Biology Graduate Policy

Department of Biology Graduate Policy

The following policies have been adopted by the Faculty of Biology, San Francisco State University. They are within, and sometimes may extend beyond, the policies set forth by the SFSU Graduate Division. (UP) = SFSU policy. All Graduate Students in Biology must sign a submitted copy of the policy attesting that they are aware of and accept all expectations of the policy. The signed copy will be retained in the Biology Department Office Student’s File.

Acceptance into the Graduate Program in Biology

Minimum Qualifications:

- Bachelor’s degree (not necessarily in Biology) (UP)

- Lower and upper division course work equivalent to that expected from a bachelor’s degree in the area of biology in which the student plans to do graduate work.

- Minimum grade point average of 3.0 in last 60 semester units (90 quarter units).

- Graduate Record Exam — General Test scores

- Acceptance by a SFSU Biology Tenure-Tenure Track/CAS Research Professor/RTC Research Professor. No student will be accepted into the program without a sponsoring advisor. The accepting advisor will retain ultimate responsibility for all phases of the student’s graduate career.

Classified Graduate Students

Students who are accepted into the Department of Biology are considered Classified Graduate Students. Unclassified Graduate Students are actually post-baccalaureate students accepted by the university but not matriculating toward a graduate degree in the Department of Biology.
Conditionally Classified Students

Occasionally classified graduate students are accepted conditionally (but are still classified). Conditions are set by the graduate coordinators. Graduate students must satisfy all conditions prior to filing their GAP.

Progress in the Program

Research
SFSU Biology graduate students must enroll in at least one research unit (Biology 897) every semester in which they are conducting research (includes lab, library, and field research). (UP) Graduate students should discuss with their advisor the number of research units taken and expectations for work to be completed for these units before enrolling in Biology 897.

Grades
SFSU Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 (minimum) grade point average throughout their graduate career. (UP) It is the responsibility of the advisor to determine the grading system for Biology 897 course work. This should be discussed clearly with the student prior to enrolling in the course.

Academic Probation (UP)
Students who do not maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 are placed on academic probation (see university bulletin). Students who fail to recover from academic probation are subject to declassification (i.e., dismissal from the Biology Graduate Program). Continuous enrollment in the University (UP) To remain a continuing student, all SFSU students, including Graduate Students, are required to enroll at least every other semester. Graduate students who remain unenrolled for more than one semester are dropped from the University, hence from the graduate program in biology.

Advisors and Thesis Committees
The Faculty of Biology at San Francisco State University have discretion over all graduate matters. They set policy and expectations, and have final say over any decisions regarding graduate thesis research, publications, and items pertinent to their graduate advisees. There is implicit agreement to this policy on the part of graduate students and graduate faculty upon the acceptance of a graduate student by a faculty member.
Roles of the Advisor

- Orient new Graduate students and introduce them to department/university regulations and expectations.

- Help define the student’s thesis project.

- Advise students on course selection and course load.

- Remind students of critical deadlines

- Advise the student on completion of important forms, including the Advancement to Candidacy (ATC), Culminating Experience Proposal Form (895: Field Study or Applied Research OR 898: Thesis), Animal or Human Subjects Protocol Forms, and Thesis Prospectus.

- Sign student forms in a timely manner.

- Advise students on seeking funding to support research and education.

- Maintain a clear and helpful line of communication with the graduate student, with special regard to the advisor’s and thesis committee’s expectations of the student.

- The advisor shall have complete discretion over the content of the graduate student’s thesis research.

- Promote professional development of graduate students; encourage participation in workshops, attendance at professional meetings, presentation of posters and papers, communication with colleagues in their field.

Committee Membership

- Minimum 3 committee members (exceeds University minimum of 2)

- Minimum 2 must be SFSU Biology Tenure/Tenure Track/CAS Research Professors/RTC Research Professors

- Outside reader (non-Biology Tenure/Tenure Track/CAS Research Professor) must be third signature on thesis (UP)

Updated: July 2016
Communication between Faculty and Graduate Students

The Department of Biology seeks to foster an environment of open discussion of all issues at all times. Faculty advisors and graduate students have a right and an obligation to express their own expectations and to hear the expectations of the other party. Effective, early, and regular communication will generally eliminate or defuse disputes between graduate students and advisors, and bring clarity to issues of concern.

There are occasional situations in which the advisor-student relationship may be terminated prior to the student’s completing their M.A. These are...

Students Leaving Labs Voluntarily
Graduate students are not obligated by the Department of Biology to remain under the direction of the advisor who accepted them; however, a student who leaves an advisor shall be allowed one full semester to relocate to another advisor. It is the student’s responsibility to find a new advisor. If the student has not succeeded in doing so within one full semester (i.e., the full semester immediately following the student’s departure from the original advisor’s directorship), the Graduate Committee shall initiate declassification procedures under the aegis of “...performance, progress ... judged by appropriate University authorities to be unsatisfactory...” Students who elect to leave an advisor’s directorship must notify the advisor and the Department Graduate Coordinator in writing.

Students Who Are Dismissed from Graduate Labs by the Advisor
Biology faculty advisors are not obligated to retain graduate students who fail to meet the advisor’s (or department’s) requirements, standards, and expectations. If an advisor determines that a graduate student has failed to meet the standards of that advisor’s lab, s/he may dismiss the student from the lab.

Failure to meet the advisor’s standards includes but is not limited to:
Failure of the student to meet expectations of scholarship and deadlines set by the advisor.
Disruption of the educational and/or interpersonal environment of the lab.
Unresolvable differences (personal and/or professional) with the advisor.
Prior to dismissing a graduate student from a lab, the advisor and student should make every attempt to resolve the problem. Suitable warning of potential dismissal of the student should be given well in advance. Faculty
who dismiss students from their directorship must notify the student and the Department Graduate Coordinator in writing. A student who is dismissed by an advisor shall be allowed one full semester to relocate to another advisor. It is the student’s responsibility to find a new advisor. If the student has not succeeded in doing so within one semester (i.e., the full semester immediately following the student’s departure from the advisor’s directorship), the Graduate Committee shall initiate declassification procedures under the aegis of “...performance, progress ... judged by appropriate University authorities to be unsatisfactory...” Graduate Students advanced to candidacy: If a student relocates to another advisor, irrespective of reason, they must file a “Revised Culminating Experience Proposal” form. This does not apply to students who have not yet filed a “Culminating Experience Proposal” form.

Rights of Students and Advisors

Ownership of Research
Prior to entering the graduate program in biology, students should meet with their advisor to discuss clearly any issues of ownership of research conducted by the graduate student. If the advisor has an obligation to an agency or other resource that is funding research involving a student’s thesis, the nature of this obligation must be made clear to the student prior to the student beginning her/his thesis work. Such obligations must apply to the student as well. Often an advisor will have an ongoing or long-running research program, in which a graduate student may become involved for her/his M. A. thesis research. In these cases, it is expected that the student and advisor will agree on the nature of the “research ownership” prior to the undertaking of the research by the student. If a graduate student relocates from one advisor to another, the student may take their research project with them only upon agreement of the former advisor and new advisor. It is the student’s responsibility to seek accord between advisors.

Authorship
Issues of authorship or co-authorship on publications resulting from student theses should be resolved prior to the student initiating the research. Each advisor should set a policy on authorship and articulate it to each new graduate student. Timely progress is expected toward publication of thesis research that is part of the advisor’s own research program. If a student fails to make timely progress toward publication, the advisor may choose to assume an active authorship role and, accordingly, refine the authorship.

Thesis Copyright
Graduate students are allowed to copyright their thesis; however, copyright
issues must be discussed openly with the advisor and other faculty involved prior to the thesis being filed.

**Harassment and Misconduct**

The Department of Biology adheres completely to the Sexual Assault Policy, the Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures, and Student Conduct/Discipline Policy as set forth in the University Bulletin. Charges of violation of these policies shall be forwarded to the appropriate campus office.

**Appeals Procedures**

The role of the Department of Biology Graduate Committee in appeals procedures is to ensure that all proper steps were taken and that adequate communication was made among all parties concerned. The Graduate Committee’s role is to interpret and communicate Department and University policy to the parties concerned. The Graduate Committee shall decide if an appeal warrants a personal meeting with the parties concerned. Once apprised of an issue warranting the attention of the Graduate Committee, the Committee shall make every attempt to act and respond within a two-week period during the normal semester.

After reading this policy, please sign below (your copy) and on the next page. Please turn in the next page after you have signed it. The signed form must be in your graduate file before your ATC and Culminating Experience Form is processed.

____________________________________Signature

________________________________________Print your name here
Biology Graduate Policy Signature Page

I have read the Department of Biology Graduate Policy provided to me in the Biology Graduate Student Handbook. These policies have been adopted by the Faculty of Biology, San Francisco State University. They are within, and sometimes may extend beyond, the policies set forth by the SFSU Graduate Division.

By signing this form, I attest that I have read the Department of Biology Graduate Policies. By signing I also affirm that I am aware of and accept all expectations of the policy. The signed copy of this page will be retained in my student file in the Biology Department Office.

____________________________________________       Signature

____________________________________________       Print your name here

____________________________________________       Date