

**DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE**

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK
AY 2016 – 2017

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Welcome Statement

Congratulations on being accepted into the graduate program in the Department of Biological Sciences here at UAA. We are excited to have you as a member of our graduate program, and hope that you will enjoy your time in our department.

The mission of the M.S. Program in Biological Science is to train developing life scientists to discover new knowledge through rigorous scientific experimentation and critical reasoning. The program is designed to train students in the theory and practice of biology and prepare students for careers in the life sciences, including basic and applied research fields. To achieve this mission, the Biological Science M.S. Program will:

- Provide quality graduate instruction that teaches the practical and theoretical basics of biological research, including experimental design and field-specific content.
- Provide training in skills required for careers in science, including critical thinking, scientific writing, grantsmanship, classroom teaching, and others that in combination will promote success in academia, applied research or other scientific careers.
- Provide support and mentorship for graduate student research and creative activities.
- Provide well-equipped laboratories or other facilities essential to productive student research.

This Graduate Handbook was developed by the Department of Biological Sciences' Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) with help from past graduate students in order to assist you as you progress through your degree. Here you will find guidance on the paperwork and procedures that you must follow in order to remain in good standing, and to graduate in a timely fashion.

The Biological Sciences Department at UAA offers one in-house degree, a Master's of Science in Biological Sciences, and the guidelines provided here deal primarily with students in the M.S program. Additionally, we participate in a cooperative Ph.D. program with various departments at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Students in this program are officially UAF students, and must follow the guidance provided by the department at UAF with which they are affiliated. However, as a cooperative Ph.D. student housed at UAA, we recognize you as our students, and require that you keep our program abreast of your progress as well. Separate guidance on how to do this is provided throughout this handbook.

As you make your way through your degree, your first and most important advocate will be your graduate advisor. Your advisor is there to provide assistance and guidance on your research, coursework, and paperwork. However, as a graduate student you are making the transition from student to trained professional, and as part of this progression you should recognize that ultimately you are responsible for meeting all requirements and completing all paperwork. Should you have questions that your advisor can not answer, or questions / issues that you do not want to discuss with your advisor, there are several routes open to you. If the issues revolve around departmental graduate policies (such as are outlined in this manual), your next advocate is either the Chair of the Graduate Affairs Committee and / or the Department Director. Beyond them or if the concerns center on graduate policies set by the University or Graduate School, you can also discuss concerns with the Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies, and the staff in the Graduate School.

Basic Information

- UAA's graduate policies and procedures can be found in the UAA Graduate Student handbook developed by the Graduate School which is online at:
<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/>
- Note that the departmental handbook reflects the policies published in the 2016-2017 UAA Course Catalog at the time the handbook was written. Graduate students must comply with the policies in place at the time they were admitted or in place the semester they graduate. Online copies of current and past catalogs can be found online under the course catalog link on the main UAA webpage, or at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/students/registrar/catalogs/>
- The Department of Biological Sciences operates a number of listservs that allow us to communicate important information to our students and faculty. These include the Biology-General, the Biology-Seminars, and the Biology-Grad-Students listserv. You can sign up for these by selecting the various listservs at <http://lists.uaa.alaska.edu/mailman/listinfo>
- Graduate students can sign up to receive important emails from the Office of Graduate Studies regarding campus events; internship and financial aid opportunities and other information just for graduate students. To subscribe to the **Graduate_students** listserv, please go to <http://lists.uaa.alaska.edu/mailman/listinfo>.
- Graduate students can also participate in **The Graduate Student Association (GSA)**, which represents the interests of all students wishing to attain advanced degrees by communicating with the university administration to effect positive change. The GSA strives to make UAA a more competitive institution by maintaining a living wage, adequate health insurance, sufficient resources, and administrative support for all graduate students. In addition, the Graduate Student Association provides a supportive community for students in all colleges and departments. For more information about the GSA, visit their website at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/graduate-student-association/>
- The **Graduate Student Health Insurance Plan** is a benefit provided to graduate students who are on a research (RA) or teaching (TA) assistantship or a University Fellowship. The University (for TAs) or research grants (for RAs) typically pay the policy on behalf of the student (may vary with award conditions). Eligible graduate students must enroll with the Graduate School by submitting copies of their assistantship/fellowship letter and FERPA certificate (for TAs). It is the student's responsibility to enroll in the Graduate Student Health Insurance Plan and submit all necessary documents to the Graduate School no later than one week after the start of the semester.

Useful Contacts

At the Graduate School (Administration Bldg., STE 200)

- Dr. Helena Wisniewski, Dean of the Graduate School
 - Tel: 907-786-4833; hswisniewski@alaska.edu
- Elisa Mattison, Director of Graduate Programs
 - Tel: 907-786-1096; esmattison@alaska.edu

At the College of Arts and Sciences (Social Sciences Bldg., STE 335)

- Dr. John Stalvey, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences
 - 907-786-1708; jstalvey@alaska.edu
- Dr. Patricia Linton, Ph.D., Senior Associate Dean for Academics
 - 907-786-1751; pwlinton@alaska.edu

In the Department

- Dr. Cheryl Wilga, Director of the Department of Biological Sciences
 - 907-786-1726; cwilga@alaska.edu
- Dr. Jennifer Burns, Chair, Graduate Affairs Committee
 - 907-786-1527; jmburns@alaska.edu
- Dr. Jonathan Stecyk, Co-Chair Graduate Affairs Committee
 - 907-786-4791; jstecyk@alaska.edu
- Luis Chavez Jr., Administrative Assistant
 - 907-786-7762; lchavezjr@alaska.edu
 - This person can help with all departmental and coursework paperwork. They maintain your graduate student files (with copies of all reports and paperwork).

Other Support Staff

1. Krystal Haase, Building Manager, CPISB
 - a. Krystal can help with all facility related questions (key cards, building / lab access, physical plant problems etc.)
 - b. 907-786-1264; kkhaase@alaska.edu
2. John Moore, Radiation Safety Officer & EBL Building Manager
 - a. John can help with physical plant and access issues for EBL, with chemical ordering and tracking, and with facility issues. He is also the RSO for UAA and can help with preparing protocols, issuing approvals, and safe handling and training related to use of radio-isotopes
 - b. 907-786-1268; jdmoore@alaska.edu
3. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
 - a. The IACUC committee must approve all use of vertebrate animals at UAA. Online and hands-on training can be coordinated through the IACUC committee
 - b. <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/research/ric/iacuc/>

4. Lora Volden, University Registrar
 - a. Questions about registration troubles that can't be answered by your advisor, Luis Chavez Jr., or Elisa Matteson at the Graduate school
 - b. 907-786-1560; llvolden@alaska.edu

Biological Sciences Graduate Affairs Blackboard Site

Much useful information is contained within this student this Graduate Student Handbook. In addition, a Blackboard site has been set up as an additional resource in order to aid assist you as you progress through your graduate degree. The Blackboard site serves two important functions.

Firstly, The Biological Sciences Graduate Affairs Blackboard Site contains information. Specifically, on the site you will find:

- the **Contact details** for the members of the Departmental Graduate Advisory Committee
- important **Announcements** for such things as scholarship and teaching assistantship applications
- an electronic copy of this **Graduate Student Handbook**
- a repository of the numerous **Forms** that are required to be completed throughout the graduate degree
- information on **Important Dates and Deadlines**

Secondly, the Biological Sciences Graduate Affairs Blackboard Site will also serve as the place to upload and submit completed and signed paperwork/forms. This will enable you to keep track of all of the necessary forms and paperwork that are required to be submitted as you progress through your degree and to help you ensure that you maintain good standing. Additional details on the process for completing paperwork and uploading the forms are provided below in [Completing and Submitting Graduate Paperwork/Forms](#).

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The Three Levels of Requirements

Graduate students have the unenviable task of having to meet a variety of different requirements in order to graduate successfully. This means that the prepared student must maintain familiarity with all the different requirements and if (and how) they change during the student's tenure. Briefly, students have three groups to satisfy. In order of increasing specificity, these are:

1. UAA's Graduate School (<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateschool/>) sets overall policy for all graduate students and must approve all official documents (i.e. study plans, committees, thesis). The policies that are set by the Graduate School are detailed online in the 2016-2017 UAA Course Catalog. You may find the deadlines and forms necessary to meet these requirements on the Graduate School's website. Please review the Graduate School's information on [Graduate Student Orientation](#). The Department holds a separate, in-person orientation each fall and attendance is mandatory. The "Current Students" tab on the Graduate School's website is full of relevant and important information and all students should familiarize themselves with the site. The Graduate School is located in the Administration Building (East Campus) in suite 200 and can be reached at 907.786.1096. The Graduate School is open Monday-Thursday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm and Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.
Review the below Graduate School policies:
[Graduate Degrees: General University Requirements](#)
[Graduate Degrees: Graduate Degree Policies](#)
2. The Department of Biological Sciences (<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/biological-sciences/>) sets policies specific to our graduate students: these include criteria for acceptance to the program, coursework required of all departmental graduate students, procedures for applying for funding through the department, and requirements for forming and convening committee meetings, and the overall structure of the thesis and defense. These requirements are provided in more detail in this handbook, as well as in the Departmental section of the 2016-2017 UAA Course Catalog. Students must meet BOTH the Departmental and Graduate School requirements.
3. Requirements set by the student's advisor and graduate committee. Each graduate student will, in consultation with their advisor, select the members of their graduate advisory committee. This committee will work with the student to identify required coursework (outlined on the student's Graduate Study Plan) and to outline the proposed thesis research (detailed in the thesis proposal). Once approved by the graduate committee, department, and Graduate School, the student is required to complete the coursework listed on the GSP and thesis research as described in the proposal in order to graduate.

Basic Requirements

Much of the content here has been adapted from the 2016-2017 UAA Course Catalog to reflect both University and departmental policy. The catalog copy can and does change, and students should make sure they are familiar with the version in force at the time they were admitted, and the most recent version.

General Policies

Students may elect to graduate under the requirements of the catalog in effect at the time of formal acceptance to a graduate degree program, or the catalog in effect at the time of graduation. If the requirements for a master's degree as specified in the entry-year catalog are not met within seven years after formal acceptance into the program, or if the requirements for a doctoral degree as specified in the entry-year catalog are not met within 10 years after formal acceptance into the program, admission expires and the student must reapply for admission and meet the current admission and graduation requirements in effect at the time of readmission or graduation.

All credits counted toward a master's degree, including transfer credit, must be earned within the consecutive seven-year period prior to graduation. All credits counted toward a doctoral degree, including transfer credit, must be earned within the consecutive 10-year period prior to graduation.

Continuous Registration

Continuous registration is expected every semester as appropriate for the program, from admission through graduation, until all requirements for the degree are completed. To make continuous progress in a graduate program, students have the following options:

- Registering for at least 1 graduate-level credit applicable to their graduate degree, or
- Paying the continuous registration fee to remain active in the graduate program although not registered in any courses.

Students are also expected to register or pay the continuous registration fee for the summer if they use university facilities or consult with faculty during the summer and are not registered for the upcoming fall semester. The continuous registration deadline is the same as the deadline for registration for thesis research, independent research and independent study courses, i.e., the end of the ninth week of the semester.

Failure to undertake continuous registration may result in previously deferred (DF) grades taken for thesis research becoming permanent grades. Students not making continuous progress or not on an approved leave of absence may be placed on academic probation or, in some cases, removed from graduate degree-seeking status.

Inactive status

Students can take a leave of absence by applying to their graduate committee and advisor. Students on leave must still complete all credits to be counted towards their degree within a 7 year period for the M.S. degree and 10 years for a Ph.D..

Good Standing

Students are presumed to be in good standing during their first semester at UAA. Following their first semester, to be considered in good standing, graduate students must have

1. A UAA cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher
2. A GPA of 3.00 or higher for the most recently completed semester. A grade of P is considered equivalent to a grade of B (3.00) in graduate courses.

3. Completed any remedial / conditional admission requirements within their first year in the program
4. Completed, and turned in to the department, the paperwork creating their Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) by the end of their first semester in residence.
5. Filed an Annual Report of Student Progress with the department and Graduate School by the end of the second semester in residence, and every other semester thereafter. Note this is an annual requirement.
6. Maintained adequate progress toward completion of their thesis research, as indicated by the progress report.

Students not receiving a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher during a semester will be placed on probation for the next semester by the University and the Department. If a GPA of 3.0 or higher is not attained during the probationary semester, the student will be dismissed from the Graduate Program. The academic obligation (i.e., course work) required to satisfy release from probation must be of sufficient rigor to demonstrate a student's ability to continue graduate study and must be approved by the student's GSC. Withdrawing from a course is not an acceptable mechanism for circumventing the requirements of probation.

Only graduate students in good standing are academically eligible to re-enroll at UAA, and to apply for graduate student fellowships and/or teaching or research assistantships. Only students in good standing can be awarded tuition waivers from the department, college, or graduate school.

Comprehensive Exams

Currently, the graduate students in the Biological Sciences M.S. program are not required to take or pass comprehensive exams. However, many UAF programs require that their Ph.D. students pass comprehensive exams prior to advancing to candidacy. Students in the cooperative Ph.D. program should discuss the requirements and expectations for comprehensives with their committee early in their degree process.

Advancement to Candidacy

The Department of Biological Sciences does not have any formal Advancement to Candidacy requirements as prerequisites to graduation with a M.S. degree. Note that many Ph.D. degrees require that a student must Advance to Candidacy prior to the semester in which the student proposes to complete the degree. Ph.D. students should discuss the requirements and expectations for Advancement to Candidacy with their committee early in their degree process. Typically, this occurs after the student has passed their comprehensive exams and completed all required coursework.

Degree Requirements

General University Requirements

*Note this has been abbreviated to reflect how these requirements are applied to Biology Graduate students.

To complete a graduate degree, a student must complete the General University Requirements (GURs) for graduate degrees, school or college requirements, and program requirements. GURs for all graduate degrees are as follows:

1. A student must be admitted to the degree program and establish an approved graduate studies plan (GSP).
2. No more than 9 credits may be completed in the student's graduate program before program admission, unless a student wishes to apply credits from a previous graduate certificate in the same or closely related subject area.
3. The student must complete at least 30 approved semester credits beyond the baccalaureate degree for a master's degree, and must complete at least three years of post-baccalaureate study for a doctoral degree. The actual number of credits required for each graduate degree program, including prerequisites for required courses, are specified in the current catalog. While no minimum or maximum credits are specified for doctoral programs, a student is expected to be affiliated with the university for at least two years. On approval by the dean of the Graduate School and college dean, an official GSP may stipulate other course credit requirements, including leveling courses.
4. Up to 9 semester credits not used toward any other degree (graduate or 400 level) may be transferred to UAA from an accredited institution and counted toward a graduate degree. In the case of a second master's degree, up to 9 credits may be transferred from a previous master's degree. In the case of a doctoral degree, up to 21 credits may be transferred from previous graduate study. Acceptance of transfer credit toward program requirements is approved by individual programs, college deans and the Graduate School.
5. Only 400- and 600-level courses approved by the graduate student's advisor, graduate studies committee and dean or designee may be counted toward graduate program requirements. Courses at the 500 level are for professional development and are not applicable toward any degree.
6. A cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 must be earned in courses identified in the official GSP.
7. In 600-level courses, a grade of C is minimally acceptable, provided the student maintains a cumulative GPA of 3.00 (B) in all courses applicable to the graduate program. At least 21 credits must be taken at the graduate level (600) for any master's degree, including thesis credits. For performance comparison only, in 600-level courses a grade of P (pass) is equivalent to a B or higher, but does not enter into the GPA calculation.
8. Courses taken as credit by examination, or graded credit/no credit (CR/NC) do not count toward graduate program requirements. They may, however, be used to satisfy prerequisites or establish competency in a subject, allowing the advisor or committee to waive certain courses in an established program as long as the total credits in the program remain the same.
9. All credits counted toward the degree, including transfer credits, must be earned within the consecutive seven-year period for a master's degree or the consecutive 10-year period for a doctoral degree prior to graduation. If these requirements are not met, admission expires and the student must reapply for admission and meet the admission requirements in effect at that time (see Catalog Year in [Graduate Degree Policies](#)).
10. Students must be continuously registered throughout their graduate program (see Continuous Registration in [Graduate Degree Policies](#)).
11. Students must complete all requirements established by the program and must complete a thesis project, write an acceptable thesis, and pass the thesis defense. For programs with a thesis option,

selection of that option will be indicated on the GSP and on the annual progress report. The evaluation, examination or defense must be approved by all graduate committee members as passing the requirement. After the completion of the thesis defense the student's graduate committee chair must submit an exam or defense report. (See Examinations below.)

12. When an oral comprehensive examination, project or thesis defense, or evaluation of independent scholarship is required, the student may select an outside reviewer approved by the dean of the Graduate School and college dean to participate in the evaluation. An outside examiner is required for a doctoral defense. Typically, the outside examiner is a faculty member from another department in the university, or other qualified individual in the area in which the student is seeking a degree.
13. All theses and dissertations must have final approval by the Graduate School.

Examinations

Defense of Thesis

Graduate students who are required to complete a thesis in partial fulfillment of degree requirements must pass an oral defense of the thesis. Defense dates must be submitted to the Graduate School and publicly posted at least one week before the defense. The defense will consist of a presentation followed by questions on the research, analysis and written thesis presentation. The Graduate School will not accept a thesis for final submission until the student has successfully defended it. All committee members normally must be present for the defense of thesis, either physically present or through electronic media. A Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense must be submitted to the Graduate School indicating date of completion, and approved by the graduate advisor and committee, program chair, college dean, and the Graduate School.

Outside Examiner (for Doctoral Defense)

An outside examiner representing and appointed by the dean of the Graduate School is required at all doctoral defenses. The examiner must be from a different department than the student and the chair of the advisory committee. The outside examiner is present to determine that a stringent, unbiased examination is fairly administered and evaluated, but may also make substantive contributions to the evaluation process.

Thesis Review

Before final acceptance, all members of a student's graduate committee, department/program chair, school/college dean, and the Graduate School must approve the written thesis. Changes or corrections to the thesis may be required at any of these levels. The graduate committee is primarily responsible for thesis evaluation, grammar, punctuation, and usage, but the department chair and college dean may also conduct reviews to monitor the quality of theses and check for any overlooked errors. The Graduate School checks that format and style conform to UAA standards. Ideally, these checks should be made before the defense of a thesis or dissertation. Thesis signature pages must be approved by the Graduate School prior to the thesis defense. In addition the Graduate School may review selected theses in detail and does not give final approval until all required corrections are made. Please see the Thesis Section of this handbook for further instruction.

Graduate Student Research

All graduate students are strongly encouraged to complete the Responsible Conduct of Research Training (RCR). Graduate students planning to conduct research that involves the use of human participant subjects and/or human participant data, vertebrate animals, hazardous chemicals, biohazards, and/or radioactive materials are required to complete the [Research Compliance and Intellectual Property \(RCIP\) Form](#). If students are unsure of whether additional training is required due to the nature of their graduate studies, the student should complete the form with their advisor. This form outlines the additional training requirements that may be required prior to onset of the research. If students are not sure of whether a

particular item applies to their graduate studies, the student should contact the Research Compliance Office at 786-1099.

Note that all graduate students are expected to respect the copyright, license and intellectual property rights that may attach to files of any media type, including software, texts, databases, images, video, music and other audio files, especially when using university computing and/or networking resources.

Graduate Degree Policies

Please visit the [2016-2017 UAA Course Catalog](#) for further information.

Topics included:

- Academic Appeals
- Academic Standing
- Additional Master's Degrees
- Catalog Year for Graduate Degree Programs
- Change of Degree
- Change of Major or Emphasis Area
- Concurrent Degrees
- Continuous Registration
- Formal Acceptance to Graduate Degree Programs
- Full-Time/Part-Time Status for Graduate Degree Programs
- Graduate Advisor
- Graduate Assistantships
- Graduate Studies Committee
- Graduate Studies Plan
- Leave of Absence
- Non-Degree-Seeking Students
- Reinstatement to Graduate Degree-Seeking Status
- Removal from Graduate Degree-Seeking Status
- Resident Credit
- Transfer Credit

Departmental Requirements for a M.S. Degree

(Abbreviated from the [2016-2017 UAA Course Catalog](#); must be met in ADDITION to the above University requirements)

To complete a M.S. degree in Biological Sciences, a minimum of **30 approved semester credits** beyond the baccalaureate degree is required, of which at least 21 credits must be at the 600-level (this includes thesis, research and independent study credits). Upper division (400-level) credits may be applied to the degree only with approval of the Graduate Study Committee Chair (Research Advisor). However, as most students enroll in 9 credits per semester (full time status for graduate students), it is anticipated that students will actually complete between 36 and 54 credits prior to graduation (2 -3 years). No more than 45 credits may be applied to the Graduate Study Plan. Additional information on many of these requirements is provided in this handbook.

In addition to the above general requirements of the graduate school, students working toward an M.S. degree in Biological Sciences must fulfill the following requirements:

Program Requirements

600-level science electives (does not include BIOL A692 , BIOL A696 , BIOL A698 or BIOL A699 credits)		9
BIOL A601	Experimental Design and Statistics	3
or BIOL A604	Experimental Design for Cell/Molecular Biologists	
BIOL A605	Graduate Proseminar in Sciences	3
BIOL A606	Advanced Analysis and Interpretation *	3
BIOL A698	Directed Research **	1
BIOL A699	Thesis **	1

**This requirement can be waived by the student's graduate study committee if the student has sufficient other experience or coursework in statistical analysis. This requirement can also be met by other graduate level statistics coursework*

***In combined total, no more than 12 credits of BIOL A698 & BIOL A699 can count towards the 30 credits required for graduation; however more can be taken.*

Upper-division (400-level) credits may be applied to the degree only with approval of the student's graduate study committee via inclusion on the graduate studies plan (GSP). In order to receive credit for coursework, students must receive a minimum grade of B in all 400-level courses, and a minimum grade of C in all 600-level courses. Courses completed with grades below the minimum will not count towards graduation. In addition, the cumulative GPA must not drop below 3.00.

Additional requirements

1. Within the first semester of study, each student must select a graduate study committee consisting of a minimum of three members (no more than five is recommended). Two of the three members must be full-time, tenure-track faculty in the Department of Biological Sciences. The committee chair will be the student's primary research advisor if that person is a full-time UAA faculty member in the Department of Biological Sciences. If the primary research advisor is an affiliate faculty member, the chair will be shared with a full-time UAA faculty member from the Department of Biological Sciences, and both will be designated as co-chairs. To be a co-chair, a non-UAA faculty member must have official affiliate status within the department.

2. Each student must submit an official GSP form ([available online from the Department of Biological Sciences](#)) by the end of the first semester of graduate work. The GSP formally establishes the specific program requirements that will, upon satisfactory completion, entitle the student to receive the graduate degree or certificate. This form must be approved by the student's graduate study committee and also be signed by the department director and the dean of the Graduate School.
3. A student's graduate study committee must meet at least once each year (every other semester) to review a student's progress. The annual report on student progress ([available online from the Graduate School](#)) must be completed by the student and committee, signed by the graduate study committee, filed with the departmental secretary, and submitted to the UAA Graduate School no later than May 15th of each year. Failure to file annual progress reports will be taken as an indication of inadequate progress, and is grounds for probation and subsequent dismissal from the program.
4. All graduate students must remain in good standing throughout their program. At a minimum, students not in good standing will not be able to compete for teaching assistantships or be awarded tuition waivers from the department, college or Graduate School. Students not in good standing risk being placed on probation and/or removed from the program. In order to remain in good standing in the program, students must:
 - a. Maintain a 3.00 GPA (cumulative) in all coursework listed on their GSP,
 - b. File a GSP by the end of their first semester in residence and
 - c. File satisfactory progress reports during each year in residence.
5. Within their first year in the program, each graduate student is required to submit a written thesis proposal that details the plan for the student's graduate work. This document is developed in consultation with the graduate advisor, and once prepared must be submitted and approved by the student's graduate study committee. A copy of the approved proposal shall be placed in the student's departmental file.
6. Students will conduct the research outlined in the thesis proposal and present their results as a graduate thesis following guidelines provided by the Graduate School ([available online from the Graduate School](#)). This written thesis must be approved by the graduate study committee, the director of the Biological Sciences Department, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the dean of the Graduate School in order to be considered complete. No student shall graduate without completing a written thesis.
7. Following submission of their thesis to their GSC, students must present a thesis defense seminar, which will be followed by a private meeting with their graduate study committee to finalize the defense. The student must successfully defend the thesis in order to graduate.

A total of 30 credits is required for the degree.

- See more at: <http://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/graduateprograms/cas/biologicalsciences/ms-biologicalsciences>

Policies Specific to Ph.D. students

Pursuit of a doctoral degree is possible in selected areas of biological sciences through a cooperative program with the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Students working toward a doctoral degree must adhere to the graduate policies of both UAA and UAF, and should therefore consult closely with both programs.

Because UAF is the grantor of the degree, it is their policies that must be satisfied in order to graduate. Students enrolled in a Ph.D. program through UAF should pay particular attention to the requirements for comprehensive exams, advancement to candidacy, and the number of UAF credits required in each semester/year in order to maintain good standing at UAF. Additional guidance for Ph.D. students can be obtained through the Graduate Schools at UAF.

The timeline and forms submitted by joint Ph.D. students will differ slightly to reflect the requirements of the UAF degree program. However, copies of all forms submitted to UAF should also be filed with the Biological Sciences department, for placement in the student's UAA departmental file. At a minimum, an annual report of student progress is required by UAA, regardless of UAF policies.

Paperwork, committees, meetings, etc.

Completing and Submitting Graduate Student Paperwork/Forms

All graduate student required paperwork should be completed electronically and uploaded to the Biological Sciences Graduate Affairs Blackboard Site. The use of DocuSign has been implemented to reduce the cost of printing and the amount of paper waste within the College of Arts & Sciences. All graduate paperwork made available to students are either in Word document format or in Enterable PDF format, and thus can be completed electronically by students, faculty and committee members.

When it is time for the student to submit graduate paperwork, the student should download the forms from the links provided in this document, by [visiting our website](#) or by visiting the Biological Sciences Graduate Affairs Blackboard Site and then complete the form electronically. For forms requiring only the signatures of the Graduate Study Committee, once the document is complete and signed, the student should upload the form in the Required Paperwork section of the Biological Sciences Graduate Affairs Blackboard site. For forms requiring signatures beyond that of the Graduate Study Committee, the student should inform the departmental administrative assistant that the form has been uploaded to the Blackboard Site. The administrative assistant will then forward the document to those whose signatures are required and will file the form with the appropriate office(s). If you have any questions about this process, please feel free to call or email the departmental administrative assistant (907-786-7762; lchavezjr@alaska.edu)

Graduate Study Committee Selection

Within the first semester of study, each graduate student enrolled in the M.S. program must select a Graduate Study Committee (GSC) consisting of a minimum of three members (no more than 5 is recommended). Your committee should include faculty who can assist you in completing your studies and research by providing mentoring and training throughout your degree. The composition of the committee should comply with the following guidelines:

- The committee chair will be the student's research advisor if a full-time, tenured or tenure-track UAA faculty member. If the primary research advisor is an affiliate faculty member, the chair will be shared with a tenured or tenure-track UAA faculty member. Both the affiliate faculty member and the UAA faculty member will be designated as co-chairs. To be a co-chair, a non-UAA faculty member *must* have official affiliate status within the department.
- The second member must be a full-time, tenure-track faculty member in the Biological Sciences Department
- The third member can be from inside or outside the department or UAA provided that they have the appropriate professional credentials (for example, affiliate status with the department)
 - If from outside UAA, their membership must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, College Dean, and Biological Sciences Graduate Committee Chair.
- Additional members as deemed necessary to provide adequate guidance to the student

It is recommended that students choose their committee members based on their research interests and career goals. Oftentimes, faculty advisors/committee chairs will have suggestions for the student as to who should be invited to join the student's full committee. The student may also have suggestions as to who they would like to invite to join their committee based on past educational experiences. Committee members should be chosen based on their ability to add value and insight to the student's graduate research.

Once the student is ready to create their committee, the student will be required to complete the Graduate Committee Assembly Form ([available from the Department of Biological Sciences](#)). Once complete, the

student should send the form to the departmental secretary to obtain signatures and will be placed on file with the Graduate School.

While the division of responsibility between the advisor and/or committee is determined by each committee, the graduate advisor and/or committee will do the following:

- Review and approve the graduate student's program, ensuring that it meets/ includes:
 - All University, College, and Departmental Requirements for Master's Degrees;
 - Guidelines for timely correction of any deficiencies in the student's academic background;
 - A research project that will, upon completion, demonstrate independent research of sufficient depth and quality to meet departmental guidelines for a master's thesis;
 - Provide guidance to the student on University and Departmental policies with respect to graduate study plans, permits (if required for the work), teaching assistantships etc.
- Monitor the student's progress and timely completion of all requirements through, at an absolute minimum, holding annual committee meetings. At these meetings the students' research plans, methods, and results should be reviewed, to ensure that they are scientifically valid and appropriate to the task at hand.
- Provide support to the student and the student's project either through existing resources or by assisting the student with grant proposals developed early in the student's tenure.
- Provide training to the student in the proper use of all methods, equipment, permits, etc. needed for them to complete their degree (this can be done by the PI, senior personnel in the lab, or by sending the student to others with expertise in the area).
- Encourage the student to participate in scientific activities such as external conferences and meetings, and to develop grant writing skills through applying for awards.
- Assist the student in preparing posters, presentations, and papers reporting their work, and provide critical review of their products in a timely fashion.
- Review and approve any changes to the program of study, and respond in a timely fashion to requests for assistance.
- Review and approve the thesis, including initial proposals, according to procedures established by the individual graduate program.
- Review and approve requests for temporary leaves of absence, which, if approved, will result in the student being placed on inactive status.
- Administer and assess the thesis defense.

Note that while the committee selected has many tasks, these are all focused around **assisting** you, the student, towards successful completion of your degree. As a candidate for a professional degree, it is your responsibility to be in primary charge of your degree program, and to request assistance and guidance when needed.

Frequency of Committee meetings

A student's GSC must meet at least once each year to review a student's progress. The annual report on student progress ([available online from the Graduate School](#)) must be signed by the GSC, and copies must be submitted to the departmental secretary and filed with the Graduate School no later than May 15th of each year.

Failure to file annual progress reports is taken as to be an indication of inadequate progress, and therein is grounds for probation and subsequent dismissal from the program.

Prior to the committee meeting, the student should provide the committee with a written annual report of progress that can be attached to the official form. In addition to detailing progress in research and

coursework since the last meeting, this review should include a timeline for degree completion outlining the courses and milestones that will be accomplished in the remaining semesters. Students are also encouraged to provide an updated CV and GSP.

At the meeting, the student should lead the discussion of research plans and progress, and provide an overview of the working hypotheses for the research and the methods that will/are being used to address the research questions. Students should remember that faculty have many different duties and are not as focused on the student's research as the student is, and so the committee will need to be brought up to speed at the start of each meeting with an overall review. Any questions / problems/ concerns that the student has about their coursework or research should be raised at the committee meeting (if not earlier!). This overview should provide the committee with sufficient detail to make an informed evaluation of the student's progress and to provide mentoring as needed.

Graduate Study Plan

Each student must submit an official Graduate Study Plan (GSP) form by the end of the first semester of graduate work. This is usually done at the first meeting of the graduate studies committee (GSC). The official GSP formally establishes the specific program requirements that will, upon satisfactory completion, entitle the student to receive the graduate degree or certificate. This form must be approved by the student's GSC and also be signed by the Chair of the Graduate Affairs Committee, the Department Chair and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Things to keep in mind about the GSP:

- The GSP should be crafted using the General University Graduate Degree Requirements and the Departmental Degree Requirements. If the GSP does not accurately adhere to these guidelines, it will be sent back to the student. It is the student's responsibility to submit a correct GSP.
- A copy of the approved GSP must be in the student's departmental file.
- The GSP should be kept updated and reflect current coursework plans.
- All courses required by the department (as outlined above) must be listed on the GSP, all unit requirements must be met, and the GSP should include all courses (including remedial and transfer credits) that the student needs to take in order to successfully complete their graduate degree.
- Only courses listed on the GSP are eligible for coverage by tuition waivers.
- Withdrawing from a course previously listed on the GSP must be approved by the student's GSC or this action will be considered as lack of adequate progress, thus leading to probation.
- Most importantly, students who do not submit a GSP by the end of their first semester in residence will not be considered to be in good standing, and therefore will not be eligible for a tuition waiver for the following semester, and awarded teaching assistantships may be revoked.

BIOL A698/A699 Credits

It is important for students to understand the difference between BIOL A698 and A699 credits, how they should be applied to the Graduate Studies Plan, and how they may affect academic standing.

BIOL A698, Directed Research, should be taken by students when they are conducting research that is applicable to their thesis. Students may take BIOL A698 credits throughout their program until their graduate research is complete, however, it is important to note that only 12 credits in combination with BIOL A699 can be applied to the Graduate Studies Plan. For example, if the student applied 8 credits of BIOL A698 to their GSP, the student would then only be able to apply 4 credits of BIOL A699. Within each semester, the student has the option to take 1 to 6 credits. Unlike BIOL A699 credits, BIOL A698 credits should be given a grade at the end of each semester. BIOL A698 uses the Pass/No Pass grading system. The research that is conducted in the given semester should be supervised by the faculty advisor

and there should be perimeters set to evaluate if the student has satisfied the requirements. In order to enroll in BIOL A698, students and faculty members will be required to complete the Directed Research Permission to Enroll form ([available from the Department of Biological Sciences](#)). This form is used as a tool for the student and faculty advisor to formalize the content of the research, expectations and grading procedures. The form must be submitted to and approved by the Director of the Department of Biological Sciences by the payment deadline of the corresponding semester enrolled. If the student has questions regarding the form, they should contact the departmental administrative assistant.

BIOL A699, Thesis, should be taken when the student is actively engaged in writing the thesis. Oftentimes these credits are saved until the end of the student's degree program. Students may take a total of 12 credits of BIOL A699 in combination with BIOL A698. As with the BIOL A698 credits, the student may take BIOL A699 throughout multiple semesters, however, the student will receive a deferred grade (DF) until all requirements for the thesis have been satisfied. It is important for the student to understand that deferred grades will not count towards the student's overall or semester GPA. The student's GPA will be determined by courses the student is enrolled in that adhere to the normal letter grading system (Letter grades A-F). Students and faculty advisors will also need to request for thesis credits to be opened, however, this process is not formalized, and the request can be made directly to the departmental administrative assistant.

Please see the UAA Catalog course descriptions below for more information:

BIOL A698, Directed Research: 1-6 Credits

Thesis specific research for the M.S. in Biological Sciences. Topic for study to be approved and directed by a faculty member in the biological sciences.

Special Note: May be repeated for a maximum of 12 credits in combination with **BIOL A699**; total for both courses not to exceed 12 credits toward M.S. degree.

Registration Restrictions: Graduate standing; permission of graduate advisor.

BIOL A699, Thesis: 1-6 Credits

Planning, preparation and completion of thesis for the M.S. in Biological Sciences.

Special Note: May be repeated for a maximum of 12 credits in combination with **BIOL A698**; total for both courses not to exceed 12 credits toward M.S. degree.

Registration Restrictions: Graduate standing; permission of graduate advisor.

Thesis Proposal

All graduate students admitted to the Department of Biological Sciences at UAA are required to submit a written thesis proposal that details the plan for the students' graduate work. The thesis proposal should be formatted much like a research proposal to a funding body, and should be 5-20 pages long (or longer if additional detail is required). This document is developed in consultation with the graduate advisor, and should follow the format outlined below.

Once prepared (in consultation with the advisor), the student must submit the proposal to the student's Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and present an oral defense of the proposal at a committee meeting. The committee should receive the written proposal at least two weeks in advance of the meeting at which the proposal is defended. Upon satisfactory completion of the defense, the student's GSC must signify approval of the proposal by signing the proposal cover page. The signed copy of the proposal shall be submitted to the departmental secretary and this copy will be placed in the student's departmental file. This must be done by the end of the second semester in residence (end of their first academic year). An example of a thesis proposal's formatting is provided below:

A. Introduction and literature review

- This section will place the specific research project within the larger picture. It should involve a fairly extensive literature review of relevant research, and provide the reader with sufficient information to understand why the proposed research project is scientifically valid and unique. If the research project is built on other ongoing work in the advisor's laboratory, and there is baseline or preliminary data available that are relevant, such data should be discussed in the proposal.

B. Specific Hypotheses or Research objectives

- This section will detail the specific questions that the student's research will address. Enough information should be provided so that the reader can understand why these particular hypotheses have been framed

C. Methods

- Here the student should outline, with as much detail as possible, the methods that will be used in their research. This should include information on species, sample sizes, field and laboratory techniques, statistical analyses, and any other methodological issues. While the specific details of the methods may change during the course of the thesis, this section will provide information on how the research is to be carried out.

D. Expected Findings

- Here the student should provide information on what they expect to discover in the course of their research. Specifically, the student should cover what insight will be gained if they accept or reject their stated hypotheses (or research objectives). This section may include reference to other studies, and should again place the work within a larger framework.

E. Timeline for Completion

- This will allow the committee to evaluate whether the research planned will be able to be accomplished in a timely fashion, and can subsequently be used as a guideline to assess the student's progress.

F. References Cited

The Thesis and Thesis Defense

The Thesis

After the student completes his/her research, a research thesis must be written by the student and submitted prior to graduation for review and approval by the Graduate Studies Committee, the Departmental Directors, the Dean of CAS, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

It is recommended that the student first submit their thesis draft to their graduate advisor, who will then work with the student to prepare a version suitable for submission to the committee. Students should anticipate taking *at least* one semester to prepare their written thesis, and must schedule their thesis defense at least a month in advance of the semester deadlines for graduation, which itself is several weeks in advance of the end of the semester.

Most students organize their thesis so that the main data from the research is included in chapters that resemble scientific papers in their format. Under this scenario, there is *also* an overall abstract for the thesis, and a general introductory and conclusion chapters that integrate the data chapters and place the whole work into context.

More general guidance on the required overall format, deadlines and process, can be found at: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis/index.cshhtml>

Ph.D. Students should follow the thesis formatting guidelines provided by the UAF campus.

The Thesis Defense

1. The student writes the thesis.
2. The student's faculty advisor reviews and approves the thesis for committee review—if revisions are necessary, the student should make the revisions and resubmit it. This process continues until it's ready for the committee.
3. The student's Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) reviews the thesis and approves it for defense—there isn't a formal approval process, however, the committee does need to indicate to the student that it is ready for the defense. If revisions are necessary, the student will edit the thesis and resubmit it for approval.
4. Once the thesis is approved, the student submits the [thesis signature page](#) to the Graduate School for a formatting check **BEFORE** the defense. Although not required, it is recommended that the student also submit the entire thesis for a formatting review; doing so may result in fewer revisions later.
5. The student schedules the thesis defense and notifies the department at least two weeks in advance that they intend to defend their thesis. At this time, the student must provide the title and abstract for the thesis to the departmental secretary. The departmental secretary will schedule the room for the defense and advertise the upcoming defense to the Biological Sciences faculty, graduate students and the University community.
 - a. The defense will preferentially be scheduled in the departmental seminar slot. Should this time not be acceptable, another may be selected; again, with the date and time being a *minimum of two weeks* after notification.
 - b. The public thesis defense must be scheduled during the academic year on days when the campus is open and when faculty are on contract (typically two weeks prior to and two weeks after the end of classes).
 - c. The thesis defense (both public and private) must be attended by the student's entire graduate committee. If committee members cannot be present in person, it is the student's

- responsibility to arrange for their presence by video or teleconference at least 72 hours prior to the defense.
6. Student defends thesis publically.
 - a. The public thesis defense will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour and be followed by a period of questions asked by all in the audience.
 - i. Ph.D. students may be required to conduct their dissertation defense at the UAF campus. If the student must conduct the defense at UAF, the student should arrange to have the seminar distance delivered to UAA. Alternatively, a second public seminar (not defense) at UAA may be requested.
 7. Student defends thesis privately.
 - a. During this closed-door portion of the defense, the committee will be able to question the student about broader scientific questions relevant to the student's research focus area as well as details of the student's thesis work.
 - b. The committee should complete the 'Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense' form available at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/biological-sciences/academic-programs/master-of-science/thesis.cshtml>. Graduate students can Pass, Conditionally Pass, or Fail their thesis defense presentations (the public presentation) and/or the closed door session. Students that conditionally pass or fail to pass either portion will need to meet again with their GSC after completion of required revisions/remediation, and at the second meeting the committee will update the Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense form.

Thesis Submission

Students are required to meet the thesis submission deadlines for the Department, the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) and the Graduate School. The student should plan on leaving at least **two weeks** for the review by the Department Director, and another **two weeks** for review by the Dean of the College. As a result, the thesis defense must be scheduled early in the semester that the student plans to graduate.

These deadlines provide the Department of Biological Sciences and Associate Dean Patricia Linton with sufficient time to read theses and return them to students for review and editing prior to submission to the next level. Edits and revisions can, and likely will, be required at each stage of the process. Students are therefore encouraged to leave more time than indicated.

Thesis Deadlines for the Department of Biological Sciences for review and signature are as follows:

Fall	November 14, 2016
Spring	March 13, 2017
Summer	June 12, 2017

Thesis Deadlines for the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office for review and signature are:

Fall	November 28, 2016
Spring	March 27, 2017
Summer	June 26, 2017

Thesis Submission Deadlines to The Graduate School:

Fall	December 12, 2016
Spring	April 10, 2017
Summer	July 10, 2017

1. Following the thesis defense, the student may need to modify their written thesis in order to address the concerns or issues of the committee. Required modifications will be identified by the committee and must be completed by the student before the thesis is considered approved. Once the thesis is in its final form, the student should submit the thesis to the committee with two original signature and title pages. The committee should review the thesis and sign the thesis signature pages if approved. All signatures on the thesis signature pages must be original and in blue ink.
2. Prior to submitting the thesis to the department for review, the student MUST have the formatting approved by the Graduate School's Director, Elisa Mattison (esmattison@alaska.edu or 786-1096). The departmental reviewer (currently Dr. Jerry Kudenov) will not review the thesis unless the formatting has been approved by Director Mattison and approval can be confirmed by the departmental secretary.
 - a. Once the thesis has been submitted to and approved by the student's GSC, and the Director of the Graduate School, the student will submit the thesis to the departmental administrative assistant for the departmental review by the advertised deadline.
 - b. The thesis should be submitted in PDF form, and the original signature pages must be submitted in person to the departmental administrative assistant.
 - c. The departmental reviewer may email the student required revisions for the student to make. It is recommended that all required revisions are completed and approved a week before the CAS deadline.
3. Once all departmental revisions are complete, the Director of Biological Sciences will review the thesis and can also recommend revisions. These revisions must be made by the student prior to receiving the Director's signature.
4. After the thesis has been approved by the Director of Biological Sciences, the departmental administrative assistant will notify the student and forward the approved version to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The student must collect the signed signature and title page from the departmental administrative assistant and submit them to CAS.
 - a. The Dean may also require/recommend revisions to the thesis. If revisions are required, the student must make them prior to submitting the thesis to the Graduate School.
5. Subsequent to the Dean's approval, the thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School/Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies for approval by the advertised deadlines.
 - a. The student must collect the signed signature and title page from CAS and submit them to the Graduate School
 - b. The Graduate School checks thesis content, formatting and references.
 - c. The Graduate School's Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies conducts final review and may require further revisions. If revisions are necessary, the student must complete the revisions and resubmit the thesis to the Graduate School.
6. The Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies approves the final thesis and signs the thesis signature pages. The Graduate School will notify the student when the thesis is ready for ETD submission.
7. The student creates an ETD account and submits the final thesis.
 - a. Electronic thesis submission is mandatory; no hardcopies will be accepted for publication. For upcoming ETD training dates and times, please check the Graduate School Workshop webpage at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/workshop.cshtml> or call the Graduate School at 786-1095.
 - b. If the student would like to order hardcover bound copies of their thesis or dissertation for personal or departmental use, they should contact the Office of the Graduate School for options offered. Ultimately, the student will purchase copies of the thesis through the ETD website.

The electronic thesis submission process is as follows:

1. Enter website at <http://www.etadmin.com/uaa.alaska>
2. Go to the students' tab and click on submit to upload your final thesis on the site. More online instructions are available if you need them via the Graduate School.

At this point, you have uploaded your final and approved thesis. A detailed flow chart of this process, calendar deadlines, and other thesis formatting and submitting guidelines can be found at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/thesis/index.cshtml>.

UAF students should be aware that UAF defense procedures and requirements may differ slightly from those described above. In particular, students may be required to conduct their defense at UAF; if this is the case, a second public seminar (not defense) at UAA is requested.

Deadlines for Graduation

In order to finally graduate, UAA students must submit an "Application for Graduation" form or [apply to graduate online](#) early in the semester in which they plan to graduate to Enrollment Services. This form can be found on the Graduate School's website.

Before they graduate, students must also have submitted a "Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense" form (as detailed earlier in this handbook). At this point all fees must have been paid (this includes things like parking and library fines), all deferred grades must have cleared (see process below), all forms submitted to the Graduate School, and all coursework outlined on the GSP completed satisfactorily. Check with Enrollment Services for exact deadlines, as these change regularly.

Deadlines to apply for graduation:

- **Fall** December 9, 2016
****Deadline to apply for graduation and be included in the commencement program is November 1, 2016.
- **Spring** April 28, 2017
**Deadline to apply for graduation and be included in the commencement program is March 31, 2017.
- **Summer** July 29, 2016
-See more: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/students/registrar/degree-services/index.cshtml>

The Office of Degree Services is notified by the Graduate School upon approval of the thesis by the Dean of the Graduate School and successful electronic submission for publication. Degrees are dated and posted immediately by the Office of Degree Services during the semester in which all degree requirements are completed.

Graduate students who complete their degree in previous Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters can participate in both the Graduate Student Hooding ceremony and Commencement at the end of the Spring and Fall semesters. Students who anticipate graduating in the upcoming Summer cannot participate in previous Spring ceremonies. Information on both ceremonies can be found at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/graduating-and-beyond.cshtml>

Students who participate in these ceremonies must acquire regalia (hood, cap, and gown); this can be done through the bookstore.

Abbreviated Timeline for All Graduate Students

Master's students should meet with their Graduate Study Committee at least once a year. After each meeting, the committee chair will complete a Graduate Student Progress Report Form, which will be signed by all committee members and the student, and will be given to the departmental administrative assistant so that the Director can sign prior to forwarding to the Graduate School. These forms will be held in the student's file in the Department of Biological Sciences Office as evidence of adequate student progress.

The timeline and forms submitted by Ph.D. students must meet the requirements of the UAF degree program. However, copies of all forms submitted to UAF should also be filed with the departmental administrative assistant for placement in the student's UAA departmental file.

Semester 1:

- Select a Graduate Study Committee (GSC) and meet with that committee
- Develop and submit your Graduate Study Plan (GSP)
- Develop your thesis proposal in consultation with the GSC.
- Complete (with a B or above average) required coursework.
- Complete/Clear any remaining conditions of admission or remedial coursework needed

Semester 2:

- Complete, have approved, and submit, your Thesis Research Proposal by the end of the second semester in residence.
- Complete (with a B or above average) required coursework.
- Meet with GSC and complete Annual Progress Report form. File the report with the departmental administrative assistant, and ensure that copies are placed in your departmental file and forwarded to the Graduate School.

Year 2:

- Conduct research towards degree
- Meet with GSC and complete Annual Progress Report form. Submit form to departmental secretary, and ensure that a copy is placed in your departmental file, and that a copy is forwarded to the Graduate School.

Prior to graduation:

- Submit an Application for Graduation form to Enrollment Services ([or apply online](#))
- Submit a thesis to the GSC for review
- Formally present and defend the thesis in an advertised public forum
- Submit a Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense form to the Department and Graduate School
- Submit final, approved, thesis to the Graduate School and upload onto ProQuest ETD.

Other details

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships give students financial aid as well as opportunities to acquire valuable experience. They fall under three categories: teaching assistantships, research assistantships and service assistantships. The graduate school provides a detailed document outlining these positions; that can be found at

<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/graduate-assistantships/index.cshhtml>

- Teaching assistantships involve academic instruction or instructional support activities under the supervision of a faculty member.
- Research assistantships involve research or research support activities under the supervision of a faculty member.
- Service assistantships involve service activities such as office duties, library services, residence hall duties, athletic services or other academic or professional assignments.

To be awarded graduate assistantships, students must be in good academic standing, as reflected by timely completion of required milestones (GSP, GSC, thesis proposal), and /or an Annual Report of Student Progress on file with the Graduate School (if beyond their second semester of study). Incomplete (I) grades may affect the ability of students to receive tuition awards associated with graduate assistantships. A graduate student with a GPA less than 3.00 for one semester will be allowed to petition to continue as a graduate assistant for the next semester. A maximum one-semester exception will be allowed per student. The petition by the student must be approved by the student's graduate committee chair, department head, school or college dean, and the Graduate School.

Graduate assistants receive stipends for either a semester or for the academic year. Graduate assistants can be paid for a maximum of 20 hours per week while school is in session. Students with assistantships must be registered for at least 9 credits during the fall and spring semesters or as attendance is appropriate to their program (audited credits are not eligible). This requirement does not apply to graduate students undertaking fieldwork or during the summer semester. Graduate students spending significant time in the field during the fall or spring semester on a research assistantship (see below) are only required to enroll in 6 credits. Graduate students in their final semester of study are also only required to enroll in 6 credits. If the student is only enrolled in 6 credits, it is important to note that the Office of the Registrar will acknowledge the student's enrollment as part-time.

A student may hold two graduate assistantships for which the terms of appointment overlap, only if each of the assistantships is half-time (no more than 10 hours) during the period of overlap. Teaching and service assistants should have Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) training, and research assistants should have training in Responsible Conduct of Research.

Note that University tuition waivers for graduate students can only be used for courses that are listed on the student's approved graduate study plan. If the student plans to take courses that deviate from their approved graduate study plan, the student will be required to revise the plan and submit to the Department for approval. The graduate study plan must be approved by the student's faculty advisor, the Director of the Department of Biological Sciences, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Graduate School before the tuition waiver can be processed. It is the student's responsibility to submit the revised GSP and students that fail to do so may incur late payment fees and/or become ineligible for a tuition waiver.

Teaching or service assistantships include a tuition payment by the university for no more than 9 credits during each semester if the workload is 15 to 20 hours per week. If the workload is 10 to 14 hours per week, no more than 5 credits will be included. No tuition will be included if the workload is less than 10 hours per week. Graduate programs should provide prospective teaching assistants with notification of positions no later than April 15 for fall positions or December 1 for spring positions. Students are under no obligation to respond to such offers prior to April 15, but any acceptance of a position after this time commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the Graduate School. Research assistantships include a tuition payment by grants/contracts for no more than 10 credits during each semester if the workload is 15 to 20 hours per week. If the workload is 10 to 14 hours per week, no more than 5 credits will be included. No tuition will be included if the workload is less than 10 hours per week. Tuition payments may be used for tuition only. All fees are the responsibility of the student unless the department or grant makes other arrangements with the UAA Business Office prior to registration.

Graduate assistants receive a health insurance benefit paid on their behalf. Graduate students must come to the Office of the Graduate School each semester and show a copy of their appointment letter and FERPA certificate to complete the health insurance enrollment process. Students who expect to have teaching, service or research assistantships during an upcoming academic year may have health insurance paid by the relevant department, school or college for the preceding summer period.

Ph.D. students receiving tuition waivers should be aware that the requirement for enrolling in both UAA and UAF credits can sometimes cause difficulty when UAA tuition waivers are sought for UAF courses. This is particularly true when the tuition waiver is provided by the College (such as for a teaching assistant) rather than from an externally funded grant. Students in the Ph.D. program requiring tuition waivers for UAF credits while working as a teaching assistant should contact the Graduate School to inquire about tuition waivers from the School instead of the College. Students obtaining tuition waivers from externally funded grants should work closely with their research advisor and grant technician, to ensure that their award letter accurately reflects funding sources. Graduate students are expected to be proactive in this area.

Timesheets

Graduate research and teaching assistants who are not on Federal Work Study and who are paid through stipends will not be required to submit timesheets to the department. Graduate research and teaching assistantship hours and payment schedules are determined by the assistantship appointment letter/contract. Graduate research and teaching assistants are paid bi-weekly throughout the appointment timeframe specified on the assistantship contract until the total stipend amount has been paid. Graduate research and teaching assistants will be paid for the entire stipend amount regardless of hours worked. If the appointment letter covers multiple semesters and the department does not intend to pay the student for Christmas break, the appointment letter should specify the time periods when the student is entitled to compensation. The stipend payments will be released via direct deposit or by a mailed paper check according to the outlined payment schedule. Please refer to your Graduate Assistantship appointment letter/contract for further information.

Biological Sciences graduate students cannot be paid for more than 20 hours a week during the academic year, and are subject to all university holidays and closures. In some weeks, this may result in the total number of hours worked being less than 20, however, stipend payments will remain as outlined in the assistantship contract except under extenuating circumstances, in which stipends may only be docked with the approval of the MAU HR Director.

Graduate research and teaching assistants on Federal Work Study are not eligible to work under a federal grant. These FWS students are paid on an hourly basis and are not exempt under the Fair Labor Standards

Act (FLSA). Graduate research and teaching assistants are subject to the minimum wage and overtime pay provisions of the FLSA. Hourly positions must receive minimum wage and overtime at one and one half times the regular rate of pay. Hourly employment is paid through Payroll, and the department may require timesheets to be completed on a bi-weekly basis per the pay schedule via UAOnline or by filling out a paper timesheet. Please refer to your Graduate Assistantship appointment letter/contract for further information.

Travel Forms

Any time that a graduate student will be traveling outside the Anchorage bowl (past Palmer or Girdwood) in order to conduct research or participate in scientific conferences / endeavors, they need to file their travel plans in TEMS for approval. Detailed information on travel policies and procedures can be found at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/about/administrative-services/departments/financial-services/budfin/aptravel/index.cshhtml>, and questions specific to UAA travel policies should be directed to that office.

Prior to travel, the student needs to complete travel authorization (AT). The AT details when and where the student is going, and contains an estimate of costs for the travel. Justification for travel must be provided, and can be satisfied with a copy of a meeting agenda, a statement of research needs, etc. If the trip includes both personal and business travel, documentation must be provided demonstrating that there was no additional costs incurred due to the personal portion of the trip. The AT must be completed and submitted sufficiently in advance of travel that the university has time to review and approve the travel before travel begins. This usually takes one week.

Costs for the travel should be estimated by the student. Standard per diem rates can be found at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>. Lodging within Alaska is reimbursed at the DOD rates, which can be found at <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/perdiemCalc.cfm>. Note that you may not be reimbursed at the maximum per diem rate, but instead at actual costs or some fixed amount determined by your supervisor or the agency providing the funding.

Tickets for air travel can be purchased by the student directly, or purchased by the university. If the university is to purchase the ticket, then the student needs to request this on the AT, and work with the travel department to have them purchase the ticket. The ticket cannot be purchased by the university until the AT is approved, and the entire process can take several days to two weeks, so this can't be done at the last minute.

The completed AT should be submitted by the student and approved by the Associate Dean. The advisor will provide the fund/org number against which the travel will be charged. This process is done through TEMS. Please login into TEMS by logging into your UAOnline, clicking 'Financial Information' then 'Finance Travel' and finally 'TEMS'. If you are unable to login initially, please contact [Krystal Offord](#) to set up your account. Once you are logged in, verify your mailing and email address in the 'Profile' tab and add 'Fred Rainey' as your approver. You will also need to add Krystal Offord and Teresa Kimmel as delegates (found on the left column).

During travel the student should keep all receipts pertaining to air travel and lodging. Meal receipts do not need to be retained, provided that the total cost is less than the per diem, unless reimbursement is for actual costs. The University cannot reimburse for the costs of alcohol. Miscellaneous receipts (taxi, parking, fax, copying) must be retained in order for reimbursement to be authorized. A maximum of \$20 in miscellaneous costs will be reimbursed without receipt.

Within 14 days of return from travel, the student is required to submit an "Expense Report" (ER) through TEMS. This form created from your previously completed AT, and details all the expenses incurred

during the travel as authorized. The expenses must be referenced to the days in which they occurred and all necessary receipts provided, scanned and attached to the ER in TEMS. Keep copies for yourself and your advisor. Travel reimbursement will be mailed to the address listed in the Profile tab in TEMS.

If a personal vehicle was used for work related travel, then it is necessary to complete a mileage log (ask [Krystal Offord](#) to send the log via DocuSign). The log requires that you track the beginning and ending odometer reading, and the location and distances traveled. This form is required as an attachment on the ER in TEMS. Please keep in mind, if you are driving for your travel and you meet one of the following categories, you must complete the UA Driver Authorization:

Category 1 Drivers:

- a) where driving is required by the employee's official job description
- b) where an employee is assigned use of a UA vehicle
- c) where the driving period is expected to exceed 14 (fourteen) consecutive days
- d) where driving is long distance (greater than 50 miles one way), and
- e) for drivers who will transport groups, students, minors, and/or other non-UA affiliated persons on UA business or UA sponsored events and activities.

Category 2 Drivers:

- a) where driving a motorized vehicle is on an occasional, as needed, basis, and not a requirement in the official job description.
- b) when periodically renting vehicles on a short term basis to conduct UA business

Please contact [Krystal Haase](#) to complete the UA Driver Authorization, to include reading the UA Transportation Safety Guide, providing a current driving record, completing a SkillSoft training and completing the UA Driver Authorization form.

Laboratory Safety and Access

UAA's Environmental Health & Safety and Risk Management Support Division has the task of ensuring that all personnel who work on campus are properly trained and protected. As part of this effort, they oversee safety training and policies, and work with researchers to ensure that all chemicals are handled and disposed of in a proper way.

Informative documents such as the University's Chemical Hygiene and Laboratory Safety Plan, information on Risk Management, MSDS, & proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) can all be found at:

<http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/EHSRMS/laboratory/labsafety/index.cfm>.

The laboratory access forms and requirements can be found at:

<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/about/administrative-services/departments/facilities-campus-services/ehsrms/forms-templates.cshtml>

Before new graduate students can work in a scientific laboratory setting, they must complete all required forms and safety training. UAA's Laboratory Support group offers Research Lab Specific Safety Training sessions, and all occupants of the research labs are required to attend this safety training presentation on an annual basis.

Petty Cash

Graduate students occasionally incur costs of \leq \$100 that should otherwise be covered by funded research. If this is the case, then students can be reimbursed via petty cash. In order to be reimbursed from petty cash, students must complete a petty cash voucher (available from the Department of Biological Sciences office), attach all receipts, and provide the account number to be charged. The form must be

signed by the faculty or staff member in charge of the account from which the funds are to come from. This must be completed within 30 days of the expenditure (or return from the field) and submitted in person to the Cashier in the University Center. The supervisor should clear all such expenditures in advance.

Other Funding opportunities

- Travel Grants are available through departmental offices, the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Student Association. You should also check for travel grants from professional organizations that are sponsoring specific conferences.
- Information on scholarships available to UAA graduate students through UAA can be found at <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/scholarships/> and additional information can be found at <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/research-opportunities-and-resources/funding.cshtml>
- The Graduate Student Association also provides opportunities to compete for research funding
- The department occasionally announces competitive funding opportunities.

Important Forms

UAA has spread the forms you require across a variety of different websites. Here is some guidance on where to find them.

Forms are also available on the Biological Sciences Graduate Student Affairs Blackboard page.

- Guidance for applying for student financial aid: <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/financialaid/index.cfm>
- Guidelines and application for applying for Alaska residency for tuition purposes
<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/admissions/Residency.cshtml>
- Application for Teaching Assistantship from the Biological Sciences Department:
<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/biological-sciences/academic-programs/master-of-science/ta.cshtml>

The following forms are available online at the Graduate School

<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/graduate-school/graduate-school-forms.cshtml>

- [Annual Report of Graduate Student Progress](#)
- [Report on Thesis/Dissertation Defense](#)
- [Application for Temporary Leave of Absence](#)
- [Change of Major or Emphasis](#)
- [Graduate Academic Petition](#)
- [Reinstatement to Graduate Degree Status](#)
- [Application for Graduation](#)
- [Request For Outside Examiner \(Ph.D. Only\)](#)

The following forms are available online at the Department of Biological Sciences

<https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-arts-and-sciences/departments/biological-sciences/academic-programs/master-of-science/documents-and-dates.cshtml>

- [Graduate Studies Plan](#) *(Must be completed in first semester in program.)*
- [Graduate Committee Assembly Form](#) *(or for a Change in Graduate Advisory Committee Members.)*
- [Annual Report of Graduate Student Progress](#) *(Must be completed by end of second semester in program.)*
- [Thesis Proposal](#) *(Must be completed by end of second semester in program)*
- [Directed Research \(BIOL A698\) Permission to Enroll Form](#) *(Must be completed by the student and faculty advisor in order to enroll in BIOL A698 credits.)*
- [Student Outcome Assessment](#) *(Must be completed upon submission of thesis.)*