

Valdosta State University

Biology Masters of Science with a Major in Biology Program

Graduate Student Guide Book

Fall 2007

GENERAL GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS:

(Valdosta State University Graduate Bulletin)

GRADUATE STUDENT CLASSIFICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

Valdosta State University offers several admission classifications to graduate students. Students who have met all requirements will be admitted as “regular.” Criteria and limitations for this and all other categories are shown below. Some colleges and departments have criteria that exceed the minimums shown below. Please refer to individual college and department listings to determine specific standards.

Master’s Degree Programs

1. Regular Admission - To be considered for admission as a “regular” graduate student the applicant must have received a bachelor’s degree from an accredited or approved college or university with an undergraduate major in, or prerequisites for, the planned graduate field of study, where applicable. The applicant must have a cumulative undergraduate grade-point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, calculated on all work attempted in which letter grades were awarded. Verification in the form of an official transcript is required. All master’s degree programs require an acceptable GRE, GMAT, or MAT score. In addition, some programs have additional admission criteria; please refer to the departmental listings for all these specific requirements.

2. Irregular - Applicants who have not submitted all application documents may some times be admitted as “irregular.” Students in this category will not be admitted to a degree program until they have met all admission requirements. Students may not enroll in more than 9 hours of coursework while in irregular status. Students admitted as irregular are not eligible for financial aid or graduate assistantships.

3. Probationary Admission — Applicants failing to meet one or more of the requirements for regular admission may be considered for probationary admission under conditions specified at the time of admission by the appropriate department and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Students admitted as probationary are eligible for financial aid and assistantships. Students admitted on a probationary basis remain in this category until at least 9 semester hours of graduate credit are satisfactorily completed. The grade-point average for these 9 semester hours must be 3.0 or higher, unless different conditions were specified at the time of admission. After completion of the probationary period, students may be reclassified as “regular” students, with the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School and the department concerned. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the Graduate School to request reclassification.

4. Transient - Graduate students currently enrolled in good standing at another college or university may register at Valdosta State University.

5. Non-Degree - Students who hold an undergraduate degree and wish to take graduate or undergraduate courses for add-on certification or personal enrichment without

pursuing an advanced degree may be admitted as “non-degree.” Students who maintain a cumulative average of “B” or higher in graduate courses taken may later be granted entry to a degree program upon proper application to the Graduate School. A maximum of 9 semester hours may be considered by the appropriate department involved for transfer into a degree-granting program. Students admitted as non-degree are not eligible for financial aid or graduate assistantships.

GRADUATE SCHOOL ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

NOTE: Graduate students must maintain a minimum graduate grade point average of 2.5 to be eligible for financial aid.

1. Academic GPA Requirements: For graduation, the cumulative graduate grade-point average must be **3.0** or higher on a 4.0 scale. Throughout their program, students’ performance must be **acceptable** on a continuing basis. Students must at all times maintain an overall grade-point average of not less than 2.5. No grade below “C” will be credited toward a graduate degree. Any student acquiring any combination of two grades “D,” F,” “WF,” or “U” will be dismissed from the Graduate School. Additional requirements have been established for the Master of Business Administration program; the Master of Science programs with majors in Criminal Justice , Marriage and Family Therapy, and Sociology; the Master of Public Administration program. Please refer to the program descriptions in this Catalog.

2. Calculation of GPA: All grades received for graduate courses taken at Valdosta State University, after admission to the Graduate School, will be used to calculate the graduate cumulative grade-point average. Courses may be retaken, if desired or required, but all graduate grades received will affect this average. Cumulative grade-point averages are calculated at the close of every semester in which course work is taken. This calculation appears on the permanent record of each student. Matters requiring interpretation of a graduate record should normally be referred to the student’s advisor or the Graduate School. Undergraduate grades will not be calculated as part of the graduate student’s semester or cumulative average.

3. Course Load: The normal full load for a graduate student is 9-15 hours of graduate-level work per semester. Graduate assistants must register for a minimum of 6 hours per semester. The normal full load for a student with a graduate assistantship is 9 semester hours at the graduate level; however, in special circumstances, with the approval of the major professor and the department head, a graduate assistant may be permitted to take 12 hours. Graduate students may earn no more than 6 hours credit in Directed Study and/or Independent Study courses to meet the requirements of a degree-granting program.

4. Scholarly Conduct: VSU expects all students to meet high standards of academic conduct, and this expectation is particularly true of graduate students. Graduate students have been through the experience of completing undergraduate degree programs, and they should be familiar with the expected standards of conduct within Academe. Some of

the key principles relating to these standards are found in the Thesis and Dissertation Guide at <<http://www.valdosta.edu/gradschool>>.

BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS:

1. **Major Advisor and Thesis Committee:** Prior to the end of the first semester in the program, students, in consultation with their major advisor, will form a thesis advisory committee to oversee and direct progress towards completion of the degree requirements. Thesis committees will consist of graduate faculty members willing to serve in that capacity and include the major professor and at least two other consenting faculty members with relevant interests and expertise. Additional committee members, from within or without the department, may be added as necessary and agreed upon by the student in consultation with his or her committee. The student is required to submit a Committee Composition Form, signed by the student and all Committee members, to the Graduate Program Coordinator for inclusion into the student's record two weeks prior to the end of their first semester of enrollment.

2. **Additional Graduate School Requirements for the Thesis Committee** (see page 7 of the Graduate School Thesis Guide) :

“A thesis committee must have a *minimum of three members*, with the major professor and at least one additional professor drawn from the department in which the student is majoring. One member of the committee *must be from a department outside* the student's area of specialization. All members of the committee must be members of the VSU graduate faculty or be approved by exception by the dean of the Graduate School.

All of the committee members must be members of the VSU graduate faculty, or have been approved by exception by the dean of the Graduate School. One member must be a member of the faculty in the student's departmental major; this person may serve as the chair of the committee
Submit Form to the Graduate School

Once you have determined the composition of your committee and the individual members have agreed to serve on the committee, you must obtain their signatures on the Appointment of Committee form and submit that form to the Graduate School, which retains the right of final approval of your committee. There are different forms for master's theses and doctoral dissertation committees. *A copy of the thesis committee form is contained in Appendix D.* “

3. **Programs of Study:** Students will develop individual programs of study in consultation with their committees. Programs of study will consist of specific course work directly relevant to student interests and needs and will include a timeline for completion of all work related to the degree. Students will also be required to take a diagnostic exam in biology (advanced GRE or The Major Fields Test) during their first semester in the program. Results of the exam will be used by the thesis committee, in consultation with the student, for developing an appropriate program of required courses for the degree. A copy of the completed program of study form must be approved by signature by the thesis committee and submitted to the Biology Graduate Coordinator for inclusion into the student's record two weeks before the end of the student's first semester in the program.

4. **Curriculum Requirements:** All graduate programs of study will consist of 36 semester hours. Of these 36 semester hours 15 hours must be in courses numbered 7000 or above including two hours of Graduate Seminar (BIOL 7900), two hours of Introduction to Research (BIOL 7000) and six hours of Thesis credit (BIOL 8999), to earn the Master of Science degree with a major in biology. Students must take the graduate seminar twice for a grade and attend seminar every semester. Students may take up to six hours of approved course work outside of biology that the thesis committee deems acceptable and supportive of the program of study (e.g., math, geology, chemistry, physics, education, etc.). Students working in educational fields may use the approved six credit hours outside the major to take science education coursework that will enhance the individual's ability to teach.

A typical program of study will include:

BIOL 7000 Introduction to Research	2 hours
BIOL 7900 Graduate Seminar	2 hours
Courses appropriate to the program of study, numbered 7000 or above	5 hours
Courses appropriate to the program of study numbered 5000 or above	15 hours
Electives numbered 5000 or above.	6 hours
BIOL 8999 Thesis	<u>6 hours</u>
Total	36 hours

5. **Thesis Proposal:** During their first semester, students must identify an appropriate research project in consultation with their major advisor and thesis committee members and submit a formal proposal to their committee for approval by signature. Proposals should include an introduction and background to the project, a discussion of the proposed research methods and a summary of the importance of the project. Approved proposals will then be submitted to the department graduate coordinator for inclusion into the student's records two weeks prior to the end of the student's first semester in the program.

6. **Thesis Committee Meetings:** Student's are required to hold a formal meeting with their thesis committee once each semester during their enrollment in the program. These

meetings should revolve around the student's progress in coursework, research and thesis to date and provide an opportunity for both the student and thesis committee to constructively address problems and developments in the student's program. The committee will then evaluate the student's performance and progress at the conclusion of the meeting. The major professor will then write a summary evaluation letter of the student's progress and submit copies to the student, committee members and the Graduate Program Coordinator for inclusion into the student's record prior to the last day of the semester.

7. Assistantship Eligibility: All graduate students must maintain a status of "In Good Standing" in both the Graduate School and the Biology department in order to remain in the program and to be eligible for stipend support. "Good standing" is interpreted to mean that a student is enrolled under regular admission status full time, is currently maintaining an acceptable GPA of 3.0, has completed all scheduled Graduate and Departmental requirements to date, and has demonstrated satisfactory performance and progress towards completion of the degree. Determination of "Good Standing" status will be made by the Graduate Program Committee based on a review of the student's records, placing most emphasis on the student's thesis committee evaluation letter at the end of each semester. A student's standing will be documented by a letter written by the program coordinator and placed in the student's record.

8. Assistantship Availability: Students are eligible for a maximum of 4 semesters of stipend support during their degree program. Student teaching stipends are limited in number and no student is guaranteed stipend support. In cases where the number of stipends is limited assistantships will be awarded on a competitive basis depending on student progress and achievement.

PROGRAM COMPLETION AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Competency Exams: Students will be required to pass a competency exam covering general subject areas, the program of study course work, as well as specific areas related to the thesis topic prior to their completion of the last semester during which they are enrolled in formal program of study] Exams may consist of written and oral questions to be developed and administered by the thesis committee members. Students must pass the competency exam, as determined by the examining thesis committee, to achieve candidate status for the degree and remain in the program. Students not successfully passing the competency exam may, at the thesis committee's discretion, be re-examined after completion of appropriate remedial work as determined by the thesis committee. Students failing to pass competency exams and denied a re-examination by the thesis committee will be dismissed from the program.

2. Application for Graduation: Students must apply for graduation one semester in advance. Students planning to attend graduation should make arrangements with the VSU Bookstore for purchase of cap, gown, and hood. The Registrar's Office should be consulted early in the program (at least one semester before graduation) for procedures and deadlines. A graduation fee must be paid at the Bursary prior to final evaluation. This

fee is valid for one year beyond the initial term selected for completing degree requirements. A 3.0 cumulative GPA on all graduate courses completed at VSU after acceptance to the Graduate School is required for graduation. All financial obligations to the University must be cleared before an official diploma will be issued.

3. **Thesis:** Students will be required to design, conduct, and write a formal research thesis in their chosen area of study in order to earn the degree. Completed thesis research will be formally presented and defended before the thesis committee, general faculty, and student body in an open seminar. Candidates must also defend the thesis research and the formal thesis by oral exam before their thesis committee. Successful completion of the thesis and defense will require signatures of approval by the student's major advisor and all members of the thesis committee. Final approval and graduation status of the candidate will require the thesis to conform to the Graduate School format standards and to be formally accepted for publication by Valdosta State University's Graduate School. Thesis guidelines are found in the *Thesis and Dissertation Guide* at <<http://www.valdosta.edu/gradschool>>.

4. **Graduate School Requirements for the Defense** (see page 9 of the Graduate School Thesis Guide):

“Your committee chair will inform you when the committee members consider your project ready for a defense. The defense should *be scheduled at least two weeks prior to midterm of the semester in which you expect to graduate. You must notify the Graduate School of the date, location, and time of your defense at least two weeks in advance.* Notification must include your name, your degree program, the title of your project, and a short description of the project. You may submit a copy of your abstract for this purpose. The defense is usually an oral discussion/presentation of your project and is open to the academic community and invited guests.”