for the Ph.D. degree is the submission and defense of the dissertation that is based on original research in the area of specialization acceptable to the Ph.D. student's dissertation committee.

Students must complete a Program of Study designed by the dissertation committee to support the dissertation research and to provide a strong and comprehensive background in the Biological Sciences and **must include 30 graduate credits**. The courses required by the committee must be listed on form D-2 and must be taken before or during the term the student plans to take the candidacy exams and present the proposal seminar. A minimum of 90 credits of graduate course work beyond the baccalaureate is required including a minimum of 24 credits in Doctoral Dissertation (BSC 7980). Students in consultation with the committee

should only list the courses required by the committee on the D-2 exclusive of Doctoral Dissertation (BSC 7980).

Required courses for all Ph.D. students include:

- Introduction to Biological Research (BSC 6457; 3 credits) (For those doctoral students that already have a M.S. degree, BSC 6457 is strongly recommended but is not required).
- Quantitative skills (2 courses, 6 credits)
- Dissertation Proposal Seminar (BSC 7981, 1 credit)
- Supervised Teaching in Biology (BSC 5945; 2 credits)
- Ph.D. Dissertation (BSC 7980; 24 credits)
- Dissertation Defense Seminar (BSC 7982, 1 credit)
- Workshops/laboratories (a minimum of 4 credits and at least 3 separate courses).
- Electives from courses offered by the Department of Biological Sciences (8 credits)

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and must earn a grade of “C” or higher in all courses.

## **TRANSFER OF GRADUATE CREDITS**

If approved by the dissertation committee, a maximum of 36 term hours earned elsewhere within a **completed graduate degree program** may be accepted toward the Ph.D. degree. Up to six thesis credit hours may be transferred to a Ph.D. program only if they were part of an earned degree and are approved by the dissertation committee. A maximum of six term hours of graduate credit earned from another institution or a maximum of twelve term hours of graduate credit earned at FIU in a non-degree seeking status may be transferred if approved by the dissertation committee.

## **QUANTITATIVE SKILLS REQUIREMENT (FORM D-2)**

To ensure that our graduates have quantitative skills, the Department requires students to take two courses (at least six credits) of graduate level computer programming, statistics, or mathematics. The courses to fulfill this requirement will be decided by the Committee and should be documented by a memo from the Committee.

## **SUPERVISED TEACHING**

The ability to teach at the University level is an important skill that should be encouraged in all graduate students. For this reason, all Ph.D. students are required to perform two terms of supervised teaching or document an equivalent amount of teaching experience.

## **CANDIDACY EXAMINATION (FORM D-2)**

A candidacy examination is required of all students working toward the Ph.D. The candidacy examination has the goal to broaden and deepen the students’ knowledge and scientific thinking in fields relevant to his/her research topic and more generally in the biological (and in some cases, related) sciences, thus ensuring the proper preparation of PhD candidates. Thus, the examination should be both rigorous and constructive with the intent of strengthening the student’s scientific background and critical thinking skills.

The examination should be completed after a minimum of 18 credits in residence and no later than the sixth term of study (including the summer term). Written and then oral sections of the examination will be conducted in that order and evaluated by the dissertation committee. These exams will test the student's competence and mastery of his or her field of specialization.

The student's major professor acts as the chair of the committee and is responsible for scheduling written and oral examination sections, collecting exam questions, returning answers to the committee members and instructing outside committee members as to their responsibilities. The major professor must also communicate to the Graduate Office the exact date when the examination sections will be held. The student should meet with each committee member prior to the examination and request reading materials. All committee members without exception are required to provide questions for the written portion. The format and type of questions should be determined by the entire committee and communicated to the student at least two months prior to the examination. The written portion should precede the oral portion.

After the student completes the written portion, the major professor returns the answers to all committee members and requests feedback. Each committee member should provide feedback to the student about his/her performance in the written section and indicate which areas of concern will be included, among others, as topics of oral exam questions. The oral section should be scheduled only if all committee members *agree that the student can take the oral portion of the exam*. Failure to pass one or more subject areas of the examination constitutes a failure. Passing the examination cannot be conditional. The student either passes or fails the exam and cannot be passed contingent on satisfactory completion of courses or submission of research papers.

If the student passes the written portion, the oral portion needs to be scheduled between one week to four weeks after the completion of the written portion. The oral portion must be held on the FIU campus. All committee members must actively participate in the examination (either in person or via *phone or* videoconferencing).

After completion of the candidacy examination, the student must submit form D2 along with the Student Progress Memo - Qualifying/Candidacy Exam form to the Graduate office within one week indicating the results (Pass or Fail). Students who fail the examination are entitled to re-examination. Re-examination may be scheduled after a minimum of one and a maximum of two terms have passed. Failure of the re-examination results in dismissal from the Graduate program. The dissertation committee may also recommend that the student transfer to the M.S. program. A request to transfer must be submitted by the student and the major professor to the Graduate Committee.

## **RESEARCH PROPOSAL (FORM D-3)**

During their first term, students should write a brief outline of their proposed research project. Full-time students should submit this preliminary proposal to their dissertation committee no later than the beginning of their second term; part-time students should submit their proposals upon completion of nine credits. Students must prepare a formal version of their research proposal and distribute it to each member of the dissertation committee prior to the end of their sixth term in the program, or upon completion of 48 credits. Students must also prepare a five page summary of the proposal to be submitted with form D-3 after the proposal seminar.

The formal proposal should follow the general guidelines outlined in the Regulations for Dissertation Preparation Manual ([http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Graduate\\_Packet\\_For\\_Dissertations.pdf](http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Graduate_Packet_For_Dissertations.pdf)) and should contain the following sections:

**1. Introduction** - statement of the problem/purpose and a review of prior relevant work



2. **Materials & Methods** - a technical discussion of the methods and approaches to be used in the research
3. **Preliminary Results/Feasibility**
4. **Program Schedule**
5. **References**

Sections 1-3 of the formal proposal shall be a minimum of 12 pages double-spaced with 12 pt font (approximately 11 pages, single spaced), OR consistent with guidelines established by the National Science Foundation program for Dissertation Improvement Grants, at the discretion of the student's advisory committee. All Ph.D. candidates are encouraged to submit this proposal to an appropriate funding agency, as determined by the faculty supervisory committee.

Dissertation committee members should review the formal proposal and return it to the student along with their comments no later than two weeks from the date of receipt of the formal research proposal. After revisions, the student should resubmit the proposal to all dissertation committee members for final approval. If necessary, the major professor should poll the dissertation committee regarding the acceptability of the revised proposal. If deemed unacceptable to one or more of the dissertation committee members, the student or the student's major professor should contact the pertinent dissertation committee member(s) to determine the points necessary for approval. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the student and major professor should take the issue to the Graduate Committee for mediation.

The student is responsible for scheduling the presentation of the proposal at a time convenient to the supervisory committee members and the faculty of the Biological Sciences Department during regular business hours. The student must also adequately advertise the proposal seminar at least one week in advance of the presentation with appropriate signage, and via email by sending the Graduate Director a copy of the announcement. The term after the proposal is successfully presented, the student should register for BSC 7981 Dissertation Proposal Seminar.

Immediately following presentation of the proposal seminar and a public question period, the public audience shall be asked to leave and the committee and major professor will remain for a defense of the proposal and research plan.

After successful completion of the proposal seminar, the major professor should send a memo (with the proposal seminar announcement attached) to be put in the student's file (see student progress memos) as well as the D-3.

## **ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY**

A graduate student is not a candidate for the Ph.D. degree until granted formal admission to candidacy by completion of Form D-2 (Program for Doctoral Degree and Application for Candidacy). This form requires signatures from the student's major professor, the Graduate Program Director, and the Dean of the University Graduate School. Approval is based on:

- completion of coursework specified in the Program of Study;
- successful completion of the Candidacy Examination;
- completion of the Quantitative Skills Requirement

A student may not enroll for dissertation credits until the term after he/she is admitted to candidacy. At least three terms must elapse between admission to candidacy and submission of the D3 and awarding of the Ph.D. degree. Refer to the University Academic Calendar for deadlines.

## **ANNUAL COMMITTEE MEETING (ANNUAL STUDENT EVALUATION AND MENTORING PLAN FORM)**

Each doctoral student is required to meet annually with their dissertation committee after the D-1 has been filed. The student must submit a completed Annual Student Evaluation and Mentoring Plan form to the Graduate Program Director following the annual meeting of the dissertation committee. The Performance Summary and Future Goals sections must be completed by the major professor with input from the committee members. If a member cannot attend physically but hears/sees the meeting then he/she can send an email to the advisor authorizing him/her to sign the form.

## **DISSERTATION**

A dissertation is required of all candidates for the Ph.D. degree and must conform to the format outlined in the Regulations for Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Manual available to students online from the Graduate School ([http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Graduate\\_Packet\\_For\\_Dissertations.pdf](http://gradschool.fiu.edu/documents/Graduate_Packet_For_Dissertations.pdf)). Once a student advances to candidacy, the student must be continuously enrolled in at least three credits each term including summer term until she/he graduates. Students will receive IP (in progress) grades for Doctoral Dissertation (BSC 7980) credits until the final term. Grades will be changed from IP to P as soon as the candidate successfully defends the dissertation and the major professor files a grade of P for Doctoral Dissertation (BSC 7980).

## **PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF DISSERTATION & REQUEST FOR ORAL DEFENSE (FORM D-5)**

After preliminary approval of the dissertation and completion of all other prescribed work for the Ph.D. degree, the candidate will give a public presentation and be given a final oral examination by the dissertation committee. The examination will be based primarily on the dissertation research and related topics. The dissertation defense is a university requirement and, thus, the defense must be scheduled and held to comply with University deadlines. The University Graduate School publishes their deadlines for the last date of submission of Form D-5 on their website (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/electronic-thesis-dissertation-deadlines.shtml>). The College of Arts and Sciences publishes both the University Graduate School and the College deadlines on their website ([cas.fiu.edu/graduate/](http://cas.fiu.edu/graduate/)) which can be accessed from the Biological Sciences Graduate Program website. A copy of the near-final draft of the dissertation, a copy of the defense seminar announcement, and a completed D-5 form must be filed with the Graduate Program Director **5 weeks** before the defense date (the College deadline is 4 weeks before the defense and the University Graduate School deadline is 3 weeks before the defense). The Dean of our College and the Dean of the Graduate School adhere strictly to the last date of defense deadlines and the 4 and 3 weeks of receipt of document rules, respectively, before them. Thus, the student who does not comply with these deadlines will be forced to reschedule the defense on a new date, which may require enrollment in another term.

## **RESULTS OF THE DISSERTATION DEFENSE (RUBRICS)**

When a student successfully defends the dissertation, committee members may provide suggested changes in the content of the final document. Three rubrics evaluating the contents, written and oral presentation of the dissertation must be completed by all members of the Committee and submitted to the Graduate Program Office after the dissertation defense. The rubrics forms are available in the College of Arts & Sciences and Education Graduate Program website: <http://cas.fiu.edu/graduate/casgradrubrics08-09.pdf>. A student who fails the dissertation defense may be allowed a second defense, on recommendation of the dissertation committee. If re-examination is necessary, the examination cannot be held earlier than six months or more than one year from the date of the first examination.

## **THE FINAL DOCUMENT (FINAL ETD APPROVAL FORM)**

When a student successfully defends the dissertation, committee members and the committee chair may suggest changes in the content of the final document. When those changes have been completed to the satisfaction of the Committee, one paper copy of the final version of the dissertation (for College of Arts & Sciences & Education) must be presented to the Graduate Program Director with the accompanying Electronic Thesis and Dissertation form two days before it is due at CASE. The Graduate Program Office will make a copy of the form and submit the dissertation to the College who will submit it to the Graduate School.

## **ACTIVE STATUS AND TIME LIMITATIONS**

Continuous registration will be required for all students accepted into the Ph.D. program. Full time students supported with a Graduate Teaching Assistantship or Graduate Assistantship must register for at least nine credits per term during the regular academic year and six credits during the summer term. Once students have advanced to candidacy, a minimum of three hours per term is required to maintain active status in the program. Students must be continually enrolled until they defend.

At the Ph.D. level, all requirements, including the successful defense of a dissertation must be completed within **nine years** of first enrollment in the Ph.D. program, inclusive of any leaves of absence or other interruptions of active student status. Students who do not complete their dissertation within this time period may apply for an exception to this rule by filing a Request for Exception form to the Dean of the University Graduate School.

## **GRADUATE REVIEW (MS AND PhD STUDENTS)**

*Each student will participate in the annual Graduate Review during their tenure as a graduate student in the Department of Biological Sciences. This review is not that same as the annual committee meeting conducted between the student and their advisory committee. The purpose of this review is to be sure that the student is on track with regards to the process of the graduate program (committee formation, committee meetings, memos in file, etc) to ensure smooth and timely progress for the student. These reviews also allow the Graduate Program Office to keep track of when students are likely to finish, information essential for recruitment planning.*

*During the spring term, the student must schedule a meeting with his/her graduate reviewer, who is a member of the Graduate Committee. Students who receive unsatisfactory reviews and do not correct deficiencies by the end of the summer term will be recommended for dismissal from the program. Students who have been dismissed must apply for readmission if they wish to complete their degree. Students who are supported by a teaching assistantship or research assistantship must obtain a satisfactory review to maintain their support for the next academic year.*

*Below are the guidelines used by the graduate reviewers. These guidelines have been provided so students can prepare themselves and their major professors adequately for the graduate review.*

### **Guidelines for Students and Graduate Committee Reviewers**

#### **For all students:**

All students must submit a CV each year for their files. This CV will be updated yearly at each graduate review and will be used to document students' participation in scientific congresses, publications, and any special awards.

#### **For first year M.S. students (started in Fall term):**

A student would be considered to have made excellent progress if she/he:

- formed a committee, met with the committee, distributed a draft proposal to the thesis committee, filed form M-1, and filed departmental form (first committee meeting)
- scheduled the qualifying examination and thesis proposal seminar
- completed the quantitative skills requirement

Students who have not formed a committee should be given an unsatisfactory. To make up the unsatisfactory, they should form a committee, file form M-1, have the committee meet and schedule a qualifying examination and thesis proposal seminar. The qualifying examination and thesis proposal seminar do not have to be completed before the end of the spring term.

#### **For first year Ph.D. students (started in Fall term):**

This is the ideal case that would be considered excellent progress. The student should have:

- formed a committee, met with the committee, distributed a draft proposal, and filed form D-1
- developed a program of studies

- completed the quantitative skills requirement
- completed or scheduled the teaching requirement
- discussed with the committee the qualifying examination and dissertation proposal seminar

Students who have not formed a committee should be given an unsatisfactory. To make up the unsatisfactory, the student should form a committee, file form D-1, have the committee meet and discuss the qualifying examination and dissertation proposal seminar. The qualifying examination and dissertation proposal seminar do not have to be scheduled to receive a satisfactory.

**For all first year students:**

All students should complete their quantitative skills requirement by the end of the first year. If they are fulfilling it by statistics or computer classes, they must have made a reasonable plan to complete the requirement by the end of the second year.

Students who have formed a committee but not met with the committee should be given an unsatisfactory.

**Second year and beyond M.S. students:**

Students who started the spring prior to the annual review should formed a committee, met with the committee, distributed a draft proposal, completed their quantitative skills requirement, taken their qualifying examination and presented their thesis proposal seminar. Students who have not met these requirements should be given an unsatisfactory and have until the end of the spring term to complete them.

Students who began the program prior to the fall term and who have met all the above requirements should be asked when they are planning to graduate. Ideally, M.S. students should be planning to graduate by the end of their second year in the program. If they are not planning to graduate, they should have a committee meeting so their committee can evaluate his or her progress. The student will receive an unsatisfactory, which can be made up by having a committee meeting and presenting a memo from their committee that evaluates their progress and estimates the date of graduation.

Students who are planning to graduate must apply for graduation by the deadline announced in the University Academic Calendar. Forms M-3 and the ETD have specific deadlines set by the UGS and effectively mean that a defensible document should be completed within 6 weeks of the start of the semester. A graduate student must be enrolled in the term in which she/he graduates.

Basically, any student who is not planning on graduating and has not had a committee meeting since the last graduate review should be given an unsatisfactory until they have met with their research committee.

**Second year and beyond Ph.D. students:**

Students who began the program prior to the Fall term should already have formed a committee, met with the committee, completed their quantitative skills requirement, completed their teaching requirement, taken their qualifying examination, completed all the required courses for the program as described in the program of studies and presented their dissertation proposal seminar. Basically, Ph.D. students who have advanced to candidacy by the spring term of their second year are making excellent progress. Students who

have not met these requirements should be given an unsatisfactory and have until the end of the summer term to complete them.

Students who have advanced to candidacy should have met with the dissertation committee and received an evaluation of their progress toward degree in the form of the *Student Evaluation and Mentoring Plan Form*. Any student who is not planning on graduating and has not had a committee meeting since the last graduate review should be given an unsatisfactory until they have met with their dissertation committee. Students will have until the end of the term to make up the unsatisfactory.

Students who are planning to graduate must apply for graduation by the deadline announced in the University Academic Calendar. Forms D-5 and the ETD have specific deadlines set by the UGS and effectively mean that a defensible document should be completed within 6 weeks of the start of the semester. A graduate student must be enrolled in the term in which she/he graduates.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Various forms of financial assistance are available to graduate students at FIU.

Recommendations for aid as well as admission into the program are based on the initial ranking of new students by their GRE and GPA scores. In addition, graduate students are encouraged to apply for external support for their graduate work (e.g., Sigma Xi, NSF, etc.). Proposals to funding agencies must have the approval of the Department of Biological Sciences and, in some cases, the Office of Sponsored Research Administration.

Information regarding financial assistance may be obtained from the Biology Graduate Program Office or from the University Graduate School website ([gradschool.fiu.edu/future-students-finance-education.shtml](http://gradschool.fiu.edu/future-students-finance-education.shtml)). Graduate stipends for TA's and RA's and some tuition fee waivers (partial) are available to eligible students.

*Graduate assistantships are renewed each term. While we expect that an assistantship will be renewed for up to two years for M.S. students or four years for Ph.D. students, satisfactory progress toward the degree and a 3.0 GPA are conditions for renewal. The University Graduate School will not process your paperwork if you fall out of GPA compliance. Students will be notified before August 1 of each academic year regarding renewal of an assistantship, amount of stipend/tuition waiver and responsibilities for the following term.*

## GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

### **Research assistantships are intended to:**

- provide financial support for graduate students working toward their M.S. or Ph.D. degrees.
- give graduate students the opportunity to obtain university research experience under the guidance of departmental faculty; specific research duties are assigned by the researcher providing the assistantship.

### **Teaching assistantships are intended to:**

- provide financial support for graduate students working toward their M.S. or Ph.D. degrees.
- give graduate students the opportunity to obtain university teaching experience under the guidance of Departmental faculty. The Teaching Assistant Coordinator in consultation with faculty determine specific course assignments.
- enable the Department to meet the teaching demand of multiple-section high-enrollment laboratory courses.

### **Tuition Waivers:**

- can cover the matriculation part of any course, but they do not pay any additional fees above matriculation.
- cover the UM-FIU exchange courses, they cover "rear-in-seat" courses, and they can be used against some of the online courses.
- do not support off-campus, study abroad courses, special language courses undergraduate courses, or audited courses.

## **DUTIES OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS (TAs)**

Teaching Assistants are expected to allocate 20 hours per week to responsibilities associated with teaching 2-3 sections of a laboratory class during the academic term. Students may be responsible for 1-2 laboratory sections in the summer. Students are paid in bi-weekly paychecks.

Teaching assistants receive a waiver for 24 credits of matriculation annually, and must be enrolled as full-time students. Full-time enrollment is designated as 9 credits in the fall and spring terms and 6 in the summer, *or* as 3 credits per term after a student advances to candidacy. International students, however, are **not** considered full-time at 3 credits, and must be enrolled in 9 credits in the fall and spring terms, and 6 in the summer *regardless* of candidacy status.

Assigned duties may include:

- supervision and instruction of 2-3 laboratory sections per week. Since some laboratory courses meet for differing lengths of time, alternate duties may be added or subtracted to ensure that TA effort in all courses is equivalent
- grading of lecture- or laboratory-related quizzes, exams, reports, and other materials
- attendance at weekly laboratory meetings and/or course-related lectures
- preparation of laboratories
- consultation and office hours with students
- proctoring of lecture exams
- attending workshops and meetings held by the Department or other entities in order to train in areas appropriate to TAs.



New teaching assistants are required to enroll in BSC 5945 - Teaching Biology (1-2 credits). This clinic meets the week before the beginning of the Fall Term. Depending on the type of research you plan to do, additional occupational health and safety courses will be completed as needed. Students should attend departmental seminars to observe a variety of presentations and presentation skills.

## **SERVICE REQUIREMENT**

All Graduate students, MS and PhD, regardless of form of support, are required to do 2 hrs/year of Departmental service. The requirement can be fulfilled in many ways such as, assisting with the annual Biology symposium, holding an officer position in BGSA, and proctoring exams. Proctoring two exams can fulfill the requirement. If you are a TA, the proctoring you do as part of your normal assignment does not count towards the service requirement. If you do not fulfill it, you will get an unsatisfactory in your annual review in which can affect your assistantship. For further information and questions, contact the Graduate Program Office.

## **RESPONSIBILITY OF SUPERVISING FACULTY**

The faculty members supervising courses requiring TAs should serve as a mentor for the graduate student. Faculty should strive to make the laboratory portion of their courses run smoothly by ensuring that:

- the material to be presented by the TA is clearly defined and available well in advance of the laboratory
- teaching assistants are properly briefed on the lab techniques and expected results for each laboratory
- all reagents and supplies have been adequately prepared and are available for the TA before a laboratory begins.

In the case of General Biology (BSC 1010 & 1011) and Human Biology (BSC 2023), faculty and TAs are expected to work closely with the Laboratory Coordinator.

## **EVALUATION OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

Teaching assistants receive an evaluation from students in every laboratory that they teach. Graduate students who have also enrolled in BSC 5945 (Teaching Biology) will also receive a Pass/Fail grade based on their teaching performance. The TA Coordinator and faculty members are also encouraged to submit written evaluations of the TAs involved with their courses to the Biology Graduate Program Director. These evaluations are added to the student's file.

## **TEACHING ASSISTANT/FACULTY GRIEVANCES**

On rare occasions disputes between TAs and faculty members will arise. Changes in TA assignments or suggestions to resolve conflicts should be made to the Biology Graduate Program Director or a member of the Graduate Committee. Failure of the Graduate Committee to resolve a conflict to the satisfaction of all parties will necessitate the formation of a temporary "Graduate Assistant Committee". This temporary committee will be composed of: two representatives from the Biology faculty elected by the faculty, one of whom will be elected chair; the Biology Graduate Program Director as *ex-officio* member; two graduate student

representatives elected by fellow graduate students; one faculty member from outside of the Department selected by the temporary committee chairperson.

A majority vote by this committee will resolve complaints. This committee may also make recommendations to the Graduate Committee and the Department concerning issues of TA welfare.

## **STUDENT DISMISSAL POLICY**

Certain circumstances may lead to a graduate student being dismissed from the program. Those circumstances may include:

- 1) Falling out of GPA compliance two consecutive semesters
- 2) Student fails qualifying exams twice
- 3) Failure to maintain continuous enrollment
- 4) Failure to meet conditional admission requirements
- 5) Student no longer has a sponsoring major professor
- 6) Student is not making satisfactory progress as reflected by unresolved unsatisfactory status on the Departmental Annual Review
- 7) Student Academic or Research Misconduct/Illegal, Fraudulent, or Unethical Behavior
- 8) Other serious issues as determined by the Graduate Committee

1) To remain in good academic standing, graduate students must maintain a graduate GPA of 3.0. Failure to maintain good academic standing will result in placement on academic warning, probation or dismissal. A graduate student whose cumulative graduate GPA falls below a 3.0 will be placed on warning, indicating academic difficulty. A graduate student on warning whose cumulative graduate GPA remains below 3.0 in the following semester will be dismissed. A graduate student will not be dismissed prior to attempting a minimum of 12 hours of coursework as a graduate student. The student has ten working days to appeal the dismissal decision.

2) Failure of a second attempt in the qualifying exams will result in the student dismissal. No appeal of dismissal under these circumstances will be considered.

3) Lapses in enrollment for two or more consecutive terms prior to advancement to candidacy for PhD or approval of the proposal for MS students will result in the student being dropped from the program. After a doctoral student is advanced to candidacy, continuous registration for at least 3 dissertation credit hours each term (including the summer term) is required until the dissertation requirement is fulfilled. For Master's degree students with an approved proposal, continuous registration for at least 1 thesis credit hour each term (including the summer term) is required until the thesis requirement is fulfilled. A student who finds it necessary to be excused from registration must formally request a leave of absence from the graduate program.

4) 10% of MS students admitted may be below the 3.0 UG60 requirement under a conditional admit. The student must earn a 3.25 GPA upon completion of their first 9 graduate credits within one year of being admitted, i.e. within 3 consecutive semesters. In the case of International F-1 students, however, they only have one semester to meet their condition since they must register for 9 graduate credits to meet the full time requirement. Students failing to meet the above conditions will be dismissed from the University and will not be able to petition for reinstatement. Ph.D. students who do not meet the UG60 requirement of 3.0 may be admitted if a petition to exception of graduate requirements is approved by the Dean of the College and UGS, but no conditions are attached to the admission. Under some circumstances students are admitted conditionally

with unofficial documents, pending receipt of the final official documents. If the official documents are not received by the middle of the first semester of attendance, the student will be dropped from the Program.

5) Faculty sponsors may decide that they are incompatible with a student or the student may wish to separate from the lab. If a faculty sponsor has decided that they are no longer willing to advise a student, they must immediately send a memo to the Graduate Office, copied to the student, stating they will no longer continue to be the student's advisor. If a student wishes to separate from a lab, they should immediately consult with the Graduate Program Director who will help them find a different sponsor, if possible. Students whose advisor has terminated their sponsorship or students who have left a lab have until the end of the semester to find an alternate sponsor before they will be dropped from the Program. Students who were admitted to the program on a research assistantship without promise of Departmental support will require a vote of the Graduate Committee to determine if TA support will be provided (if available) to allow the student to remain in the program under sponsorship of a new advisor without available grant support. The duration of such TA support would be determined at the discretion of the Graduate Committee on a case-by-case basis.

6) During the spring term, the student must schedule a meeting with his/her graduate reviewer, who is a member of the Graduate Committee. The purpose of this review is to insure that the student is on track with regards to the process of the graduate program (meeting program milestones, i.e., committee formation, committee meetings, memos in file, etc) to insure smooth and timely progress for the student as documented in the Biology Graduate Policy and Procedures Manual. Students who fail to meet Departmental milestones may receive an unsatisfactory review. Students who are supported by a teaching assistantship or research assistantship must obtain a satisfactory review to maintain their support for the next academic year. Students who receive unsatisfactory reviews and do not correct deficiencies by the end of the summer term will be recommended for dismissal from the Program. Students who have been dismissed must apply for readmission if they wish to complete their degree.

7) Students are bound by the codes of student and academic conduct as described in the FIU Student Handbook. University policies outline acts of student misconduct, which are expressly prohibited and violate University rules and regulations. These include such actions as disruptive conduct, theft or unauthorized possession, vandalism, hazing, falsification of records, harassment, and assault. Once a student has been charged with a code violation, he/she has three options: 1) administrative disposition, whereby the student may accept responsibility and a sanction is imposed by the judicial administrator; 2) a formal administrative hearing; 3) a formal hearing before the University Judicial Committee. The format for the formal hearings, the appeals procedures, and possible disciplinary sanctions are all outlined in the Student Handbook and may include dismissal. Separate policies and procedures govern academic misconduct. Academic misconduct (i.e., academic dishonesty) includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, falsification of academic records, bribery to gain academic advantage, and misuse of computer services, including the unauthorized appropriation of another's program(s). Disciplinary penalties for academic misconduct range from counseling to expulsion from the University. Allegations of academic misconduct are handled through Academic Affairs Office as outlined in the Student Handbook.

8) Other serious issues as determined by the Graduate Committee

**Appeal:**

Students dismissed from the Program have 10 business days to appeal to the Department of Biology Graduate Committee for reinstatement. If one of the committee members or the GPD has a conflict of interest with the student, the member in conflict will be replaced by the Associate Chair. The Committee will evaluate the appeal and render a decision within two weeks. Note that for reinstatement for dismissal of items 1 and 3, a

petition to UGS will also be required. Appeals from students failing their qualifying exams twice (2) and petitions from students not meeting conditional admit requirements (4) will not be considered.

**\*Re-admission:**

A period of at least one academic year must elapse after the date of dismissal before an application for admission will be accepted for consideration. In applications for re-admission, to the same program or admission to another program, admission criteria shall include consideration of previous performance at the graduate level in addition to the normal admission requirements. A student who has been dismissed for failure to make sufficient progress toward degree completion or for non-compliance with the continuous enrollment policy may submit an application for re-admission at any time prior to their time limit for degree completion. Re-admission of all doctoral students will require approval by the Dean of the University Graduate School.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **OBTAINING FLORIDA RESIDENCY**

To be considered for Florida residency, the student must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident, and independent (i.e., your parents do NOT claim you on their taxes and you file your own taxes). To apply for residency, the following information and any other documentation proving your ties to the state of Florida must be taken to the Registrar's Office to be reviewed. Residency may only be established prior to the beginning of your first enrollment term – after that point, you may not alter residency status. Therefore, it is extremely important to get the following items BEFORE YOUR FIRST TERM BEGINS.

Proof of Residency:

Florida Driver's License

Voter Registration Card

Florida Vehicle Registration

Declaration of Domicile (from a Dade County Court and signed by a Notary Public of Florida)

Proof of Independence (e.g., tax return)

Permanent Employment (e.g., a copy of your agreement with the University)

Residence during periods of non-enrollment

Lease/Own Home/Own Property

Checking Account with a Florida Bank

### **WITHDRAWAL/LEAVE OF ABSENCE/READMITTANCE**

Admitted graduate students who have not been registered for two consecutive terms, including the summer session, will be dropped from the graduate program and must apply for re-admission through the Graduate Admissions Office. Graduate students who withdraw voluntarily from their graduate studies are required to apply for readmission under the admission regulations in force at the time of reapplication.

If a student finds it necessary to be excused from registration in a graduate degree program for *two* or more consecutive terms he/she must formally request a leave of absence from the Graduate Program. Leave will be granted only under exceptional circumstances. When the student returns from a leave of absence, decisions concerning previous or current programs of study will be mutually agreed upon by the student's supervisory committee and the student.

A leave of absence does not extend the amount of time allotted for degree completion. The six years for the M.S. and nine years for the Ph.D. are calculated from the entry date in the program and do not take absence from the Program into account.

## **RESEARCH AND PATENTS**

The results of a graduate student's research could lead to a patent and the payment of royalties. The University claims no rights to patent royalties if the research is performed in a laboratory outside of the University under close cooperation with an outside advisor. The University insists, however, that the student receive a fair share of any financial benefits from such a patent. If the patented work was done in a University laboratory the University will own the patent and royalties will be distributed in accordance with the University Patent Policy.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The University has developed policies and procedures on the rights and responsibilities of students and a code of conduct assuring that these rights may be freely exercised without interference or infringement by others. The code of conduct, academic misconduct policies, student grievance procedures and policies on student records are reported in detail in the University publication Rights and Responsibilities of Students. Also, all administrative procedures and time deadlines must be met, whether or not they are specifically mentioned in this document. Students must operate within the rules and guidelines of the Graduate Policy and Procedures Manual, Graduate Catalog and the Regulations for Thesis and Dissertation Preparation Manual. Accordingly, graduate students should obtain copies of these publications from the Graduate Studies Office or visit the University Graduate School website ([gradschool.fiu.edu/index.shtml](http://gradschool.fiu.edu/index.shtml)) and be familiar with their contents. Particular attention should be paid to the deadlines posted annually in the University Academic Calendar.

## **FORMS AND MEMOS**

### **University Graduate School Forms**

**(available as PDF files at <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/student-forms.shtml>)**

#### **M.S. FORMS**

Form M-1	Appointment of Thesis Committee
Form M-1r	Appointment of Revised Thesis Committee
Form M-2	Master's Thesis Proposal
Form	CASE Annual Review Form (available from Biology Grad Office)
Form M-3	Preliminary Approval of Thesis and Request for Oral Defense
ETD Form	Approval of Defense, Thesis, and Electronic Submission of Thesis.

#### **Ph.D. FORMS**

Form D-1	Appointment of Dissertation Committee
Form D-1r	Appointment of Revised Dissertation Committee
Form D-2	Program for Doctoral Degree and Application for Candidacy
Form D-3	Doctoral Dissertation Proposal
Form	Student Evaluation and Mentoring Plan Form
Form D-5	Preliminary Approval of Dissertation and Request for Oral Defense
ETD Form	Approval of Defense and Electronic Submission of Dissertation.

# DEPARTMENTAL FORMS

## Student Progress Memo - First Committee Meeting

To: Graduate Committee

From:

Re: First Committee Meeting

Date:

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Panther ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Degree Earning:**  M.S  PhD

**Committee Members are as follows:**

*Please print names in this column .*

*Please put signatures below*

_____ <i>Major Professor</i>	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Form M-1/D-1 was completed and presented to the committee for signatures at meeting.**

Quantitative skills requirement will be fulfilled by: \_\_\_\_\_

The qualifying exam is scheduled for: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Qualifying Exam guidelines (attached) were reviewed with committee at meeting.**

Topics to be examined by individual examiners are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The proposal seminar is scheduled for: \_\_\_\_\_

Specific classes or any other conditions required by the committee are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## **QUALIFYING EXAMINATION - MS CANDIDATES**

Master's candidates must take and pass an oral qualifying examination in order to demonstrate adequate progress toward degree. Full-time students should complete the examination by the end of their first year in the program (first three terms, including summer term); part-time students must complete the examination before 18 credits have been completed. The exam shall cover at least three subject areas specified by the student's supervisory committee. The student must be informed of the subject areas at least one month prior to the date of the examination. The form and content of the qualifying examination are determined by the student's supervisory committee. Students should meet with all committee members twice before the exam. During the first meeting, the topics and readings should be assigned. Questions regarding the assigned materials can be covered during the second meeting.

A unanimous decision by the thesis committee in all subject areas examined is required to successfully pass the qualifying examination. Failure in any examination area constitutes a failure of the qualifying exam. Passing the qualifying examination may not be conditional; i.e., the student either passes or fails the exam and cannot be passed contingent on the satisfactory completion of courses or submission of research papers. On successful completion of the qualifying examination, a written summary signed by the major professor should be placed into the student's graduate file (available on the website).

Students who fail their first qualifying examination can petition the Biological Sciences Graduate Committee for a second examination. If the petition is granted, the second examination must be taken no earlier than one month and no later than four months after the first examination. The second examination may be either oral or written; this is at the discretion of the student's thesis committee. Students who fail the second examination are dismissed from the program.

## **CANDIDACY EXAMINATION – PhD CANDIDATES**

A candidacy examination is required of all students working toward the Ph.D. The candidacy examination has the goal to broaden and deepen the students' knowledge and scientific thinking in fields relevant to his/her research topic and more generally in the biological (and in some cases, related) sciences, thus ensuring the proper preparation of PhD candidates. Thus, the examination should be both rigorous and constructive with the intent of strengthening the student's scientific background and critical thinking skills.

The examination should be completed after a minimum of 18 credits in residence and no later than the sixth term of study (including the summer term). Written and then oral sections of the examination will be conducted in that order and evaluated by the dissertation committee. These exams will test the student's competence and mastery of his or her field of specialization.

The student's major professor acts as the chair of the committee and is responsible for scheduling written and oral examination sections, collecting exam questions, returning answers to the committee members and instructing outside committee members as to their responsibilities. The major professor must also communicate to the Graduate Office the exact date when the examination sections will be held. The student should meet with each committee member prior to the examination and request reading materials. All committee members without exception are required to provide questions for the written portion. The format and type of questions should be determined by the entire committee and communicated to the student at least two months prior to the examination. The written portion should precede the oral portion.

After the student completes the written portion, the major professor returns the answers to all committee members and requests feedback. Each committee member should provide feedback to the student about his/her performance in the written section and indicate which areas of concern will be included, among others, as topics of oral exam questions. The oral section should be scheduled only if all committee members *agree that the student can take the oral portion of the exam*. Failure to pass one or more subject areas of the examination constitutes a failure. Passing the examination cannot be conditional. The student either passes or fails on the performance on the exam and cannot be passed contingent on satisfactory completion of courses or submission of research papers.

If the student passes the written portion, the oral portion needs to be scheduled between one week to four weeks after the completion of the written portion. The oral portion must be held on the FIU campus. All committee members must actively participate in the examination (either in person or via *phone or* videoconferencing).

After completion of the candidacy examination, the student must submit form D2 to the Graduate office within one week indicating the results (Pass or Fail). Students who fail the examination are entitled to re-examination. Re-examination may be scheduled after a minimum of one and a maximum of two terms have passed. Failure of the re-examination results in dismissal from the Graduate program. The dissertation committee may also recommend that the student transfer to the M.S. program. A request to transfer must be submitted by the student and the major professor to the Graduate Committee.

**Department of Biological Sciences  
Student Progress Memo - Qualifying/Candidacy Exam**

**To: Graduate Committee, Biological Sciences**

**From:**

**CC:**

**Date:**

**Re: Qualifying/Candidacy Exam**

\_\_\_\_\_ took the qualifying exam on \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Student Name)* *(Date)*

*Degree Earning:*  *M.S*  *PhD*

He/She was examined on the following topics by:

TOPIC	EXAMINER'S SIGNATURE
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The committee was (unanimous / not unanimous) in assigning a passing grade for the examination.

(If the committee was not unanimous, it is the student's responsibility to request re-examination from the departmental graduate committee. The student's committee should indicate if they are in favor of re-examining the student.)

Comments: