

## 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.

### **Program of Study**

With the program director's help (Dr. Geraldine Grant), fill out a Program of Study (POS) form to be included in your file in the Life Sciences Graduate Office (LSGO) office. The POS states what courses you are taking in which semesters to fulfill particular degree requirements. This is to be in your file before you complete your coursework.

There is a range on the number of credits allowed for Proposal/Dissertation (12-24). 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.

Doctoral students and their advisors should think carefully about the division of credits between Dissertation Proposal (998) and Dissertation Research (999). The parameters are that the combined total of 998/999 is to be 12-24 credits; that no more than 6 credits of 998 are taken in any one semester; that no more than 12 credits of 999 are taken in any one semester; that registration in 999 is to be a minimum of 3 credits per semester, in continuous semesters (excluding summers). Once the student has 3 or fewer credits of 999 remaining, s/he may register for as little as 1 credit per semester until graduation. (Factor in one semester, prior to 999, just for the proposal review process.) If the Proposal or Dissertation is not completed when planned, a revised POS is then sent to the Dean's office.

### **Committees**

Permanent advisors serve as committee chairs, and will help students make good choices regarding the balance of the student's committee members. One committee member **must** be from a department other than Molecular and Microbiology.

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.)

The Biosciences PhD program requires a minimum of four committee members.

### **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](http://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. 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 998.

### **DOCTORAL/DISSERTATION**

Sometime between finishing your coursework and getting advanced to candidacy to work on your Dissertation Research, you must do the following:

#### Committee

With suggestions from your permanent advisor/Chair, find at least three other GMU graduate faculty members to be on your Committee. One of these *must* be from a department *other* than MMB. Obtain the members' signatures on the Committee Formation form, and bring the form to the LSGO office. The committee members must also be approved by the program director and by the Dean.

#### Program of Study

Get help from your permanent advisor/Chair in filling out the portion of your POS that deals with the number of credits to be devoted to 998 (Dissertation Proposal) and 999 (Dissertation Research). Send the POS electronically to [dstgerma@gmu.edu](mailto:dstgerma@gmu.edu) and Copy your advisor/Chair.

#### Qualifying Exam

Your Committee writes your Qualifying Exam, decides the subject areas and research skills to be tested, and decides whether or not there is to be an oral portion. Work with them on a good exam date for all, and an appropriate location.

#### Dissertation Proposal

Unlike the Master's programs, PhD students receive credit for work on their Proposals. When you have your Committee in place, your POS submitted, and are ready to work on this, register for BIOD 998. Work closely with your Committee as you are formulating your Proposal. Although continuous semester-to-semester registration in 998 is not necessary, the credits are not complete until your Committee has approved your Proposal, and it has passed a review by the program director, department Chair, and by the Dean. (In the meantime, you will receive grades of "IP".) If your Committee approves, get their signatures on the Proposal Approval form, and bring it with your proposal to the LSGO office. The LSGO office will pass these on to the program director and to the department chair. If they approve, the LSGO office will forward them to the Dean's office for review and approval.

### Advancement to Candidacy

Once everything else mentioned above has been successfully completed, the program director sends a memo to the Dean recommending your advancement to candidacy. The Dean's office will then confirm that all Qualifying Exam, Program of Study, and Proposal Approval paperwork is in order. Once confirmed, you will be formally advanced to candidacy. The Dean's office will send you a letter to this effect. ***IMPORTANT: Read "Nearing Graduation" on this website to ensure you are familiar with the advancement to candidacy process.***

### Dissertation Research

After being advanced to candidacy, use the "Dissertation 999 Code Request" form (available from the College of Science Dean's office website) to register for dissertation research and writing.

Once you are registered for 999, 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 999 credits you must take in a semester is 3. Once you have 3 or fewer remaining to be taken, you may register for 1 credit per semester until the Dissertation is completed.

Your dissertation must be submitted in a certain format. Therefore, your final semester must include 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. Consult <http://www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/dtwebguide.htm>

### Dissertation Defense

You have to have permission from your Committee to schedule a defense of your dissertation. If your Committee feels you are ready, the department Chair and Dean are given the opportunity to give approval as well. (The time needed for this must be factored in to your plans.) You decide on a defense date with your Committee.

Your defense must be announced to the University two weeks prior. For this announcement you are responsible for providing to the LSGO office an abstract of your dissertation along with the scheduling details—date, time, location—**at least one week prior to the two-week notice**. (The Dean's office is very strict about this: no full two-week announcement--no defense. Consequently, no abstract provided three weeks ahead to the department office--no announcement.)

After your public defense, your Committee will meet and make a decision as to your success. If you were successful your committee members sign the dissertation cover sheet. You are then responsible for walking your dissertation manuscript for the additional signature approval of the department Chair and of the Dean's office.

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/>

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