



Biology Master of Science
Graduate Student Handbook 2026-27



Congratulations and welcome into the Biology Master of Science Graduate Program at GVSU. We are so pleased you have decided to throw your lot in with us for the next two years and want to take a moment to express wishes for you; that this be a formative, rigorous, and life-changing opportunity for you to expand your scientific skill sets, to advance your progress as life-long learners, and to form and cement new professional friendships that will last the rest of your lives.

As you integrate and move through the program, please keep us in the loop and know that we are all working with your best interests at heart.

Sincerely yours,



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Table of Contents

	Page
Program overview.....	4
Student goals.....	4
Frequently Asked Questions.....	5
Degree requirements.....	8
Class registration and program of study.....	11
Semester-by-semester timeline, courses to take, and benchmarks to meet.....	11
List of graduate courses.....	13
Graduate awards and opportunities for professional growth.....	14
Departmental and University policies.....	15
Department organization.....	19
University Resources.....	19
Appendix and link for forms.....	21

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Master of Science in biology is a versatile graduate program designed to produce outstanding graduates. Versatility in the program allows students to achieve individual goals while serving a diversity of student interests. Students have the opportunity to pursue graduate programs in broad areas such as genetics and cell biology, organismal biology, aquatic and terrestrial ecology, and natural resources. As a focus for these MS programs, we offer internship, project, and thesis pathways. Students may choose an emphasis (but not required) in either aquatic sciences or natural resources. The Master of Science in biology degree program is designed to meet the needs of baccalaureate-trained professionals who will be more competitive with a master's degree as they seek job placement or advancement, secondary teachers who prefer a science master's, and baccalaureate graduates who wish to earn a master's degree before continuing their graduate education at the doctoral level.

The Master of Science in biology helps candidates extend their knowledge in their discipline, extend their professional skills, gain experience in the application of their knowledge and skills, and develop their abilities as leaders and team members. Graduates will be professionals who have progressed from learning about science to doing science, and graduates will be able to use their knowledge and abilities to solve problems and answer questions in the complex and interactive context of local, regional, and global issues and concerns. The optional emphasis in natural resources is offered to meet the more specific needs of natural resources management professionals, while the aquatic sciences emphasis highlights the importance of aquatic ecosystems of the region. Both aquatic sciences and natural resources emphases offer students opportunities to work, and be advised by, with faculty from the Annis Water Resources Institute in Muskegon as well as with Biology Department faculty at the Allendale Campus.

Student goals:

Goal 1: The Master of Science in Biology helps students extend their knowledge, skills, and experience and helps students develop their leadership, teamwork, and communication abilities.

Goal 2: Graduates will be professionals who have progressed from learning about science to doing science.

Goal 3: Graduates will be able to use their knowledge and abilities to answer questions and solve problems in the complex and interactive context of local, regional, and global issues and concerns.

FAQ's:

1. How do I select a graduate committee?

Your graduate committee serves as a resource for your program of study and provide input and advice as you develop your thesis, project, or internship, as well as evaluate your readiness to engage in your proposed activities via the qualifying exam, and evaluate your final written document when you defend your degree. Talk to your major advisor, as well as your fellow graduate students to determine the best committee composition. A committee ideally sets high, but realistic, expectations for you.

Three graduate committee members are required, one of whom is your major advisor, but you may have more if it is in the best interest of your program of study. All committee members must have graduate faculty standing. Committee members from outside the University are supported, but they must be granted adjunct graduate faculty standing. The required application form, Non-Tenure Track Faculty Engaged in Graduate Education Application, is located here (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/forms-library-31.htm>).

2. Where do I find information about the Bio MS degree final project report (either thesis, project or internship report)?

The GVSU Graduate School provides excellent resources for the development of your written thesis, project or internship. FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES CAREFULLY as failure to adhere can extend the time required to graduate. Guidelines and other writing resources can be found here (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/thesis-and-dissertation-information-35.htm>) and include examples of high-quality theses (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/graduate-writing-resources-96.htm>).

3. Should I publish my research? Yes.

4. What are the expectations for publication and scholarship?

The Biology Graduate Program has the following intellectual property expectations and guidelines:

“We strongly encourage graduate students to submit for publication their research projects, internships, and theses as the primary author, and with appropriate secondary authorship including, but not limited to, the student’s major advisor. If, after one-year post graduation or after one year of no active progress toward graduation a manuscript has not been submitted, the major advisor may submit the results for publication using an alternate first author, and with appropriate recognition of the student’s contribution(s). The student shall solicit approval of the advisor(s) and other co-authors prior to presenting or disseminating the results of the research or project. The intellectual property that consists of the student’s project, internship,

or thesis shall be shared jointly between the student and the major advisor. Prior to graduation, and/or upon request, the graduate student must provide a digital copy of all data collected and/or related voucher samples to the major advisor. GVSU Authorship Guidelines can be found at the following website (<https://www.gvsu.edu/ours/gvsu-authorship-guidelines-660.htm>).”

5. Can I change major advisors?

Yes; but we encourage you to explore all avenues prior to making this decision as it can represent a significant set-back in terms of time taken to graduate and you may lose access to equipment and funding associated with the major advisor. The Biology Graduate Program Committee and Director are always willing to mediate potential disputes. Our three tips for minimizing potential conflicts include the following:

- Maintain frequent and honest lines of communication with your major advisor and committee.
- Establish clear expectations for both your course work, and your thesis, project or internship research. If it is helpful, put these expectations in writing.
- Establish attainable benchmarks and deadlines and STICK TO THEM!
- To change major advisors, you need to work with Biology Graduate Program Director and they will guide you through the process.

6. Should I join the Biology Graduate Club?

Yes! The Biology Graduate Club provides a pathway to obtain funding to both attend and/or present the results of your research at regional, national and international conferences. If you are NOT a member of the club, you do not have access to this support. The club does require a minimal annual membership fee, and also coordinates numerous social activities throughout the year. To sign up, follow this link (<https://app.suitable.co/student-organizations/GyA7SadTqQ2z?tab=profile>) and email the primary contact to indicate your interest in joining.

7. What are the deadlines for completing my qualifying exam, defending my thesis, and applying for graduation?

Firstly, work with your major advisor to plan ahead and make sure you are giving committee members adequate time to review and comment on project proposals, schedule your committee meetings and qualifying exam, and schedule your culminating public oral presentation and defense. The Graduate School maintains an [up-to-date calendar](#) that highlights University-mandated deadlines in order to graduate within a specific semester. Generally committee members will need at least two weeks to review materials, although some members may need more time especially during busy times in the academic year (such as near the beginning and end of the semester).

8. Can I get financial support to attend meetings, network with professionals, and disseminate my research?

Yes. There is significant support at the University- and program-level to aid in these endeavors. Note FAQ number 6 above.

9. What's the qualifying exam and when do I need to take it?

Prior to initiating your research project, you need to complete an oral qualifying exam administered by your graduate committee. Each committee member will give you material to review and/or a topic or set of topics to be covered, all related to your proposed research endeavor. The purpose of the exam is two-fold. Firstly, we want to make sure you are prepared to embark on your project. Secondly, we want to give you practice thinking on your feet while responding to questions. After the oral exam, your committee ascertains your preparation and may recommend additional readings and preparation. This also helps prepare you to attend and present at professional meetings and for your public thesis/project/internship defense.

10. What is the thesis, project, or internship defense?

The defense represents the culminating experience for your MS degree, and is an opportunity for you to publicly present and defend your research. This event is open to the public, must be advertised in advance, and is an opportunity for the community to ask you questions about your work. Arguably, most students find this to be quite enjoyable! You've spent at least two years of your life working on a project and to be given an opportunity to spend an hour presenting and discussing your work is, frankly, satisfying. The public defense is preceded by a closed meeting with your graduate committee who provide final suggestions and feedback, make recommendations on any additional work that should be done, and who will eventually 'sign off' on your work, giving their stamp of approval for what you have accomplished and written.

11. When should I sign up for classes?

As soon as possible in March or as soon as you get your G number, and for BOTH fall and winter semesters at the same time. Accurate and timely enrollment helps us avoid issues enrolling in a course and unnecessary class cancelations.

12. What if I have academic trouble? For example, if my GPA falls below a 3.0 cumulative GPA?

The University requires a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 to maintain a Graduate Assistantship and to avoid possible dismissal from the program. Keep up on your course-work!

13. Should I work outside of my graduate school activities?

Our strong recommendation is that you don't try to juggle too much while working on your degree. Most students who work part-time tend to take longer to finish.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Admission to the Master of Science in Biology Program requires the following:

- A 500-word essay detailing educational and professional goals and your area of interest in biology
- Three letters of reference
- An overall undergraduate of at least 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale (you can request an exemption)
- Prospective candidates must contact the biology graduate program coordinator to begin the process of identifying a prospective graduate committee chair. Candidates will only be admitted if a faculty member has consented to serve as the committee chair.
- Applicants must interview with faculty either via telecommunication or by visiting campus to determine compatibility and interests.

The Biology Graduate Committee begins reviewing applications in mid-January for admission during the following fall semester. All materials must be submitted by January 15th to be considered for a Graduate Assistantship. We recommend applicants reach out to potential major advisors to determine compatibility and level of interest as soon as possible in the application process. However, identification of a major advisor is not required to have a completed application.

Graduate Assistantships:

The Biology Graduate Program offers several types of Graduate Assistantships:

- *Biology Graduate Assistantships* are base-funded assistantships and are authorized on an annual basis as part of the University budgeting process. We typically are able to offer four of these per year, typically starting in the Fall and including summer stipend support for two full years. Stipends are competitive, and include a full tuition waiver, up to 9 credits per academic semester. The selection process includes an objective ranking based on a combination of all application materials, as well as phone interviews for the top 10 to 15 candidates, typically near the end of January. These assistantships require teaching a total of six introductory laboratory sections over the course of two years. Specifically, students teach one section in their first semester, two sections in their second and third semesters, and one section in their final semester.
- *Annis Water Resources Assistantships* are privately funded and include typically four awards per year. Stipends are competitive, and include a full tuition waiver, up to 9 credits per academic semester. The selection process occurs with individual AWRI faculty interviews with prospective candidates. Teaching is not required for these assistantships.
- *Special Projects Graduate Assistantships* are offered by the GVSU Graduate School. This competitive award must be applied for by your graduate faculty advisor. Most awards

are for one academic year, although a subset can be for two full years of support. Award details are located here (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/special-projects-graduate-assistantships-61.htm>), and note that the application deadline is typically in early December, with support starting the proceeding academic year.

- Externally-funded Graduate Assistantships – Graduate faculty can provide support for graduate students on externally-funded research grants. As you communicate with prospective major advisors, please ask them about this type of support. In addition, we support student-initiated grant funding and encourage candidates to talk to prospective mentors about potential funding opportunities.
- Financial Aid – Contact the GVSU Financial Aid Office located in the Student Services Center to determine eligibility for student loans (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/financial-support-28.htm>).

Requirements for the MS in Biology:

The Master of Science in biology is a highly individualized, planned program of study. Early advising is essential because the student's graduate committee chair must approve all course work in advance. Requirements for each student will be individually predetermined at the time the program plan is established. The degree will be earned upon the successful completion of all requirements outlined in the Grand Valley State University Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog (http://catalog.gvsu.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=48&poid=9130). The program of study will include a qualifying exam administered by the student's graduate committee and a minimum of 33 approved credits with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or above. We can't stress the importance of maintaining this GPA. Classes taken at the graduate-level are intentionally rigorous and will challenge you academically and provide an opportunity for significant intellectual growth.

Please give these classes your full effort. Falling below this GPA requirement can result in a warning, academic probation, or dismissal from the program.

All program plans will include the following components:

- Nine credits common to all students in the program. These will consist of an experimental design/statistics course, the introductory course (BIO 610 - Scientific Methodology), and the Capstone (BIO 698 - Perspectives in Biology).
- Fifteen to 18* credits in the student's interest area, all of which must be approved by the student's graduate committee chair. Specific coursework, which may include a focus in a secondary area, will be developed by the candidate with the guidance and approval of the student's graduate committee chair.
- 12 credits of dual-listed course work can be applied to your graduate degree. A dual-listed course has both upper-level undergraduate and graduate students enrolled and will be listed as 4XX/5XX designation (where "X" = specific course number).
- Students can elect two optional emphases in aquatic science or natural resources. In addition to the nine credits common to all students in the program, the aquatic science emphasis requires two classes, advanced aquatic ecology (BIO 530) and aquatic ecosystem management (NRM 576), plus 9 to 12* credits in the student's interest area.

- Six to nine* credits of BIO 695 - Thesis, BIO 693 - Project, or BIO 691 - Internship (for those selecting the optional natural resources emphasis, the corresponding course numbers are NRM 695, NRM 693, or NRM 691). Note that the credits may not be mixed in this category. This component will be conducted under the supervision of the student's graduate committee chair and with the approval of the student's graduate committee. No course-only option is available.

*The variable credits in components two and three are designed to allow for an extended thesis, project, or internship. The graduate program will consist of a minimum of 33 credits.

Successful progress toward completion of the degree and continued enrollment requires that the student's graduate committee chair be determined before admission, and the student's graduate committee be appointed before the end of the second semester of enrollment. In addition, the student must pass the qualifying exam before registering for thesis, project, or internship credits. The purpose of the qualifying exam is to ensure that students have adequate science knowledge and background to successfully complete their thesis, project, or internship. All students will be limited to a five-year period to complete their degree.

Thesis, Project, or Internship:

We offer three tracks (categories) of Biology MS degrees, all of which require an equivalent amount of time, effort, and investment. Please consult with your major advisor and graduate committee before deciding on a specific plan of study. We strongly encourage you to publish your results and would advise you to consult with your advisor and committee regarding grant opportunities to assist with publication costs. GVSU provides grants to support open access publication (<https://www.gvsu.edu/csce/open-access-publishing-support-program-31.htm>).

The thesis track would be considered the traditional route toward a graduate degree and consists of independent research including experimental design, hypothesis testing and data analysis, and writing the MS thesis document in a traditional scientific format (IMRAD). The project track is designed to accommodate a student in either a work-related project or, for example, a project in consultation with a non-profit organization. The internship track is specifically available for a graduate student who actively works as an intern. Both internship and project tracks require a final report equivalent to a thesis. For all three tracks, the expectations are equivalent.

Optional Emphases:

Natural Resources Emphasis (optional): Corresponding to the existing undergraduate degree program in natural resources management, the Master of Science in biology includes an optional natural resources emphasis. Candidates choosing this optional emphasis have the same admissions criteria and degree requirements as other MS students, but will focus their course work, thesis, project, and internship activities in an area related to the management, conservation, or protection of atmospheric, aquatic, or terrestrial resources. Students in this emphasis will develop interdisciplinary studies involving CLAS faculty as well as other collaborating agencies and groups in the West Michigan area. Students in this emphasis will

have opportunities to work with faculty and conduct research at the Annis Water Resources Institute located in Muskegon, as well as at the Allendale Campus of Grand Valley State University.

Aquatic Sciences Emphasis (optional): The Master of Science in biology includes an optional aquatic sciences emphasis. Candidates choosing this optional emphasis have the same admissions criteria as other MS students, but will focus their course work, thesis, project, and internship activities in an area related to research, management, conservation, or protection of aquatic resources. In addition to the existing nine credits of course required of all graduate students, students electing this emphasis are required to take a course in advanced aquatic ecology (BIO 530) and aquatic ecosystem management (NRM 576). Students in this emphasis will develop interdisciplinary studies involving CLAS faculty as well as other collaborating agencies and entities in the west Michigan area. Students in this emphasis will have opportunities to work with faculty and conduct research at the Annis Water Resources Institute located in Muskegon, as well as at the Allendale Campus of Grand Valley State University.

CLASS REGISTRATION and PROGRAM OF STUDY:

Keeping on track and finishing your degree in a timely fashion requires attention to details such as scheduling classes in a timely fashion, and regularly meeting with your academic advisor and committee. Outlined below are a series of benchmarks and requirements that if followed, will greatly increase your success at completing your degree in timely fashion. Please follow these suggestions and note that we require a progress report from you at the end your second semester.

Admission to the graduate program includes the assignment of a “G-number”, which provides access to the class registration web portal, known as “Banner”. Banner can be accessed here (<https://www.gvsu.edu/banner/>). It also provides a mechanism for you to track your academic progress through the program by using “myPath”. Please sit down with your advisor if you have trouble accessing this information. NOTE: You need to sign up for classes for **BOTH** the Fall and Winter semesters when registering. **DO THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE** to avoid not getting a space or classes being canceled due to low enrollment!

Semester-by-semester timeline, courses to take, and benchmarks to meet:

1st Semester:

Classes: Sign up for BIO 610 (scientific methods) and at least one additional course. BIO 610 is required in your first semester and provides a structured mechanism for you to develop your thesis, project or internship proposal. In addition, most students sign up for a statistics course. We recommend one of the following: BIO 593 (Advanced Univariate Methods), BIO 594 (Advanced Multivariate Methods); STA 518 (Statistical Computing and Graphics with R); STA 622 (Statistical Methods for Biologists). Note that you need to

register for 9 credits to be considered a full-time student. This is important particularly if you have received a full-time Graduate Assistantship.

Graduate committee: We recommend scheduling your first graduate committee meeting near the end of this first semester. This meeting should be used to introduce your committee to your thesis, project, or internship plans, and also should be used to schedule your qualifying exam some time in your second semester. You must pass this exam prior to starting your thesis, project or internship research. In consultation with your advisor and committee, you also need to complete two forms:

- [Committee Membership Endorsement for Project, Thesis, or Dissertation](#), found on the GVSU Graduate School's Forms Library. Forward an electronic copy to the Biology MS Graduate Program Director.
- [Plan of Study](#) form found on the Biology MS forms library web site. Submit a hard copy to the Biology Office. Keep a copy for yourself.

Required activities: Attend the Thesis and Dissertation workshop sponsored by the Graduate School (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/thesis-and-dissertation-information-35.htm>). Note, you could also attend this workshop in your 2nd semester.

Required forms: Most forms can be found here (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/forms-library-31.htm>), however, the Biology MS program has two forms—the Plan of Study, and the Qualifying Exam—available on Biology MS webpage (found here: <https://www.gvsu.edu/biology/forms-9.htm>).

2nd Semester:

Classes: Take second BIO statistics course (either BIO 593 or BIO 594), and two additional electives (see list of potential courses below).

Required activities: Schedule and complete the qualifying exam. This oral exam is administered by your graduate committee and includes suggested readings from each committee member ahead of time, as well as specific areas of questions that you will be asked to address. The purpose of the qualifying exam is to determine your readiness to undertake your research project. This exam MUST be passed prior to starting your research and before you sign up for thesis, project or internship credits. Please submit the Qualifying Exam Report Form to the Biology Office.

Required forms: [Qualifying Exam Report Form](#).

3rd Semester:

Classes: Take 9 credits of electives and/or research (thesis, project or internship). There is a maximum of 9 credits of research allowable.

Graduate committee: We encourage you to meet with your committee as often as is helpful.

4th Semester:

Classes: Take BIO 698 (Graduate Capstone). The graduate capstone requires that you produce a manuscript based on your research project and this forms the basis of at least a portion of your MS degree final written project (either thesis, project or internship report), remaining research credits, and/or electives.

Required activities: Apply for graduation at the Registrar's Office (<https://www.gvsu.edu/registrar/applying-to-graduate-5.htm>) and publicly defend your work. Note: many students defer the public defense until the summer and/or fall.

Thesis/project/internship public oral defense: With approval of your major advisor, you should work to establish a date, time, and location to give a public presentation of your research, project or internship. This event must be publicly advertised ideally two weeks prior to your defense, and the Biology and AWRI offices will help you disseminate this information. Note that the GVSU Graduate School establishes deadlines for completion of your thesis, project, or internship defense and submission of the final written document. These deadlines are posted under "[Student Resources, Thesis and Dissertation Requirements and Deadlines](#)". With the advice and input of your major advisor, work back from these deadlines in order to get your final draft thesis, project or internship report to your committee with enough time for adequate review.

Required forms: [Thesis or Dissertation Defense Announcement](#); [Thesis Title Page](#); [Thesis Defense Report Form](#) (submitted to the Biology Office; keep a copy for yourself). Once your thesis is approved by The Graduate School, you'll be sent a Library form to fill out that allows you to hold off (or embargo) publishing your research in the University ScholarWorks which is open access and gives you time to publish in peer-reviewed journal(s).

Required content for thesis: Follow [these guidelines](#) from the Graduate School when assembling your thesis ([https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/777A03CA-E5D1-90B3-8FF97B7EA6E9ECB3/guidelines - preparation of theses and dissertations 2024-25_v3\(2\).pdf](https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/777A03CA-E5D1-90B3-8FF97B7EA6E9ECB3/guidelines_-_preparation_of_theses_and_dissertations_2024-25_v3(2).pdf)).

Required content for projects: Follow [these guidelines](#) from the Graduate School when assembling your project (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/project-guidelines-104.htm>).

5th Semester (or more):

Classes: Take 1 credit, per semester, of BIO/NRM 696 (Continuation of Master's Project or Thesis Research). Note that if you have been previously covered by a Graduate Assistantship, there is no tuition waiver for this credit.

COURSE LISTING: (33 credits required to graduate)

Required Classes:

BIO 610 – Scientific Methods (3 credits)
One upper-level statistics course (BIO 593, BIO 594, STA 518, STA 622) (3 credits)
BIO 698 – Graduate Capstone (3 credits)
BIO/NRM 691 – Graduate Internship (6 to 9 credits)
BIO/NRM 693 – Graduate Project (6 to 9 credits)
BIO/NRM 695 – Graduate Thesis (6 to 9 credits)

Additional Required Classes for Aquatic Science Emphasis:

NRM/BIO 576 – Aquatic Ecosystem Management (3 credits)
BIO 532 – Advanced Aquatic Ecology (3 credits)

Elective classes: Prior to signing up for elective classes for both the Fall and Winter semesters, please talk to your major advisor. Also, remember when searching for elective classes, that you can take up to maximum of 12 credits of dual-listed courses. “Dual-listed” means that the course is offered at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Finally, remember to search for courses with the following prefixes: BIO (biology), NRM (natural resource management), and WAT (water), as well as other graduate-level courses in areas potentially relevant to your research.

BIO 570 - Landscape Ecology Theory and Application (3 credits)
BIO 575 - Population Genetics (3 credits)
BIO/NRM 580/680 - Special Topics in Biology & Natural Resource Management (1 to 4 credits)
BIO 585 - Molecular Ecology (3 credits)
BIO/NRM 586 - Restoration Ecology (3 Credits)
BIO 651 - Emerging Issues in Water Resources (2 credits)
BIO 680 - Special Topics in Biology (1 to 3 credits)
BIO/NRM 696 - Continuation of Master's Project or Thesis Research (1 credits)
BIO/NRM 699 - Independent Study (1 to 3 credits)
NRM 572 - Fisheries Management (3 credits)
NRM/BIO/WAT 576 – Aquatic Ecosystem Management (3 credits)

Additional dual-listed courses include the following course titles: embryology, mammalogy, forest ecosystem management, plant structure function, stream ecology, freshwater algae, natural resource policy, issues in western U.S., terrestrial ecosystem ecology, plant-animal interactions, wildlife management, aquatic insects, limnology, herpetology, and conservation biology.

GRADUATE AWARDS and OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Awards: There are many awards for which graduate students can be nominated. These are listed [here](https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/the-graduate-school-citations-for-academic-excellence-32.htm) (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/the-graduate-school-citations-for-academic-excellence-32.htm>).

Professional Growth: There is significant support available for your [professional development](#). For example, apply for research support and travel support via the Presidential Grant, the

details of which are listed here (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gv/presidential-research-grants-33.htm>). Take advantage of opportunities to present at the Student Scholars Day (<https://www.gvsu.edu/ours/ssd/>), travel to regional, national, or international conferences with funding via the Academic Conference Fund, with potential additional financial support from the Biology MS program and Annis Water Resources Institute.

DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES and UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Field, Laboratory and Travel safety: The Biology Graduate Program takes your safety seriously, and many of our students are involved in field-based research that can include significant travel, research in hazardous conditions and environments, and work with potentially dangerous plants and animals. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOWING THE STEPS BELOW:

1. Every graduate student/research group is required to review the field and lab safety guidelines posted on the GVSU Biology website (click on Current Students, [Forms and Field/Lab Safety](#) tab). If you plan to conduct field research and/or travel as a part of your MS experience you MUST fill out a Biology Field Experience and Travel Safety Plan (found under the [Biology Forms](#) library and also copied in the Appendix). Once completed, this form must be shared with all team members, and the Biology or AWRI Department Office Coordinators (for BIO, Barb Ellis, ellisb@gvsu.edu; for AWRI, Heidi Feldpausch, feldpauh@gvsu.edu). This form MUST be completed in order to travel off campus for research, dissemination (public meetings), and any over-night travel. If travel/research plans are ongoing or continuous, please indicate approximate beginning and ending dates.
2. You cannot conduct field work alone. Period.
3. Your major advisor and/or committee members must be kept apprised of your field-based activities and plans.
4. To get access to the building you need a keycard for most spaces. Depending on the requested rooms and laboratory spaces, you will be required to participate and complete some virtual safety training modules (links will be provided). [Key card](#) access is required for access to most spaces (<https://www.gvsu.edu/clas/labresource/padnos-henry-kindschi-hall-key-card-request-form-6.htm>). Please work with your advisor to determine where you will need access.

Responsible research: Some research projects also require approval of the Human Research and Review Committee (HRRC) (<https://www.gvsu.edu/irb/>) and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) (<https://www.gvsu.edu/iacuc/>). Also note that some projects require State or Federal approval. Please work with your major advisor to determine the necessity of such approvals.

Academic integrity: The Biology MS Graduate Program follows all University guidelines related to academic integrity. Please familiarize yourself with these guidelines which are listed here (<https://www.gvsu.edu/osccr/academic-misconduct-policies-and-procedures-14.htm>).

Conflict Resolution and Grievance Policy: Our graduate program STRONGLY encourages open

communication, and proactive conflict resolution. As noted above in our FAQ section, you are able to switch major advisors, although it is not encouraged, assuming that you and your advisor meet the expectations for [research, data, and intellectual property integrity](#). The Biology Graduate Program Committee, the Graduate Program Director, and the Chair of the Biology Department and Director of the Annis Water Resources Institute are always willing to mediate potential disputes. Our three tips for minimizing potential conflicts include the following:

- Maintain frequent and honest lines of communication with your major advisor and committee.
- Establish clear expectations for both your course work, and your thesis, project or internship research. If it is helpful, put these expectations in writing.
- Establish attainable benchmarks and deadlines and STICK TO THEM!

However, this internal reconciliation process isn't always feasible. Therefore, we have established the following [Biology MS Program Grievance Policy](#). Grievances brought forward under this policy are those based on a claimed violation of any university rule or established practice and grievances related to conditions that adversely impact the student's ability to successfully complete the graduate program. Examples of the types of grievances covered by this policy include, but are not limited to: [inappropriate conduct in the workplace](#) (e.g. verbal abuse, threatening behavior, harassment, or favoritism); [academic grievances](#) related to grades and other course-work concerns; [graduate program expectations](#) such as unreasonable interpretation of time-off and excessive work hours, unreasonable delay of student progression toward degree, and unreasonable expectations for graduate research and graduate teaching assistantships; [sexual harassment](#); and [research integrity](#), including intellectual property rights, publication policies, and data sharing. This policy deals exclusively with Biology MS graduate student grievances against GVSU faculty.

Specific types of grievances and steps that can be taken:

1. [Inappropriate conduct in the workplace](#) (e.g. verbal abuse, threatening behavior, harassment, or favoritism). If you feel you've been exposed to or witnessed these potential behaviors, we want you to be empowered to speak up. To that end, please follow the guidelines listed below, that include both an informal and formal grievance and resolution procedure.
 - A. *Informal Grievance & Resolution:* Informal resolution first involves discussion between student and faculty member. This could be the end of it and no additional communications are needed. If not resolved, or if the student can't speak to the faculty member about it, then they can speak to the next person on the list they feel comfortable discussing it with:
 - A member of the student's committee (who will consult with the Biology Graduate Program Director)
 - A Biology Graduate Program Committee member (who will consult with the Biology Graduate Program Director)
 - The Biology Graduate Program Director (who will consult with the appropriate Unit Head)

- The Unit Head (who will consult with the Biology Graduate Program Director)

Any of these people can provide support to you about how best to resolve the grievance. If you have concerns about academic integrity, sexual harassment, graduate assistantship logistics, research integrity, or general complaints, please see additional grievance categories listed below.

- B. *Filing an unwritten or written informal complaint:* If the issue cannot be resolved informally, and the graduate student wants to summarize the incident without proceeding to a formal complaint, this may be done through one of two mechanisms. However, the Student Ombudsperson, Biology Graduate Program Director, or Unit Head will inform the student that the recourse may be limited without filing a formal complaint.
- To provide an unwritten summary: contact the Student Ombudsperson (Takeelia Garrett, garrettt@gvsu.edu).
 - To provide a written summary: contact the Biology Graduate Program Director (Eric Snyder, snydeeri@gvsu.edu), and/or the Biology Department Chair (Joe Jacquot, jacquotj@gvsu.edu), and/or the Director of the Annis Water Resources Institute (Stuart Jones, jonesstu@gvsu.edu).
- C. *Formal Grievance & Resolution:* If it can't be resolved with informal discussion, then a formal written complaint can be made and submitted to either the Biology Graduate Program Director (who will consult with the Unit Head) or the Unit Head (who will consult with the Biology Graduate Program Director). The Associate Vice Provost of the Graduate School will be consulted as needed.

Formal complaint contents and process: The complaint should attempt to identify the following information. The student grievant; the respondent faculty member or administrator; any other person involved; the incident, including approximate date and time, and whether the incident is ongoing; the policy claimed to have been violated or the limitation imposed on the graduate student's ability to complete their degree; and a brief statement of the remedy sought.

Graduate students are encouraged to submit their complaint within 60 class days after the incident occurred or 60 class days after informal resolution procedures have failed. "Class days" are defined as days when the University is open for classes, examinations, or administrative office activities according to the GVSU Academic Calendar sections relevant to Graduate Studies.

If the grievance is ongoing or involves a particularly sensitive matter, the grievant is encouraged to submit their complaint as soon as possible.

Resolution of formal grievance: The Graduate Program Director and/or Unit Head and/or Associate Vice Provost of The Graduate School (or designee) will meet separately with the student and the faculty or administrator involved to determine whether a preliminary resolution can be reached. If a preliminary resolution

cannot be reached, a meeting shall be convened that includes the respective Unit Chair, the Graduate Program Director (if applicable), the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (or designee) to recommend an appropriate course of action. The student shall be notified of this course of action.

2. Academic grievances include problems with procedures, policies and grades in a course, and can be handled following the [CLAS student grievance procedures](#).
3. Graduate Program Expectations: Resolved within the Unit as described above in steps 1A, B and C and can progress to consultation with the Graduate School Associate VP.
4. Sexual Harassment: All allegations of sexual harassment, including sexual violence, for which the student wishes the University to officially acknowledge and investigate should be reported immediately to the [Title IX Office](#) and Coordinator (Kathleen Vanderveen, vandervk@gvsu.edu).
5. Research Integrity: [Policies related to research integrity and research misconduct](#) are established by the Office of Research Compliance and Integrity. Note that the Biology MS program has an established intellectual property rights, data, and publication policy (please see FAQ number 4 on page 5 of this document). Grievances related to this policy are resolved within the Unit as described above in steps 1A, B and C, and can progress to consultation with the Grad School Assoc VP.

If you are unsure if a grievance falls within the scope of this policy you can receive additional information and guidance from any of the persons listed below:

- Biology Graduate Program Director (Eric Snyder, snydeeri@gvsu.edu)
- Biology Department Chair (Joe Jacquot, jacquotj@gvsu.edu)
- Director of the Annis Water Resources Institute (Stuart Jones, jonesstu@gvsu.edu).
- Associate Vice Provost of The Graduate School (Erika Hamilton, hamilter@gvsu.edu).
- Associate Dean for Personnel, Hiring, and Planning (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) (Donovan Anderson, andersdo@gvsu.edu)
- GVSU Student Ombuds (<https://www.gvsu.edu/ombuds/> Takeelia Garrett garrett@vsu.edu): An Ombuds is a specific position within the university that serves to advocate on behalf of students, should they encounter a problem within their program or have a grievance that they believe is unfairly hindering their progress in their program of study. This allows you to engage in a grievance process that is confidential and outside of the program of study.
 - Title IX Office and Coordinator (Kathleen Vanderveen, vandervk@gvsu.edu).

If the student requests confidentiality or asks that the complaint not be pursued, GVSU will take all reasonable steps to investigate and respond to the complaint consistent with the request for confidentiality or request not to pursue an investigation. However, in the case of sexual assault all faculty are mandatory Title IX reporters and as such are required to report to the Title IX office. The Title IX office will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not to pursue the instance. If a student insists that their name or other identifiable information not be disclosed to the alleged perpetrator, please note that our ability to respond may be limited.

Biology Graduate Remediation Policy: Remediation is the process of permitting a student to

demonstrate competency in an outcome measure that the student did not successfully exhibit in a prior course assessment. Remediation is not allowed for a course grade of “E” or “no credit”, a culminating experience requirement, a project, a thesis, or a dissertation. In the case that a student passes a course but does not achieve a required score on a specific course requirement, the instructor may require remedial work to achieve the required score. Each student will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the instructor of record and the BIO MS Program Director. Refusal to engage in remediation may result in probation and/or dismissal from the program.

DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATION

Faculty Areas of Interest: Faculty areas of interest in Biology, Natural Resources Management, Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, and Wildlife Biology are found [at the Biology website](#) and at the [Annis Water Resources Institute](#), respectively.

Faculty Eligible to Serve on Committees: To serve on a Graduate Committee, faculty must have “Graduate Faculty Status”. These forms are found on [The Graduate School Forms](#) Library. Specifically, GVSU-employed faculty should fill out the [Tenure and Tenure Track Faculty Engaged in Graduate Education Application](#) form; non-GVSU committee members or GVSU committee members who are not tenure-track, should fill out the [Non-Tenure Track Faculty \(non-GVSU employee\)](#) form, respectively.

Office and Desk Space: Graduate students have access to desk space and computer resources in Kindschi Hall and at AWRI.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Directory of Frequently Contacted Offices:

Biology (3300a Kindschi Hall of Science)	331-2470
Career Center (200 Student Services Building)	331-3311
Graduate School (318C DeVos Center)	331-7105
Health Center (10383 42 nd Ave., Allendale)	252-6030
Registrar’s Office (150 Student Services)	331-3327
Writing Center (068 James H. Zumberge Hall)	331-2398

Resources and Services for Graduate Students:

- LGBT Resource Center (<https://www.gvsu.edu/lgbtrc/>) – The Biology Graduate Program is open and inclusive and our faculty and staff are here to support you. Please note that the LGBT Resource Center advocates for institutional equity, promotes community-building, and provides educational opportunities to create an informed, cohesive, and just campus where community members of diverse orientations, gender identities, and gender presentations are supported and welcomed.
- Counseling Services (<https://www.gvsu.edu/counsel/>) – The GVSU University Counseling Center has many services that are available for no charge.
- Disabilities Services (<https://www.gvsu.edu/dsr/>) – GVSU is committed to providing

access to programs and facilities for all students, faculty and staff. GVSU promotes the inclusion of individuals with disabilities as part of our commitment to creating a diverse, intercultural community. It is the policy of GVSU to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended by the ADA Amendment Act (2008), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other applicable federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. GVSU will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities upon request.

- Parking Services (<https://www.gvsu.edu/parking/>) – If you have a Graduate Assistantship, your parking is covered for the duration of your assistantship. If you don't have this support, please follow the web-link above to register and pay for your parking ticket, as needed. Note that there is a really convenient public bus service (RAPID; <https://www.gvsu.edu/bus/bus-routes-and-schedules-52.htm>) that connects Grand Rapids and surrounding areas with the Allendale campus.
- On Campus Housing (<https://www.gvsu.edu/gs/graduate-student-housing-73.htm>) – There are a variety of places to find housing both on and off-campus. Follow the link above for on-campus housing options.
- Career Services (<https://www.gvsu.edu/careers/>) – The GVSU Career Center offers excellent services specifically for graduate students including the development of interviewing skills, CV's, resumes, etc.
- Registrar & Academic Calendar (<https://www.gvsu.edu/registrar/>) – The student services desk in the main floor of the Student Services building is an excellent way to ask questions about class schedules, tuition payments, degree audits, etc. Please look on-line or stop by and familiarize yourself with these resources.

Health Insurance: Grand Valley State University does NOT require you to have health insurance, but it is strongly encouraged. We think it is important that students have comprehensive health coverage so you can stay healthy and achieve your educational goals. Please be aware that the University's liability insurance program does not cover injury or sickness sustained by a student; even if these activities result from class or group participation activities such as intramural sports, theater, etc. We encourage you to review your medical insurance coverage to assure that it is adequate.

The GVSU Campus Health Center bills all major health insurance plans and will bill services provided to your insurance. If you have any questions about the insurance plans we accept, please contact us at (616) 252-6030. Students can receive care regardless of their insurance status. If a patient does not have insurance, they can receive a 40% discount on their services.

There are options for both domestic and international students to sign up for health care programs. Options are described here: (<https://www.gvsu.edu/campushealth/student-health-insurance-23.htm>).

Graduate Program Leave Policy: The Graduate School establishes policies regarding a leave of absence, which is described in the [Graduate Education Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

APPENDIX

FORMS:

Forms can be found both at the [Biology Department website](#) and through the GVSU Graduate School [forms library](#). Hard-copies are available in the Biology Office (KHS 3300a) and at the Annis Water Resources Institute.

Biology Field Experience and Travel Safety Plan

Principal Investigator:	Department:
Phone Number:	E-mail Address:
Dates of Travel: <i>(List multiple dates if more than one trip is planned)</i>	
Location of Field Experience and/or Travel Destination:	
Country: _____ Geographical Site: _____	
Nearest City: _____ <i>(Name, Distance from Site)</i>	
Nearest Hospital or Medical Clinic: _____ <i>(Location, Distance from Site)</i>	
Field Experience and/or Travel: (Please include a brief description of the experience).	
University Emergency Contact:	Local Emergency Contact:
Phone:	Phone:
Email:	Email:
Emergency Procedures: (Please include detailed plans for field location including evacuation and emergency communication; <i>Include a separate sheet if necessary</i>).	
For Field Safety, Indicate First Aid and/or CPR Training: (Please list any team members who are first aid or CPR trained and the type and date of training they have).	
Field Safety Physical Demands: (Please list any physical demands required for this field research, e.g., Diving, Climbing, Temperature Extremes, High Altitude).	
Field Safety Risk Assessment: Please list identified risks associated with the activity or the physical environment (e.g., extreme heat or cold, wild animals, endemic diseases, firearms, explosives, violence). List appropriate measures to be taken to reduce the risks; <i>Include a separate sheet if necessary</i> .	

