

## GRADUATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As outlined in the “**BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**” (<http://ase.tufts.edu/biology/graduate/GradGuidelines.pdf>) **MS and PhD thesis candidates are required to conduct two committee meetings each year.** The committee should receive a brief update outlining your progress three to four working days before each semi-annual meeting. The reports should be brief, not exceeding 2 pages, excluding figures and tables. Figures can be simple and hand-drawn, but should be clear and easily interpreted and must include complete figure legends. The report should contain the specific aims of the research (for rotations, the limited aim of that period), approaches used, results obtained, and a brief discussion. The report should conclude with research plans for the next six months. Students should bring their lab notebooks containing the original data to the scheduled meetings. If the student completed a rotation, the head of the lab in which the rotation was done should send a brief evaluation to the committee. These reports will be kept in the student's folder.

During your committee meeting the chair of each student's committee will record the meeting minutes. Items such as course needs, rotations completed or in progress, courses taken and those to be taken, research progress, exam scheduling, and work as a teaching assistant should be discussed.

Before the minutes of the meeting are put into the student's folder, they should be circulated to all committee members for additions and/or corrections. The committee should give a final copy of the minutes to the student. In addition to committee minutes, a student's folder should also have a copy of the Graduate Progress Form, to be kept up to date by the student's advisor. This form is used for both Ph.D. and Research Masters and can be found electronically on the graduate students section of the department's website (<http://ase.tufts.edu/biology/graduate/current.asp>) or in hardcopy in the department office (Dana120). Students have the right to add comments to their files in response to the minutes of committee meetings.

**EACH SEMESTER, THE CHAIR OF THE STUDENT'S COMMITTEE SHOULD GIVE A COPY OF THE MEETING NOTES AND THE COMMITTEE FORM (SIGNED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE THAT ATTENDED THE MEETING) TO:**

- 1) THE STUDENT,**
- 2) THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE, AND**
- 3) THE STUDENT'S GRADUATE FOLDER (via the Staff Assistant Eileen Magnant - who after recording the date of the meeting will place it in the student's folder)**

### HOW LONG SHOULD MY COMMITTEE MEETING BE SCHEDULED FOR?

The answer to this question might vary but here are some general guidelines -

1. The first time you meet with your thesis committee – you will need to provide background and rationale for your thesis project. The expertise of your committee members will often be quite diverse, and you need to make sure everyone understands your project. This first meeting might be a little longer than subsequent meetings – discuss with your thesis advisor what topics should be covered in your meeting. Typically 60 minutes is sufficient for the first meeting.

## AFTER THE FIRST COMMITTEE MEETING IS COMPLETED...

2. For most students, the meeting held in the fall semester be fairly short (30-60 minutes) – and should use a more informal format (chalk talk style – instead of a formal PowerPoint presentation). Remember - you are updating your committee on what you have accomplished since your last meeting (6 months of work) – you are not defending your thesis. Use this time wisely – you can discuss any problems, obstacles, alternative approaches, manuscripts and conferences. Timelines should also be discussed to make sure everyone is on the same page.

3. The meeting in the spring semester should be held within two weeks of the date of the graduate student's annual department seminar. Since committee members should make every effort to attend the seminars of the students they are serving – a formal PowerPoint presentation given during the spring meeting would be redundant. Instead during your meeting (30-60 minutes), provide an update of your research progress to your committee. Again, just as in the fall meeting - use this time wisely – you can discuss any problems, obstacles, alternative approaches, manuscripts and conferences. Again, timelines should also be discussed to make sure everyone is on the same page.

If anyone has any questions – or suggestions regarding the graduate program – please do not hesitate to come see me.

~ Kelly McLaughlin

## HOW TO SCHEDULE A COMMITTEE MEETING

J. Pechenik has kindly provided a few suggestions to help you schedule your committee meeting. Getting a bunch of faculty to all commit to arrive at the same time and place – can be difficult – but not impossible (even though at times it can feel like ‘herding cats’). Here are some tips from Jan that might facilitate the process.

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### How to Schedule a Committee Meeting (without driving anyone crazy)

Committee meetings are usually scheduled for late in the semester, but the earlier you start, the better your chances of getting the date you want, and the better your chances of having all committee members present. Faculty schedules start filling up before the semester even starts, so impress the [heck] out of us and get your meeting scheduled in the first few weeks of the semester.

Your fall meeting can occur at any time during the semester. You should schedule your spring meeting sometime in the week or two after you give your departmental seminar.

Take a standard block schedule, write your name at the top, and cross off times that are not good for you. Then, at the top of one sheet, write the following: For the Week of \_\_\_\_\_. Make copies of this sheet for each committee member.

At the top of each of the 3 sheets that you now have before you, write in the dates for the starts of 3 successive weeks.

Then copy each sheet for each of your committee members and send the block schedules out with a brief cover letter explaining that you are trying to set up your next committee meeting.

Ask faculty members to cross out any times that will not work for them. (If you don’t specify this, some people will indicate times that will work, some people will indicate times that won’t work!).

Ask faculty members to get the sheets back to you by a certain date (give them about a week to do their homework).

**Once you find a day and time that works for everyone, send out a notice to your committee immediately to lock in the date and time. Make sure you also schedule a ROOM for your meeting (our conference room, B207 fills up quickly during the semester, but there is also the ‘lunch room’ or rooms that can be booked online).**

Another method on how to schedule the meetings is to use a website such as: “Doodle” (<http://www.doodle.ch/main.html>) - this methods will allow you to create an online meeting planner to coordinate schedules for committee meetings. Make sure you have many days listed (across several different weeks and times).

About a week before the meeting, send a polite reminder to all committee members, reminding them of the date, place, and time of the meeting. With this reminder give your committee members a 1-2 page summary of your progress to date. Start by reminding them of the specific questions that you are investigating. Indicate your plans for future experiments. Note any questions or issues that you would like to discuss at the meeting.