



**PROGRAM FLOW CHART FOR:
M.S. in Biological Sciences (Thesis-based) – SBS¹
4 Semester Plan to Graduation**

YEAR 1 - FALL	YEAR 1 - SPRING
BIO 512 TA Development Seminar (Fall only)* 1 credit BIO 594 (Fall only)/SCED 694 (take early in program) 2/3 credits Establish domicile in CO, if not already a resident ² Select your Graduate Committee ³ Prepare your Plan of Study ⁴	Prepare your Research Proposal ⁵ Schedule committee meeting to discuss Plan of Study/Proposal Continue to take courses on your Plan of Study* Complete the Universal Scholarship ⁶ Deliver an oral presentation during Research Day ⁷ Submit application for SBS Summer Funding ⁸ Apply for resident status (if not CO resident upon acceptance) ²
YEAR 1 - SUMMER	
Continue to conduct research in lab or field	
YEAR 2 - FALL	YEAR 2 - SPRING
Submit APR ⁹ reporting on Year 1 Submit report for SBS Summer Funding, if recipient Schedule a date for your defense talk ¹⁰ during Spring Friday seminars BIO 699 Thesis credits* (6 credits total)	Apply for graduation ¹⁰ (first week of semester) BIO 699 Thesis credits* 6 credits total) Complete GS "Application for graduation" form ¹⁰ Prepare and disseminate your thesis to your committee ¹¹ Defend your thesis ¹² School of Biological Sciences Graduate Exit Survey ¹³

*Throughout the above plan, you should take courses identified in your Plan of Study⁴ and make progress on your research. Consult with your advisor about appropriate summer responsibilities¹⁴.

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 SBS Director. 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

¹SBS = School of Biological Sciences (our main office is in Ross 2480), GS = Graduate School

²Resident 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.

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

- Ensure all members have active Graduate Faculty or Doctoral Research Endorsement.
- Use the “Selection of Master’s Graduate Committee” form on the SBS website. After collecting signatures from all members of your committee, file in your SBS 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.

⁴Plan of Study (i.e. the course plan to earn your degree) should be prepared with input with your advisor and committee. Any deficiencies noted on your acceptance letter should be included and completed before the deadline provided in your admissions letter. Your plan should include a minimum of 30 graduate credits and use the SBS template available on SBS website (*not* the GS form).

- Follow the catalog requirements for the academic year when you began your program.
- Consult the SBS Financial Summary Sheet, available from the Director or Associate Director, for the financial repercussions of minimum and maximum credits taken each semester (usual = 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, the Chair of the SBS Graduate Committee, and the SBS Director should sign a final version.
- You are required to take all courses on your approved Plan of Study to graduate. Minor changes can be made but require a signed, detailed memo from your advisor to the GS.
- 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 (see the SBS Financial Summary Sheet).

⁵Research 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 SBS Proposal guidelines from the SBS 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 SBS “Approval for Master’s Proposal” form, and you should file the form and a copy of your approved proposal in your SBS SharePoint folder.

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

⁷Research Day is a yearly celebration of UNC research (as part of Academic Excellence Week) sponsored by the Center for Honors, Scholars, and Leadership and SBS. 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 can apply for Research Excellent Awards after their first year in their program.

⁸SBS Summer Funding is available on a competitive basis through a SBS application process. The stipend (see the SBS Financial Summary Sheet) 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).

⁹APR (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 SBS template available on our website to guide this preparation.
- The SBS Graduate Committee evaluates your progress, detailed in your APR, compared with benchmarks and timelines outlined in this 4-semester flow chart document.

¹⁰Preparing 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 “Application for Graduation in a Master’s/Specialist Program” 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. Ensure you strictly adhere to these guidelines.
- At least 2 weeks prior to your defense date, but much earlier is better, complete and submit the SBS “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 solid month or more before the end of the semester, so check early!

¹¹Prepare your thesis with regular input from your advisor.

- Discuss with your advisor your preferred publication style (Traditional vs Journal Manuscript format). See SBS “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.

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

- Once you have passed your defense exam and made requested revisions on your thesis, your committee members will sign the SBS “Defense of Thesis or Project in Lieu of Written Comprehensive Exams” form and it should be filed with the GS.
- Two copies of the title page of your thesis, with original signatures, should be submitted to the GS. These pages do not need to be on any specific type of paper.
- 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.

¹³Graduate Student Exit Survey (available on the SBS website) should be completed prior to your graduation. To maintain confidentiality, seal your completed survey in an envelope and have a SBS

staff member sign off that you have completed this survey.

¹⁴Summer 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 SBS Chair of the Graduate Committee, the SBS Associate Director, the SBS Director, 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 SBS 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. SBS forms are available here: <https://www.unco.edu/nhs/biology/about-us/forms.aspx>