

**Rev. 8/7/2006**

## **FINISHING YOUR DEGREE BIODEFENSE STUDENTS**

The “MMB office” referenced in these directions refers to the graduate program offices on the fourth floor of the Occoquan Building at the Prince William campus. Diane St. Germain is in Room 416-A, and Mary-Margaret Flannery is in Room 416-C.

### **Advisor**

Choose the faculty member that you think will be the best mentor for you in anticipation of working together on your Project, Thesis, or Dissertation. This decision should be based mostly on similar research interests. Get permission from her or him to be your permanent advisor and Committee Chair. Tell the graduate program coordinator in the MMB office who this is.

Students admitted FL 06 and later will have this advisor confirmed upon admission to the program.

MS students pursuing the Course-Only option do not require a formal advisor, and should seek advisement, when necessary, from the MMB office.

### **Program of Study**

As soon as you can estimate your last semester of coursework, inform the MMB office.

As you near the end of your coursework, fill out a Program of Study (POS) form to submit to the MMB office. The POS states what courses you are taking/have taken in which semester to fulfill which requirements, and is an easy way to confirm you have taken the right courses and the right number of credits.

The portion of the POS for which you must state number of credits of Project, Thesis, or Dissertation is done in concert with your permanent advisor. The distribution is based on the number of semesters needed to complete your Project, Thesis, Dissertation Proposal, or Dissertation Research and Writing.

There is a range on the number of credits allowed for Project (1-3), Thesis (3-6), and 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.

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.

Doctoral students and their advisors should think carefully about the division of credits between Proposal work and Research. The parameters are that the

combined total of 998/999 is to be 12-24 credits; that no more than 12 credits are taken in any one semester; and 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 student does not complete the Proposal when planned, a revised POS must be submitted to the Dean's office.

### **Committees**

Permanent advisors/Chairs 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 Mary-Margaret in the MMB office if a faculty member that you would like on your committee does not have this status.\*

### **Research Compliance**

Some students' research involving human subjects will need to be "cleared" by the Research Compliance unit in the Office of Sponsored Programs. This is the responsibility of the student and the committee chair. Visit their website or contact their office to determine if your research falls into this category. Allow up to two months for a review process.

### **Department Chair**

Some registration forms require the Department Chair's signature. Examples are the forms needed to register for 780, 793, 798, 799, and 998. The program office can get the Dept. Chair's signature for you, but you must factor in a two-week time delay.

### **MS PROJECT**

You must choose a second person for your Committee. Get signatures on the Committee Formation form, and bring the form to the MMB 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 MMB office.

After we have the signed Proposal Approval form in your file in the MMB office, you can register for BIOD 798 effective the following semester to work on your Project.

At the conclusion of your Project, submit a written report to your Committee. Around the time of the conclusion of your Project your Committee will administer a Comprehensive Exam—both oral and written—covering your coursework and

possibly also covering your Project. 798 is not complete until your Committee has issued a grade based on both the Project report and on the Comprehensive Exam.

### **MS THESIS**

You must have two other persons besides the 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 MMB 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 MMB office. The department Chair must also approve.

After we have the signed Proposal Approval form in your file in the MMB office, you can register for BIOD 799 effective the following semester to work on your Thesis.

Once you are registered for 799, you must (excluding summers) remain continuously registered until you graduate. The minimum number of 799 credits you must take in a semester is 3. Once you have 3 or fewer remaining to be taken (based on your POS), you may register for 1 credit a semester. If you plan a summer graduation, you must be registered in that summer.

You must have 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 in advance of the manuscript submission date.) Let the MMB office know the date, time, location, and thesis title so that it can be announced to the department at least one week ahead.

Your Committee's assessment of your defense must be approved by the department Chair. 799 is not complete until your Committee Chair submits a grade.

### **MS COURSE-ONLY**

You can elect to complete your degree with 30 credits in coursework, without doing a Project or Thesis. You do not need a special advisor, or a committee.

In addition to the minimum 12 credits of core courses, minimum 2 credits of seminars (1 of each), and minimum 9 credits of additional BIOD courses (**excluding** independent studies or internships), take a minimum 7 additional credits in any BIOD courses or in the pre-approved elective courses. Submit a completed Program of Study to the MMB office at least two weeks before the Registrar's deadline to apply to graduate.

## **DOCTORAL/DISSERTATION**

In the time 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 two other GMU faculty members to be on your Committee. One of these two *must* be from a department other than MMB. (The Biodefense program has been allowed some exceptions in this regard, in which the “other department” person instead comes from outside the university; see Mary-Margaret for details.\*)

Get signatures on the Committee Formation form, and bring the form to the MMB office. The committee members must be approved by the program director and by the Dean, and will be forwarded to those persons by the MMB program office.

### 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). Have your advisor sign it, and then turn this in to the MMB office. The MMB office will pass it on to the program director and Dean.

### 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—date, time, and location are arranged by you and your committee chair.

Your committee chair is the primary “director” of your qualifying exam. If your chair has questions about the exam process, have him/her contact the MMB office.

### 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 with an Individualized Section form (printed from Registrar’s website).

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 Dean. (In the meantime, you will receive grades of “IP”.)

Once your Committee approves your proposal, get their signatures on the Proposal Approval form, and bring it and the proposal to the MMB office. The MMB office will pass these on to the program director and to the department chair. If they

approve, the MMB 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, and that your proposal has been approved. 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. Following the plan in your POS you must (excluding summers) maintain continuous registration with a minimum of 3 credits per semester. Once you have 3 credits remaining, you may register for 1 credit a semester. If you plan a summer graduation, you must be registered in that summer.

Your final semester must include a formatting review with the Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator in the Library, who can remind you of the date your manuscript is to be submitted.

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.) Then decide on a defense date with your Committee.

Your defense must be announced to the University two weeks prior. For this announcement you are to provide to the MMB office at least one week prior to that an electronic abstract of your dissertation with the scheduling details—date, time, location. (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.

### **\*IMPORTANT NOTE**

Because of the unique nature of the Biodefense program, some students have had difficulty securing a committee member from another department. The Dean's office allows

Biodefense students in that situation to bring in a committee member from outside GMU. For the period 3/22/06 through 5/15/08 Biodefense students will be allowed to form their dissertation committees with one professor to be tenure-track faculty in GMU and the rest to be external to the university, provided they have proper credentials.

Before this can be approved the outside person must be made Graduate Faculty. This "appointment" involves the review and approval of the program director, the Dean's office, and the Provost's office.

The outside person you choose should be someone your committee chair approves, and should have a PhD. and relevant scholarly experience in a field related to potential biodefense research topics.

Provide M.M. with full contact information for this person including a mailing address, e-mail address, electronic version of her/his curriculum vitae, and the name of your committee chair.

If your committee comprises all GMU faculty who are tenure-line (or already made Graduate Faculty), you do not need this special Dean review. Simply submit to our office the Committee Formation Form with their signatures.

The Chair of these Committees does not need to be GMU faculty.

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: MMB Dept. webpages...Students...Graduate Students...Forms & Documents

**You are responsible for knowing the information contained in the university catalog and in the following websites:**

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

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