



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

Department of Biological Sciences, Western Illinois University



## Thesis Plan

Student must have a research advisor before admission or by the end of the first semester

### First Semester

- Meet with your research advisor to define your course work plan and research project
- Start preparing research proposal
- Start research project in coordination with research advisor

### Second Semester

- Define graduate committee
- Present thesis proposal to graduate committee
- Make progress in your research
- 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
- 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 Bio601 –exit course (only once)
- Apply for graduation (form) 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
- 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. Bio477, Bio595)

### Second Semester

- Define graduate committee
- 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 Bio 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 (form) 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
- 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)