



Department of Molecular Biosciences
(Formerly Cell Biology, Microbiology and Molecular Biology
with name change effective in 2023)

Graduate Student Handbook

USF and MBS Policies & Procedures

2023-2024

MBS, USF

Version 10.1; Revised 07/2023

Revised by Brant Burkhardt, originally prepared by LN Shaw with input from the MB Graduate Committee, faculty, and staff.

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Introduction

Welcome to the graduate program of the Department of Molecular Biosciences (**MBS**) (formerly Cell Biology, Microbiology and Molecular Biology (CMMB)). We are a comprehensive research and training department located in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of South Florida. We offer thesis and non-thesis MS degrees in both Microbiology and Cell & Molecular Biology, along with a Ph.D. in Cell and Molecular Biology. Our graduate program mission is to prepare students for professional careers in academia, government or industry in a broad range of focus areas of bacterial pathogenesis, genome integrity, molecular biophysics and systems biology and biomedical sciences. The information presented in this document is intended to be a comprehensive list of the departmental policies and regulations of the MBS graduate degree programs. You are advised to keep a copy of this document throughout your time in our program, and to refer to it often as you progress through your graduate studies. In addition to the information contained within this manual, there are very specific academic requirements located in the **USF Graduate Catalog** (<https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/faculty-and-staff/graduate-catalog-archives.aspx>) that must be fulfilled before a degree is granted. While your Major Professor, the MBS Graduate Director, your thesis/dissertation advisory committee, the department chairman, and college and graduate school deans are available to assist you in meeting these requirements, it is ultimately your responsibility to be acquainted with all policies, regulations, and rules. If the requirements contained within this document, along with those of the University and Office of Graduate Studies, have not been satisfied, then a graduate degree will not be awarded. Therefore, we ask that you familiarize yourself with the content of this handbook as soon as possible, and should you have any questions at all then please direct them to the MBS Graduate Director or Graduate Program Specialist.

Again, we would like to welcome you to our degree program – we are delighted you have chosen the department of MBS for your graduate education, and wish you a fulfilling and successful graduate education experience!

Important Contact Information

MBS Graduate Director

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MBS Chairman

Dr. Marcus Cooke
Office: ISA 6206
Telephone: 813-974-1594
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MBS Graduate Program Specialist

Simone Samuda
Office: ISA 2015
Telephone: 813-974-6218
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USF Office of Graduate Studies

Office: ALN 226
Telephone: 813-974-2846
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Website: <http://www.grad.usf.edu/>

Graduate Education at USF

Graduate Education at USF is administered at three levels. The **USF Office of Graduate Studies** (<http://www.grad.usf.edu>) is the hub of graduate education at USF and oversees:

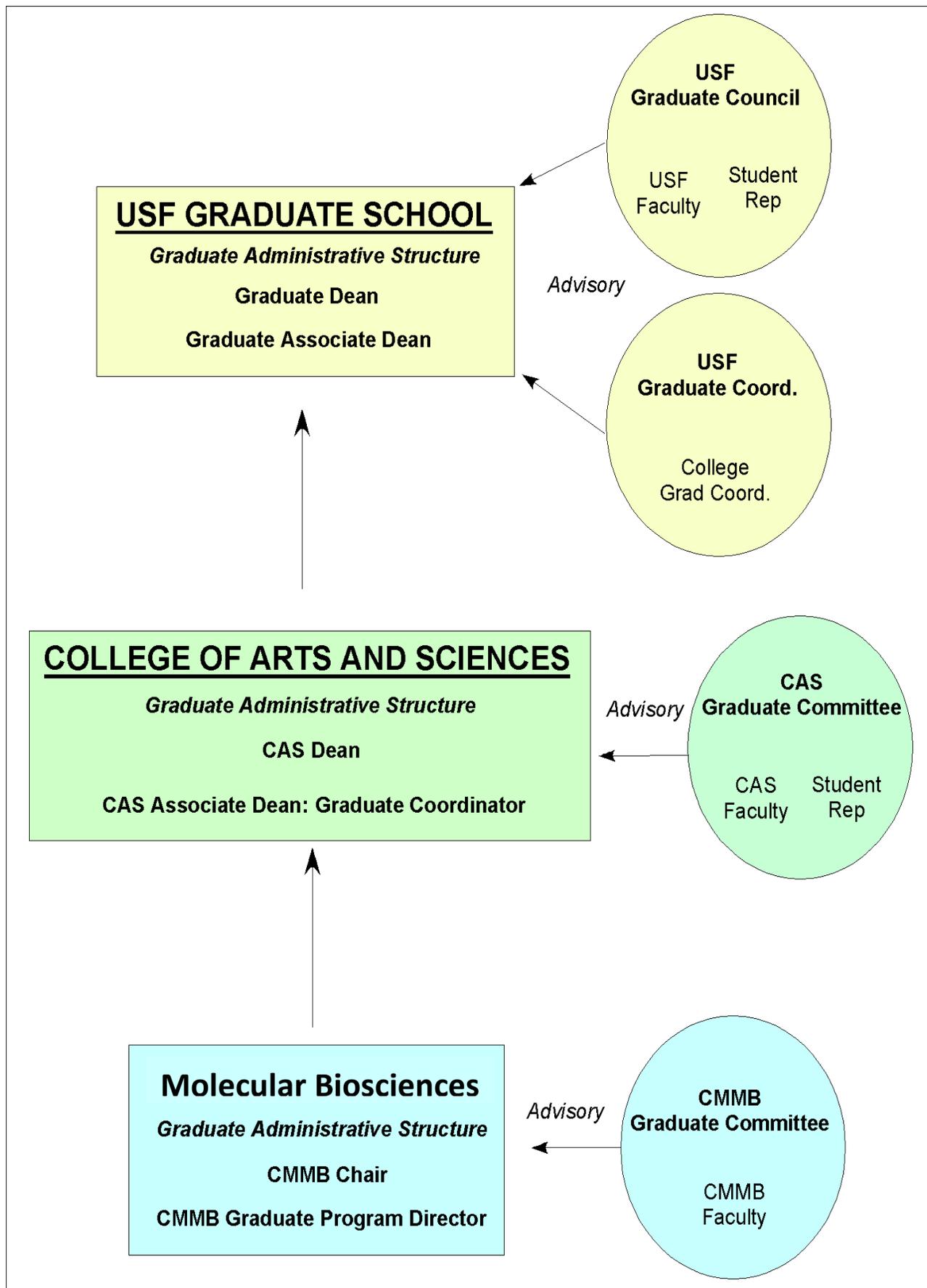
- Compliance of all graduate programs
- Incoming graduate applications
- USF Graduate student policy
- USF graduate fellowships and awards
- Graduate student success initiatives (i.e. workshops, seminars, symposia)
- Graduate student recruitment and marketing
- Thesis and dissertations
- Approval of new graduate programs and courses
- Orientation and commencement
- Graduate student appeals/petitions.

The USF Office of Graduate Studies is administered by a Dean (currently Dr. Ruth Bahr) and an Associate Dean (TBD). They work with the USF Graduate Council (a committee made up of USF graduate faculty and two graduate student representatives) to review and approve policies, programs, and courses. In addition, the Graduate Deans are advised by a committee made up of the Graduate Coordinators (typically Associate Deans from each college), which meet monthly to discuss pertinent graduate issues. The USF Office of Graduate Studies also houses the **Graduate and Professional Student Council** (GPSC). This is a student group that serves as a voice for graduate students and meets regularly with the Deans. All graduate students are invited to become members of this group.

The next level of graduate education is administered at the college level. For MBS, this is the **College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)**. The Associate Dean for UG and Grad studies works with the CAS and SNSM graduate committee to evaluate and approve programs and courses, evaluate graduate appeals, advise on program development, and assess and recommend graduate policies.

The third level of graduate education occurs at the **Departmental** level. Each Department typically has a faculty member assigned as a Program Director (Currently, Dr. Brant Burkhardt). The Program Director serves as the first point of contact for all program information as well as information on graduate policy and procedures. In MBS, the Program Director also serves as coordinator of admissions and recruitment, monitors student progress, coordinates the orientation, advises students on MBS specific issues, and is involved in scheduling MBS graduate courses.

It is important for each student to know all the key administrators in each of the above units, and to actively participate in workshops and orientations that provide additional information about graduate education and professional development at USF. The USF Office of Graduate Studies has a comprehensive website, which provides a wealth of information and resources. In addition, many of the committees that serve advisory roles to both CAS and the USF Office of Graduate Studies have graduate students that serve as members. MBS students are encouraged to be involved in these important committees. This can be done through the Student Council.



Items Common to All Degrees

Incoming Course/Degree Requirements

It is expected that candidates for graduate degrees in the department of MBS will have completed courses equivalent to those required for the B.S. in Cell and Molecular Biology, or Microbiology, at USF.

Out of State Students

All students admitted to the University of South Florida after fall 2008, and who did not previously reside in the state of Florida for 12 months prior to matriculation, will be considered an out-of-state student for tuition purposes. Should a student under this classification receive financial support (please see below) via a Research Assistantship (RA), or Teaching Assistantship (TA), then they will be considered in-state students for tuition purposes ONLY during the semester(s) of support. At the termination of financial support, such students will revert to being considered out-of-state students.

Financial Assistance

There are several mechanisms available to MBS graduate students for financial support during their time in our program. For research students it is likely, although not guaranteed, that they will be funded via departmental Teaching Assistantships (TA); or via Research Assistantships (RA) from the research grants of their Major Professor. Departmental TAs are awarded and renewed prior to the start of the fall and Spring Semesters, and are allocated by the MBS Graduate Committee based on a number of criteria, including budgetary concerns, departmental need and past performance. Students should be aware that their conduct and performance as a TA will be evaluated by the relevant Laboratory Coordinator (LC) during each semester that they hold such a stipend. Students will receive a copy of this evaluation and will also have an opportunity to meet with the LC to discuss its content. If the LC identifies areas of concerns regarding performance, then it is the student's responsibility to make any alterations or changes necessary in order to remain eligible for future TA support. The department of MBS also receives a variable budget from the college to conduct a program of summer classes, which also allows for some level of TA support. As this budget is often smaller than that of our regular semesters, we can make no guarantees with regards to TA allocations for summer semesters. The MBS graduate committee will award these stipends during the Spring Semester, and will use prior performance and academic standing measures, along with other considerations, for their allocation. **It should be made clear that MBS departmental policy only allows for 5 semesters of TA support for MS students, and 10 semesters of TA support for PhD students** (summer not included). In addition, non-thesis MS students are not usually eligible for TA support. Exceptions to any of these rules require the approval of the MBS Graduate Committee. Students should be aware that a separate handbook exists for MBS TAs, which they are required to obtain and familiarize themselves with. In addition to RA and TA support, several USF, regional and national fellowships/scholarships are available to MBS students. We encourage students to consult with their Major Professor and the MBS Graduate Office for more information on such funds.

Submission of Documentation: All documentation must be submitted to our Graduate Program Specialist (Mrs. Simone Samuda). Please **do not forward** documentation to the College of Arts and Science or the Office of Graduate Studies directly.

Support from Outside Scholarships

MBS encourages its students to obtain outside support for their graduate studies, in the form of scholarships and fellowships. Normal practice for those students receiving extra support by such mechanisms will be to implement a reduction in teaching assistantship assignment (e.g. receiving one section of support, rather than two). Care will be taken to ensure that students with outside support will still receive overall financial support (fellowship + TA) equivalent to existing MBS stipend levels. In such situations, scholarships and fellowships should be considered a mechanism to reduce teaching burden, and thus allow more time to focus on research, and degree completion. Exceptions to these rules will only be made if the funding source specifically requires a full stipend to be received in addition to the scholarship or fellowship. In such cases, we will do our best to accommodate, but any such support is dependent on available funds and standing within the program.

Outside Employment and Activities

Under the terms of the UFF Graduate Assistants United Collective Bargaining Agreement with USF, all students supported by RA or TA in MBS must report, and seek approval for, ALL outside activities and employment to the Chairman and Graduate Director of MBS. This should be performed prior to assuming any such position via the appropriate USF website. The MBS Chairman retains the right to deny any such request.

Spring Admission

Where appropriate the department of MBS will offer admission to its graduate program for students in the Spring Semester. Those students who enter during the Spring Semester will be unable to follow the exact timelines defined elsewhere in this document for the MS and Ph.D. degrees. As such, these students will be required to embark on the core-MBS graduate degree course requirements beginning in the Fall Semester of their first year. Students will be expected to use their first semester to identify a Major Professor, complete any laboratory rotations, take at least 1 of their structured course requirements, and enroll in BSC6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology. Students admitted in the Spring Semester will be expected to have formed and held a meeting with their thesis advisory committee by the end of the Fall Semester of their first year.

Minimum Enrollment Requirements

Students must enroll in 9 credit hours in both fall and spring semesters, and 6 credit hours in summer, to be considered full-time students. These enrollment levels are particularly important for those students funded via RAs, TAs or other University fellowships. In addition, all graduate-degree seeking students must be continuously enrolled, which is defined as completing (with grades) a minimum of 6 hours of graduate credit every three continuous semesters (i.e. 2 hours Spring, 2 Summer, 2 Fall; OR, 3 Fall, 0 spring, 3 Summer; OR 6 Fall, 0 Spring, 0 Summer; etc.). Any student not continuously enrolled will be converted to non-degree seeking status by the Office of Graduate Studies. Students that fall to NON-DEGREE status must submit a new application to the USF Graduate School. The

MBS Graduate Committee will evaluate any such applications and determine if the student in question will be readmitted to the program. In such cases, MBS may require student to undertake additional course work, to demonstrate competency and retake any qualifying examinations. Any student readmitted to the program must adhere to the policies contained within the Graduate Catalog in the year of readmission; however, the time to degree requirements will be calculated based on the original date of admission. Students taking any examination in each semester must be enrolled for a minimum of 2 credit hours of graduate credit. PhD students who advance to candidacy must enroll in at least 2 credits of BSC7980 in EVERY semester thereafter. Those students funded by Graduate Assistantships or Teaching Assistantships are expected to register as full-time students. Students with an approved leave of absence will not be subject to these requirements.

Selection of a Major Professor without Laboratory Rotations

In the first semester of residence, MBS research graduate students will be required to begin the process of identifying a Major Professor under which to study. Those students admitted with a mentor already agreed upon will enter that professor's laboratory directly in lieu of rotation to begin research.

Selection of a Major Professor with Laboratory Rotations

Students admitted to the MBS research graduate program without a Major Professor already determined will be assigned to laboratory rotations during their first semester of residency. The details of these rotations should be determined by the student in conjunction with appropriate MBS Faculty and the MBS Graduate Director/Committee in advance of their joining the program. Students will submit a minimum of 3 names of MBS faculty they are interested in rotating with to the MBS Graduate Office. Students are required to contact MBS professors prior to the beginning of their first semester to gain agreement for the proposed rotations. The MBS Graduate Committee will then assign students 2-3 rotations over the course of their first semester. Students are expected to use these rotations to determine a Major Professor. Students should notify the MBS Graduate Director in writing of their official Major Professor by the end of the first semester of residency. The choice of Major Professor must be a joint agreement between the student and Major Professor. Should the student be unable to select a Major Professor by the end of their first semester in residence, they may petition the MBS Graduate Committee for additional laboratory rotations, which will be scheduled during their second semester in residence. Students are required to submit the names of at least three faculty members to the MBS Graduate Director no later than the 1 week prior to the end of the first semester. It is recommended that the student contact the faculty to confirm that they would be interested in having the student rotate. Where necessary, students are expected to use this second semester of rotations to determine a Major Professor. Students should notify the MBS Graduate Director in writing of this choice by the end of the second semester of residency. The choice of Major Professor must be a joint agreement between the student and Major Professor. Students that are unable to establish a Major Professor by the end of their second semester of residency (including summer) will automatically be moved to the non-thesis MS program, assuming they are in good standing. Those students that are not in good standing may wish to seek graduate education opportunities outside of the MBS department.

Laboratory Rotations Requirements

Laboratory rotations will be administered under the BSC 7910 (PhD) or BSC 6910 (MS) class code, with the relevant professor as instructor. Students will be permitted to undertake no more than three different rotations in any given semester, although less is acceptable. In a fall and spring semester, students will only register for 1 credit hour of rotation per professor (e.g. a maximum of 3 credit hours). In cases where a second set of rotations are conducted during a summer semester students may enroll in each rotation for as many credit hours as is required (e.g. 3 rotations at 2 credit hours each, 2 rotations at 3 credit hours each, 1 rotation at 6 credit hours). Students are required to consult with each rotation professor in advance of joining their laboratory regarding expectations, requirements and rules. Each professor is responsible for organizing and orchestrating the rotation as they see appropriate. It is expected that students will devote a minimum of a normal working week (M-F, 9-5), minus program and TA requirements, to each rotation. At the conclusion of the rotation students are required to submit a rotation experience document to each rotation professor within 7 days. This document will outline the work conducted during the rotation, demonstrate knowledge of the background theory to the research of each laboratory, and detail any techniques or methods learnt. It should NOT be in list form, but be written in scientific prose, with references where applicable. If this document is deemed unacceptable by the rotation professor, then students will have 1 chance at remediating the situation and will have a 1 week to do so. If the remediated document is submitted late, or still considered unacceptable upon resubmission, then students will receive an Unacceptable (U) grade for that rotation. Students should note that they must report to their next rotation immediately following the conclusion of the preceding one. Completing the previous rotation professor's report or laboratory work is not an acceptable excuse. It should also be clear that rotation faculty can impose additional requirements beyond the research experience document (e.g. lab meeting presentation, attending weekly one-on-one meetings with the professor) and students are expected to fulfill each of these conditions to receive a passing grade for the rotation.

Changing Major Professors

Occasionally it is appropriate for students to change Major Professors. This decision can be made at any time during the student's tenure in the MBS department, by either the Major Professor or the graduate student. Regardless of who initiates the decision, it is the graduate student's responsibility to find another Major Professor before the beginning of the next semester. If the student has had 1 set of rotations or less at the time of leaving their existing laboratory then they will be offered 1 additional set of rotations, which will be determined after discussion with the MBS Graduate Director, and appropriate MBS faculty. If the student in question has already undertaken 2 sets of rotations, then no further rotations will be permitted. Should the new set of rotations not yield a new Major Professor or should a new set of rotations not be appropriate, then the student will either have the choice of joining our non-thesis MS program, or pursuing graduate education opportunities outside of the MBS department. If a thesis/dissertation committee has been formed at the time a student leaves a laboratory, then all members of the committee should be informed about the change and any possible ramifications. Members of the thesis/dissertation committee may elect to remove themselves from the committee and/or the graduate student may request changes in the composition of the graduate committee to better support any change in research direction. Any student in good standing in the

MBS department who finds themselves without a Major Professor or committee will be guided and advised, in an ad-hoc manner, by the MBS Graduate Committee. This is expected to be in only the most extreme of situations, and suffice for matters such as annual reports, or the approval of specific aims for written qualifying examinations. In such situations, the MBS Graduate Committee will be unable to administer oral examinations, or other such benchmark matters usually performed by a student's regular thesis/dissertation advisory committee. Additionally, students who join a new laboratory during their time in the MBS program will be eligible, where relevant, to request a delay of oral examination by 1 semester. The student's new PI may further request a second semester of delay in appropriate circumstances by petitioning the MBS graduate committee. Students may not request a delay of written examination for similar circumstances.

Changing Degree Tracks

In certain circumstances (such as Major Professor leaving USF), students may decide to change the degree for which they are currently enrolled. For Ph.D. students wishing to change to a MS degree, approval of their Major Professor, advisory committee and the MBS Graduate Director is required. If a Ph.D. student petitions to change to the MS thesis track due to failing their Ph.D. oral qualifying examination twice, then it is acceptable for that student to substitute their successfully completed Ph.D. written qualifying examination for the MS oral qualifying exam. Such a change in degree track is made only with the approval of the MBS Graduate Committee, and requires the student to be in academic good standing at the time of petition. All changes from the Ph.D. degree to the MS degree will also require the approval of the graduate school. Ph.D. and MS thesis students wishing to voluntarily change to the NT-MS degree must obtain approval of their Major Professor and advisory committee; before petitioning the MBS Graduate Committee. The unanimous approval of each party is required for such a change. It should be noted that this kind of alteration, once a body of research is underway, is considered most unusual, and approval of such a change is not guaranteed. Furthermore, Ph.D. and MS students CANNOT substitute a previously, successfully completed qualifying examination for the final non-thesis masters oral examination. MS students wishing to change to the Ph.D. degree must obtain the approval of their Major Professor, advisory committee and the MBS Graduate Director; before applying to the Graduate School. It should be noted that such an application will be considered entirely new and will have to go through the regular admission evaluation processes. Each instance of a change of a degree program is reliant on the student being in good academic standing at the time of petition, and on them meeting the requirements for admission and completion of each degree. **Important note when changing degree tracks:** Please keep in mind that if you change a degree track for example from the Ph.D. to the M.S. in Biology, upon approval of your "Change of Graduate Major Form", your graduation requirements will fall under the Catalog year of your change of major approval NOT your year of original graduate school entry. This will change your catalog requirements. Finally, you cannot change your degree track and graduate in the same semester. Please consult heavily with your PI, Graduate Director and Graduate Program Specialist upon consideration of changing degree tracks.

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty

The department of MBS, the USF Office of Graduate Studies and the University of South Florida hold academic integrity and honesty in the highest regard. Students are individually responsible for being aware of, and complying with, University Regulations and Policies, and must conduct themselves accordingly. Specific information with regards to these policies can be obtained from the USF Office of Graduate Studies. Students should note that the regulations apply not only to your coursework, but to your research activities as well.

USF Academic Probation

The USF Office of Graduate Studies will automatically place any student on academic probation if their TOTAL graduate GPA falls below 3.00 (referred to as **P1 probation**). This probation will be effective from the beginning of the following semester (summer included). Students with a graduate GPA below 3.0 for two consecutive semesters (referred to as **P2 probation**) will be prevented from registering for classes without the permission of the MBS Graduate Committee and the CAS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies. Students that have 3 consecutive semesters with a total GPA below 3.00 will be placed on **P3 probation** and will not be able to enroll in any classes without the permission of the MBS Graduate Committee, the CAS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and the Assistant Dean from the USF Office of Graduate Studies. Notification of probation will be made to the student by the USF Office of Graduate Studies, and in writing by the MBS Graduate Director. Students that are placed on probation must schedule an immediate meeting with the MBS Graduate Director AND Major Professor to construct an academic plan to remove the probation. At the end of each probationary semester, there are several possible outcomes:

1. **Removal of the probation.** Students who have increased their graduate GPA to 3.0 or above will now be considered in academic good standing. This can only be initiated by the USF Office of Graduate Studies.
2. **Continued probation.** Students whose GPA remains below 3.0, will progress to P2 or P3 status, and will be prevented from enrolling in classes unless approved by the MBS Graduate Committee and the CAS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies (P2), or the USF Office of Graduate Studies (P3).
3. **Dismissal from the MBS program.** The MBS Graduate Committee may proceed with academic dismissal, or recommend to the student voluntary withdrawal, from the MBS Graduate Program following P1, P2 or P3 probation.

No grade of C- or below will be accepted towards a graduate degree. Should a student find themselves on academic probation upon the completion of their required coursework/classes then they will not be able to graduate. Both the total and major GPA must be above 3.00. If the student is on P1 or P2 probation at the time of intended graduation, they MAY be permitted to enroll in further classes to rectify the situation. The Major Professor and advisory committee will be responsible for determining the makeup and expectations for these additional classes. If a student is on P3 probation at the time

of intended graduation, a petition of removal must be filed with the USF Graduate School. Such students will have ONE additional semester to clear the probation.

CAS and MBS Academic Probation

The MBS department or the College of Arts & Sciences may also place students on probation for other reasons as appropriate. These include, but are not limited to, a lack of research performance or attaining U grades in MBS classes. Students placed on probation for these issues will be notified in writing by the MBS Graduate Director of the specific conditions required for the removal of probation. Students not meeting the conditions set out for them will either be subject to further probationary periods or dismissed from the MBS Graduate Program.

Annual Progress Reports

All MBS students (*both thesis and non-thesis*), without exception, are required to submit Annual Progress Reports to the MBS Graduate Office by December 15th of each year. The forms necessary for this are available from the MBS Graduate Office. Each student is required to demonstrate their progress through the program over the course of the preceding 12 months and illustrate benchmarks and course requirements achieved. Students are also required to create a series of academic and/or research goals for the coming 12 months. Students are obligated to hold a meeting with their advisory committee (or advisory professor in the case of non-thesis students) to discuss the report, and to obtain unanimous approval and signatures. The report must be distributed to the advisory committee at least 2 weeks before the meeting is scheduled to be held. Once approved, the form must be turned in to the MBS Graduate Office for the Graduate Directors signature and approval. For those newly admitted students who do not yet have a Major Professor and/or committee should consult with the MBS Graduate Director for guidance and approval of their annual report.

Graduate Catalog

Of the utmost importance, to remain in compliance with all degree and program requirements, students are expected to adhere to the conditions and regulations laid out in the USF Office of Graduate Studies Catalog. Students are permitted to select which Graduate Catalog they chose to comply with; however they may not use those Catalogs prior to their admissions. In addition, they may not use a catalog produced in an academic year that they did not complete at least 2 semesters. Students are also expected to comply with all requirements laid out in the MBS Graduate Student Handbook. Students will use the MBS handbook in place at the time of their admission. Final graduate certification must always comply with the catalog of graduate enrollment or change of major or years thereafter until graduation year.

Transfer of Credits

Students are permitted to petition the MBS Graduate Committee to transfer graduate credit earned at any regionally accredited institution in the United States. The evaluation of such petitions will be made on a case-by-case basis, and at the sole discretion of the MBS Graduate Committee. All credit transferred must have a B grade or better, and in no instance will more than 12 graduate hours be permitted for transfer. Courses that receive an S grade cannot be transferred. The transferred credit will be assigned a T grade by the USF Graduate School and will not count towards the institutional GPA. All courses, including any transferred credit, cannot be older than 7 years at the time of graduation for a MS degree, or older than 8 years at the time of graduation for a Ph.D. Most credits earned in satisfaction of degree requirements must be earned through instruction offered on the Tampa campus of the University of South Florida. It should be noted that credit previously applied to an awarded degree cannot be used towards a graduate degree at USF.

Leave of Absence

In certain exceptional or unavoidable circumstances, it is permissible for a student to take a Leave of Absence (LOA) from their graduate studies. These are granted for a total of up to 2 years, and require the approval of the Major Professor, the MBS Graduate Director, the College of Arts & Sciences and the USF Office of Graduate Studies. Any absent time that results from an approved LOA will not count towards the degree program time limits outlined in this handbook. Students must enroll in appropriate graduate credit the first semester following the expiration of LOA or they will fall to Non-Degree status, and must reapply to the USF Office of Graduate Studies for readmission. Returning students should contact the Registrar's Office for instructions on how to reactivate their status. Doctoral candidates must also ensure that their candidacy is reactivated by contacting the USF Office of Graduate Studies.

Time to Degree and Time Limit Extensions

Students admitted to MBS MS degrees must complete all degree requirements within 5 years of the original date of their admission. Courses applied to MS degrees cannot be older than 7 years at the time of graduation. Students admitted to the Ph.D. program must complete all degree requirements within 8 years of the original time of their admission. Courses applied to Ph.D. degrees cannot be older than 8 years at the time of graduation. It is important to note that students who have fallen to inactive status, and been readmitted to the MBS Graduate Program, must meet the time to degree requirements from the original date of admission, even if those times have been changed since they were originally admitted. Students with an approved LOA do not have the time of their absence counted in the time to degree calculations. Due to extenuating circumstances, a student may require additional time to complete their degree. In such instances the student must complete a "Time Limit Extension" (TLE) Request and submit it to the USF Office of Graduate Studies. The TLE should only be used if the student is within a few semesters of graduation, and will not be approved for periods of time in excess of 2 years. A student will be permitted to submit only ONE TLE request to the USF Office of Graduate Studies during the course of their degree program. The TLE request requires the

submission of an action plan, detailing the benchmarks and timelines needed to complete the degree, and must be signed by the student's major professor, the MBS Graduate Director and the MBS Chairperson. An approved TLE also allows the age of courses to be extended.

Thesis/Dissertation Requirements

The thesis or dissertation of all graduate students admitted to a graduate degree program at the University of South Florida must conform to the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) guidelines from the USF Office of Graduate Studies. Required paper documentation must be submitted to the USF Office of Graduate Studies by each semester's posted final submission deadline (available from the MBS Graduate Office) to be considered for graduation in that semester. Once a thesis or dissertation is ready for submission to the USF School of Graduate Studies, the student's supervisory committee members must sign the Certificate of Approval (COA) form indicating approval of the document. The Certificates of Approval must contain each professor's original signature – please note that faxed signatures are acceptable, however they must be that of your professor(s). The COA form also contains a Committee Verification signature area that the MBS Graduate Director must sign, verifying that:

1. The Supervisory Committee listed is accurate.
2. The Committee was appointed and approved following University policies and procedures.
3. The signatures are original (i.e. signed by the committee member personally).

The maximum length of the abstract (to be published in Dissertation Abstracts International) is 350 words. The USF Office of Graduate Studies will not accept a thesis or dissertation after the first day of the academic term unless the student is enrolled for at least two hours of dissertation credit. The student will be sent an e-mail from the USF Office of Graduate Studies indicating approval. Only after the USF Office of Graduate Studies Dean has approved the thesis or dissertation can the student be certified for the degree. Students should also be aware that new USF guidelines require the major professor to submit any thesis or dissertation to plagiarism software, and that the generated report must be communicated to the USF Office of Graduate Studies. It should be noted that USF only allows first author papers to be included as content for doctoral dissertations.

Submission of Thesis / Dissertation

Students will be required to submit ALL copies of their dissertation to the MBS Graduate Office not less than 2 weeks prior to the date of their thesis or dissertation seminar/defense. Students should NOT submit final copies of their thesis or dissertation to individual committee members directly. Students are of course welcome to submit pertinent sections of their unfinished thesis or dissertation to their committee members for review prior to submission. The submitted thesis or dissertation must

be a completed and final version that is ready for evaluation by their advisory committee. If a student fails to submit all copies of their final thesis or dissertation by this 2 week deadline then the seminar/defense will automatically be cancelled, and the student will be responsible for rescheduling it.

Graduation Requirements

There are several USF specific deadlines that must be met successful graduation. These include, but are not limited to, matters concerning the dissertation/thesis, class registration, seminar defense, credential certification etc. These dates are available from the USF Office of Graduate Studies website located here: <https://www.usf.edu/education/graduate/graduate-support-office/grad-stud-resources/dates-and-deadlines.aspx>. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these dates and comply with all deadlines and requirements. Be aware that a number of these *deadlines occur very early* and cannot be waived or altered. In the semester of graduation all Ph.D. students are required to be registered for 2 hours of BSC 7980 Doctoral Dissertation and 1 hour of BSC7936 PhD Seminar. In the semester of graduation all MS thesis students are required to be registered for 2 hours of BSC/MCB 6971 Thesis: Masters and 1 hour of BSC6935 Thesis Seminar. During the semester in which the degree is to be awarded, students must submit to the MBS Graduate Office a photocopy of the abstract, title page, and committee approval page that has been signed by his/her committee. This must occur at least a week preceding the thesis/dissertation deadline of the USF Office of Graduate Studies. Upon completion of the degree requirements, the MBS graduate office will complete the certification for graduation paperwork only after receiving email confirmation from the USF Office of Graduate Studies.

Of utmost importance, please ensure strict compliance of required core, concentration and elective courses as detailed in the Graduate Catalog year of graduate school entry or degree track change in addition to requirements that may be listed in this handbook.

The MS Non- Thesis Degree

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Non-Thesis

M.S. in Biology, with a concentration in Cell Biology & Molecular Biology

Non-Thesis MS- Biology Program Catalog Requirements 2023-2024

- Minimum of 30 credits required (*approved by MBS*)
- **Core Requirements - 6 credit hours**
 - BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences Credit Hours: 1 (Taken 3 times)
 - BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology Credit Hours: 1 (Taken 3 times)
- **Concentration (required) - 15 credit hours minimum**
 - Students select courses approved by the supervisory committee or department.
 - Please contact Graduate Program Specialist for List of Approved Classes
- **Non-Thesis (Electives) - 9 credit hours minimum**
 - BSC 6939 CMNT Seminar (in either the 1st or 2nd semester of residence)
 - BSC 6932 (1 hrs) Masters Qualifying Exam during final semester
 - BSC 6910 Directed Research may be applied here
 - BSC 6905 Independent Study may be applied here
 - Approved elective coursework may be applied here
- 15 additional hrs of credit must be at 6000-level
- 15 credits must be in MBS courses
- Due to rule changes at USF, NO 4000-level credit will be applied to NT-MS degrees after January 2016
- Submission of a written scientific review on an approved topic
- Successful completion of a final oral exam at the completion of the structured course work
 - BSC 6932 NTMS Qualifying Exam

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Non-Thesis M.S. in Microbiology

Non-Thesis MS Microbiology Program Catalog Requirements 2023-2024

- Minimum of 30 credits required (*approved by MBS*)
- **Core Requirements - 6 credit hours**
 - MCB 6205 Bacterial Pathogenesis Credit Hours: 3 (Current listing may have 6932)
 - MCB 6306 Advanced Bacterial Genetics Credit Hours: 3 (Current listing may have 6932)
- **Additional Required Courses - 3 credit hours**
 - BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology Credit Hours: 1 (Taken three times)
- **Electives - 21 credit hours minimum**
 - Select from the following or other graduate courses approved by the supervisory committee:
 - Please contact Graduate Program Specialist for List of Approved Classes
 - 15 of the 30 credit hours must be in courses of a microbiological nature. Approval of such courses will be made by the MBS Graduate Director.
 - BSC 5931 Selected Topics in Biology Credit Hours: 1-4 (3 credits for this program) (Molecular Microbial Ecology)
 - BSC 5931 Selected Topics in Biology Credit(s): 1-4 (3 credits for this program) (Prokaryotic Molecular Genetics)
 - BSC 5931 Selected Topics in Biology Selected Topics in Biology Credit(s): 1-4 (3 credits for this program) (Bacterial Pathogenesis)
 - MCB 5655 Applied and Environmental Microbiology Credit Hours: 3
 - PCB 6930 Current Topics in Cancer Biology Credit Hours: 2
 - Principles of Immunology Credit(s): 3 (Proposed as PCB 5335)
 - PCB 6236 Advanced Immunology Credit Hours: 4
 - MCB 5815 Medical Mycology Credit Hours: 3
 - PCB 5616 Molecular Phylogenetics Credit Hours: 3

- PCB 6525 Molecular Genetics Credit Hours: 3
- BSC 5425 Genetic Engineering and Recombinant DNA Technology Credit Hours: 3
- Note: Additional courses not on the list may be substituted with the approval of the thesis committee and MBS Graduate Director.
- BSC 6939 CMNT Seminar (in either the 1st or 2nd semester of residence)
- BSC 6932 (1 hrs) Masters Qualifying Exam during final semester
- BSC 6910 Directed Research may be applied here
- BSC 6905 Independent Study may be applied here
- 15 additional hrs of credit must be at 6000-level
- 15 credits must be in MBS courses
- Due to rule changes at USF, NO 4000-level credit will be applied to NT-MS degrees after January 2016
- Submission of a written scientific review on an approved topic
- Successful completion of a final oral exam at the completion of the structured course work
 - BSC 6932 NTMS Qualifying Exam

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM TIME LINES

MS-Bio NON-Thesis Program

Projected tracking **example of full time-enrollment** through program in 1.5 years*

Please keep in mind this is an example as your actual courses and timeline may vary

-
- Semester 1 (fall)**
- BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (1 of 3)
 - BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences (1 of 3)
 - BSC 6932 Cellular Processes
 - BSC 6932 Cellular Metabolic Processes
 - BSC 6932 Microbial Processes
 - Submit Annual Progress Report by December 15th
-

- Semester 2 (spring)**
- BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (2 of 3)
 - BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences (2 of 3)
 - BSC 6932 Introduction to Genetics
 - BSC 6939 Selected Topics in Cancer Bio CMNT Sem
 - BSC 5931 Advanced Immunology
-

- Summer 1**
- GMS 6111 Basic Medical Pathology
 - GMS 6201 Basic Medical Biochemistry
-

- Semester 3 (fall)**
- BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (3 of 3)
 - BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences (3 of 3)
 - BSC 6932 Medical Mycology
 - BSC 6932 Pub Health/Pathog Microbiology
 - BSC 6932 Non-Thesis Masters Qualifying
-

Advisory Professor for Non-Thesis MS Students

All non-thesis-MS (NT-MS) students in the MBS graduate program have NT-MS Director (At present, this is Dr. James Riordan) serve as the advisor. This professor will help with course selection choices, academic advice and will be the instructor of record for the final qualifying exam taken during the student's last semester. The advisory professor will assign the topic for the final qualifying exam, and form and lead the examining committee for this requirement. It is required that NT-MS students consult with their advisory professor prior to enrolling in each new semester's classes to ensure that they meet departmental and degree requirements. NT-MS students should also meet with their advisory professors during each semester to give an update of progress and to address any concerns. NT-MS students will require the advisory professor to approve and sign any annual reports produced. MBS professors with active research laboratories will not normally serve as advisory professors to NT-MS students.

Departmental Residence Requirements

- ✓ A minimum of one year of graduate work beyond the Bachelor's degree is required. The student must earn at least 30 post-baccalaureate semester credits.
- ✓ Students must be registered as a full-time graduate student for one semester, or two summer sessions (session C).
- ✓ Full-time registration is defined as 9 hours for fall and Spring Semesters, or 6 hours for summer semesters.

NT-MS Degree Coursework Requirements

The MBS department has specific course requirements for the NT-MS degree, which can be found in the NT-MS program requirements section of this document. Students are required to take a minimum of 30 credit hours with specific hourly requirements listed as Core, Concentration and Elective requirements. All must be approved by MBS. Sixteen hours must be completed at the 6000-level, and 15h of the total 30h must be completed in MBS offered courses. No courses at the 4000-level are permissible for NT-MS degrees after January 2016. Students pursuing the M.S. degree in microbiology must take at least 15h of courses in that discipline. The MBS Graduate Director will be responsible for approving microbiology courses. List of approved courses can be received from the Graduate Program Specialist.

NT-MS Degree Masters Qualifying Exam

NT-MS students are required to produce a review paper in their final semester, which will form the basis of their qualifying examination. Associated with this, students must register in BSC 6932 (1 hrs) Masters Qualifying Exam during their final semester. The quality and length of the review should be like an article that would appear in the Quarterly Review of Biology, or in Biological Reviews. The

paper will review a topic of your choosing that has NOT been included in the coursework of your other classes. The topic must be approved by your non-thesis MS advisor before starting work on the document. Papers should be a minimum of 5000 words in length, not including references, title page, tables or figure legends. Papers should include a minimum of 20 distinct citations of research papers, using a standard numerical documentation format.

An outline of the topic will be due within 2 weeks of agreeing the subject with your advisor. The outline should include a short paragraph referring to the importance of the topic, and a list of 5 peer reviewed papers to be included in the final paper. Students should include a short explanation for each of the papers, and their relevance/importance to the review topic.

Upon agreement of a topic, the student and advisor will identify 2 other MBS faculty to serve as the examination committee.

The full paper will be due no later than 4 weeks before the end of the semester (including finals week). USF plagiarism software will be used as a matter of course for assessing content similarity.

The paper will be presented to your examination committee via a powerpoint presentation 2 weeks after submission of the final document. At this time your committee will question you on the subject and content of the paper.

Note: a practical way to approach the literature is to seek out a **recent** review on the topic of your choice, and to use this as a foundation to develop your research paper.

Papers must include the following:

- A. An overview of the topic, and its relevance to Cell Biology, Microbiology or Molecular Biology.
- B. A full review of the respective topic in terms of its importance and relevance.
- C. Literature cited section at the end of the paper.
- D. Proper grammar and spelling.
- E. Organization and clarity.
- F. Pages must be numbered and should include your last name in the header of each page. A word count must be included on the title page.

- ✓ The examination is open to all members of the department and must be announced two weeks prior to the presentation.
- ✓ A request for oral examination must be coordinated through the MBS Graduate Office.
- ✓ The student will be required to defend the submitted review to the unanimous approval of the examining committee to pass the examination.
- ✓ An evaluation rubric will be utilized to assign a final grade for the examination.
- ✓ Students must take the examination in the final semester of their degree program.
- ✓ Should a student not pass the oral examination they may retake it, one time only, upon the written consent of the advisory professor.

- ✓ A student who fails the oral examination twice will be dismissed from the program.

The MS Thesis Degrees

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

THESIS

M.S. in Biology, with a concentration in Cell Biology & Molecular Biology

THESIS MS- Biology Program Catalog Requirements 2023-2024

- Minimum of 30 credits required (*approved by MBS*)
- **Core Requirements - 6 credit hours**
 - BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences Credit Hours: 1 (Taken 3 times)
 - BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology Credit Hours: 1 (Taken 3 times)
- **Concentration (required) - 15 credit hours minimum**
 - PCB 6920 Advances in Cell and Molecular Biology during Fall Semester of first year Credit Hours: 1
 - BSC 6956 Scientific Grant Writing during Spring Semester of first year* Credit Hours: 3
 - Other concentration course requirements- 11 credits
 - Please contact Graduate Program Specialist for List of Approved Classes: 11 credit hours
- **Thesis (Research and Defense) - 9 credit hours minimum**
 - BSC 6971 Thesis: Master's Credit Hours: (8 credit hours minimum)
 - BSC 6935 Graduate Seminar in Biology Credit Hours: 1
 - Submission and Approval of Thesis Proposal
 - Successful Completion of an Oral Qualifying Examination
 - Presentation Requirement (1 presentation at National/Regional professional meetings)
 - Submission of acceptable thesis

** For Fall admissions. Students admitted in Spring will take this course in the Spring of their 2nd year.*

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Thesis M.S. in Microbiology

Thesis MS Microbiology Program Catalog Requirements 2021-2022

- Minimum of 30 credits required (*approved by MBS*)
 - 15 of the 30 credit hours must be in courses of a microbiological nature. Approval of such courses will be made by the MBS Graduate Director.
- **Core Requirements - 6 credit hours**
 - MCB 6205 Bacterial Pathogenesis Credit Hours: 3
 - MCB 6306 Advanced Bacterial Genetics Credit Hours: 3
- **Additional Required Courses - 7 credit hours**
 - BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology Credit Hours: 1 (Taken three times)
 - PCB 6920 Advances in Cell and Molecular Biology during Fall Semester of first year* Credit Hours: 1
 - BSC 6956 Scientific Grant Writing during Spring Semester of first year* Credit Hours: 3
- **Electives - 8 credit hours minimum**
 - Select from the following or other graduate courses approved by the supervisory committee:
 - Please see Graduate Program Specialist for List of Approved Microbiology Classes
 - PCB 6930 Current Topics in Cancer Biology Credit Hours: 2
Principles of Immunology Credit(s): 3 (Proposed as PCB 5335)
 - PCB 6236 Advanced Immunology Credit Hours: 4
 - MCB 5815 Medical Mycology Credit Hours: 3
 - PCB 5616 Molecular Phylogenetics Credit Hours: 3
 - PCB 6525 Molecular Genetics Credit Hours: 3
 - BSC 5425 Genetic Engineering and Recombinant DNA Technology Credit Hours: 3
- **Thesis (Research and Defense) - 9 credit hours minimum**
 - BSC 6971 Thesis: Master's Credit Hours: **(8 credit hours minimum)**
 - BSC 6935 Graduate Seminar in Biology Credit Hours: 1

- Submission and Approval of Thesis Proposal
- Successful Completion of an Oral Qualifying Examination
- Presentation Requirement (1 presentation at national/regional professional meetings)
- Submission of acceptable thesis

** For Fall admissions. Students admitted in Spring will take this course in the Spring of their 2nd year.*

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM TIME LINES

MS-Bio Thesis Program

Projected tracking **example** through program in 2.5 years*

**based on successful completion of oral qualifying exam in the time specified, good academic standing and continuation of research during summer sessions*

Semester 1 (fall)

- BSC 6910 Directed Research or Laboratory Rotations if required
- PCB 6920 Advances in Cellular & Molecular Biology
- Concentration structured course (3 of 11 credits)
- BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (1 of 3)
- BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences (1 of 3)
- Submit Annual Progress Report by December 15th
- **Establish MS Laboratory and Major Advisor**

Semester 2 (spring)

- BSC 6910 Directed Research
- BSC 6956 Scientific Grant Writing
- Concentration structured course (6 of 11 credits)
- BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (2 of 3)
- BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences (2 of 3)
- **Form thesis committee (*file paperwork*)**

Summer 1

- BSC 6910 Directed Research
- Work on thesis proposal

Semester 3 (fall)

- BSC 6910 Directed Research
- BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (3 of 3)
- Concentration structured course (9 of 11 credits)
- Concentration structured course (12 of 11 credits)
- BSC 6393 Advances in Life Sciences (3 of 3)
- **Submit Thesis Proposal to Thesis Committee**
- **Complete Oral Qualifier by November 15th**
- Submit Annual Progress Report by December 15th

Semester 4 (spring)

- BSC/MCB 6971 Thesis: Masters (9 credits)

Summer 2

- BSC/MCB 6971 Thesis: Masters (6 credits)

Semester 5 (fall)

- BSC/MCB 6971 Thesis: Masters (8 credits)
- BSC6935 Thesis Seminar (1 credit)
- *Defend thesis and graduate*
- ***National meeting presentation***

Departmental Residence Requirements

- ✓ A minimum of one and a half years of graduate work beyond the Bachelor's degree is required. The student must earn at least 30 post-baccalaureate credits. At least one academic year of residence must be on the Tampa campus of the University of South Florida.
- ✓ Students must be registered as a full-time graduate student for one semester, or two summer sessions (session C).
- ✓ An academic year's residency is defined as a minimum of 9 hours of enrollment in both the fall and Spring Semesters.
- ✓ It is expected that students will continue their research during summer semesters. Six hours of enrollment are considered full time during this term.
- ✓ Deviations from these rules must be recommended by the student's supervisory committee and approved by the USF Office of Graduate Studies Dean.

MS Degree Coursework Requirements

The MBS department has specific course requirements for MS degrees, which can be found in the MS (thesis) timelines and benchmarks section of this document. Students are required to take a minimum of 30 credit hours, 20 hours of which must be in structured courses. Of these twenty hours, 10 must be completed at the 6000-level. To ensure students follow MS degree requirements, and to facilitate their ability to graduate in a reasonable time, they should consult, where necessary, with their Major Professor and the MBS Graduate Director as early as possible. There are no specific requirements for the structured course(s) that students are obligated to take beyond PCB 6525 Molecular Genetics. The direction and guidance for choosing these graduate courses resides with the Major Professor and thesis committee. It should be noted that MS students are expected to complete their structured course requirements in their 3rd semester (summer not included) to allow graduation from our program in a reasonable time. It is not permitted for students to take any of their structured courses in semesters beyond the completion of their oral examination. At the behest of the Major Professor MS students are entitled to substitute an additional structured course for the BSC6905 / MCB 6919 Independent Study requirement. Please note however that students will still be held to the 6000-level course hour requirements above and will not be permitted to take this additional course after the completion of the oral examination. The Major Professor will be, in addition to these stipulations, responsible for directing the student towards enrollment in any other classes as they see appropriate outside of the core requirements of our graduate program.

Masters Thesis Advisory Committee

- ✓ The major advisor and at least two additional faculty will constitute a student's advisory committee

- ✓ Of the 2 remaining faculty members at least one must be Graduate Faculty from MBS, whilst the other may be from any other relevant department at USF. Please note that the inclusion of committee members from outside MBS will require approval of the Major Professor and MBS Graduate Director.
- ✓ The committee must be established within two semesters of entering the program. The responsibility for forming the committee lies with the student. This time limit requirement is in place to ensure that the advisory committee is formed in sufficient time to administer and supervise the thesis proposal and oral qualifying examination.
- ✓ The paperwork required to form or change a committee is available on the MBS website, and from the MBS Graduate Office.
- ✓ The Graduate Director, the College Dean, and the USF Office of Graduate Studies Dean must approve the supervisory committee.
- ✓ All students in the MBS graduate program are required to hold annual committee meetings at a minimum, in the Fall Semester of each year. Students are encouraged to hold as many additional meetings as required and permitted by faculty availability.
- ✓ Students should be aware that their advisory committee exists not only to examine and evaluate them, but to provide help and support during their research careers at USF. Students should make use of each member of their committee as is appropriate and reasonable.

Thesis Proposal

MS students will be required to produce a thesis proposal that is approved by their advisory committee. It will form the basis and starting point for their oral examination (see below). It is expected that students will work on the proposal during their first summer semester (2nd for spring admits), and present it to their thesis advisory committee for evaluation and approval during the oral examination in the Fall Semester of the 2nd year. Spring admitted students are, where appropriate, eligible to present this document to their thesis committee during the spring of their second year. There are no specific requirements for the content of this proposal; however it must form a cohesive scientific document, with referencing, that outlines the background knowledge, preliminary data and proposed direction of the student's thesis research. It should be prepared in consultation with the Major Professor, and receive unanimous approval from the student's thesis advisory committee.

MS Oral Qualifying Examination

- ✓ MBS MS students will take their oral qualifying examination, conducted by their thesis advisory committee, during their 3rd semester in the program (summer not included).
- ✓ For students admitted in the fall this will be in their 2nd Fall Semester. Those students admitted in the Spring Semester are permitted to attempt their oral examination in the spring of their 2nd year,

assuming that all course work requirements can be completed in time. If this is not possible then spring admitted students will attempt their oral in the fall of their 2nd year.

- ✓ The examination is expected to be conducted after, or in concurrence with, the completion of all formal course work, except for the BSC6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology and any BSC6905 / MCB 6919 Independent Study requirements.
- ✓ A request for oral examination must be coordinated through the MBS Graduate Office.
- ✓ The oral examination will comprise of a formal thesis proposal presentation, which the public may attend, followed by a private period of questioning by the thesis advisory committee.
- ✓ Students should submit a final version of their thesis proposal to the MBS graduate office no less than 2 weeks before the proposed oral examination date. The MBS graduate program assistant will then be responsible for distributing the proposal to the student's advisory committee. If the proposal is not received within 2 weeks of this meeting the proposed oral examination will be cancelled and it will be the student's responsibility to reorganize this meeting.
- ✓ The thesis proposal presentation should be in powerpoint format and should last 30-45 minutes. Students must give an outline of their work, including relevant background information, preliminary studies and the proposed framework and timeline for their thesis research.
- ✓ Following the presentation, the thesis advisory committee will question the student on their thesis proposal.
- ✓ This questioning will then lead into a more detailed period of questioning, focusing on the student's general knowledge of their field of study.
- ✓ A unanimous vote of the examining committee is necessary to pass the examination.
- ✓ An evaluation rubric will be utilized to assign a final grade for the examination.
- ✓ Students must take the examination at least one semester before the thesis is presented.
- ✓ Should a student not pass the oral examination they may retake it, one time only, upon the written consent of the Major Professor and the advisory committee.
- ✓ A student who fails the oral examination twice will either have the choice of petitioning to join the NT-MS program, or pursue graduate education opportunities outside of MBS.
- ✓ Any deadline extensions for taking the oral examination require the approval of the MBS Graduate Director.
- ✓ Students must be enrolled for a minimum of two graduate hours during the semester that the comprehensive examination is taken.

Required Enrollment in Thesis Research

- ✓ Following successful completion of the oral qualifying exam MS students must enroll in BSC / MCB 6971 Thesis: Masters when engaged in research, data collection, or writing activities relevant to the MS thesis.
- ✓ Advisors should assign the number of credits in this course appropriate to the demands made on faculty, staff, and university facilities; but in no event will the number be less than 2 hours per semester.
- ✓ The total number of earned thesis credits cannot be less than 8 for graduation.
- ✓ MS students who have not completed their oral qualifying examination *are ineligible* to enroll in BSC / MCB 6971. Such students should instead register in BSC6910 Directed Research.
- ✓ Z GRADES are given for thesis research until the semester the thesis is approved. The USF Office of Graduate Studies will give a grade of S during the semester of approval; it will only appear on the transcript for this semester.

Presentation Requirements

Students in the MBS MS program are required to give one presentation of their research, excluding the Masters seminar. Students should meet this requirement via a poster or oral presentation based on their thesis research at a national/regional professional meeting. On campus or local presentations *will not* count towards this requirement. The graduate committee must approve the presentation.

MBS Policy for the MS Thesis Seminar

- ✓ All MS students must be enrolled in 1 hour of BSC 6935 Thesis Seminar during their final semester, in addition to at least 2 hours of BSC/MCB 6971 Thesis: Masters.
- ✓ The thesis seminar is open to the public and must be announced two weeks prior to the presentation.
- ✓ The thesis seminar should be held at least two weeks before the USF deadline to submit completed theses to ProQuest.
- ✓ Students are required to submit to the MBS Graduate Office a request for the Masters thesis seminar at least two weeks before the proposed date
- ✓ The MBS Graduate Director, the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and each of the student's committee members must sign the request for thesis seminar form. This form should contain the date, time and title of the proposed seminar.
- ✓ Students should ensure that the USF Office of Graduate Studies holds on record their most recent

thesis committee form. Any discrepancies in the makeup of the committee may prove cause for delay of the seminar.

- ✓ Changes to the advisory committee must be completed at least 6 weeks BEFORE the thesis seminar, and all committee members must agree to the change.
- ✓ Changes to a graduate committee will not be approved to facilitate graduation.
- ✓ Students wishing to graduate during the summer must make arrangements with their graduate committee by the end of the Spring Semester.
- ✓ The final thesis seminar is an important moment in the student's graduate education and is a significant formal event.
- ✓ This examination will be conducted by the student's advisory committee and should comprise of a concise summary of the research completed to satisfy the requirements for the MS degree.
- ✓ Upon completion of the seminar, the public will be invited to ask questions.
- ✓ After completion of public questioning the student's graduate advisory committee will continue questioning in private as necessary.
- ✓ Each student is expected to defend their research to the unanimous satisfaction of each member of the thesis advisory committee.

The Ph.D. Degree

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Cell and Molecular Biology

PhD Program Requirements

- Total Minimum Program Hours: 90 credit hours
- **Core Requirements – 4 Credit hours**
 - PCB 6920 Advances in Cell and Molecular Biology Credit Hours: 1 (Fall offering)
 - PCB 6956 Scientific Grant Writing Credit Hours: 3 (Spring offering)
 - *Students admitted in Spring will take this course in the Spring of their 2nd year.*
- **Additional Required courses – 7 Credit hours Minimum**
 - BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology Credit Hours: 1 (1 credit for this program, taken four times for a total of 4 credits)
 - PCB 6525 Molecular Genetics Credit Hours: 3
 - *May be substituted for another suitable course upon approval by the Graduate Director and student committee chairperson.*
- **Electives – 3 Credit hours**
 - Graduate class approved by the MBS Graduate Director and student committee chairperson
- **Directed Research – 43 Credit hours**
 - BSC 7910- Research credits prior to successful completion of written and oral examination
- **Dissertation – 32 Credit hours**
 - BSC 7980- Research credits following successful completion of written and oral examination
- **Seminar – 1 Credit hour**
- Preliminary Doctoral Examinations – successful completion
 - Written portion (in the format of a grant proposal)
 - Oral portion
- Submission and approval of Dissertation Proposal
- Seminar Presentation of Research in BSC6930 upon advancement to candidacy
- Presentation Requirement (2 presentations at national/regional professional meetings)
- Publication Requirement (one 1st author research paper submitted for publication to refereed scientific journal by date of the Doctoral Seminar/Defense)
- Submission of acceptable dissertation
- Presentation of the doctoral seminar (BSC7936) and successful defense

MBS GRADUATE PROGRAM TIME LINES

PhD Program

Projected tracking through program in 5 years*

**based on successful completion of written and oral qualifying exams in the time specified, good academic standing and continuation of research during summer sessions*

Semester 1 (fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSC7910 Directed Research or Laboratory Rotations if required • PCB6920 Advances in Cellular & Molecular Biology • PCB 6525 Molecular Genetics or Other Approved Class • BSC6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (1) • Submit Annual Progress Report by December 15th • Establish PhD Laboratory and Major Advisor
Semester 2 (spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSC7910 Directed Research • BSC6956 Scientific Grant Writing (<i>develop aims of written exam</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students admitted in Spring will take this course in the Spring of their 2nd year. • BSC6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (2) • Form Dissertation Committee (file paperwork)
Summer 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSC7910 Directed Research • Circulate Aims to Committee for Approval <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MUST BE COMPLETE BY 05/31 • Begin Work on Written Qualifying Exam
Semester 3 (fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSC7910 Directed Research • BSC6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (3) • 2nd Structured Course • Submit Written Qualifier by 9am on 1st day of fall classes • Hold Annual Committee Meeting • Submit Annual Progress Report by December 15th
Semester 4 (spring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSC7910 Directed Research • BSC6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology (4) • Begin work on Dissertation proposal
Summer 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSC7910 Directed Research • Continue work on Dissertation Proposal
Semester 5 (fall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSC7910 Directed Research • Submit Dissertation Proposal • Complete Oral Qualifier by October 15th (<i>Advance to Candidacy, file paperwork</i>) • Hold Annual Committee Meeting • Submit Annual Progress Report by December 15th

- Semester 6**
- BSC7980 Doctoral Dissertation
 - **Give Research Seminar in BSC6930**
-

- Summer 3**
- BSC7980 Doctoral Dissertation
-

- Semester 7**
- BSC7980 Doctoral Dissertation
 - *Annual Progress Report by December 15th*
 - *Hold Annual Committee Meeting*
-

- Semester 8**
- BSC7980 Doctoral Dissertation
-

- Summer 4**
- BSC7980 Doctoral Dissertation
-

- Semester 9**
- BSC7980 Doctoral Dissertation
 - *Annual Progress Report by December 15th*
 - *Hold Annual Committee Meeting*
-

- Semester 10**
- BSC7980 Doctoral Dissertation
 - BSC7936 PhD Seminar
 - *Defend thesis and graduate*
-

Departmental Residence Requirements

- ✓ A minimum of four years of graduate work beyond the Bachelor's degree is required. The student must earn at least 90 post-baccalaureate semester credits. At least one academic year of residence must be on the Tampa campus of the University of South Florida.
- ✓ An academic year's residency is defined as a minimum of 9 hours of enrollment in both the fall and spring Semesters.
- ✓ It is expected that students will continue their research during summer semesters. Six hours of enrollment are considered full time during this term.
- ✓ Deviations from these rules must be recommended by the student's supervisory committee and approved by the USF Office of Graduate Studies Dean.

Ph.D. Degree Coursework Requirements

The MBS department does not impose specific requirements on the structured course that students are obligated to take beyond: PCB 6920 Advances in Cell and Molecular Biology, PCB 6956 Scientific Grant Writing, BSC 6930 Lectures in Contemporary Biology and 2 other structured courses. The direction and guidance for choosing the structured graduate courses, and the timing thereof, resides with the Major Professor and dissertation committee. It should be noted from the Ph.D. timeline and benchmarks portion of this document that although the required 2 structured classes are recommended to be taken in an uninterrupted fashion, students can elect to take their 2nd structured course in the spring of their 2nd year (3rd year for spring admits) should their Major Professor deem it appropriate. It is not permitted for students to take any of their structured courses in semesters beyond the completion of their oral examination. The Major Professor will also be responsible for directing the student towards enrollment in any other classes as they see appropriate outside of the core requirements of our graduate program.

Doctoral Advisory/Dissertation Committee

- ✓ The major advisor and at least three additional faculty will constitute a student's advisory committee.
- ✓ Of the remaining 3 additional faculty members, at least 2 must be Graduate Faculty from MBS, and at least one must be from OUTSIDE the MBS department (this outside faculty member can be from Moffitt). Please note that the inclusion of committee members from outside MB will require approval of the Major Professor and MBS Graduate Director.
- ✓ The committee must be established within two semesters of entering the program. The responsibility for forming the committee lies with the student. This time limit requirement is in place to ensure that the advisory committee is formed in sufficient time to administer and supervise the qualifying examinations.

- ✓ The paperwork required to form or change a committee is available from the MBS Graduate Office.
- ✓ The MBS Graduate Director, the College Dean, and the USF Office of Graduate Studies Dean must approve the supervisory committee.
- ✓ All students in the MBS graduate program are required to hold annual committee meetings at a minimum, in the Fall Semester of each year. Students are encouraged to hold as many additional meetings as required and permitted by faculty availability.
- ✓ Students should be aware that their advisory committee exists not only to examine and evaluate them, but to provide help and support during their research careers at USF. Students should make use of each member of their committee as is appropriate and reasonable.

Ph.D. Written and Oral Comprehensive Examinations

Written and oral comprehensive examinations are required for all Ph.D. students in the MBS graduate program. Students are required to submit their written examination by 9am on the first day of fall classes of their second year, and undertake their oral examination by October 15th of their third year. Students should note that they must be enrolled for a minimum of two graduate hours during the semester that each comprehensive examination is taken.

Ph.D. Written Qualifying Examination

All students in the MBS PhD degree program must complete a written qualifying examination. The requirements of this exam, and its evaluation, are provided below.

I. FORMAT OF EXAM

The exam shall be in the format of a scientific grant proposal, and contain the following sections:

- ✓ Abstract [½ page]
- ✓ Specific Aims [2 aims total, 1- page]
- ✓ Background and Significance of topic [2 pages]
- ✓ Experimental Design [Approximately 4 pages]
- ✓ Bibliography (no page limit)

The length of the proposal shall be no more than 7 pages (the abstract and bibliography do not count towards the page limit). The font shall be either Times New Roman 12pt or Arial 11pt, and have margins of 0.5 inch at a minimum. Line spacing of 1, or 1.5, is recommended.

II. TOPIC OF THE EXAM

The topic of the exam shall meet the following guidelines:

- The written proposal *cannot be based in the same **model organism*** that the student will use to carry out their thesis research
- The written proposal *cannot be based on the analysis of **the same gene/protein*** that the student will investigate during their thesis research
- The written proposal *cannot be based on the analysis of **the same pathway*** that the student will investigate during their thesis research

Students should refer all questions regarding overlap of written exam topic and dissertation research to their major professors. In situations where the major professor feels unable to judge issues of potential overlap, they should in turn consult the MBS Graduate Committee.

III. APPROVAL OF EXAM TOPIC

Students will generate an examination topic, and an approved set of specific aims in BSC 6956 Scientific Grant Writing during the Spring Semester of their first year (2nd year from spring admitted students). Please see the course instructor and syllabus of this class for specific requirements and deadlines. It is expected that students will consult extensively with their Major Professor, dissertation advisory committee, as well as the course instructor during the generation of these aims. Those students who do not yet have a defined Major Professor should consult directly with the course instructor or Graduate Director. At the beginning of the summer semester, immediately following completion of BSC 6956 Scientific Grant Writing, students will be required to submit their final specific aims to their Major Professor. The Major Professor will then circulate the specific aims to the student's dissertation committee for a final step of evaluation and approval before the student can begin work on the full written proposal. Approval of these aims must be completed by **31st May**, and will be coordinated by the Major Professor. The PI should indicate formal approval of the aims by emailing the graduate director. Once final approval is achieved, students may begin work on the full written proposal. It should be noted that students are not permitted to deviate from their specific aims once approved by their dissertation committee, without first consulting their major professor and the MBS Graduate Director. In addition, once specific aims are approved, students are **not permitted to receive any outside help whatsoever**, including from their major professor. If students are found to receive such help, this will be considered academic dishonesty, and the MBS Graduate Committee will take appropriate action. Students should submit their final proposals, in electronic format, to the MBS Graduate Director **by 9am on the first day of fall classes** of their second year. Proposals must be submitted as both a word document and pdf.

IV. ASSESSMENT OF THE WRITTEN EXAM

All proposals will be assessed using USF plagiarism software. Each proposal will be made available to the MBS faculty. The MBS Graduate Committee will assign individual proposals to at least a primary and secondary reviewer. A student's Major Professor will not be permitted to serve as reviewer on the proposal but may be consulted by the MBS Graduate Director to nominate other departmental faculty with appropriate experience to fulfill this role. If necessary, a third reviewer may also be utilized. An evaluation rubric will be employed to assign each proposal an initial "score".

Final grading of the proposals will be carried out during a panel discussion of all faculty involved in the review process. The MBS Graduate Director will serve as the mediator of the meeting and will be responsible for distributing the graded exams and faculty comments to the students. Students that do not pass the written exam will be provided one additional chance to complete the exam successfully. The timeline and format of any remediation will be determined during the panel discussion. Those students who do not successfully pass the written qualifying exam after 1 round of remediation may petition to switch to the MS program (thesis or non-thesis), or seek graduate education opportunities outside the MBS department. Admittance to either MS program will be determined by the MBS Graduate Committee based on the student's past performance and academic standing at the time of petition.

Dissertation Proposal

Ph.D. students will be required to produce a dissertation proposal that is approved by their advisory committee. It will form the basis and starting point for their oral examination (see below). It is expected that students will work on the proposal during the spring semester of their 2nd year (3rd for spring admits), and present it to their thesis advisory committee for evaluation and approval during the oral examination in the Fall Semester of their 3rd year. There are no specific requirements for the content of this proposal; however, it must form a cohesive scientific document, with referencing, that outlines the background knowledge, preliminary data and proposed direction of the student's dissertation research. It should be prepared in consultation with the Major Professor and receive unanimous approval from the student's thesis advisory committee.

Ph.D. Oral Qualifying Examination

- ✓ MBS Ph.D. students will complete their oral qualifying examination, conducted by their dissertation advisory committee, by October 15th of their second year (3rd for spring admits).
- ✓ The examination is expected to be conducted after the completion of all formal course work.
- ✓ A request for oral examination must be coordinated through the MBS Graduate Office.
- ✓ The oral examination will comprise of a formal dissertation proposal presentation open to the public, followed by a private period of questioning by the dissertation advisory committee.
- ✓ Students should submit a final version of their dissertation proposal to the MBS graduate office no less than 2 weeks before the proposed oral examination date. The MBS graduate program assistant will then be responsible for distributing the proposal to the student's advisory committee. If the proposal is not received within 2 weeks of this meeting the proposed oral examination will be cancelled and it will be the student's responsibility to reorganize this meeting.
- ✓ The dissertation proposal presentation should be in PowerPoint format and should last 30-45

minutes. Students must give an outline of their work, including relevant background information, preliminary studies and the proposed framework and timeline for their dissertation research.

- ✓ Following the presentation the dissertation advisory committee will question the student on their proposal.
- ✓ This questioning will then lead into a more detailed period of questioning, focusing on the student's general knowledge of their field of study.
- ✓ A unanimous vote of the examining committee is necessary to pass the examination.
- ✓ An evaluation rubric will be utilized to assign a final grade for the examination.
- ✓ Should a student not pass the oral examination they may retake it, one time only, upon the written consent of the Major Professor and the advisory committee.
- ✓ A Ph.D. student who fails the oral examination twice will either have the choice of petitioning to join the MS program (thesis or non-thesis), or pursue graduate education opportunities outside of MBS.
- ✓ Any deadline extensions for taking the oral examination require the approval of the MBS Graduate Director.

Admission to Candidacy

- ✓ Students in the MBS Ph.D. program are expected to qualify for candidacy by the end of their 5th semester (not including summer; 6th semester in the case of spring admits).
- ✓ This requires the doctoral student to have successfully completed their written and oral portions of the qualifying examination, along with all coursework and program specific requirements.
- ✓ Admission to candidacy is only granted once the advisory committee certifies the student has successfully completed these obligations and has demonstrated the qualifications necessary to successfully complete the requirements of the Ph.D. degree.
- ✓ Students must submit an admission to candidacy form, signed by the Major Professor and the Graduate Director, to the MBS Graduate Office.

Departmental Seminar Requirement

Each Ph.D. student admitted to candidacy is expected to give at least 1 seminar in the MBS departmental seminar series. This seminar will be during the Spring Semester of their third year (4th for spring admits), and will be based on the student's approved dissertation proposal. Seminars are

expected to be in PowerPoint format, and should last from 30-45 mins, allowing at least 15 minutes at the conclusion for questions from the audience. Students should coordinate with their Major Professor, the Graduate Director and the MBS departmental seminar committee for the timing of this requirement during the semester preceding the seminar. It should be noted that the departmental seminar CANNOT be used to fulfill 1 of the 2 presentations at regional/national meetings, or final oral defense requirements.

Required Enrollment in Dissertation Research

- ✓ Following admission to candidacy, a graduate student in the MBS Ph.D. program must enroll in BSC 7980 Doctoral Dissertation when engaged in research, data collection, or writing activities relevant to the doctoral dissertation.
- ✓ Advisors should assign the number of credits in this course appropriate to the demands made on faculty, staff, and university facilities; but in no event will the number be less than 2 hours per semester.
- ✓ The total number of earned dissertation credits cannot be less than 32 for graduation.
- ✓ Students not admitted to candidacy are ineligible to enroll in BSC 7980. Prior to admission to candidacy, registration should be in BSC7910 Directed Research.
- ✓ Z GRADES are given for Dissertation Research until the semester the dissertation is approved. The USF Office of Graduate Studies will give a grade of S during the semester of approval; it will only appear on the transcript for this semester.

Presentation & Publication Requirements

Students in the MBS Ph.D. program are required to give two presentations of their research, excluding the doctoral seminar and defense, and any departmental seminar the student is obligated to give as part of the program requirements. Students should meet this requirement via poster and/or oral presentations based on their dissertation research at national/regional professional meetings. On campus presentations will not count towards this requirement. The graduate committee must approve the presentations. Students in the MBS Ph.D. program are also required to have at least one 1st author manuscript submitted for publication to a peer-reviewed scientific journal by the date of the Doctoral Seminar and Defense. The paper must be based on the dissertation research. The graduate committee must approve the journal to which the paper is submitted.

MBS Policy for Doctoral Seminar and Defense

- ✓ Be sure to consult the ETD Process Checklist before the semester you anticipate for graduation. <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/students/electronic-thesis-dissertation/etd-process-checklist/dissertation.aspx>
- ✓ All doctoral students must be enrolled in 1 hour of BSC 7936 Ph.D. Seminar during their final semester, in addition to at least 2 hours of BSC 7980 Doctoral Dissertation.
- ✓ The defense/seminar is open to the public and must be announced two weeks prior to the presentation.
- ✓ The dissertation defense examination should be held at least two weeks before the USF deadline to submit completed dissertations to ProQuest.
- ✓ Students are required to submit to the MBS Graduate Office a request for the final oral defense of the Ph.D. degree at least four weeks before the proposed seminar date.
- ✓ The MBS Graduate Director, the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and each of the student's committee members must sign the request for oral defense form. This form should contain the date, time, title of the proposed defense seminar and the name of the Chair of defense.
- ✓ Students should ensure that the USF Office of Graduate Studies holds on record their most recent dissertation advisory committee form. Any discrepancies in the makeup of the committee may prove cause for delay of the defense.
- ✓ Changes to the Ph.D. committee must be completed at least 6 weeks BEFORE the Ph.D. final dissertation examination, and all committee members must agree to the change.
- ✓ Changes to a graduate committee will not be approved to facilitate graduation.
- ✓ Students wishing to graduate during the summer must make arrangements with their graduate committee by the end of the Spring Semester.
- ✓ A minimum of three members, including the Major Professor is required to proceed with the defense.
- ✓ If a member cannot attend in person, participation is permissible via speakerphone or video conference.
- ✓ The final Ph.D. Oral Examination is the culmination of the student's graduate education and is a significant formal event.
- ✓ This examination will be conducted by the student's advisory committee, but shall be chaired by a senior and distinguished scholar, appointed by the USF Office of Graduate Studies Dean.
- ✓ The chair may not be a member of the student's advisory committee or any member of the MB

faculty.

- ✓ The defense should demonstrate mastery of the student's general field of research, as well as a grasp of the fundamental principles of biology, and how they apply to the student's dissertation research.
- ✓ The defense/seminar should comprise of a concise summary of the research completed to satisfy the requirements for the Ph.D. degree.
- ✓ Upon completion of the defense/seminar, the public will be invited to ask questions.
- ✓ After completion of public questioning the student's graduate advisory committee will continue questioning the student in private.
- ✓ Each student is expected to defend his/her research to the unanimous satisfaction of each member of the dissertation advisory committee.
- ✓ Following a successful oral defense, the Major Professor should bring the original successful defense form to the MBS Graduate Director for approval and processing. This form will must bear the original signatures of each member of the dissertation advisory committee.

Chair of the Ph.D. Defense Examination Committee

- ✓ The Dissertation Defense shall be presided over by an external dissertation committee member from outside the Department, School, or equivalent, hosting the doctoral program, but may be within the academic discipline.
- ✓ Or, a non - committee member (a.k.a. Outside Chair). If the Chair is from another institution, this individual must be approved for Affiliate Graduate Faculty status. As such the MBS Graduate Office will require a copy of the outside Chair's CV at least 10 weeks before the proposed seminar date.
- ✓ The Doctoral Dissertation Defense Chair's role encompasses overseeing the proceedings as well as serving as the student's advocate, by ensuring fairness of the examination process.
- ✓ Faculty holding joint, courtesy, or adjunct appointments in the degree - granting academic unit (i.e. Department or equivalent) cannot serve as the Defense Chair.