GRADUATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

As outlined in the “BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS” (http://ase.tufts.edu/biology/graduate/documents/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.

After your committee meeting the chair of each student's committee will fill out the Graduate Student Progress Form (http://ase.tufts.edu/biology/graduate/documents/GradProgressReport.pdf). Items such as courses taken and those to be taken, research progress, goals for the next 6 months, exam scheduling, and work as a teaching assistant should be discussed. Before the Graduate Student Progress Form is put into the student's folder, it should be circulated to all committee members for additions and/or corrections. The committee should give a final copy to the student and the Graduate Program Coordinator for the student’s file. 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 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 Graduate Program Coordinator- who after recording the date of the meeting will place it in the student’s folder)

**EACH YEAR, ANY NIH FUNDED STUDENT MUST SEND A COPY OF THE IDP FORM TO:**

1) THEIR THESIS COMMITTEE
2) THE DEAN OF A&S
3) THE STUDENT’S GRADUATE FOLDER (via the Graduate Program Coordinator)

Here are some general committee meeting guidelines –

1. **In your first year**, you will be assigned an entrance committee. You should meet with this committee before registration each semester, to go over your plan for courses and rotations. A progress report should be filled out and filed at the second and third meetings (the first meeting normally occurs upon arrival at Tufts, and no report is needed).

2. **In your second year**, once you have finalized who your research advisor will be and have an idea of your potential thesis project, you should put together a thesis committee, consisting of 3 members of the Biology department, including your advisor. The thesis committee may be the same or different from your entrance committee, should include expertise in the area of your
proposed project, and should include and be formed in consultation with your research advisor. If you want to replace members of your entrance committee this is fine – this was a provisional committee and not meant to dictate the makeup of your thesis committee. For PhD students, this committee will be your “PhD Qualifying Exam committee”. The first time you meet with your thesis committee, which should be in the fall of your second year – you will need to provide background and rationale for your proposed thesis project. Typically 60 minutes is sufficient for the first meeting.

3. For PhD students, after you pass your qualifying exam, you should form a Dissertation Committee. Usually this will be the same as your qualifying exam committee, but it is also possible to make changes at this time, for example, if your project has changed so that you need different expertise, or a new faculty member is available that would provide needed expertise. It is also possible to add an extra committee member at this stage (beyond the 3 from the Biology department) if it would be helpful (for example, someone with expertise at the Tufts Sackler School, Vet or Nutrition school, Engineering, etc.). Before your defense, it is required to add a fourth member from outside the university (see Grad Guidelines).

4. General Guidelines for committee meetings: Two committee meetings per year should be held. One of the committee meetings per year should be held after (within two weeks) of your 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 this meeting would be redundant. Instead use a more informal format (chalk talk style). During your meeting (30-60 minutes), provide an update of your research progress since your last meeting (6 months of work) to your committee. 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. The second meeting of the year can be more formal with a PowerPoint presentation and discussion; plan for ~60 minutes.

5. For NIH funded graduate students, you are additionally required to fill out and submit the Tufts A&S IDP (Individual Development Plan) Progress Report: [A&S Annual IDP Progress Report Form]. The “Initial IDP Plan” must be filled out before your first committee meeting when you are NIH funded, and sent to your committee. It should be reviewed at your committee meeting, and any changes can be made at this time. After the committee meeting, a copy of the Initial IDP Plan must be sent to your advisor and to the Dean of A&S. After this, the IDP form should be discussed once a year at one of your committee meetings and progress evaluated, recorded on the form, and sent with all notes to your advisor and the Dean of A&S as above. See the [Graduate Student Self-Assessment and IDP Process] document for more details and instructions about how to submit your IDP form.

6. For ALL graduate students, you are encouraged to fill out the [Graduate Student Self Assessment Worksheet] and review it once a year. This is a self-evaluation tool provided to help prepare scholars and students to complete the Individual Development Plan. This form is for the graduate students or postdoctoral scholars use only. It will not be archived and need not be shared with faculty advisors, mentors, or principal investigators.

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

Catherine Freudenreich
Biology Graduate Program Director
HOW TO SCHEDULE A 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 Pechenik that might facilitate the process.

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.

You should schedule one of your meetings sometime in the week or two after you give your departmental seminar.

Doodle Poll method: You can use a website such as: “Doodle” (http://www.doodle.ch/main.html) - to create an online meeting planner to coordinate schedules for committee meetings. To avoid having to create a huge poll, it is a good idea to first narrow it down to a few possible days that all members are in town and have some open time in their schedules by either a preliminary poll, email, or in person conversations. Then create a poll listing possible times during those days.

Paper method (courtesy of J.P.): Take a Tufts block schedule (available online), 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 rooms, Robinson 357 and rm 4747 and 4745 at 200 BA, fill up quickly during the semester. They may be reserved through the online system by one of the Biology department staff members. There is also the 2nd floor conference room at 200 Boston Ave, or rooms that can be booked online.

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. If appropriate, include your IDP plan (initial or with progress notes).