

Guidelines for M.A. and M.S. students in the Department of Geosciences

1. All Students are initially admitted to the M.A. and M.S. programs in the Department of Geosciences on the non-thesis option. During the first semester, the Graduate Program Director of the department or his/her designee will serve as the student's advisor.
2. By the end of the second semester of full-time coursework (or at the point where part-time students have earned 15 credit hours), students who wish to conduct thesis research should have selected a thesis advisor and filed the appropriate plan of study. Students who remain on the non-thesis option will continue to be advised by the Graduate Program Director of the department or his/her designee until graduation.
3. Thesis Students may change graduate advisors at any point in their program with a written request that must be approved by the Graduate Program Director, the Department Chair and the Graduate College. This will require a revision to the plan of study.
4. Students following the thesis option may change to the non-thesis option with a revision to the plan of study that must be approved by the Graduate Program Director, Department Chair and Graduate College. Students may not change from thesis to non-thesis option during the term in which they wish to graduate.

Selecting the Thesis Committee

1. The thesis committee shall be selected in consultation with the student's thesis advisor.
2. The thesis committee membership shall include at least three faculty members, two of whom must be tenured, tenure-track, multi-year contract or research faculty in the Department of Geosciences who have been awarded graduate faculty status. The remaining member may also be from Geosciences, or may be an FAU faculty member of a cognate department with research and teaching specialties related to the topic of the thesis. Affiliate Research Faculty in Geosciences may serve as a co-advisor along with a regular faculty member from Geosciences. All members must hold a terminal degree in their discipline.
3. Additional members, outside of the required 3, may be added from the professional community, other universities or other units of FAU if their area of expertise could make an important contribution to the thesis project. The credentials of the additional member must be considered appropriate to the student's thesis advisor, the Graduate Program Director, Department Chair, the Dean of the College of Science and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Entering Candidacy

Thesis students must officially attain candidacy before enrolling in thesis credits and before conducting the bulk of the thesis research. To attain candidacy the student must demonstrate to their committee that they have sufficient background and an adequate plan to successfully complete their research.

- 1) The student must write a formal research proposal that clearly identifies the objectives and significance of their research and the methods they propose to use. The proposal should also include a review of relevant literature, a bibliography, and a proposed timeline for the student's research. The proposal normally should not exceed 25 pages including tables, figures and references. The proposal must be presented in digital format (email with proposal as an attachment is acceptable) to the student's thesis committee at least one week prior to the oral defense of the proposal. The reference/bibliography section and all citations should be in APA format (www.apaformat.org).
- 2) The student must also deliver an oral presentation of the research proposal in a formally scheduled meeting with the student's thesis committee. The presentation should last approximately 30 minutes followed by questions and discussion. Students must clearly demonstrate their understanding and competency in their proposed research question, relevant literature and proposed methodology. Announcements of the proposal defense will be publicly posted as well as emailed to faculty in the doctoral program in geosciences. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with the Department Chair to arrange the public notice. All university community members are welcomed to attend the proposal defense.

The purpose of this meeting is for the student and the committee to agree upon a formal research plan that will lead to the completion of a defensible thesis. The thesis advisor of the student will notify the Graduate Program Director and Department Chair in writing at the time the student has qualified (i.e. successfully defended the research proposal). This should be based on agreement of the entire thesis committee that the research plan is acceptable as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A./M.S. degree.

Defending the Thesis

1. Candidates must defend their thesis during the timeframe of an academic term.
2. The thesis draft must be given to the committee members at least 1 week prior to the defense date. The reference/bibliography section and all citations should be in APA format.
3. The candidate must successfully defend the completed thesis in an open public forum in the Department. The thesis advisor of the candidate must notify the Graduate Program Director and the Department Chair no less than 10 days prior to the scheduled defense date. The Department Chair or designee will announce the defense to the geosciences faculty and graduate student body no less than 1 week prior to the scheduled defense date.

Format of the Defense

1. The candidate will prepare an oral presentation of approximately 30-45 minutes highlighting the research question, methodology and contributions of the research.
2. The presentation by the candidate will be followed by a question and answer session covering the thesis work. The thesis advisor of the candidate will serve as the Chair of the committee and will conduct the question and answer component of the defense.
3. At the conclusion of the question and answer session, the thesis committee will meet alone to discuss the quality of the work and to determine any remaining changes or corrections that must be made to the final document before its submission to the Dean of College of Science and to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The required changes and corrections will be discussed with the candidate immediately after the defense and will additionally be listed in writing to the candidate by the Chair of the student's committee. The written comments will be copied to the Department Chair.
4. Students are limited to two chances to pass the thesis defense. If the student fails the first attempt, the second attempt must occur within one semester of the first attempt, excluding the summer terms. Students who fail to pass the defense in two attempts will be dismissed from the program.
5. The student may not submit the thesis to either the Dean of the College of Science or the Dean of Graduate Studies until all committee members and the Department Chair have signed the appropriate signature page of the thesis.