

## Guidelines for M.S. students in the Department of Geosciences

### Selecting an Advisor

1. All Students initially admitted in the M.S. Geosciences non-thesis option will be advised by the Graduate Program Director of the department or his/her designee..
2. All Students initially admitted in the M.S. Geosciences thesis option are advised by the department faculty member who provided a letter of recommendation as part of the student's admission application materials.
3. Non-thesis option students who wish to conduct thesis research may change to the thesis option by the end of their second semester of full-time coursework (or at the point where part-time students have earned 15 credit hours) with a written request that must be approved by the Graduate Program Director, the Department Chair and a department faculty member agreeing serve as the student's new graduate advisor.
4. 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 both the current and new graduate advisor.
5. 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 the current graduate advisor. 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 the student's thesis advisor and at least two committee members, one of whom must be 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, in addition to the required three, 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 conducting the bulk of their thesis research and no later than the third week of the semester prior to the semester in which the student will graduate. 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](http://www.apaformat.org)).
- 2) The student must also deliver an oral presentation of their research proposal in a formally scheduled meeting with the student's thesis committee. The presentation should last approximately 20-30 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 and graduate students in the Geosciences department. 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.
- 3) 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.S. Geosciences degree.

### Defending the Thesis

1. Candidates must defend their thesis research during the timeframe of an academic term.
2. The written thesis draft must be given to committee members at least one week prior to the defense date. The thesis should be in APA format.
4. The candidate will prepare an oral presentation of approximately 30-45 minutes highlighting the research question, methodology and contributions of the research. 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.
5. 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.

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.