



**PROGRAM FLOW CHART FOR:  
M.S. in Biological Sciences (Thesis-based) – BS<sup>1</sup>  
4 Semester Plan to Graduation**

YEAR 1 - FALL		YEAR 1 - SPRING	
BIO 512 TA Development Seminar (Fall only)*	1 credit	Prepare and submit your <b>Research Proposal</b> <sup>5</sup>	
BIO 594 (Fall only)/SCED 694 (take early in program)	2/3 credits	Schedule committee meeting to discuss Plan of Study/Proposal	
Establish domicile in CO, if not already a resident <sup>2</sup>		Continue to take courses on your Plan of Study*	
Select your <b>Graduate Committee</b> <sup>3</sup>		Complete the Universal Scholarship <sup>6</sup>	
Prepare your <b>Plan of Study</b> <sup>4</sup>		Deliver an oral presentation during Research Day <sup>7</sup>	
		Submit application for BS Summer Funding <sup>8</sup>	
		Apply for resident status (if not CO resident upon acceptance) <sup>2</sup>	
YEAR 1 - SUMMER			
Continue to conduct research in lab or field			
YEAR 2 - FALL		YEAR 2 - SPRING	
Submit APR <sup>9</sup> reporting on Year 1		Apply for graduation <sup>10</sup> (first week of semester)	
Submit report for BS Summer Funding, if recipient		BIO 699 Thesis credits*	6 credits total)
Schedule a date for your defense talk <sup>10</sup> during Spring Friday seminars		Complete GS "Application for graduation" form <sup>10</sup>	
		Prepare and disseminate your <b>thesis</b> to your committee <sup>11</sup>	
BIO 699 Thesis credits*	(6 credits total)	<b>Defend</b> your thesis <sup>12</sup>	

\*Throughout the above plan, you should take courses identified in your Plan of Study<sup>4</sup> **and** make progress on your research. Consult with your advisor about appropriate summer responsibilities<sup>13</sup>.

This worksheet is a recommended schedule to complete your Master's degree in **4 semesters**. It is possible to receive approval for an additional semester to have five semesters to complete your degree, but this request must be approved by the BS Chair. Ultimately, your program is an agreement between you and your advisor to fit the needs of your project and career goals. Consult regularly with your advisor and committee to establish and check in on your progress with the above schedule in mind.

### M.S. (Thesis-based) in Biological Sciences, Notes

<sup>1</sup>BS = Department of Biological Sciences (our main office is in Ross 2480), GS = Graduate School

<sup>2</sup>Resident status is a requirement of your admission, noted in your original acceptance letter.

- Students who are not CO residents when admitted into their program will receive non-resident tuition for their first year of enrollment only. For any subsequent years, only in-state tuition assistance will be given, and you are responsible for any difference.
- You must be a CO resident for a year before applying for residency; you should establish domicile immediately when you begin your program (see details and required evidence here: <https://www.unco.edu/registrar/residency/residency-requirements.aspx>).
- If you were not a resident when accepted into your Program, your application for CO resident status should be submitted the summer before your third semester of the Program.

<sup>3</sup>Graduate Committee is a minimum of 3 members, including your advisor, to advise all aspects of your program. At least two members should be BS faculty.

- Ensure all members have active Graduate Faculty or Doctoral Research Endorsement.

- Use the “Selection of Master’s Graduate Committee” form on the BS website. After collecting signatures from all members of your committee, file in your BS SharePoint folder.
- If during the course of your program you need to change a committee member, use this same form to change the composition of your committee.

<sup>4</sup>Plan of Study (i.e. the course plan to earn your degree) should be prepared with input with your advisor and committee. Your plan should include a minimum of 30 graduate credits and use the BS template available on BS website (*not* the GS form).

- Follow the catalog requirements for the academic year when you began your program.
- Carefully consider the financial repercussions of minimum and maximum credits taken each semester (usual number is 10 credits/semester).
- Communicate with the Instructors of Record for courses you are considering, to ensure they are offered in future semesters.
- You, all your committee members, and the Chair of the BS Graduate Committee should sign a final electronic version. This version should be filed in your BS SharePoint folder.
- You are required to take all courses on your approved Plan of Study to graduate. Minor changes, approved by your mentor and committee, can be made by your advisor completing the GS “Course Adjustment” form.
- You are allowed up to 3 credits per year beyond courses identified on your Plan of Study that will be covered by your Grad Stipend, you are financially responsible for any credits beyond this allowance.

<sup>5</sup>Research Proposal is a document that outlines the work you plan to include as part of your thesis. With your advisor’s input, write this proposal. Follow the BS Proposal guidelines from the BS webpage.

- Seek example proposal from other MS students in the program whose field aligns with yours.
- With your advisor’s permission, distribute a draft to your committee at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting to discuss the document and your research.
- All members of your committee should approve a final draft of your proposal document, sign the BS “Approval for Master’s Proposal” form, and you should file the form and a copy of your approved proposal in your BS SharePoint folder.

<sup>6</sup>Universal Scholarship Application is available through your student (Bearmail) credentials into URSA. Most BS graduate students are eligible for the Albert M Winchester Graduate Fellowship and Gerald D Schmidt Memorial Scholarship – competitive, internal grants awarded by BS Graduate Committee.

<sup>7</sup>Research Day is a yearly celebration of UNC research (as part of Academic Excellence Week) sponsored by the Center for Honors, Scholars, and Leadership and BS. All graduate students will give a brief oral presentation of your research.

- Your first Research Day presentation may summarize relevant literature and ideas you have for your thesis (spring start students are not required to give a presentation their first semester).
- Subsequent Research Day presentations should present your research, highlighting accomplishments for that year.
- Students defending in the Fall are not required to give a Research Day presentation but should volunteer for Research Day events and attend the entire day.
- Students can apply for Research Excellent Awards after their first year in their program.

<sup>8</sup>BS Summer Funding is available on a competitive basis through a BS application process. The stipend is intended to allow you to work full-time on your research.

- Applicants must be in good standing, have submitted a final report for any past awards, and submit a high quality application to be eligible.
- Recipients must submit a one-page final report summarizing their accomplishments, due the same time as their APRs (see below).

<sup>9</sup>APR (Annual Progress Report) summarizes your progress (academic, teaching, and research) from the past academic year. Submit your final report to your advisor the first Friday in September.

- Use the most recent BS template available on our website to guide this preparation.
- The BS Graduate Committee evaluates your progress, detailed in your APR, compared with benchmarks and timelines outlined in this 4-semester flow chart document.

<sup>10</sup>Preparing for graduation is a multi-step process that should involve close communication with your advisor and committee.

- The semester before you plan to graduate, discuss with your advisor and committee possible times for your defense. Pay careful attention to the GS's *last day for a thesis defense* (roughly a month before the end of the semester)—see their webpage for details. Then speak with the Biology Seminar Coordinator to ensure this time is available and confirm a date.
- Complete the GS “Graduate Student Application for Graduation” (linked to OnBase) within the first weeks of the semester of graduation. To be eligible to apply ALL benchmarks noted in Degree Works (completed courses in your Program of Study) should be met, and you must be currently enrolled as a student (or continuous registration will be charged to your account).
- As you prepare your thesis, seek regular input from your advisor. The GS “Master’s Thesis and Creative Project Format” Manual is available on the GS webpage. Further BS has department-specific guidelines on the SB website. Ensure you strictly adhere to both these guidelines.
- At least 2 weeks prior to your defense date, but much earlier is better, complete and submit the BS “Request to Schedule Master’s Defense” form.
- Check the GS website for the deadlines for requesting a defense, having a defense, and filing a thesis. Many of these are a month or more before the end of the semester, so check early!

<sup>11</sup>Prepare your thesis with regular input from your advisor.

- Discuss with your advisor your preferred publication style (Traditional vs Journal Manuscript format). See BS “Thesis/Dissertation Style Guide” for details.
- Consult the GS “Master’s Thesis and Creative Project Format” format manual to format your thesis. Follow their guidelines in painstaking detail!!
- At least 2 weeks prior to your defense date, and after your advisor determines it is ready, distribute a final copy of your full thesis to all members of your committee.

<sup>12</sup>Defense of your thesis includes a ~45 min public presentation (usually scheduled during the regular BS Friday seminars), a ~10 min open question period by the general audience, a ~20-30 min open question period by the BS faculty, then a closed-door question period of just the committee. Your defense, including the presentation and advisor introduction, has a 3-hour time limit.

- Once you have passed your defense exam and made requested revisions on your thesis, your committee members will sign the BS “Defense of Master’s Thesis or Project in Lieu of Written Comprehensive Exams” form and it should be filed with the GS.
- Once your committee has provided their final approval of your written thesis (following any requested edits), you need to secure their approval by signing the GS-approved electronic signature page. You should request this form from the Chair of the Graduate Committee.
- Schedule an appointment with Thesis and Dissertation Specialist at the GS for a Format Check.
- Submit the GS “Verification of Research Subject Compliance” form (regardless of the type of research you conducted for your thesis), your IRB or IACUC approval (as appropriate), and GS “Thesis, Scholarly Project or Dissertation Processing” form with an electronic copy of your finalized thesis to the GS.

<sup>13</sup>Summer responsibilities should be agreed upon between you and your advisor, but may include several research activities (e.g. data collection, analysis, dissemination of your work). GTA-ships do not cover summer coursework, so contact your advisor before considering any summer courses.

## Other Notes

1. There are several internal grants (i.e. within UNC) that fund graduate research, for which it may be appropriate for you to apply. Depending on the type of research you do, there may also be other external opportunities (local, national, or international) that may be appropriate to apply to fund your research. Grant writing experience is an important skill, which can be practiced during your Master's Program. Consult with your advisor about sources and timing of funding.
2. Graduate students must maintain a 3.00 grade point average in graduate level courses to be eligible for graduate or teaching assistantships or to graduate (see the GS Graduate Student Handbook). Courses for which C-, D+, D, D-, F, U, W, NR or I grades are awarded will not count towards graduate degree program requirements.
3. All teaching assistant-funded graduate students need to take at least 3 credit hours in a given semester to retain their GTA-ship. However, carrying a less-than half time course load (i.e. 4 credits hours or less) may make you ineligible for student loan deferment – contact Financial Aid. Also keep in mind that if you are taking 6 or more credits per semester (half-time = 5-8 credits, full time = 9+ credits) you are required to have full coverage health insurance. Students who meet the credit hour criteria will be automatically enrolled in the UNC Student Health Insurance Plan and the cost will be added to your UNC student tuition bill, or you can complete a waiver (via URSA) if you have comparable coverage from another provider.
4. Regularly check Degree Works to ensure your program benchmarks are properly documented when they have each been completed.
5. Maintain regular contact with your advisor and committee. You are responsible for confirming dates and times of all committee meetings, exams, and your defense with your committee.
6. The best points of contact for any questions about your program, in order, should be your advisor, the BS Chair of the Graduate Committee, the BS Associate Chair, the BS Chair, and the GS staff and Dean.
7. All submitted forms noted here should be copied and retained for your own records, and a copy should be offered to your advisor for their records and to the BS Office for your file.
  - a. GS forms are available here: <https://www.unco.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/current-students/graduate-school-forms.aspx>
  - b. GS thesis manuals and other resources are available here: <https://www.unco.edu/graduate-school/student-resources/current-students/thesis-capstone-dissertation-resources.aspx>
  - c. BS forms are available here: <https://www.unco.edu/nhs/biology/about-us/forms.aspx>