

Department of Biological Sciences

UTEP

**General Handbook and Guidelines for
Master's Students**

For Planning and Advisement

31 January 2011

General Guidelines

Introduction:

Specific Graduate School and Department of Biological Sciences requirements are spelled out in the University Catalog, and the following guidelines are intended to supplement that document. The suggested schedule is for a two year program for Master's of Science (MS) Degree students. Appeals related to these guidelines will be handled on a case-by-case basis by the department's Graduate Committee. These guidelines are **not** proposed to burden you, but are intended to help you finish your degree program within two years. Students being funded as teaching assistants (**TA**) must normally enroll in at least 9 credit units of coursework per semester (3 hours during summer session), although during your last semester this requirement may be reduced. Also, it is imperative for graduate students wanting TA positions to inform the Graduate Secretary, **Annette Vasquez**; Bioscience Building 2.138; annettev@utep.edu; 747-7479 before the beginning of each semester; an e-mail memo requesting this information will be distributed to all graduate students before each semester begins. Make sure that the Graduate Secretary has your updated address, phone number, and e-mail address, if applicable. Remember that all MS students must bring an advising form to the Graduate Advisor before enrolling in classes each semester, including summer sessions. The Graduate Advisor is **Dr. Jerry D. Johnson**; Biology Building 214; jjohnson@utep.edu; 747-6984. The following is a list of required MS procedures and time-lines along with pertinent comments and suggestions.

First Semester:

Before registration, attend an advising session with the Graduate Advisor. Your background and your area of interest will determine your first semester course work. Specific deficiencies or conditions of acceptance, if any, were detailed in a letter included with your official acceptance letter from the Graduate School. A copy of that letter is in your departmental graduate folder kept by the graduate secretary. At the end of the advising session with Graduate Advisor, you should have a signed copy of your academic advising form so the advising hold for the semester can be removed, thereby allowing you to register for classes. **Holds need to be removed each semester before you can register.** A copy of the advising form will be placed in your departmental folder. Do not register for classes you were not advised to take and only the Graduate Advisor can sign the advising form (not your Thesis Advisor). Any changes to your registration form must have prior approval by Graduate Advisor before the official census day for the applicable semester.

During the beginning of the first semester if you have not already done so, learn as much as possible about the department and the research interests of various faculty members. It is beneficial to have a specific focus on your research interests and to select a **Thesis Advisor** as

soon as possible. In order to do this, you need to be aware of the research interests of the faculty and the general goals of the curriculum. Direct contact with a faculty member as a potential Thesis Advisor (Major Professor) is a necessity. Do not hesitate to contact several faculty members about your interest before selecting a Thesis Advisor. Some faculty members may have no room for additional graduate students in their labs at a particular time, thus the advisability to initially contact more than one to inquire into their program's availability.

By the middle of the first semester you should have picked your Thesis Advisor. The Thesis Advisor will then help you to form your Thesis Committee. Your Thesis Committee should consist of at least **three** members, including your Thesis Advisor, one other from the department, and one **must** be from outside the department; all three must be members of the Graduate Faculty. **Note: If you wish to have a faculty member from another university on your Thesis Committee, please notify the Graduate Advisor as soon as possible since the Graduate Advisor must petition the Graduate School to allow this person to serve on your committee; that individual must also be approved by the departmental Graduate Faculty.**

The Thesis Advisor and Graduate Advisor should be consulted when filling out the Preliminary Degree Plan (**DP – Form #1**). This Form lists tentative courses to be taken, a Thesis Committee, and must be signed by the Graduate Advisor and Dean of the College of Science and sent to the Graduate School for final approval; a copy will be placed into the students file in the Biology Office. The form should list at least 30 course units, 9 of which are required. The 9 required course units are 3 hours of Seminar (BIOL 5130; three separate courses) and 6 hours of Thesis (BIOL 5398 and BIOL 5399). BIOL 5398 should not be taken until the semester before you plan to graduate, normally the third semester on your DP form. BIOL 5399 should be taken during the semester you plan to graduate (fourth semester on your DP form). If for some reason you do not graduate during the expected semester, you must enroll in BIOL 5399 every semester until you do graduate. The remaining 21 hours of course units will be selected from 5000 level graduate courses and approved upper division undergraduate courses (3000 and 4000 level courses). It may also be possible to enroll in 6000 level courses (PhD level), with permission from your Thesis Advisor and from the faculty member teaching that course. Of the 5000 level graduate course units, no more than 6 units (two classes) can be in BIOL 5302 - Research in Biological Science; only once in the case of BIOL 5502. A maximum of 9 course units can be upper division undergraduate courses. Course units from outside the Department of Biological Sciences must have prior approval by the Thesis Committee and Graduate School.

Second Semester:

You must complete and file a **DP form** before registering for the second semester. Copies of that form, signed by the Graduate Advisor and Dean of Science, must be turned into the department office and a copy sent to the Graduate School for final approval. Holds must be

removed in Banner before you can register. During the second semester (or summer session), you should present a **Thesis Proposal** to your Thesis Committee for approval.

The Thesis Proposal is required and must be defended and approved before the **beginning** of your third full semester. **Note: You will not be eligible for a teaching assistant (TA) appointment for the third or subsequent semesters if you have not defended your thesis proposal.** The Thesis Proposal must be presented and approved by your Thesis Committee, and defended at least one semester prior to the final **Thesis Defense** (summer counts as one semester). Your Thesis Proposal will be presented as a written document and defended orally to your Thesis Committee and interested faculty and students at a prearranged time. Your Thesis Advisor must announce to the faculty that you will be defending your proposal on a given date, time, and location, and you are also required to place your written proposal in the Biology Office (Bioscience Building 2.120) for review at least five working days before the proposal will be defended; a copy of that memo will be placed in your file. After a successful defense, your committee will sign **The Proposal Approval Form (Proposal Defense, Form #2)** and submit a copy to Annette Vasquez or Juan Camacho for placement into your file in the Biology Office. A copy will also be sent to the Graduate School. If your Thesis Proposal is unacceptable to your Thesis Committee, the Committee will present in writing a document outlining necessary remedies needed to resolve the issues, which could include taking additional course work. You must then submit your revised Thesis Proposal to your Thesis Committee for approval. When approved, the Proposal Approval Form will be sent to the department office to be placed in your file and to the Graduate School.

Third Semester:

During the third semester, you should be well into your thesis research and enrolled in BIOL 5398 - Thesis. By this time your approved Thesis Proposal must be on file. Remember, students who want teaching assistantships will only be approved for a second year if the proposal is on file. Any conditions of acceptance into the program must also have been removed by the beginning of the third semester.

Fourth Semester:

During your fourth semester, you should be concentrating on finishing your written thesis, which should be completed and defended before the end of the semester. Make sure that you follow all directions and time-lines needed to be completed in order to graduate that semester (see below). Also, beyond that time, you may no longer be eligible for a teaching assistantship. You should obtain from the Graduate School a copy of the **“Guide for the Final Preparation of Thesis, Reports and Dissertations Submitted to the Graduate School.”**

During your thesis work, you should take advantage of the advice and guidance of your entire committee. You should be enrolled in BIOL 5399 –Thesis, during the fourth semester. Please note that members of your Thesis Committee have the right to **refuse** to meet with you or read your written thesis drafts if you are **not** enrolled for thesis hours. By the middle of the semester, all committee members should be provided a copy of your thesis draft for review and be in general agreement that it is ready to defend **before** a Thesis Defense date is set. Once a Thesis Defense date is agreed on, your Thesis Advisor needs to write a formal announcement to the departmental faculty contain date, time, and location for the defense, along with a copy of your written thesis (placed in the department office for comments), **at least one week** prior to the Thesis Defense. A copy of your formal announcement will be placed in your file. The copy of your thesis to be defended should be in nearly final form, so post-defense modifications will be minor in nature. If for any reason your thesis committee fails to approve your thesis defense or written thesis, you will be required to correct the deficiencies and defend or resubmit at a later date. This may require enrollment for an additional semester if necessary. Your thesis committee will provide you in writing a description of the deficiencies needed to be addressed before approving your thesis defense. You will only have the opportunity to successfully defend your written or oral thesis one more time. If unsuccessful for defending either the written or oral components, you will be given a letter from the Graduate Advisor stating that you will no longer be allowed to remain in the MS program in Biological Sciences.

During this final semester and after you have successfully completed the final defense, you must submit to the Graduate School the original **Defense Form (Thesis Defense, Form #3)** and **The Application for Graduate Degree (Form #4)**. You should provide copies of those forms to the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Secretary. In addition, a digital copy of your thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School within the time-line indicated for that semester for approval, including examination for correct style. It is also customary to provide a courtesy copy of a bound thesis to your Thesis Advisor, if requested.

FORMS

1. Degree Plan (*Form DrYr1*)
2. Proposal Approval Form (*Proposal Defense*) Biology Department only.
3. Defense Form (*THESIS Defense*)
4. Application for Graduate Degree

GRADUATE STUDENT EMPLOYMENT AND STIPENDS

Eligible graduate students at UTEP may be employed or supported by the University in a variety of positions reserved specifically for them. Eligibility criteria and applicable benefits depend upon whether the position or support is (a) salaried, (b) hourly, or (c) a stipend.

I. Salaried positions include the following

- Teaching Assistant
- Assistant Instructor (Doctoral Student)
- Research Assistant
- Research Associate (Doctoral Student)
- Graduate Intern

II. Eligibility Criteria for salaried positions:

Enrollment of at least nine semester hours (three hours in summer) for the term in course work listed on the PDP (Preliminary Degree Plan) or other upper Division or graduate-level work in the field of study. Exceptions to the nine hour rule may be made for the final term of enrollment,

- Admitted (either conditionally or unconditionally) to a degree program,
- Good academic standing,
- PDP approved and on file in the Graduate School,
- International Students seeking appointment as Teaching Assistants or Assistant Instructors who have not received in a university degree from a U.S. institution must have a TOEFL score of 600 if their work will include verbal contact with students.

III. Salaried Employees may be eligible for benefits if

- The appointment is for 50% time, and if
- The appointment is for the entire term

Benefits may include a variety of health and insurance programs through Human Resources Services.

Non-resident (including International) students who are eligible for benefits may be entitled to pay the resident tuition rate if the appointment is within their academic department or is directly supporting their academic degree. Students seeking a waiver of the non-resident tuition rate must submit the appropriate form, approved through their academic department, to the graduate school prior to the beginning of classes for the term.

IV. Stipends

Eligibility criteria to receive a stipend include:

- Enrollment of at least nine semester hours (three hours in summer) for the term in course work listed on the PDP or other upper division or graduate-level work in the field of study. Exceptions may be made for the final term of enrollment.
- Admitted to a degree program
- Good academic standing
- PDP approved and on file in the Graduate School
- Satisfactory progress towards the completion of the degree.

Stipend support does **not** constitute employment by the University. Student stipends do **not provide** University benefits. Non-resident students are **not** eligible to pay the resident tuition rate unless their stipend support has been specifically approved by the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Academic departments may request an application for approval from the graduate School.

	Teaching Asst. Asst. Instructor	Research Asst. Research Assoc. Graduate Intern	Asst (Grad) Student Asst.	Stipend
Minimum Enrollment LS/Summer	9/3	9/3	9/3	9/3
Admitted to Degree Program	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Good Academic Standing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DP on file	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TOEFL	600 TA	550	550	No
Maximum Appointment	50%	50%	20 Hrs/Week	–
Benefit Eligible	50% for whole term	50% for whole term	50% for whole term	–
Resident Tuition for Non-Residents	50% for whole term	50% for whole term	Yes	Stipend of \$1,000 Or more

Note: Per Graduate School: registration of 3 hours course work for summer is satisfactory.



The Graduate School
 Academic Services Building, Room 223
 The University of Texas at El Paso
 500 W. University Avenue, El Paso, Texas 79968
 (915) 747-5491 Fax (915) 747-5788
 http://www.utep.edu/graduate

DrYr3

Print Form

Thesis/Dissertation Proposal Form

Submit to the Graduate School for Processing

Consult your department regarding policies on proposal presentation. Please type information online and print for signature approval.

Name: _____ Student ID#: _____
 Email _____ Phone Number _____
 College: _____ Department: _____ Degree & Major _____
 Title of Proposal: _____ Date Proposal Defended: _____
 First Term of Thesis/Dissertation Enrollment: _____ Expected Term of Graduation: _____
 IRB: Does your research involve human subjects? If you answered yes, attach a copy of The University of Texas at El Paso **approved** IRB application. _____ Answer Verified by Thesis/Dissertation Advisor Initial & Date: _____

Graduate Studies Committee

The Graduate Studies Committee affirms that the candidate listed above has presented and successfully defended an acceptable research topic and has the academic and professional background to address the topic. We also affirm that the candidate has completed coursework requirements, only lacking the completion of the thesis or dissertation to satisfy degree requirements.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Signature</u>	<u>Date</u>
Chair:	_____	_____	_____
Co-Chair:	_____	_____	_____
Member:	_____	_____	_____
Member:	_____	_____	_____
Member:	_____	_____	_____
Member:	_____	_____	_____
Outside Member:	_____	_____	_____

Graduate School policy requires a minimum of three committee members: two from within the program/major and one from outside the program/major. Graduate School policy also maintains that committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty and requires the Committee Chair to be a permanent member of the Graduate Faculty. Departments or programs may impose additional membership criteria. You are responsible for adhering to policies of your department or program.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Signature</u>	<u>Date</u>
Candidate:	_____	_____	_____
Doctoral candidates please follow up by submitting form DrYr4 Application for Doctoral Candidacy to the Graduate School.			
Graduate Advisor:	_____	_____	_____
College Dean:	_____	_____	_____
Graduate School	_____	_____	_____

DrYr1 on file _____ DrYr2 on file _____



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Completion/Defense Form

Submit to the Graduate School

This is to certify that _____ Student ID _____

successfully passed the _____ administered on _____

Department: _____ College _____

Type of Degree Plan: _____

Title of Thesis,
Dissertation,
Project, etc. _____

Supervising Committee

Supervisor(s)	<input type="text" value="Name"/>	<input type="text" value="Signature"/>
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Committee	<input type="text" value="Name"/>	<input type="text" value="Signature"/>
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Supplementary Requirements (If applicable)

Supplementary Requirements Successfully Completed? _____

Description of Supplementary requirements: _____

Verified by (Name & Title) _____ Date _____

Graduate Advisor Signature & Date

College Dean Signature & Date

From#4 (Application for Graduate degree)



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Application for Graduate Degree

Submit to the Graduate School for Processing

Applicant Information Please Type or Print clearly

UTEP Student ID _____ Student E-mail Address _____

Name must match official University records on Goldmine. Your official name will be printed in the program, in the Prospector, and on the reader card.
IMPORTANT: If you have the "Confidential" indicator on your records, your name will NOT be published in the official UTEP commencement program nor released to the Prospector. Your college may not include your name in any pre-commencement materials nor include your picture and/or name in any department/college websites. If you want your picture and/or name included in ALL of these, please go the Registration and Records Office to release the "confidential" indicator from your records.

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Country _____ Phone Number _____

Your diploma will be mailed to your Mailing Address on file with the Registrar's Office. If required, update your address through Goldmine or at the Registrar's Office, ASB, Room 123. International Students please note that an additional fee must be paid for mailing a diploma outside the U.S.A.

Diploma Information Reenter your official name below only if accents or special characters are required. The Diploma Name matches the Official Goldmine Name.

First Name _____ Middle Name _____ Last Name _____

Graduation Information Expected term of Graduation _____ Select Ceremony in which you will participate

Fall/December Conferral _____ Spring/May Conferral _____ Summer/July Conferral _____ Spring Commencement Fall Commencement

Degree Information REQUIRED FIELDS - THE APPLICATION WILL NOT BE APPROVED IF THE SECTIONS BELOW ARE LEFT BLANK.

Attach a copy of your Degree Plan for verification purposes.

Degree _____ Major: _____ Concentration (if applicable) _____

Non-Thesis Thesis Dissertation Other

Title of Thesis/Dissertation _____

Scheduled Defense Date _____

Committee	Printed Name	Signature	Date
Chair	_____	_____	_____
Co-Chair	_____	_____	_____
Member	_____	_____	_____
Member	_____	_____	_____
Member	_____	_____	_____

Approvals: This student is a candidate for the degree and date indicated. All degree and major information on this application is correct

NOTE: Effective Fall 2010, a new application must be submitted if the student is unable to graduate as indicated above & graduation fees will be reassessed.

Student Signature & Date

Graduate Advisor Signature & Date

College Dean Signature & Date

Graduate School Signature & Date

On time application fee is \$30.00. Late fee is \$45.00. The Graduate School will post the Diploma Fee to your Goldmine account. You may then pay this fee online or at the Cashier's Office. Please allow one full business day for your fee to be posted.