

FINISHING YOUR DEGREE

Note: The Life Sciences Graduate Office is also known as the MMB Dept. graduate program office—Prince William campus, Occoquan Bldg., #416, 703-993-4263.

Advisor

If you do not already have one, you must choose a permanent advisor within your first 12 credits of coursework: Choose the faculty member you think will be the best mentor for you while you are working on your Project or Thesis. This decision should be based mostly on similar research interests. Get permission from her or him to be your permanent advisor and Committee Chair. Estimate with your advisor what will be your last semester of coursework. Inform the Life Sciences Graduate Office (LSGO) office at the Prince William campus of both advisor and last semester of coursework.

Program of Study

With your advisor's help, fill out a Program of Study (POS) form to be included in your file in the LSGO office. The POS states what courses you are taking in which semesters to fulfill particular degree requirements. You are to do this within the first 12 credits of coursework.

There is a range on the number of credits allowed for Project (1-3) and Thesis (3-6). The number of credits allotted to this portion is largely dependent on how many credits you still need to graduate. In this area, there is no actual correlation between the amount of work you do and the number of credits for which you are registered in any given semester.

If you do not finish the work for 798 (MS Project) or 799 (MS Thesis) in the semester you had planned, you *must* register for 799 again the following semester; you *may* register for 798 again the following semester if you need the credits. You will have a grade of "In Progress" until all work is completed.

Committees

You are also to form your supervising committee within your first 12 credits of coursework. Permanent advisors serve as committee chairs, and will help students make good choices regarding the balance of the student's committee members.

For the minimum number of committee members designated, members must be "Graduate Faculty" at GMU. Any GMU faculty member who is tenured or in tenure-track automatically has Graduate Faculty status. (Other faculty members *may* be granted this status. Please contact the LSGO office if a faculty member that you would like on your committee does not have this status.)

Some graduate programs in MMB require more than the University minimum number of committee members. Check the Committee Formation form for your program's requirement.

Research Compliance

Some students' research will need to be "cleared" by the Research Compliance unit in the Office of Sponsored Programs. It is the responsibility of the student and the committee chair to determine if his/her research falls into this category. All students must contact this office. See www.gmu.edu/pubs/osp/compliance.html

Department Chair

When any of your forms are ready for the signature of the Department Chair bring them to the LSGO office. Dr. Alan Christensen signs these, and he is difficult to reach. We will get his signature for you, but you must allow a two-week time frame for this. As an example, Individualized Sections Forms require the department Chair's signature, and are needed to register for 798 and 799.

MS PROJECT

Biology students must choose a second and third person for their Committee. Get signatures on the Committee Formation form, and bring the form to the LSGO office. Talk with your Committee about what you plan to do for your Project. Give them a Proposal in written form. If they approve, get their signatures on the Proposal Approval form, and bring it to the LSGO office.

After we have the signed Proposal Approval form in your file in the LSGO office, you can register for BIOL 798 (using an Individualized Section Form from the Registrar's website) to be effective the following semester to work on your Project.

At the conclusion of your Project, submit a written report to your Committee. Afterward, your Committee creates a Comprehensive Exam—both oral and written—based on your Project and your coursework. 798 is not completed until your Committee Chair has submitted a grade for the project, and a memo stating both exams have been passed before that semester's graduation date.

MS THESIS

You must have two other persons besides Chair to be on your Committee. One of these two additional persons *may* be from a department other than MMB. Get their signatures on the Committee Formation form, and bring the form to the LSGO office. The department Chair must approve the choices.

Talk with your committee about what you plan to do for your Thesis. Give them a Proposal in written form. If they approve, get their signatures on the Proposal Approval form, and bring it to the LSGO office. The department Chair must also approve.

After we have the signed Proposal Approval form in your file in the LSGO office, you can register for BIOL 799 (using an Individualized Section Form from the Registrar's website) to be effective the following semester to work on your Thesis.

Once you are registered for 799, you must remain continuously registered each spring and fall term until you graduate. (If you plan a summer graduation, you must

be registered in that summer.) The minimum number of 799 credits you must take in a semester is 3. Once you have 3 or fewer remaining to be taken, you must register for 1 credit per semester until the Thesis is completed.

Your thesis has to be submitted in certain format. Schedule a formatting review with the Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator in the Library, who will also help you determine the date your manuscript must be submitted.

Decide with your Committee the date you will defend your Thesis in a public seminar. (Your defense must take place before the manuscript submission date.) Let the LSGO office know so that it can be announced to the department at least one week ahead. Your Committee's assessment of your defense must also be approved by the department Chair. 799 is not complete until your Committee Chair submits a grade for this work.

Many of these topics are covered in more depth in the MS Biology FAQs on the MMB Dept. website:

http://www.gmu.edu/departments/mmb/acad_msbiol_FAQ.html

ALL THE FORMS, DOCUMENTS, AND CONTACTS MENTIONED ABOVE CAN BE FOUND ONLINE, EITHER ON THE MMB WEBSITE OR A CORRESPONDING GMU WEBSITE (REGISTRAR, LIBRARY, OSP, ETC.)

MMB Forms: Go to the MMB Dept. webpages. Click on Students, Graduate Students, Forms & Documents

You are responsible for knowing the information contained in the following websites:

Filing Intent to Graduate <http://registrar.gmu.edu/gif/>

CAS Graduation Checklists <http://cas.gmu.edu/cas/current/index.html>

Manuscript submission/GMU guidelines
<http://www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/dtwebguide>