

GRADUATE HANDBOOK  
FOR  
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES



DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES  
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING  
TECHNOLOGY  
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY

Revised Fall 2022

# GRADUATE STUDENT CONTRACT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have received a copy of the Graduate Handbook from the Department of Biological Sciences. I understand that I am expected to abide by all policies, deadlines, and timelines set forth both in this handbook and those found in the Graduate Catalog, Schedule of Classes, and Thesis Requirements. I also acknowledge that it is **my** responsibility, and not the Graduate Coordinator nor members of my advisory committee, to see that I meet these obligations and deadlines. Additionally, I agree that my admission status as well as any financial support provided by the Department of Biological Sciences and College of Science and Engineering Technology may be withdrawn if I have not followed these policies in good faith.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Graduation (Semester, Year): \_\_\_\_\_

## Contact Information:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Local Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Permanent Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# GRADUATE DATA CONTRACT

I \_\_\_\_\_, hereby agree to regularly back up on, multiple hard drives, my data, prospectus, thesis, Powerpoint slides, *et cetera*. I acknowledge that the loss of my data will not be accepted as a valid excuse for failing to meet the deadlines outlined in the Graduate Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# ACADEMIC PROCEDURES

## APPLICATION / ACCEPTANCE PROCEDURES

**Regular Admission.** Requirements for **regular** admission to the graduate school are set forth in the Graduate Catalog and are summarized below (see the Graduate Catalog for more detailed information):

### A. Program Admission Requirements

1. A minimum undergraduate GPA, from the baccalaureate granting institution, of 2.5\* (on a 4-point scale).
  - a. \*A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required by the Graduate School. Those with an undergraduate GPA < 3.0 will require a waiver to be granted by the Graduate Committee of the Department of Biological Sciences to be considered for Regular or Probationary admittance.
2. Applicants from non-English speaking countries must present a score of at least 78 on the Internet-based (iBT), 550 on the paper version (PBT), or 213 on the computer version (CBT) of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). If English is recorded as the official language of the Applicant's country, then a TOEFL score is unneeded. SHSU is currently accepting Duolingo scores of at least 105.
  - a. Students from the following countries qualify for a TOEFL waiver: Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada (except Quebec), Dominica, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Liberia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Overseas UK territories, Overseas US territories, South Africa, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, and the United Kingdom
  - b. Students who completed undergraduate or previous degree coursework at a university where English was the language of instruction, and have a GPA of 2.5 or higher, may be eligible for a TOEFL waiver. If the Office of Admissions cannot determine if English was the language of instruction at the applicant's university, an advisor will contact you to submit additional evidence.

### B. MS Program in Biological Sciences

1. Meet program admission requirements as listed above.
2. An undergraduate degree in biology or a closely related field. Applicants with an undergraduate degree in a discipline other than biology or a closely related field must complete ecology (BIOL 3409) and genetics (BIOL 3450) or equivalent courses to be considered for regular admission. At least an undergraduate minor in the biological sciences, including ecology and genetics, is strongly recommended. The requirement for ecology and genetics will be waived if a student scores 70% or better on the genetics and ecology sections of the MFAT exam. This exam must be taken within the first two weeks of entering the graduate program.

3. Copies of all undergraduate and graduate transcripts. Unofficial transcripts are permitted during the application process.
4. At least two letters of recommendation. Ideally, these letters are provided by faculty in the undergraduate major field of study.
5. A Statement of Purpose that indicates your promise for success in graduate study. This statement should provide: (1) an introduction including your interests and motivations; (2) a synopsis of your undergraduate and previous graduate career as appropriate; (3) a discussion of the relevance of your most recent and/or current activities for graduate studies; and (4) an elaboration on your academic interests including the scope of research within your area of interest.
6. A curriculum vitae/resume
7. **International applicants** must have identified and contacted an individual faculty member that has agreed to serve as their thesis advisor. Confirmation must be provided by the faculty member and is accomplished directly through the application portal.
8. **OPTIONAL:** We recommend that domestic applicants have identified and contacted an individual faculty member agrees to serve as their advisor. This should be included in the Statement of Purpose if applicable.
9. **OPTIONAL:** A GRE score is not required but can be provided if desired.

**\*Conditional Admission.** An applicant whose records are incomplete may be granted **Conditional Admission** and will be classified as conditional graduate students until all records are received and all regular admission requirements are fulfilled. Conditional admission allows for completion of **no more than six hours** of graduate credit and is valid for only **one semester**.

**\*Probationary Admission.** An applicant whose records are complete but who did not qualify for regular admission can be granted **Probationary Admission** with Graduate Committee recommendation and approval from the Dean of the College of Science and Engineering Technology (CoSET). Probationary students may enroll in graduate courses (maximum 12 hours) to demonstrate they can perform at the graduate level by earning a grade of “B” or better in each course taken under probationary status to be considered for Regular Admission.

**\*Preparatory Admission.** A degree-seeking applicant that does not qualify for regular admission and needs to complete one or more stem courses may be granted preparatory admission.

**\*Note:** Conditional, Probationary, or Preparatory Admission do not guarantee Regular Admission once deficiencies are met. Students with students Conditional, Probationary, or Preparatory Admission are ineligible for CoSET Graduate Assistantship positions.

**Post Baccalaureate Admission or Non-Degree Admission.** **Post Baccalaureate Admission** is assigned to students possessing a Baccalaureate Degree that have not been regularly admitted or conditionally admitted into the graduate program and are classified as non-degree seeking. **Non-degree admission** may be granted to a student holding a baccalaureate degree or higher from an accredited university that does not intend to pursue a graduate degree but who wishes to take courses for professional advancement, licensure, certification, or self-education purposes.

For **International Applicants** the same requirements for admission and candidacy as students from the United States must be met. In addition, international Applicants **MUST** identify a faculty member that has agreed to serve as their advisor. An original evaluation of foreign education credentials is required (formal transcript evaluation). *International students are eligible only for regular admission status.*

**Transfer Credit.** A total of six (6) credit hours may be transferred to SHSU from another accredited graduate program *at the discretion of the Graduate Coordinator and the Dean of CoSET.* Transfer credit is not automatic and must be requested by the Graduate Coordinator. Only courses with an earned grade of “B” or better may be used as transfer credit. Transferred courses must adhere to the six-year time frame (i.e., courses may not be older than six years at the time of completion of the degree). Exceptions to the six-year rule require approval by the Graduate Committee, the Dean of CoSET, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

## **GRADUATE (TEACHING) ASSISTANTSHIPS**

Graduate Assistantships are available through the Department of Biological Sciences in conjunction with CoSET and the Office of Graduate Studies. They are limited in number and awarded on a competitive basis. If desired, an Application for a Graduate Assistantship should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator after admittance to the program. Applications will be provided by the Graduate Coordinator each semester. *To be considered you must submit letters of recommendation (3) that can attest to your potential as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. These letters must be separate from those in support of your application for admittance to the program.*

Assistantships are typically awarded for a total of four semesters if the student remains in good standing, but only the first semester is guaranteed. A fifth semester of support is possible with approval by the Graduate Committee and the Dean of CoSET. To be eligible for a fifth semester of support the student must have turned in their prospectus by their third semester and completed their comprehensive exam by their fourth semester. In addition, a memo must be sent to the Graduate Coordinator explaining/justifying why a fifth semester of support is warranted.

Students must make satisfactory progress in the program, adhere to deadlines and departmental policies and procedures. Failure to adhere to may result in termination of the GA based on noncompliance.

Assistantship awards are made on a competitive basis by approval of the Graduate Committee on a semester-by-semester basis. *Students receiving a stipend as a Graduate Assistant must be registered for at least 6 credit hours during the semester they are serving as a GA.* An exception to this enrollment requirement can be requested (with adequate justification) via a memo sent to the Graduate Coordinator. *Final approval is required by the Graduate Committee, the Department Chair, the Dean of CoSET and the Dean of the Graduate School.*

Students awarded assistantships will receive a letter from the Dean of CoSET. Those students awarded assistantships are required to submit additional paperwork to the Administrative Assistants in the Department of Biological Sciences office (LSB 105).

The office of the Dean of CoSET offers a one-time scholarship for first-time master’s students that is paid out in conjunction with a GA. First-time master’s students awarded an assistantship for the fall semester are given \$2,000 that is split between the fall and spring semester. First-time master’s

students awarded an assistantship for the spring semester are given \$1,000 that is awarded in the spring semester only. Only first-time students are eligible for this scholarship.

**All students who have been awarded a Graduate Assistantship are required to attend the Office of Graduate Studies New Graduate Student Orientation during their first semester in the program, as well as the Department of Biological Sciences TA Training held at the beginning of each fall and spring semester.**

## HOURLY TEACHING POSITIONS

Students not awarded a GA may be eligible to teach laboratories on an hourly basis. Students interested in hourly teaching positions should contact the Graduate Coordinator or the Department Chair

## SCHOLARSHIPS

The College of Science and Engineering Technology (CoSET) **Graduate Recruitment Scholarship** is a \$1000 competitive scholarship awarded to outstanding students entering their **first semester** of a CoSET master's program at SHSU (in person or online) that have not been awarded a GA. Current MS students are not eligible for the Graduate Recruitment Scholarship.

To be considered for the CoSET Graduate Recruitment Scholarship, a student must be accepted into a master's program in CoSET, entering their first semester in the program, and maintain their status as a full-time student. Nominations for the scholarship are accepted from SHSU faculty, or students may self-nominate. An international student applying for the scholarship must have a transcript evaluation on file with the Dean of CoSET's (transcript evaluations by qualified SHSU faculty are acceptable). Applicants will be evaluated by their cumulative GPA scores.

The **Graduate Achievement Scholarship** is a \$1000 competitive scholarship awarded to students demonstrating outstanding academic progress in a CoSET master's program. Current master's students, regardless of time in the program (except 1<sup>st</sup> semester) are eligible. To be considered, a student must be enrolled full-time in a master's program in CoSET. Students in their first year of a CoSET graduate program who have been awarded a graduate assistantship are not eligible for the scholarship.

Complete applications require:

- 1) a personal statement from the applicant describing their academic progress toward the degree, including planned graduation date, and progress on the thesis or capstone project (where applicable), and
- 2) a letter of evaluation from the applicant's major advisor or graduate program coordinator describing the applicant's progress toward the degree and overall performance in the graduate program.

*An application form for these scholarship opportunities can be found [here](#). Applications should be submitted to Ms. Katelyn Conner at [kconner@shsu.edu](mailto:kconner@shsu.edu) or [COSET@shsu.edu](mailto:COSET@shsu.edu) by 5:00 pm on the day of the deadline. Paper applications will not be accepted.*

The Fall application deadline for Fall Graduate Achievement Scholarship is **July 1<sup>st</sup>**. The Spring application deadline for the Spring Graduate Achievement Scholarship is **December 1<sup>st</sup>**.

The Office of Graduate Studies also offers a \$1000 scholarship each fall, spring, and summer semester. Application information can be found on the Office of Graduate Studies website.

The Department of Biological Sciences also scholarships available. Students should complete an application via Scholarships4Kats.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE**

Graduate Assistants and Research Assistants employed half-time (20 hours per week) are eligible to receive a 50% discount on health insurance through the university. Students should contact Human Resources for more information.

## **TRAVEL SUPPORT FOR SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS**

The Office of Graduate Studies has funds available to support travel to scientific meetings. To be eligible, students must be traveling to an event sponsored by a professional organization and must be presenting their research in the form of an oral or poster presentation. Travel funds are limited and are awarded on a competitive basis. Contact the Graduate Coordinator and the Office of Graduate Studies for more information.

## **BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION**

The role of the Biological Sciences Graduate Student Organization (BSGSO) is to foster the interests of the graduate students in the Department of Biological Sciences, to promote and support academic and social activities of interest to graduate students, and to serve as a liaison between the graduate students, faculty, staff, and other organizations. Membership in the BSGSO is free and is automatic with acceptance into the graduate program in the Department of Biological Sciences, but participation is voluntary.

For more information see BSGSO on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/640644636006531/>

## **CREDIT HOUR RESTRICTIONS**

**The normal course load** (to be a full-time student) is 9-12 credit hours per full semester and 6 credit hours in the summer. Increased academic loads must be approved by the Dean. Other limitations include:

1. University Graduate Assistants and Research Assistants employed half-time (20 hours per week): The required academic load is 6 to 9 credit hours per semester for fall and spring semester.\*
2. Financial aid requires students to be enrolled in 18 hours per calendar year and at least 6 hours



during each regular (fall and spring) semester.

- \* Students who enroll in BIOL 6398 or BIOL 6099 for the summer should enroll in the 10-week sections of those courses to maintain full-time student status for the summer.
- 3. Students who wish to use university resources, including access to the library and research facilities, during the summer must be enrolled in at least one credit hour during the summer or be employed by SHSU for the summer.

## **BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS & PROCEDURES FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE**

**Graduate Coordinator.** Dr. James Harper, LSB 300E, [jmharper@shsu.edu](mailto:jmharper@shsu.edu), serves as Graduate Coordinator for all students seeking a MS degree in the Department of Biological Sciences. The Graduate Coordinator oversees the official academic records and is the contact person for prospective graduate students. **All application materials must be submitted through the Office of Graduate Admissions.** *The Graduate Coordinator will not provide an initial evaluation of application materials.*

After acceptance, it is recommended MS students report to the Graduate Coordinator each time a document is filed.

The Graduate Coordinator will assist with course selection for incoming students without a thesis advisor at the time of admittance. Afterward, course selections should be made in consultation with the thesis advisor and the advisory committee composed of at least two members of the faculty of the Department of Biological Sciences (in addition to the faculty advisor).

**Course Requirements.** Students must complete BIOL 5301 and 5302 within their first two semesters of course work. BIOL 5301 must be taken first.

**Students are REQUIRED to attend the weekly Departmental Seminar Series.** A checklist/sign-in sheet will be maintained to monitor graduate student attendance at seminar unless otherwise indicated. Failure to attend puts the student at risk of non-compliance and potential forfeiture of their GA. If other obligations interfere with the student's ability to attend, the Graduate Coordinator must be informed.

**Adherence to program procedures and deadlines, and satisfactory progress is necessary for continuance of GA support and enrollment in the graduate program.** Failure to adhere to departmental policy may result in termination based on noncompliance. The Graduate Committee will meet to review graduate student compliance with program policies on a per need basis. Should a student be discovered to be non-compliant, a disciplinary hearing for the student will be held with the Graduate Committee to determine a course of action.

**Degree Documentation.** Each student is responsible for submitting the necessary paperwork to the Graduate Coordinator in a timely manner. The attached timetable and checklist should be used

for reference. Please note that deadlines for the Department of Biological Sciences may be earlier than deadlines in the Graduate Catalog, Schedule of Classes, or Dean's office.

**Graduate Student Evaluation.** Each graduate student is **required** to complete a Graduate Student Evaluation form every semester they are enrolled. This requires includes an evaluation by the student as well as the student's thesis advisor and GA supervisor (when applicable). Failure to complete and file this form may result an inability to provide additional GA support if requested.

**Major Advisor.** Each student is to choose a faculty member from the Department of Biological Sciences at SHSU as a Major Advisor (see Appendix for Advisor – Student Agreement form), **by the end of the 1st semester**, to guide them in their graduate program. Identification of a Major Advisor is not required for admittance for domestic students. International students must identify a Major Advisor **that has agreed to serve** for admittance to the graduate program. The Major Advisor serves as the chairperson of the student's Advisory Committee and is responsible for advising the student on course selection and research efforts. First semester students lacking a Major Advisor should choose coursework under advisement of the Graduate Coordinator. A signature from the Major Advisor or the Graduate Coordinator is required on all official paperwork. Per University policy, the Major Advisor must have Master level graduate faculty status or higher. If there is a change in the Major Advisor, a revised Advisor-Student Agreement form (see Appendix) should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator. The former Major Advisor must be notified of this change by the student, and permission must be granted by the former advisor for the student to use any intellectual property belonging to the former advisor.

**Advisory Committee.** With the assistance of the Major Advisor, the student will select a minimum of two additional faculty from the Department of Biological Sciences at SHSU to comprise their Advisory Committee. Additional members for the Advisory Committee may be selected if desired and may be from outside of the department or University. Committee members from outside the University must be approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies to serve on the committee (see the Office of Graduate Studies website to complete a form to request approval).

Per University policy, all Advisory Committee members must have Associate level graduate faculty status or higher to serve, including those from outside the department. The Advisory Committee should be selected **by the end of the 2nd semester**. An Advisory Committee Agreement form must be submitted to the Dean of CoSET at this time. It is the role of the Advisory Committee to work with the student to establish an appropriate course sequence and plan of research. The student **must** meet with their Advisory Committee **bi-annually** (approximately every six months) to inform them of progress. A Record of Bi-Annual Committee Meeting form (see Appendix) should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator following each meeting. Should the student's Advisory Committee change, a revised Advisory Committee Agreement form must be submitted to the Dean of CoSET.

**Course Requirements.** A list of appropriate courses is found in the Graduate Catalog. Thesis Option 1 requires a minimum of 30 hours of course work. This includes 6 hours of thesis credit (BIOL 6398 & 6099) in addition to 24 hours of coursework. Thesis Option 2 includes 36 hours of course work and includes a minor (12 hours must be taken in the minor field in addition to required coursework: BIOL 5301, BIOL 5302, BIOL 6398 and BIOL 6099). **The Department of Biological Sciences does not allow Q-drops for regular graduate students.**

Students may petition to have courses outside of the Biological Sciences MS degree plan be applied toward their degree in writing to the Graduate Coordinator. This should include justification as to why the course is important for the student's thesis project/academic goals/career goals, *et cetera*. A recommendation regarding the student's petition will be made by the Graduate Committee, but final approval comes from the Department Chair and Dean of the CoSET. A Degree Plan Exception Form must be filed with the Office of the Registrar for the coursework to count toward their MS degree in Biology.

BIOL 6398 and 6099. At least **six credit hours** (but more is permissible) of the degree plan must be dedicated to thesis research hours. Three (3) credit hours are taken in BIOL 6398 and at least three are taken in BIOL 6099. Student's that have sufficient credit hours, have completed both BIOL 5301 and 5302 and are making sufficient progress toward completing their degree may request permission to enroll in thesis research hours at the discretion of the Graduate Coordinator. If the student has not successfully completed their MS thesis defense once six credit hours has been reached, the student **must enroll** in at least one credit hour of BIOL 6099 until graduation. **This meets the Continuous Enrollment requirement per university policy. Enrollment in thesis research hours requires final approval by the Graduate Coordinator and the Department Chair.** Permission is requested by completing an Approval for Enrollment in a Thesis Course form, available in the Department's main office.

PLEASE NOTE: Students must maintain at least a half-time enrollment status (or six credit hours) to receive federal financial aid or to receive a GA. Exceptions to this rule for the GA may be requested in writing to the Graduate Coordinator with final approval provided by the Dean of the Graduate College.

**Thesis Prospectus.** In consultation with the Major Advisor students will select a subject of investigation and determine the availability of the required resources, facilities, materials, and equipment to conduct the research. The student will prepare a thesis prospectus which will specify the thesis topic, detail the purpose of the proposed investigation, describe the proposed method(s) of investigation, indicate the relationship of the study to relevant research findings in the student's area of concentration, and provide a commentary on source materials and/or facilities available for the successful completion of the research.

The thesis prospectus shall be submitted to the Advisory Committee for approval. Once approved and signed the prospectus and the Prospectus Approval Form are submitted to the Dean of CoSET for final approval. Any substantial changes in topic or the proposed method of investigation must be approved in by the Advisory Committee. **The thesis prospectus should be submitted for final approval no later than the end of the student's first year in the graduate program.** See Appendix for Thesis Prospectus Guidelines.

**Bi-Annual committee meetings.** Students are expected to hold a meeting with their Advisory Committee at least bi-annually. Students should bring the **Record of Bi-Annual Committee Meeting** form to the meeting to be completed and signed. The signed form should be turned submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.

**Comprehensive Exam.** All MS degree candidates must pass a Comprehensive Exam, written and/or oral and can occur in conjunction with the presentation of the Thesis Prospectus. The Comprehensive Exam will be administered by the student's Advisory Committee.

At least two weeks before the Comprehensive Exam, MS candidates must submit a signed Prior Topic Selection Agreement to the Graduate Coordinator. This form will serve to document that the student has met with each member of their Comprehensive Exam Committee and identified topics of study open for questioning during the comprehensive exam. Answers to questions asked in the Comprehensive Exam will be evaluated by members of the Comprehensive Exam Committee on a scale of 0–5, with 0 being 'non-responsive' and 5 being exemplary. These evaluations will be recorded by each member of the Comprehensive Exam Committee on the Comprehensive Exam Grading Rubric. An unweighted average of 3 or higher among members of the Comprehensive Exam Committee is required for a passing mark. Signed Comprehensive Exam Grading Rubrics must be submitted along with the Report of Comprehensive Examination Form. Though faculty members are required to use the Comprehensive Examination Grading Rubric, students are encouraged to remind them of this policy by email at least two weeks before the comprehensive exam, and to provide these forms to members of the Comprehensive Exam Committee on the day of the scheduled Comprehensive Exam. The Comprehensive Exam Topic Agreement Form can be obtained from the Graduate Coordinator.

If not administered after presentation of the Thesis Prospectus, the comprehensive exam should be completed **no later than the third long semester** in the graduate program. It may not occur in the same semester as graduation.

If the student fails to pass the Comprehensive Exam the first time, a second exam should be scheduled in consultation with the Advisory Committee. As above, the final grade (Pass/Fail) is determined using a scoring rubric generated by each member of the Advisory Committee to reach an aggregate score. Failure to successfully pass the Comprehensive Exam on the second attempt will result in the immediate dismissal of the student from the program.

**Thesis.** The thesis requirement consists of an original written document over the student's research findings completed in compliance with the project's prospectus. The student **MUST** give a public thesis presentation that is performed during working hours. Afterward, the student is subject to a thesis defense wherein the candidate for the degree of Master of Science defends their research hypothesis, research methods, and research results to their Advisory Committee.

Thesis guidelines are available from <https://shsulibraryguides.org/thesisguide/homepage>. The One-to-One program is also available to master's students engaged in thesis research to aid with utilizing library resources: <https://library.shsu.edu/services/onetoone/index.html>. Assistance with writing and formatting can be obtained via the Academic Success Center (ACE): <https://www.shsu.edu/centers/academic-success-center/>.

The student will **submit their final thesis in electronic form using the Vireo Electronic Submittal System**. Although the thesis is submitted electronically, **the Department of Biological Sciences requires the student have copies of their thesis professionally printed and bound**, one copy for the Departmental Thesis Library and one copy for the student's Major Advisor. Students sometimes have additional copies printed for the remaining members of their Advisory Committee, but this is not required. It is recommended that you ask your committee members if

they desire a copy. The Vireo Electronic Submittal System provides the student with several different services by which they can request a printed and bound copy.

**One semester prior to the semester of expected graduation:** The student must file a degree application in the Registrar's Office (see current Deadlines for Graduation in the Appendix).

**During the semester in which graduation is expected:** MS candidates must be enrolled in **BIOL 6099**. If the student fails to graduate that semester, they must continue to enroll in BIOL 6099 each semester until graduation. **There are no exceptions to this Office of Graduate Studies policy.** An approved final copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Dean of CoSET by the date specified by the College. The student's Advisory Committee and the Department Chair must approve the thesis prior to submission to the Dean. Additional deadlines may be put in place by each Advisory Committee so that adequate time is available for review and corrections.

Once approved by all Advisory Committee members, an electronic route sheet should be started. This route sheet is available on the Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation website: <https://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/theses-and-dissertations.html>. At the same time, a copy of the Advisory Committee thesis page with signatures of all Advisory Committee members must be submitted to the Dean of COSET, along with an electronic copy of the thesis. **The Dean of CoSET will not approve the route sheet until all items have been submitted.** The completed route sheet serves as proof to the Registrar that the thesis has been completed and that all thesis requirements have been met for graduation.

The student must **schedule a public seminar**. An announcement for the seminar must be posted publicly **at least two weeks in advance and an e-mail must be sent to all faculty informing them of the date, time, and location of the seminar**. The seminar can take place during the fall, spring or summer semesters, while classes are in session, and is to be given during the student's last semester in the program. The final defense may follow the public seminar, but this is not required. The student should expect to present their research seminar a second time, however, if the defense does not follow the public seminar. A reasonable **final draft** of the thesis **MUST** be submitted to the student's Advisory Committee **no later than two weeks prior** to the scheduled defense to allow ample time for the committee to read and edit the thesis. Graduate students must obtain approval from **all** thesis committee members prior to scheduling their thesis defense.

A **Report of Thesis Examination** form (available on the CoSET website) should be completed by MS candidates after the thesis defense and submitted to the Dean's office. The student should bring the form to the defense. A copy of this form should also be filed with the Graduate Coordinator.

Students participating in the **Commencement Ceremony** must arrange for a cap and gown at the University Bookstore at least two months before expected graduation.

# **SHSU ACADEMIC POLICY STATEMENT 910312**

## **ACADEMIC PROBATION, SUSPENSION, DISMISSAL AND TERMINATION**

### **ACADEMIC GOOD STANDING FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

A minimum grade point average of 3.0 is required in all graduate course work. All grades earned at SHSU (A, B, C, F) in courses listed for graduate credit on the student's official Degree Plan will be included in computing the grade point average. The marks of Q, W, CR, NC, IP, and X are not counted as hours attempted in computing the SHSU grade point average. **Note: The Department of Biological Sciences does not allow Q-drops for regular graduate students.**

Grades earned at another institution **MAY NOT** be used to remove a grade of "C" or lower earned at SHSU.

The appropriate academic dean may place on probation, retain on probation, or terminate any student deficient in grade points.

### **ACADEMIC PROBATION, TERMINATION, OR DISMISSAL FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

A graduate student who falls below a 3.0 SHSU grade point average at the close of any semester during which one or more semester hours are attempted will be placed on probation. Two summer sessions are equivalent to one long semester. If an enrolled student on probation fails to achieve a minimum of a 3.0 SHSU grade point average at the close of the next semester following the start of the probation, the student will be terminated from graduate studies.

A graduate student who earns a grade of F in any graduate course at SHSU will be terminated from graduate studies.

A student who earns a grade of C in any course at SHSU (repeated or distinct course) within the academic program may have their graduate status reviewed by a committee of the department or college graduate faculty. The committee will recommend an appropriate remediation for the student.

A student who fails to meet any approved program-specific standards for academic performance, including professionalism standards may be dismissed from the program.

### **REMOVAL OF ACADEMIC PROBATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

The student will be removed from probation at the close of the semester or summer semester in which the SHSU grade point average achieves the required standard.

### **APPEALS PROCESS FOR TERMINATION AND DISMISSAL FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

A student who believes they have been wrongly dismissed or terminated from graduate studies may appeal using the following procedures:

The student must first appeal to the Graduate Coordinator for a resolution and must do so **in writing** within ten (10) working days following the notification of probation, termination, or dismissal. The graduate advisor must respond to the appeal in writing within ten (10) working days of receipt.

If the appeal to the Graduate Coordinator is not satisfactorily resolved, the student may appeal **in writing** to the chair of the department within ten (10) working days following the Graduate Coordinator's decision. The Department Chair must respond to the appeal in writing within ten (10) working days of receipt.

If the appeal to the Department Chair is not satisfactorily resolved, the student may appeal the decision of the chair **in writing** to the appropriate academic dean within ten (10) working days following the chair's decision. The academic dean may elect to create a appeals committee at the program, department/school, or college level to hear student appeals for readmission. These committees will be charged with making a recommendation to the academic dean. The academic dean must respond to the appeal in writing within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal or the committee's recommendation, if any.

If the appeal is not resolved with the academic dean, the student may appeal **in writing** to the Provost and Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs, or their designee, within ten (10) working days following the academic dean's decision. The decision of the Provost and Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs or their designee is final.

Per Academic Policy Statement 900823, section 2.05, some programs are permitted to establish internal academic grievance procedures, subject to the approval of the Provost and Sr. Vice President for Academic Affairs. Such academic grievance procedures take precedence over the academic grievance procedures described in sections 10.01, 10.02, and 10.03 of this policy.

## TIMETABLE OF PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

### **First regular (i.e. fall or spring) semester:**

- 1) Enroll in BIOL 5301
- 2) Submit Major Advisor and Advisory Committee forms to the Graduate Coordinator for review and approval (see Appendix and the CoSET website, respectively, for forms).

### **Second regular semester:**

- 1) After completion of 6 graduate credit hours, all non-regular admission students must apply for regular admission and must have removed all conditional requirements.
- 2) Enroll in BIOL 5302
- 3) Work toward completion of the Prospectus (see Appendix for Prospectus Guidelines) and Completion of the Comprehensive Exam. The **Report of Comprehensive Examination** form (see COSET website) should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator, pass or fail.
- 4) **Prior to the submission of the prospectus and conducting research:** involving vertebrate animal or human subjects must be approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC, animal research) and/or the Institution Review Board (IRB, human subjects) as appropriate. Forms and information may be obtained from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (OSRP) website: <https://www.shsu.edu/dept/office-of-research-and-sponsored-programs/>. Contact Sharla Miles ([sharla\\_miles@shsu.edu](mailto:sharla_miles@shsu.edu)) for additional information.
- 5) **Before the start of the third semester,** the thesis prospectus should be approved by the Advisory Committee, Department Chair, and Academic Dean (see CoSET website for the Thesis Prospectus Approval form). The approved thesis prospectus should be filed with the Graduate Coordinator.

### **Third regular semester:**

- 1) Successfully complete Comprehensive Exam (if not completed with Thesis Prospectus). After the exam, the **Report of Comprehensive Examination** form (see COSET website) should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.
- 2) Continue research and coursework appropriate for the degree plan

### **Fourth - Sixth regular semesters:**

Continue research and coursework appropriate for the degree plan

Many research projects will involve a fifth, and in some cases a sixth, semester for completion. The student and the student's Major Advisor may together petition the Graduate Committee in writing for a fifth semester of graduate assistantship support, although support is not guaranteed.

### **Summer semesters:**

- 1) Students should take any available classes pertinent to the discipline.
- 2) Students should be heavily involved in their research.



## GRADUATE COURSES

See the most recent Graduate Catalog for up-to-date information about graduate courses offered.

## RESEARCH FUNDING SOURCES

There are many sources available to support costs associated with graduate student research. Listed below are a few sources. Students are encouraged to consult with their Major Advisors regarding other potential funding sources in their particular disciplines.

### 1) Joey Harrison Student Research Award

Funds graduate and undergraduate research

Deadline: Variable, once per academic year

Administered by: Department of Biological Sciences

Amount: \$500 to \$1000

Contact: The Chair of the Joey Harrison Student Research Award Committee for application requirements

### 2) Graduate Studies Conference Travel Funds

Please see Travel Support for Scientific Meetings in this handbook for more information.

### 3) Texas Academy of Sciences Student Research Awards

Funds graduate and undergraduate student research in all areas of science

Deadline: Usually December or January

Amount: Up to \$2000

Restrictions: Must attend meeting to receive award and agree to present research at the meeting the following year

See website for more information: <https://www.texasacademyofscience.org/research-awards>

### 4) Grants-in-Aid of Research Program

Funds graduate and undergraduate student research in all areas of science

Administered by Sigma Xi

Deadline: March 15 and October 1 annually

Amount: up to \$1000

Restrictions: Student, major advisor or a committee member should be a Sigma Xi member. See website for more information: <https://www.sigmaxi.org/programs/grants-in-aid/apply>

### 5) SHSU Graduate School Thesis/Dissertation Research Grant Program

To provide funds needed for students to conduct a supervised research project. Students must be a degree-seeking graduate student in good standing currently enrolled at SHSU

Administered by The Graduate School

Amount: up to \$1000 per academic year

Contact the Graduate School for more information: <https://www.shsu.edu/dept/graduate-studies/>

### 6) Federal (e.g., NSF, NIH, NIJ, USDA, *et cetera*) and state agencies (e.g., TPWD, Comptroller, *et cetera*)

See individual agency websites for individual programs and proposal deadlines

# **APPENDIX**

## **FORMS AND CHECKLISTS**

## **FORMS: who signs them and where they are submitted:**

### Internal Documents to be submitted to Departmental Graduate Coordinator:

**1) GRADUATE STUDENT CONTRACT**

This form is to be signed by the student. It is due to the Graduate Coordinator at the beginning of the first semester.

**2) GRADUATE DATA CONTRACT**

This form is to be signed by the student and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator at the beginning of the first semester.

**3) ADVISOR – STUDENT AGREEMENT**

This form is to be signed by both the student and their Major Advisor. It is due to the Graduate Coordinator by the end of the first semester.

**4) RECORD OF BI-ANNUAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

This form is to be signed by both the Major Advisor and the remaining members of the student's Advisory Committee. It is due to the Graduate Coordinator after each committee meeting.

**5) SEMESTER GRADUATE STUDENT EVALUATION**

This form is to be filled out and signed by the student, advisor, and instructor of the classes the student for which the GA serves. It is due to the Graduate Coordinator at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> class week of each semester the student is enrolled.

### External Documents to be submitted to the Dean's office:

All forms below can be found in PDF format on the College of Science and Engineering Technology website under the "Forms" and then "Forms for Graduate Students" links.

**1) ADVISORY COMMITTEE FORM**

This form is to be signed by the student, the Major Advisor, the remaining Advisory Committee members and the Graduate Coordinator. After the Graduate Coordinator has signed the form the student will then submit the form to the Dean's office. This form is due by the end of the second semester.

**2) THESIS PROSPECTUS APPROVAL FORM**

This form is to be signed by the Advisory Committee, the Department Chair, and the Dean of COSET. The Thesis Prospectus Approval Form must be submitted by the end of the student's first year in the graduate program.

**3) REPORT OF COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION FORM**

This form is to be signed by the student's Major Advisor and the remaining members of the student's Advisory Committee. The form should be brought to the student's Comprehensive Examination. The form will be signed after the completion of the examination with the committee's recommendation to pass or fail the student. Once the committee members have signed the form, the student will take the completed form to the COSET Dean's office.

**4) REPORT OF THESIS EXAMINATION FORM**

This form is to be signed by the student's Major Advisor and the remaining members of the student's Advisory Committee. The form should be brought to the student's thesis defense/examination. The form will be signed after the completion of the thesis examination with the committee's decision to pass or fail the student. Once the committee members have signed the form the student will take the completed form to the COSET Dean's office.

# ADVISOR – STUDENT AGREEMENT

(Submit to Biology Graduate Coordinator by the end of the Student's First Semester)

STUDENT NAME:

\_\_\_\_\_

DEGREE SOUGHT:

MS

MS WITH MINOR

MINOR: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to be the major advisor to  
(print/type name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(print/type name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAJOR ADVISOR SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## Primary Responsibilities of Major Advisor:

- 1) Chair Advisory Committee
- 2) Provide student with research guidance (topic selection, experimental design, writing prospectus, grant proposals and final thesis)
- 3) Return paperwork in a timely manner

## Primary Responsibilities of Student:

- 1) Communicate regularly with Major Advisor and Advisory Committee
- 2) Adhere to program deadlines
- 3) Attend Departmental seminars



# THESIS PROSPECTUS GUIDELINES

(AT THE FINAL DISCRETION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE)

**General guidelines:** The proposal should be double spaced, with 1 inch margins, 12 point font, and page numbers in the top right corner of each page. The length should be no more than 12 pages of text for sections A - E below.

**A. Introduction** - a thorough overview (4 – 5 pages) of the area of study including appropriate supporting literature citations. Include past and present research on your specific research topic.

**B. Hypotheses/Objectives** - discuss hypotheses you will test and their associated predictions. Clearly state the objectives of your study.

**C. Methods and Materials** - how, where, when the proposed research will be conducted. Describe methods in as much detail as possible. Include how the data will be analyzed statistically.

**D. Expected Results** - describe the expected outcome for the research activities based on literature and previous work.

**E. Significance of the Proposed Research** - general and/or specific significant results from the proposed study. “How will doing this research benefit us or improve the general knowledge of science?”

**F. Literature Cited** - a listing of sources of information cited in the proposal in a formal scientific format appropriate to the discipline.

**G. Budget** - Provide an itemized budget for your research. Indicate how the research will be funded and the facilities required for the research.

**CHECKLIST FOR MS CANDIDATES IN THE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES  
(TO BE KEPT IN STUDENT FILE)**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
1. Obtain copy of Departmental Graduate Handbook	_____	_____
2. Meet with Graduate Coordinator	_____	_____
3. Major Advisor selected	_____	_____
4. Advisory Committee established	_____	_____
6. Submit forms for transfer/undergraduate credits	_____	_____
7. Advisory Committee meeting 1 —year one	_____	_____
8. Advisory Committee meeting 2 —year one	_____	_____
9. Advisory Committee meeting 1 —year two	_____	_____
10. Advisory Committee meeting 2 —year two	_____	_____
11. File degree application for graduation	_____	_____
12. Comprehensive exam scheduled	_____	_____
13. Comprehensive exam completed	_____	_____
14. IACUC or IRB Forms submitted (as needed)	_____	_____
15. Thesis prospectus approved	_____	_____
16. Enroll in BIO 6398	_____	_____
17. Enroll in BIO 6099	_____	_____
18. Public seminar of thesis research scheduled	_____	_____
19. Thesis seminar and defense completed	_____	_____
20. Thesis approved	_____	_____



**SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES  
GRADUATE STUDENT ANNUAL EVALUATION FORM [UPDATED 2020]**

**OBJECTIVE**

Forum for graduate students and major advisors to evaluate student performance and expectations

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Fill out each question to the best of your ability. This document will be a guide for individual program and performance expectations. Answers should be: 1) objective rather than subjective; 2) provide an overview of behavior rather than traits; and 3) be specific to the current semester.
2. Students should complete the form prior to forwarding it to their major advisor. Only electronic copies of the form will be accepted
3. After completion, the major advisor should submit the form directly to the Graduate Coordinator via email ([jimharper@shsu.edu](mailto:jimharper@shsu.edu))
4. For students on a Graduate (Teaching) Assistantship, the Graduate Assistantship Performance Evaluation Appendix should be completed by the student and instructor/lab coordinator as appropriate

**STUDENT/MAJOR ADVISOR INFORMATION:**

1. Student name: *Click or tap here to enter text.*
2. Date of degree program start (mm/yyyy): *Click or tap here to enter text.*
3. Current semester in program: 2nd
4. Date of most recent committee meeting (mm/yyyy): *Click or tap here to enter text.*
5. Name of Major Advisor: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

1. **NEW STUDENTS ONLY:** What do you hope to accomplish professionally in the upcoming year?
2. **RETURNING STUDENTS ONLY:** What have you accomplished in the past year and what do you hope to accomplish professionally in the upcoming year?

Student comments: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Major Advisor comments: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

**BARRIERS/BRIDGES TO/FOR SUCCESS:**

Student comments: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

Major Advisor comments: *Click or tap here to enter text.*

**PERFORMANCE EVALUATION:**

It is expected that students will take the lead in proposing Performance Expectations which will then be altered/modified in consultation with the student’s major advisor at the beginning of each semester. Information in the Performance Expectation column is meant to serve as an example. Students will work with their major advisor to determine or modify Performance Expectations each semester as needed with performance expectations for the following year developed as well. The Rating Column is to be used by the major advisor to provide the student with guidance on their performance in each category. Clearly, student year in the program will play a significant role regarding what is expected from the student; progress will be evaluated at the end of each semester.

<b>THEME</b>	<b>CRITERIA (as applicable)</b>	<b>EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>RATING (Major Advisor Only) (OUTSTANDING, GOOD, FAIR, POOR, UNSATISFACTORY, OTHER) Please explain rationale for rating</b>
Degree Program	Prospectus/Thesis Progress (i.e. written progress)	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Data Collection & Analysis (i.e. status of research)	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Research/Writing Goals	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Coursework (completed)	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	GPA	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Comprehensive Exam	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Target completion Date	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Professional & Academic Activities	Publications	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Presentations	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Proposals	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Quality of work	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Communication	Outreach	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Oral Communication	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Transparency	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Written Communication	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Time Management	Dependability	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Punctuality	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Organization	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Prioritization	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other		Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

**ACTION PLAN:** What steps will be taken to resolve unsatisfactory performance or to maintain satisfactory performance?

Student comments: Click or tap here to enter text.

Major Advisor comments: Click or tap here to enter text.

**Name of Student:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Major Advisor:**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX  
GRADUATE ASSISTANSHIP PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

To be completed by the course instructor or laboratory coordinator as appropriate. Please complete the table below and submit directly to the Graduate Coordinator via email ([jmharper@shsu.edu](mailto:jmharper@shsu.edu)). Please do not return this form to the student.

Student being evaluated:

Course(s) for which student was a GA:

Semester (Fall, Spring, Summer) & Year:

**Please check the following boxes**

	<b>Unacceptable</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Knowledge of Subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Preparation for Course Activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Rapport with students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Cooperation with peers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Cooperation with instructor/supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Provides helpful feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Grading accomplished in a timely manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Oral communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
Overall performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.

**Would you recommend this student for a GA position again?**    Yes     No

**Name of Supervisor:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_