

Biology Graduate Program – Non-thesis option – Degree Requirements

About This Page

The material on this page represents the official policies of the Department of Biological Sciences. Please note that admission and degree requirements and deadlines in the university catalog or on the Research and Graduate Studies Web page may be incomplete. Applicants and students must follow the guidelines below.

In addition to the formal requirements, this page also includes practical information originally compiled in the Graduate Student Handbook. We hope that you can find the information you need on these pages. If not, please don't hesitate to ask other graduate students, faculty, or the graduate coordinator ([Dr. Kyle Piller](mailto:kpiller@selu.edu), 404 Biology Building, 985-549-2191, kpiller@selu.edu). Lastly, if you notice important areas that were omitted, please bring them to Dr. Piller's attention.

Degree Requirements- Non-thesis Option

Minimum requirements for the Master of Science Degree (without thesis) in Biology are:

1. Coursework

Students must complete thirty-six hours of approved courses in Biological Sciences, including four hours of Non-Thesis Research Problems (GBIO 661) and two hours of Seminar (GBIO 691). The student must earn at least one-half (i.e., 50% or more) of their total graduate credit from graduate courses at the 600-level. Credit from courses at the 500-level may be no more than 50% of total graduate credit. Also, no more than 10 hours of transfer credit can be applied to the degree plan. Students may take up to eight hours of approved courses from other departments at Southeastern. All degree requirements must be completed within six years.

2. Grade Point Average

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in all graduate work, as well as, no more than 6 hours with grades of C in the degree plan. Grades below a C are not accepted for graduate credit.

3. Comprehensive Exam

Students must pass an oral or written comprehensive exam based on graduate coursework during the last semester and/or after 30 hours of completed coursework.

4. Research Paper

Students must write a research paper based on the original research conducted in conjunction with GBIO 661. The paper must be approved by the Graduate Faculty advisor and the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee.

5. Seminar

Students must present an oral presentation to the Department based on original research conducted in conjunction GBIO 661. The presentation must be approved by the Graduate Faculty advisor and the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee.

6. Degree Approval

Recommendation for degree must be approved by the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee, Graduate Coordinator, Department Head, and Graduate Dean.

7. Paperwork

Completion of necessary paperwork including, but not limited to, the following: 1) Degree Plan; 2) Non-Thesis Research Agreement Form; 3) Application for Candidacy; and 4) Application for Graduation.

NOTE: More details on these requirements are given below in "Major Steps and Target Dates- Non-Thesis Option". It is the student's responsibility to keep abreast of any changes in these procedures.

Grade Requirements, Probation, and Suspension

Graduate students are expected to maintain a 3.0 grade point average. A student whose semester GPA is below 3.0 will be placed on probation. Probation status will be retained as long as the student's cumulative grade-point average is below 3.0. A student on probation may not enroll in graduate courses for Pass/Fail and must achieve a 3.0 semester grade-point average during the next semester of enrollment (including the summer term) or be suspended from graduate studies. Application for readmission may be made after one semester of suspension by submitting the appropriate form (available from the Graduate Coordinator) to the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies. After a second suspension, the student

must wait one calendar year before applying for readmission. A third suspension results in final expulsion from the program without possibility for reapplication.

Graduate Program Personnel

This is the cast of characters relevant to graduate students (see also [Graduate Faculty](#)).

Graduate Coordinator

The Graduate Coordinator ([Dr. Kyle Piller](#)) is the administrative leader of the graduate program. His responsibilities include processing application materials within the department, advising new graduate students regarding course selection during the first semester, advising the student in the selection of a major professor, administering the oral and written exams, providing necessary forms, maintaining a file for each graduate student, checking the final degree plan to verify that all course work is completed, attending the thesis defense, and approving the final copies of the thesis.

Department Head

The Department Head ([Dr. David Sever](#)) is the administrative leader of the Department of Biological Sciences. With regard to the graduate program, his responsibilities include attending the thesis defense, approving the final copies of the thesis, appointing and supervising all teaching assistants, and approving all budget expenditures.

Dean of Research and Graduate Studies

The Dean (Dr. Jerald Ainsworth, jainsworth@selu.edu) must approve and sign all forms pertaining to teaching assistantship appointments and degree plans.

Non-Thesis Advisory Committee

The non-thesis advisory committee (Drs. Shaffer, Shockett, and Watson) coordinates the non-thesis program, with Dr. Erin Watson serving as the Non-Thesis Degree Coordinator. Their responsibilities include advising non-thesis students, approving degree plans, and administering exams. Non-thesis students may work closely with other Graduate Faculty members, but do not need a Major Professor or Thesis Committee.

Major Steps and Target Dates- Non-Thesis Option

These steps apply to all graduate students intending to complete a Master of Science Degree, Non-Thesis Option in Biological Sciences.

1. Apply for admission.

Degree-seeking students must apply to the Department of Biological Sciences (see [Applying](#)). Acceptance into graduate school does not automatically assure acceptance into the graduate program in Biological Sciences. Departmental application deadlines are 15 November (to begin in the spring) and 1 February (to begin in the summer or fall). Applications submitted after these deadlines may be considered for acceptance on a case-by-case basis; however, late submissions potentially will not be considered until after the beginning of the following semester. Departmental assistantships are generally not offered to non-thesis students, but students interested in applying should submit applications by 15 November or 1 February.

2. File Proposed Degree Plan.

New students should meet with a member of the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee to put together a degree plan. This form must be approved by the Graduate Coordinator and filed with the Office of Research and Graduate Studies by the beginning of the second semester of enrollment.

3. File Non-Thesis Research Agreement and Research Proposal.

By the end of the first year of coursework, the student must arrange with a Graduate Faculty advisor to conduct a non-thesis research project. The project will count as four hours of GBIO 661 (Non-Thesis Research Problems). In order to be eligible to register for GBIO 661, the student must submit the following paperwork to the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee: 1) a brief research proposal describing the project to be conducted that has been approved by the Graduate Faculty advisor and Non-Thesis Advisory Committee, and 2) a Non-Thesis Research Agreement form to be signed by the Graduate Faculty advisor and the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee. The Non-Thesis Advisory Committee and the Graduate Faculty advisor must approve the project in advance.

NOTE: Students will not be allowed to register for GBIO 661 until the appropriate paperwork has been approved and filed with the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee.

4. Conduct research.

Following submission and approval of the Non-Thesis Research Agreement by the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee and Graduate Faculty advisor, the student will conduct the non-thesis research project according to the accepted proposal. GBIO 661 Non-Thesis Research Problems must be successfully completed no later than one semester prior to graduation.

5. Prepare a research paper†.

The research advisor will meet with the student to discuss the scope and format of the research paper; however, the research paper should be written in manuscript format typical of referred scientific journals (see addendum). The Graduate Faculty advisor must approve the research paper before the research seminar can be scheduled.

6. Present a research seminar†.

After completion of the research, the student will present a brief (20-30 minute) seminar to the Department describing the work. Students must contact the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee to arrange a seminar time. The seminar shall be conducted in a professional manner and must be approved by the Non-Thesis Advisory Committee.

7. Pass the comprehensive exam†.

After 30 hours, or in the last semester of coursework, students must pass a comprehensive oral or written exam based on graduate coursework. The exam will include questions from three to four faculty from whom the student has taken courses. Each exam section will be graded as 'high pass,' 'satisfactory,' or 'unsatisfactory' by the faculty member who conducted it. The student must receive an overall average of 'satisfactory' to pass the exam. Students not passing the exam may take it again the following semester. Students not passing the exam on the second attempt will be dismissed from the program.

†NOTE: Students must successfully complete the comprehensive exam, seminar, and research paper submission prior to 1 November or 15 April in order to graduate during the fall or spring semesters, respectively.

8. Complete all course requirements and correct all deficiencies.

Please be advised that students will be given only ONE opportunity to repeat the comprehensive exam and/or seminar in the event of an unsatisfactory performance prior to dismissal from the Program.

9. Apply for graduation.

Graduation Forms are available from the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. Application deadlines will be around the second week of each semester, and will include a \$10 non-refundable diploma fee due at the time of submission. The student must reapply for graduation and pay the fees if he/she does not graduate as planned. As part of the exit procedure, students are required to fill out an exit survey and/or complete other Departmental exit forms.

In practice, the best way to ensure that all administrative details are followed correctly is to talk to students who have recently graduated from the Program. Lastly, stay informed because it is possible to overlook a minor detail that will ultimately preclude graduation for a semester.

Addendum

Below are guidelines for preparing a research paper and presentation of a research seminar.

Research Paper

Follow the stated guidelines for 'manuscript submission and preparation' from a representative referred scientific journal from the biological sciences. For example, the Journal of Medical Entomology (J. Med. Entomol.) requires the following sections: Abstract, Introduction, Material and Methods, Results, Discussion, Acknowledgements, and References Cited. In addition, information on how to insert citations in the text, construction of figures and tables, use of scientific names and authorship, etc. will be outlined in the journal's guidelines. Overall, be sure that the paper is written according to the rules of scientific writing.

Research Seminar

The research seminar should be between 20 to 30 minutes (maximum) and should have the following format: Introduction stating background information, hypothesis, research objectives, etc.; Materials and Methods; Results; and Discussion.

Tuition and Fees

A complete listing of tuition and fees for SLU graduate students is available from the registrar's office. In general, students holding [Graduate Assistantships \(GA\)](#) (see Financial support below) have all of their in- and out-of-state tuition waived, and are responsible only for paying registration fees. Students without GAs must pay tuition in addition to these fees. Fees tend to change from semester to semester; see the Graduate Coordinator, a current catalog, or the university home page for additional details.

Financial Support

Qualified graduate students can apply for teaching assistantships (TAs). These provide a complete tuition waiver (in and out-of-state) plus a stipend for teaching laboratory sections of undergraduate courses. The minimum stipend for a TA is currently \$2200, but most semesters we are able to offer about \$3000. Many TAs also receive some support during the summer, usually about \$1000 plus tuition. TAs are generally required to devote 20 hours per week to duties assigned by the Department Head and Graduate Coordinator. TAs must be enrolled full time, for at least 6 credits in the spring and fall and 3 credits in the summer. We know that this support is low; we are actively campaigning to the administration for higher stipends. Some graduate faculty offer additional support to their students through research grants. Salary and responsibilities are determined by the nature of the research project. In other cases, students receive Research Assistantships (RA's) instead of teaching.

Teaching assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis. The graduate faculty will rank the candidates according to several criteria including GRE scores, grade point average, letters of recommendation, and the selected discipline of the student. Usually the department will be committed to the financial support of selected teaching assistants for a period of two years, provided adequate funds are available and the student is making satisfactory progress toward the degree. Financial support will be extended for a third year if the student is making satisfactory progress towards the degree. In practice, this support is usually extended, so a Regular status TA making acceptable progress can count on six semesters of support. Teaching assistants, as well as other graduate students, are expected to present themselves and act in a manner which is a credit to the teaching profession. This should include the wearing of appropriate attire during their periods of classroom instruction and adherence to the University's professional code of ethics.

Other forms of financial aid may be available to some students in the form of fellowships or scholarships. For additional information, contact the Graduate Coordinator or the campus [Financial Aid Office](#).

Ethics

Graduate students in the Department of Biological Sciences are bound by the ethical standards given below. Teaching Assistants should also be cognizant of the specific responsibilities which accompany their position.

- 1) All students should be committed to upholding general standards of professional conduct. Fabrication of data, plagiarism, receiving prohibited outside assistance with graded assignments, and cheating on exams are considered to be extremely serious breaches of conduct that will result in the immediate dismissal of the student from the program. Students having specific knowledge that other members of the department have violated this code of ethics are honor-bound to report such violations to their Major Professor or the Graduate Coordinator immediately. If you are unable to fulfill this obligation, then you should not attend this university.
- 2) Students should deal seriously and conscientiously with teaching assignments, including careful planning of courses, preparation of lectures, regularity in meeting scheduled classes, clearly informing students of course requirements and the grading system, and fair and impartial grading according to standards established by the University.
- 3) Teaching Assistants must recognize that students deserve respect as individuals and that they have certain rights that must be protected. This includes courteous treatment of students in class and during office hours.
- 4) Students should recognize that the Teaching Assistant serves as a model and exercises a great influence in shaping the minds of students. The teacher must set a high standard in academic and professional excellence, personal integrity, and professional ethics.
- 5) Teaching Assistants should recognize that in his or her influential position in the classroom he or she is morally and ethically bound not to introduce into the classes discussions of subject matter outside the scope of the course and not within the field of his or her professional competence.

Violation of the Code of Ethics may be grounds for termination of the assistantship or dismissal from the University.

Equipment and Supplies

Teaching equipment and supplies

Materials needed for teaching are available for all TAs. Expendable office supplies are available at the departmental office. More specialized supplies are generally available in the lab where you teach, or can be ordered by Frank Campo, General Biology Lab Coordinator. Check with him if you lack something you feel is essential. Equipment such as

overhead projectors, video recorders, movie projectors, and slide projectors are available through the departmental office and the Center for Faculty Excellence. You should make your needs known to office personnel at least an hour prior to class.

Research equipment

With few exceptions, the department does not maintain a centralized equipment storage area; equipment for research is generally made available through specific faculty members.

Departmental Services

Mailing

Normally, the department will pay postage for professional mailings such as submission of manuscripts, requests for information from colleagues, registration for meetings, etc. All mail must have a Biology Department return address and budget number (1125), and be placed in the outgoing mailbox in the main office. Mail is normally delivered to the SLU post office in the mid-afternoon.

All graduate students are provided with a departmental mailbox, located in the Biology office. Mail is usually delivered in the late morning. The department address should not be used for personal mail unrelated to graduate program or department activities.

Telephones

Telephones for local calls are available in the graduate student offices. Graduate students may also use the phone in the department office for their professional long-distance calls. With permission, students may also utilize their Major Professor's phone for professional calls. Long-distance personal calls are not permitted.

Vehicles

The department has two vehicles for research and class field trip use: a pickup truck and a 15 passenger van. Regulations regarding the use of these vehicles are available through the departmental office. Students wishing to use these vehicles must have completed the University Driver's Education Course, and must reserve the vehicles ahead of time. The Department Head must approve all requests for using the departmental vehicles. University vehicles may be requested through the Physical Plant, by completing a University Reservation Request. Both the department Head and the Physical Plant must approve this request. Driving the 15-passenger van requires a chauffeur's license.

Xeroxing

Materials for the courses you are teaching may be duplicated without permission, as may brief professional materials. Students may not copy books, monographs, or other lengthy materials without the permission of the Major Professor or the Department Head.

A) Preferred Procedure--Obtain and fill out a "Xerox Request Form" from the office. Take the form and the originals to "The Document Source" in the Student Union.

B) Alternative Procedure--If you have missed the 24 hour deadline, use a xerox card and copy machine in room 329 Biology Building. This card should also work in the library.

NOTE: It is assumed that students will use this service responsibly. Failure to follow these procedures will result in permanent loss of xeroxing privileges.

Obtaining Keys

Graduate students may acquire keys to the buildings, their offices, general laboratories in which they teach, and other specialized facilities (e.g. the museum, herbarium) if their work requires access to them. Request keys using a Service Request form, available at the Department office. **DO THIS IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL ON CAMPUS! KEY REQUESTS TAKE A MINIMUM OF ONE WEEK TO BE FILLED.**

When the keys are ready, you must go to the Physical Plant to pick them up. There is no charge to get keys, but you must return all of them in order to graduate. If you have lost any, you will be charged dearly so that the locks and keys for everyone else can be changed.

Department Stationery

Students should understand that use of departmental stationery implies the approval of the university. Thus, letters expressing the personal viewpoint of the student (e.g., letters to the editors, etc.) should not be written on letterhead without the approval of the Department Head. Use of departmental letterhead in an unauthorized manner may result in severe disciplinary action.

Library Facilities

All library materials are centrally located in Sims Memorial Library. The Reference Department, Interlibrary Loan, Card Catalog and Circulation Desk are located on the first floor. The reading room on the second floor contains the current, unbound issues of all journals. Microfilm and microfilm readers are located in this room. The audio-visual center and microcomputer lab are also located on the second floor. The third floor houses bound journals and government documents. Books are located on the library's fourth floor.

In addition to housing an good collection of biological journals, the library has an Interlibrary Loan service for the convenience of faculty and student researchers. Most articles requested through interlibrary loan are provided without charge, although a fee is required for certain articles.

Other computer searches are available and can be requested at the Reference Desk. Of all available searches, the most useful for most biology graduate students is BIOSIS, which searches Biological Abstracts. An added advantage of BIOSIS searches is that they are conducted without charge to the user! Be sure to tell them that you are conducting a graduate research project, or you may be charged for the service.

Many faculty and graduate students also take advantage of the convenience of having the LSU Middleton Library within one hour's drive of campus.

Research with Animals or Wild Plants

All research conducted by SLU faculty and students is subject to regulations established by the [Institutional Review Board \(IRB\)](#) and the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee \(IACUC\)](#). The IRB reviews research protocols that involve human participants, and hazardous or controlled substances, and the IACUC, protocols involving non-human vertebrate animals. These committees evaluate the ethical, safety, and legal implications of research and classroom activities conducted by individuals affiliated with Southeastern. This review process is intended to protect the researcher/instructor by ensuring proper adherence to guidelines and regulations. The policies and procedures followed by the IRB and IACUC exist to guide individuals in the ethical and legal responsibilities set forth by federal and state governmental statutes and by the University.

Please visit the [IRB](#) or [IACUC](#) web sites to obtain forms or contact the [IRB](#) and [IACUC](#) representatives for more information.

Biology Graduate Student Organization

Graduate students in Biology are automatic members of this organization, the purpose of which is to provide graduate students the opportunity for exchanging information, getting acquainted, and for official representation in departmental and university business. Recently, the organization has recommended future graduate courses, has held various socials and field trips, and has received financial support through the university Student Government Association for members to present papers, attend scientific meetings, and invite distinguished scientists to the Biology Department Seminar Series. All graduate students are encouraged to participate in this important professional society.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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