

# M.S. in Biology: Steps to complete your degree

## Department of Biological Sciences, Western Illinois University

### Thesis Plan

Student will conduct an independent thesis research project with an advisor. Advisor must be selected before admission or by the end of the first semester

#### First Semester

- Meet with your research advisor to define your coursework plan and research project
- Start preparing research proposal (enroll in BIOL576)
- Start research project in coordination with research advisor

#### Second Semester

- Define graduate committee and meet at least once a semester with committee to discuss progress
- Present thesis proposal to graduate committee
- Make progress in your research (enroll in BIOL600)
- Students are eligible to apply for graduate funds
- Plan on presenting at the Graduate Symposium and the Bio Research Symposium (Spring semester)
- Start outline of your thesis

#### Third Semester

- Submit your degree plan, thesis proposal, and graduate committee forms for approval
- Continue research (enroll in BIOL600)
- Start data analysis and thesis document in coordination with your research advisor
- Complete the majority of your classes by this semester
- Start preparing for exit exam

#### Fourth Semester

- Register for BIOL601 –exit course (only once)
- Apply for graduation and check all your deadlines
- Finish thesis in coordination with research advisor
- Send approved thesis to the committee members
- Schedule seminar, thesis defense, and exit exam two weeks after thesis was sent to the committee
- Send seminar and thesis defense announcement to the department secretary. Reserve WG365 for your defense.
- Defend thesis and pass exit exam
- Complete corrections of your thesis
- Send approved thesis with signature page to the graduate coordinator
- Upload thesis online after approval from graduate coordinator and your research advisor
- Complete department clearance form

### Non-Thesis Plan

Advanced Biological Project (ABP) or Coursework (CW)  
Internship and Research Experiences

#### First Semester

- Consult with graduate coordinator if necessary to define courses and degree plan
- Discuss with potential mentors research opportunities to work on a specific project, gain new skills or complete an internship outside the department (e.g. BIOL477, BIOL595)

#### Second Semester

- Define graduate committee and meet at least once a semester to discuss progress
- ABP-start discussion about project with advisor
- CW- seek hands-on and internship opportunities
- Students are eligible to apply for graduate funds
- Plan on presenting at the Graduate Symposium and the Biology Research Symposium (Spring Semester)

#### Third Semester

- Submit your degree plan, committee form and project proposal for approval
- ABP-work on project in coordination with your mentor
- CW-continue working on your courses, complete an internship, gain research skills in a lab
- Define graduate committee and start preparing for exit exam in consultation with your committee

#### Fourth Semester

- Apply for graduation and check all your deadlines in the department and university
- Present project report or internship experience report
- ABP - complete project report and send approved project to the committee members
- Schedule exit exam two weeks after report was sent to the committee
- Send seminar and project defense announcement to the department secretary
- Register for BIOL599 and pass exit exam
- Complete corrections of your report
- Send approved project with signature page to the graduate coordinator
- Complete department clearance form

**Deadlines:** Apply for Graduation: Spring (March 10), Summer (June 10), Fall (Oct 10)  
Graduate Grant Deadlines: Sept 15 (Fall), Feb 15 (Spring).

**Forms:** Send Degree Plan and Committee Form to graduate studies

Send Proposal and Department Clearance Form to [gradbio@wiu.edu](mailto:gradbio@wiu.edu)

**Graduate coordinator:**

Dr. Chris Jacques

Email: [gradbio@wiu.edu](mailto:gradbio@wiu.edu)

Phone: 309-298-2155

