

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN WILDLIFE BIOLOGY  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA  
DEGREE STANDARDS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CURRENT GRADUATE  
STUDENTS  
(Approved January 17, 2024 by WBIO faculty)**

## **I. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM**

The Wildlife Biology Program (WBIO) at The University of Montana is a joint program of the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation (FCFC), the Division of Biological Sciences (DBS), and the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. This interdisciplinary structure provides broad exposure to diverse viewpoints and approaches. The Program is administered within the Franke College of Forestry and Conservation and has a Director (from either DBS or FCFC) who reports to the Dean of FCFC. Graduate degrees offered through WBIO include the Master of Science in Wildlife Biology (Thesis and Professional Paper Options) and the Doctor of Philosophy in Fish and Wildlife Biology. The University of Montana Graduate School ultimately awards and oversees administration of all aspects of graduate degrees at the University of Montana.

The WBIO graduate program emphasizes the theoretical foundations, scientific research techniques, and biological understanding necessary for graduates to pursue careers in basic or applied research and employment as wildlife biologists, managers, administrators, and academicians. Types of research questions addressed in WBIO graduate programs include theoretical and applied aspects of specific species and species groups, biological systems, and socio-political systems as they relate to conservation and management of wildlife.

## **II. GOALS OF DEGREE STANDARDS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The goals of these graduate degree standards, policies and procedures are to provide all WBIO program faculty and graduate students a clear set of guidelines and administrative regulations required to graduate on time in any of our degree programs. The primary guiding principle of these degree standards is to maximize student success. Administrative regulations are grounded in academic standards of the University of Montana, the UM Graduate School, and the faculty of the WBIO program. Guidelines have been developed to ensure timely graduation, enhance professional training of graduate students, train graduate students to work collaboratively with wildlife agencies, and to provide a clear process for graduate student success. These guidelines are also meant to enable flexibility as required for each individual student, protect student rights, and provide clear guidance for academic performance in a graduate program. Guidelines are just that, guides, and there are many ways guidelines can be made flexible to meet individual student needs during their degree. But they are also guideposts to ensure timely graduation. Any amendments to recommended timelines in these guidelines need to be approved by the graduate student's advisory committee and may affect anticipated graduation timelines.

## **III. ADVISORS AND COMMITTEES**

The graduate advisor-student relationship is central to graduate student success and implementation of these guidelines. An effective, close and mutually respectful working relationship is critical to a successful graduate program. The advisor plays a central role in development of the students research direction. The advisor is expected to approve all written and oral materials (e.g., proposal, individual chapters, draft thesis/dissertations) *before* they are circulated to the rest of the committee. The advisor is also responsible for helping the student choose committee members.

Graduate committee members are also critical to the success of a graduate student, and their main role is to serve the best interests of the graduate student. Committee members provide academic and professional advice, and review and approve drafts of thesis products (written, oral) for inclusion in the final thesis/dissertation. The UM Graduate school policy [G1.000](#) for qualifications for committee members apply to all WBIO graduate students. Prospective committee members need to possess the equivalent terminal degree (MS, PhD) for the committee (e.g., MS or higher for MS degree; PhD or higher for PhD degree).

**A. M.S. Degrees (Thesis and Professional Paper options).** The M.S. Graduate Committee consists of a minimum of 3 WBIO faculty members (the advisor as chair and 2 others), including WBIO faculty representatives from both FCFC and DBS. Faculty of the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit may serve as either DBS or FCFC Faculty. A majority of committee members will be UM Wildlife Biology faculty members, including WBIO Faculty Affiliates or Adjunct faculty.

The committee must be formed and meet by the end of the *first semester* in residence. After discussion with the advisor about appropriate committee members, the student is responsible for meeting with prospective committee members and obtaining verbal commitment to serve. It is often useful for students to have a research statement to share with prospective committee members. Once the committee is formed, the advisor will e-mail a list of the committee members to the WBIO graduate program coordinator and WBIO director for review and reporting to the Graduate School. Committee composition may change, but the director of Wildlife Biology, WBIO graduate coordinator and ultimately the Graduate School must be notified of, and approve, any such changes.

Responsibilities of the M.S. Graduate Committee are:

1. Evaluate the schedule of coursework and the first semester research statement.
2. Evaluate the proposal for thesis or professional paper;
3. Ensure that all Graduate School requirements are satisfied;
4. Provide direction, supervision, and support for the candidate;
5. Evaluate the Master's thesis or professional paper and attend related seminars; and
6. Evaluate the candidate's performance on the defense.

**B. Ph.D. Degree.** The Ph.D. Dissertation Committee consists of the major professor as chair and a minimum of 4 other voting (i.e., not including ex-officio) members. A majority of committee members are required to be UM Wildlife Biology faculty, with at least 1 faculty member from DBS and 1 faculty member from FCFC. Faculty of the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit may serve as either DBS or FCFC Faculty in this context.

The Dissertation Committee shall be formed and meet in the student's first committee meeting by the end of the *first semester* in residence to approve course work and the research statement. After discussion with the advisor about appropriate committee members, the student is responsible for meeting with prospective committee members and obtaining verbal commitment to serve. It is often useful for students to have a research statement to share with prospective committee members. Once the committee is formed, the advisor will e-mail a list of the committee members to the WBIO graduate program coordinator and WBIO director for review and reporting to the Graduate School. Committee composition may change, but the director of Wildlife Biology, WBIO graduate coordinator and ultimately the graduate school must be notified of, and approve, any such changes. Responsibilities of the Ph.D. committee are the same as for the M.S. committee (see Section III.A above), with the additional requirement of conducting the written and oral comprehensive exam (see s.XI. comprehensive examination guidelines).

#### IV. ACADEMIC STANDARDS

It is the responsibility of all graduate students to know and follow the University of Montana [academic policies and procedures](#), including the UM [student conduct code](#), University of Montana graduate school [academic policies](#), and these WBIO degree standards. Graduate students must maintain *good academic standing* throughout their degree. *Good academic standing* is defined by meeting the minimums established by the graduate school ([policy B1.000](#)), and the requirements and timelines outlined in these WBIO graduate degree standards. Graduate School policy [B2.000](#) stipulates that to maintain good academic standing, all graduate students shall maintain a B average in courses taken for graduate credit at the University of Montana, maintaining a cumulative grade point average  $\geq 3.0$ . Graduate students also are required to comply with the UM Graduate School policies on Plagiarism ([policy B.600](#)) and the [UM Student Conduct Code \(policy B.700\)](#) to be maintained in good academic standing. Failure to maintain good academic standing will result in academic probation (see s.VII below).

Students also are required to be continuously registered (Graduate School policy [B3.000](#)) and register for  $\geq 3$  credits each semester during the academic year to maintain good academic standing. Students who do not register for  $\geq 3$  credits may be automatically suspended by the graduate school. Re-admission is allowed through petition only. Some scholarships may require registration for 6-12 credits and are the responsibility of the student to understand. Students on a Teaching Assistantship (TA) or Research Assistantship are also generally required to register for a minimum of 6 credits. Upon completion of course requirements, degree candidates need to maintain continuous registration, and register for  $\geq 3$  credits each fall/spring semester until graduation. Exceptions to the continuous registration policy are provided below in s.V: Leaves of Absence. All graduate students are expected to enroll in WBIO 594, Graduate Seminar for at least 2 semesters, and are strongly encouraged to enroll and attend during every semester in residence (see s.VI-A).

#### V. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Continuous enrollment is required to maintain good academic standing (see s.IV), which is administered by the Graduate School. However, the WBIO program recognizes that flexibility may be required for the successful completion of a graduate degree program. For any proposed leave of absence, graduate students should discuss their leave of absence with their advisor and graduate committee, revise their timelines and coursework plan, and submit these revisions to their graduate file and make note on subsequent graduate evaluations forms. The graduate school provides a non-exclusive list of examples for which leave of absences may be granted ([policy B.3.100](#)):

- 1) International or National assignment with an NGO, Fulbright, Peace Corps, etc. as a program requirement (program registration documentation)
- 2) Parental leave or major illness (documented by physician, psychologist, etc.)
- 3) Extended family-leave due to illness (documented by physician, psychologist, etc.)
- 4) Significant off-campus field assignment (documented by department chair and dean).
- 5) Post-defense periods in which the student is only revising the thesis, dissertation, or professional paper (no registration is required for one semester); after one semester, one-credit registration is required for one semester; beyond one semester, three-credits continuous registration is required.

The University of Montana also formally recognizes the need for leave of absence for Cultural and Ceremonial purposes. See the UM Diversity, Equity and Inclusion [Cultural Leave Policy](#) for details.

The WBIO graduate student mental health and well-being working group also maintains a list of mental health resources for students that need support associated with any leave requests – or any other reasons – on our program website here: [WBIO Mental Health Resources](#). These resources include but are not limited to Curry Health Center Counseling Services, Curry Counseling Urgent Care, Student Advocacy Resource Center (SARC), UM Clinical Psychology Department, Curry Wellness, and suggestions for off-campus mental health and counseling resources. We recognize that student mental health is critical to student success and maintaining good academic progress in their degree programs.

All leaves of absence need to be approved by the graduate advisor and committee, as well as the WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator, and the Dean of the graduate school. Applications for leave need to be submitted to WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator before the first day of classes for which an exception is requested. For more details on Leaves of Absence see graduate policy [B.3.100](#).

The WBIO program also recognize that continuous registration may be required in some of these aforementioned leave situations, for example, to maintain scholarships, health care coverage, or international VISA's, for which a leave of absence may jeopardize. In these instances, students may also apply for a maximum of 1 semester of 1-credit enrollment. Graduate students apply using a petition submitted to the WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator using this form available [here](#).

## VI. TIME LIMITS

Maximum time limits allowed for completion of degrees are set by the Graduate School at the end of their fifth (5) year for M.S. ([Policy C3.00](#)) and seventh (7) years for Ph.D. programs ([Policy D2.300](#)). For example, a Dissertation student in their 14th continuous semester (only including Autumn and Spring semesters) will be notified they are in their last semester to complete before being suspended by the Graduate School. Extensions to these maximum time limits require approval of an extension by the graduate advisor, committee, and Dean of the school. Graduate School Students may petition for a one-time extension of up to 1-year. Extensions will be approved only if unusual circumstances have delayed progress toward the degree, and only if the student, advisor, and committee have agreed (in writing) to a clearly documented schedule for completing all degree requirements. Requests for extensions should be approved by the advisor and committee and submitted to the WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator prior to the end of the student's time-limit. No further extensions are allowed and if the student does not finish, they will be suspended from the program by the Graduate School (see s.VII below). Such students can re-apply to the Wildlife Biology Program through the Graduate School but may be faced with new degree requirements. Funding in the program (including Teaching or Research Assistantships) is not guaranteed beyond maximum time limits.

We recognize that family, medical, health and parental leave may all interrupt progress in a graduate program and are common reasons for requests of extensions to maximum time limits. We recommend, however, that graduate students work with their advisors and committees well before approaching the maximum time limit and consider other avenues to extend the duration of study such as leaves of absence or other committee-approved modifications to the graduate timeline.

## VII. ACADEMIC PROBATION and SUSPENSION

Graduate students will be placed on academic probation ([Policy B7.000](#)) for failure to maintain good academic standing (see s.XIV). If the student is placed on academic probation by the WBIO graduate evaluations committee, the program will notify (in writing) the student, WBIO Graduate Program

Administrator, and the Graduate School. Graduate students on probation must develop a committee-approved timeline to return to good academic standing. Once per academic semester, the WBIO program faculty will review probationary students in a faculty meeting. The faculty will review the probationary students' progress towards returning to good academic standing. And, if progress has not been satisfactory, will recommend suspension from the WBIO program.

A student can be suspended from the WBIO program for any of the following reasons; provisional admission conditions not being met ([Policy A2.000](#)), cumulative GPA remains below 3.0 after being placed on academic probation, failure to maintain continuous registration, failure to return to good academic standing after being placed on academic probation, and unsatisfactory progress in meeting timelines and requirements in these WBIO graduate degree standards. Note that a grade of F in any graduate course automatically triggers review for academic suspension. When a program determines that a student should be suspended, they will notify the student and the WBIO Graduate Program coordinator of the suspension in writing of the reasons therefor, with details in the student's record relevant to existing program policy.

Student's wishing to appeal a suspension must notify the Dean of the Graduate School of the intent to appeal the suspension within five (5) business days of receiving written notification of suspension. The student must submit an appeal letter and supporting documentation to the Dean of the Graduate School within ten (10) business days from receipt of the written notification of suspension. Suspensions due to not meeting minimum GPA requirements cannot be appealed without the support of the academic program. Guidelines for appealing suspensions are given by the graduate school [policy B7.00](#). Graduate students wishing to appeal being placed on probation can use the same procedures as above, except for providing notice and an appeal letter submitted to their respective Associate Dean.

## VIII. GRADUATE COURSEWORK

Graduate coursework is geared toward preparing the graduate student to develop scientific knowledge and skills to support the graduate students research and career goals. Hence, required coursework may include aspects of theory, application, biology and ecology, socio-political aspects of conservation, and statistical and other quantitative methods. The majority of coursework normally is taken in WBIO, Biology, and Forestry, but the graduate student may require courses in other departments. The course work plan is developed in consultation with the graduate committee to assist the student in planning, conducting, and completing the graduate degree. It is the responsibility of the graduate committee, often at the first meeting, to review and approve a coursework plan and the responsibility of the advisor to file that plan in the graduate students' files. Changes to approved coursework plans are common, but must be made in writing and approved by the graduate advisor and entire committee and placed in the student's file. The WBIO program coursework policies closely follow UM Graduate School policies [C1.00](#) and [D.200](#) for Masters and Doctoral students.

- A. M.S. Thesis Option.** A copy of the approved coursework outline needs to be approved prior to the end of the first semester in residence; it will then be placed in the student's file in the WBIO office.
1. Minimum coursework requirement for the M.S. Degree, Thesis option, is 30 graduate semester credits.
  2. Of these 30 credits, 20 must be in formal coursework, with at least 10 at the 500 level or above.
  3. Up to 10 of the 30 credits may be taken as research and/or thesis credits.

- B. M.S. Professional Paper Option.** A copy of the approved coursework outline needs to be approved prior to the end of the first semester in residence; it will then be placed in the student's file.
1. Minimum requirement for the M.S. Degree, Professional Paper Option, is 30 graduate semester credits.
  2. Of the 30 credits, at least 20 shall be in formal course work.
  3. At least 10 of the coursework credits shall be at the 500 level or above.
  4. Up to 10 of the 30 credits may be taken as professional paper credits.
- C. Ph.D. Degree.** Primary emphasis in the Ph.D. program is on professional development, stimulation of intellectual curiosity, and competency in science, which is complemented with graduate course work. A copy of the approved course work outline needs to be approved prior to the end of the first semester in residence; it will then be placed in the student's file in the WBIO office.
1. The Ph.D. student is required to obtain a minimum of 60 graduate semester credits beyond the bachelor's degree and can include MS credits. A dissertation committee may require more credits, depending on the student's background for the proposed Dissertation research program;
  2. Of the 60 semester credits, 20 may be Dissertation thesis credits;
  3. Of the remaining 40 credits, at least 20 shall be numbered > 500;
  4. At least 30 semester graduate credits need to be taken at UM;
  5. Up to 30 semester MS credits, 10 of which may be for thesis, research, or independent study courses, may be applied to the 60-credit requirement. See Graduate School Policy [D2.100](#) for policies on graduate transfer credits;

## IX. WILDLIFE BIOLOGY GRADUATE SEMINAR SERIES (WILD 594)

- A. Purpose and Participation.** The purpose of WILD 594 is to encourage the regular (weekly) exchange of scientific ideas among Wildlife Biology faculty and students and to promote improved communication skills. All graduate students are required to enroll for at least 2 semesters of WILD 594 and are encouraged to attend during every semester they are in residence. Seminar attendance is mandatory when enrolled for credit.
- B. Timing of Seminars.** Both M.S. and Ph.D. students are required to present both a proposal seminar and a thesis or dissertation defense seminar. The recommended time allowed for proposal/defense seminar is 40 minutes to allow ample time for questions and discussion.

The proposal seminar should be presented early in the student's graduate program (see s.XIII for details on timeline). Students are encouraged to present the proposal early enough to facilitate input to development of the proposal. Approval of the written proposal approval is contingent upon a successful public proposal seminar presentation. The proposal and thesis or dissertation defense seminars are usually presented on the same day as the student's defense of the corresponding written portion with the committee but may be presented up to 2 weeks prior to the defense. For both proposal and defense seminars, students should note that prior planning on scheduling with one's graduate committee is important. Scheduling of WBIO 594 graduate seminar will prioritize thesis and dissertation defenses over other types.

Ph.D. students are required to present a seminar once every 2 years during their residence. For example, PhD students can present preliminary results, results of 1 Dissertation research question/chapter, or adaptations of recent conference presentations in graduate seminar. Such progress update seminar presentations need not be the full 40 minutes and could focus on 1 complete chapter. For example, two progress update presentations could be presented in graduate seminar that

are 20 minutes each, similar to the format of a major professional conference (e.g., Ecological Society of America, the Wildlife Society). Progress update seminars are especially important in the period between completion of the comprehensive exam and Dissertation defense to ensure timely progress towards completion.

## X. RESEARCH PLANNING AND PROPOSALS

- A. **Research Statement.** As soon as possible after the graduate committee is formed, MS students are required to prepare a statement that generally describes their research projects and *preliminary* ideas and questions. The student needs to arrange a formal committee meeting, no later than the end of the first semester in residence for MS students. Committee members will evaluate the research statement and the proposed course work outline, provide feedback, and either approve them or recommend modifications. While not required for PhD students, a research statement is also helpful to solicit prospective committee members and get initial early feedback on research direction.
- B. **Preliminary Research Proposal.** Each PhD student is required to write a preliminary research proposal (<5 pages) that meets committee approval no later than the end of their second semester in residence, especially prior to collecting any field data for their dissertation. Its purpose is to demonstrate progress toward a full Dissertation proposal. The preliminary proposal provides an overview of proposed concepts, questions, study design, and data collection.
- C. **Research Proposal.** Each MS and PhD student is required to complete a formal research proposal that presents the conceptual and empirical framework for their graduate program. The proposal follows no set format, but often consists of a title, an introduction to the research problem, an explanation of how the problem fits into a broader conceptual framework defined by existing literature, a justification of its importance, the specific objectives, methods (including details about design and proposed methods of analysis), broader impacts, a timetable, and could even include a budget if appropriate. M.S. candidates shall defend their thesis proposal and receive committee approval of their proposal by the end of their second semester in residence and prior to collecting data for their thesis research.

Doctoral students are required to defend their research proposal in a committee meeting by the end of their third semester in residence and, in the case of revisions, receive final committee approval of the proposal no later than the end of their fourth semester. In the case of students that convert from a M.S. to Ph.D. program before completing the M.S., the dissertation proposal must be successfully defended by the end of their fifth semester in residence and receive final committee approval no later than the end of their sixth semester.

Both M.S. and doctoral students must present a public presentation on their thesis or dissertation proposals. This presentation will commonly be given during a regularly scheduled WBIO graduate seminar time slot (see VI-B). Following this presentation, students will meet with their committee for the oral defense of their proposal. After approval by the committee, a committee meeting form approving the proposal and seminar needs to be filed by the graduate advisor in the student's graduate file.

In approving the proposal, the advisory committee agrees that successful completion of the proposed research will likely result in a successful thesis or dissertation. Any substantive changes made after committee approval are required to be brought back to the committee for discussion. Revisions to the

research proposal will be documented and approved by the advisor and committee and placed in the student's WBIO file. All graduate students are required to meet with their committee members at least annually to keep them informed of progress and to maintain good academic standing.

## **XI. TEACHING REQUIREMENT AND TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS**

All Ph.D. students, including those whose primary support is on Research Assistantships (RA), are required to engage in supervised teaching activities such as the equivalent of a regular teaching assistant (TA) assignment for  $\geq 2$  semesters. Non-UM teaching experience may be eligible for consideration by the graduate committee for substitution for the teaching requirement. For example, being an instructor of record for an undergraduate course may be equivalent to 2 semesters of TA experience. Off-campus teaching experience may also be eligible for consideration to fulfill this requirement. Teaching assistantships are awarded annually on a competitive basis; students not in good academic standing may not be eligible for receiving teaching assistantships. Renewed TA support is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward degree requirements and quality of teaching performance.

## **XII. ANNUAL REVIEW OF STUDENT PROGRESS**

The most important factor in affecting graduate student success towards their graduate degree is effective communication and engagement with the graduate advisor and committee. Regular meetings with advisors, committee members, and successful completion of timelines are critical steps to success in graduate school. The graduate advisor and committee's responsibilities include tracking academic progress, providing advice and direction, submitting graduate committee meeting memos to the student's file, and helping develop professional and scientific skills. It is the student's responsibility, however, to understand and follow the WBIO and Graduate School policies, and to inform their graduate advisor and committee of any challenges to maintaining good academic standing and progress towards completion.

To provide an annual review of progress, graduate students in the WBIO program are required to submit an annual review of student progress to the WBIO graduate evaluations committee. The graduate student will use the graduate student evaluation form (see appendix) to submit annual progress towards the degree, along with an advisor (and if needed, committee) statement that is meant to be shared directly and ideally in person with the student summarizing progress. Unless WBIO notifies otherwise, the deadline for academic progress reports April 1 of each spring semester. Any changes from the recommended timelines for successful completion of a degree program, such as approved leave dates (only dates of approved leave are required) should be included and an alternative timetable included. The graduate evaluations committee will conduct a review of annual graduate student progress. Students not maintaining good academic standing will be recommended for probation or suspension as explained above in s.VII.

## **XIII. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION GUIDELINES (Ph.D. Students Only)**

The comprehensive exam should be completed by the end of the doctoral student's fourth (4) semester. In the case of students that convert from a M.S. to Ph.D. program before completing the M.S., the comprehensive exam shall be completed before the end of the sixth semester. WBIO degree requirements follow UM Graduate school policy [D3.000](#) for comprehensive exams. The examining committee, nominated by the student and the program chair and appointed by the Graduate Dean, may be (but need not be) the same as the student's dissertation committee. Any interested WBIO faculty may attend the examination and ask questions on recognition by the chair.



- 1) At least 1 month (and preferably > 2-3 months) before the exam, the student should:
  - a) provide a copy of these regulations to all examination committee members.
  - b) convene a committee meeting at which an examination committee chair is selected and examination topics are discussed. The comprehensive examination committee chair is normally a member of the Wildlife Biology faculty and the student's committee but cannot be the student's major professor.
- 2) At least 2 days before the beginning of the written exam, the examination committee is required to meet to approve the examination questions. Given the diversity of faculty in the Wildlife Biology Program, a meeting is required to ensure consistency. The exam Chair will also work with the graduate student to identify and implement any necessary accommodations to facilitate health, family, parental or cultural considerations for the student.
- 3) The written portion of the comprehensive examination will consist of up to 8 hours of open and/or closed book (at the examiners discretion) questions from each committee member, typically answered by the student over 5 consecutive days. Accommodations to this typical schedule can be made for any of the above (e.g., family reasons) or committee-approved reasons. At least 1 committee member will ask biologically oriented questions and at least 1 committee member will ask policy- or management-oriented questions. Most wildlife conservation and management involve biological as well as social/political/legal/economic aspects; the intent is to ensure that doctoral candidates have knowledge in both.
- 1) At least 3 (and no more than 10) calendar days after completion of the written examination, faculty will privately communicate to the examination chair their evaluation of the student's answers and vote (pass/fail). The committee may pass the student with only one negative vote, two or more negative votes constitutes a failure of the exam (see graduate school policy [D3.000](#)). The rating will be 1 of the following:
  - a) Pass – Student progresses to the oral exam.
  - b) Marginal – The examination demonstrates weakness in 1 or more areas. The committee will meet to discuss the next step, but it may require some or all of the exam to be re-written and may postpone the oral examination.
  - c) Fail – In case of failure of the written portion of the exam, one repeat examination before the same committee is permitted.
- 4) The oral examination explores in depth the areas presented in the written questions but is not restricted to those areas. The oral examination will be no longer than 3 hours in length. The examination is open to all members of the faculty of the University of Montana, though all except committee members are excused before the private vote.
- 5) Normally, the confidential vote by the comprehensive exam committee for admission to candidacy will occur at the end of the oral examination. The Chair is responsible for notifying the WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator of the outcome of the comprehensive exam. The committee may rate the student's oral exam in one of the following 3 categories with only one negative vote; two or more negative votes constitutes a failure of the exam.
  - a) Pass – No further work is necessary. Student progresses to candidacy.
  - b) Conditional pass – The examination demonstrates weakness in 1 area. The student is required to improve knowledge in this area before progressing to candidacy. At the examination, the

comprehensive examination committee will specify the tasks required for the student to progress to candidacy, and the criteria for evaluating their completion.

- c) Fail – The examination may be rescheduled if the student fails, but the comprehensive exam committee retains the right to recommend suspension of the student upon majority opinion.

#### XIV. APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION

At least by the start of the semester the student is intending to graduate, and preferably earlier, months before the M.S. or Ph.D. degree is awarded, the student needs to submit to the Graduate School 1 copy of the [Application for Graduation Form \(see appendix\)](#). Graduate students should work with the WBIO graduate program coordinator early for help completing and submitting this form. The graduate advisor and program director are required to sign the application for graduation.

#### XV. COMPLETION AND DEFENSE OF M.S. THESIS OR Ph.D. DISSERTATION

- A. Content.** The thesis or dissertation will embody the results of independent research by the candidate. It shall be an original contribution to knowledge, appropriate for publication in peer-reviewed journals. WBIO students are strongly encouraged write their thesis or dissertation as a series of papers, and some submit such papers to journals before graduating. A paper that is accepted by a journal does not, however, automatically constitute acceptance by the committee for the thesis/dissertation. It is expected that students receive approval for manuscripts from their committees *prior* to submission to journals.
- A. Deadlines and approvals.** It is the advisor's responsibility to notify the WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator of the time, date, and place of the final defense. Copies of the dissertation or thesis draft (edited and approved by the advisor as being ready for defense) are provided to the rest of the committee, and a meeting for all committee members is scheduled for a vote on approval no less than 10 calendar days after the committee received the draft (graduate school policy D5.00). If there is one negative vote to proceed to the defense, the graduate advisor and Graduate Dean may still elect to proceed to a defense. Two or more negative votes will indefinitely postpone the defense. After the committee unanimously approves the thesis for defense the student submits it to the WBIO faculty for their review at least 10 calendar days prior to the defense date. The combination of these two steps requires that students will provide copies of their dissertation or thesis to their committee at least 20 calendar days before their scheduled defense. Students will also provide the Graduate School an electronic copy of the committee-approved defense draft of the dissertation or thesis prior to their defense date (see [www.umt.edu/grad/](http://www.umt.edu/grad/)); the Graduate School reviews this draft for formatting only. Public notice of the defense should be posted 7 calendar days prior to the defense date.
- B. Defense.** Masters and Doctoral students are required to conduct a public 40-minute seminar presentation of the research findings to the advisory committee and any other interested persons followed by a 10-minute question and answer period (see VII-B). This should ideally be scheduled during the WILD 594 seminar series. The closed-door defense meeting usually lasts no more than 3 hours, and normally occurs immediately following the seminar; but may occur up to 2 weeks thereafter. the closed-door defense is also open to all faculty members of the University. The student is expected to answer questions specific to the research and those of a more general conceptual nature. The student is required to “defend” the approach, methods, analysis, and conclusions of their research. The exam is passed with no committee votes to fail on the M.S. defense and with no more than 1 committee vote to fail on the Ph.D. defense. In the case of failure, 1 repeat defense

examination is permitted, following a suitable interval for revisions as determined by the committee.

Students who are unable to finish during the academic year will need to return the following fall for the defense. No summer defenses are allowed because faculty are not on academic contract during the summer months.

- C. Thesis and Dissertation Copies.** For guidance in preparing and submitting a thesis or dissertation, as well as deadlines, forms, and procedures required for graduation, students will need to consult the Graduate School website [www.umt.edu/grad/](http://www.umt.edu/grad/). The major professor must submit the final copy of the thesis or dissertation to the WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator and the Graduate School in an electronic format. The student submits their final to the Mansfield Library following graduate school guidelines.

## XVI. RECOMMENDED TIMELINES

To help graduate students achieve their goals, meet academic timelines and maintain good academic standing, we provide this set of recommended timelines to adapt to each graduate students' degree program. The specified guidelines for proposals, defenses, etc., come from the regulations above and can be adapted for a number of circumstances including but not limited to a) changes in availability of academic courses, b) health, medical or personal reasons, c) parental or family leave, d) cultural leave, etc. though the mechanisms outlined above. But any changes to the default and recommended timelines need to have committee approval, need to be filed in the graduate student file with the WBIO Graduate Program Coordinator, and need to be documented in each graduate progress report to ensure fair evaluations.

	M.S.	Ph.D.
Committee membership submitted to WBIO Office	By end of 1st semester	
Committee-approved coursework to WBIO	By end of 1st semester	
Committee-approved research statement	By end of 1st semester	Not formally required but encouraged.
Committee-approved preliminary proposal	N/A	Prior to end of second semester, before collecting data for dissertation research (see VII-B); by end of 1 <sup>st</sup> semester when data collection begins after 1 semester of residence.
Research proposal presented orally and in a committee meeting	Prior to collecting data for thesis research, defended and committee approved by the end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester. Where data collection begins after 1 semester, defended and committee approved by the end of the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester.	Prior to collecting data for dissertation research, by end of 3 <sup>rd</sup> semester
Committee-approved dissertation proposal (in the case of revisions not being completed in semester 3)		By end of 4 <sup>th</sup> semester
Successful completion of comprehensive exam		4 <sup>th</sup> semester
Application for admission to candidacy	6 months before degree awarded	

Annual Committee meeting	Every year of a student's program for both MS and PhD.	
Progress seminar in graduate seminar	NA?	Every 2 years; e.g., every year after PhD proposal / comps until defense.
Draft thesis or dissertation certified by committee as ready for defense	10 calendar days before defense	
Electronic copy of draft thesis to Graduate School	Typically, $\geq 7$ calendar days before defense (check <a href="http://www.umt.edu/grad">www.umt.edu/grad</a> )	
Successful defense	Maximum timelines within 5 academic years of start date	Maximum timelines within 7 academic years of start date
Submit final electronic copy of thesis or dissertation to Graduate School	Typically 4 weeks after the end of semester of successful defense (check <a href="http://www.umt.edu/grad">www.umt.edu/grad</a> )	
Submit final copy of thesis or dissertation electronically to Mansfield Library	Typically 4 weeks after the end of semester of successful defense (check <a href="http://www.umt.edu/grad">www.umt.edu/grad</a> )	

**Appendix I - Annual Progress Form for Graduate Students in Wildlife Biology**

[Students are required to turn in this form each year to Wildlife Biology Office by April 1]

**(Attach full CV)**

**NAME and EMAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_ **M.S./Ph.D. (Circle one) DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CUM. GPA:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE FIRST ENROLLED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **ADVISOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I. State whether each of the following has been completed, and if so, the date completed, or the date you plan to complete each item (see regulations):**

	<u>DATE PLANNED</u>	<u>DATE ACCOMPLISHED</u>
• Enrolled in WILD 594	_____	_____
• Committee submitted to WBIO office	_____	_____
• Committee approves coursework	_____	_____
• Committee approves research statement (MS only)	_____	_____
• Committee approves preliminary proposal (PhD only)	_____	_____
• Committee approves research proposal	_____	_____
• Complete comprehensive exam (PhD only)	_____	_____
• Annual progress seminar completed (PhD only)	_____	_____
• Annual committee meeting completed	_____	_____
• Draft certified as ready for defense	_____	_____
• Defense	_____	_____

**II. Record the following for work completed SINCE LAST APRIL 15**

- i) Publications In Press or published only (give full citation):
- ii) Proposals Submitted (list all PI's in order, amount, and granting organization). Report if funded or not:
- iii) Presentations at Conferences or other professional outlets:
- iv) Awards for Research Excellence (e.g., best paper, fellowships, etc.):
- v) Management/Conservation Impacts of research:
- vi) Other Professional Activities (including graduate student service):

**IV. Amendments to Graduate Timeline**

**IV. A statement by the major professor on progress:**

**SIGNATURE OF BOTH STUDENT AND MAJOR ADVISOR IS REQUIRED**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor Signature

## **Appendix II. Graduate Student File Contents and Application for Graduation**

By the end of a graduate students' tenure in the Wildlife Biology Program, the following records must be included in the graduate student file, which is maintained by the WBIO graduate program coordinator, Wendy Maltonic.

- Committee appointment
- Proposal approval
- Annual progress reports
- Comp exam outcome (for PhDs)
- Transfer credit form (for PhDs)
- Copies of any paperwork for the Grad School (such as petitions, leaves of absence, readmission, etc.)

Graduate advisors can access FCFC forms [here](#). Finally, a blank application for graduation form is included on the next 2 pages for your information.

This document should be completed digitally and submitted to your Department for approval. Once approved, your Department will send it to the Graduate School prior to the posted deadlines. Once received, a \$50 graduation application fee will be put on your CyberBear account. An additional \$25 fee will be added to any application received after the deadline. If you fail to graduate in the term indicated on this application, you will have the opportunity to roll over this application with a \$25 processing fee. You must notify the Graduate School if you wish to rollover this application.\*Note applications are only valid for up-to one year after the original submission deadline.

For any questions regarding graduation, please contact the Graduate School at (406) 243-2784 or grad.school@umontana.edu.

Name (as it should appear on diploma):

Degree Award Date:  
(Semester, Year)

**Local Address**

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

**Diploma Address (address that will be valid 3 to 4 months after graduation date - NOTIFY Grad School if address changes)**

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

UM Email:

Phone:

Degree Applying For:

Major:

Concentration:

Check if completing an Accelerated Program (BA/MA or BS/MS)

Degree Requirement: (NOTE: If degree requirement is a thesis, professional paper or dissertation, an approved committee appointment form MUST be on file in the Graduate School. This form must be submitted by the department.)

Dissertation	Thesis	Professional Paper	Non Thesis	Certificate	In House Paper/Project/ Portfolio
Previous Degree(s) Received	Institution		Date		Major Field

Course No & Title (Chronological Order)	Credits	Semester, Year	Grade	Non-Degree	Transferred	Accelerated
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Total Credits:

The application for graduation is signed by the student's program advisor or department chair and submitted to the Graduate School for approval. The Graduate School will return a copy of the approved application to the department after an audit has been performed. After the student's program advisor or department chair signs this document no changes can be made to it without approval from the department and the Graduate Dean.

Application for Graduation Approved:

Advisor or Dept Chair Signature

Date

Graduate School Signature

Date

\*\*\*\*\*For Departmental Use Only\*\*\*\*\*

Prior to the end of the student's final semester and meeting the Graduate School final deadline, the department will circle the degree requirement, sign, and return the departmental copy of this application to the Graduate School (it is known as the degree completion document on the Graduate School website, [www.umt.edu/grad](http://www.umt.edu/grad)).

Comprehensive examinations, OR In-house paper/project/portfolio, OR Non-thesis, OR Certificate requirements satisfied:

Committee Chair Signature

Date

Thesis, OR professional paper, OR dissertation defense satisfied

Committee Chair Signature

Date

PhD candidates must have their committee chair sign off on completion of comprehensive exams and a successful dissertation defense.