GRADUATE HANDBOOK

for

M.S. and Ph.D. in Marine Biology

The Department of Life Sciences (LSCI)

College of Science and Engineering (S&E)

Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC)

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www.marinebiology.tamucc.edu

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This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the CGS Master's Student Handbook (https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/current_students/masters_students.html) or the CGS Doctoral Student Handbook (https://gradschool.tamucc.edu/current_students/doctoral_students.html).

Updated: November 16, 16

Introduction

This document has been developed for the guidance of faculty members and graduate students associated with the Marine Biology Interdisciplinary Degree Program (IDP) at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC). For prospective students, it contains a brief overview of the program and instructions for applying for admission. For admitted students, it contains information about the requirements for successfully completing the degree, the course of study, selecting an advisor and a graduate committee, choosing a thesis/dissertation research topic, qualifying exams/admission to degree candidacy (Ph.D. students), the thesis/dissertation defense, and the final oral examination. Students associated with the M.S. and Ph.D. in Marine Biology ("MARB") at TAMU-CC are required to follow these departmental and university guidelines and procedures. Additional graduate school requirements and specific rules and procedures can be found in the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) Master's Student Handbook and/or Doctoral Student Handbook and the TAMU-CC University Handbook.

The Marine Biology IDP is unique in that it combines the strengths of three universities within the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) including the Departments of Life Sciences at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Marine Biology and Marine Sciences at Texas A&M University at Galveston, and Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, and Oceanography and Biology at Texas A&M University. Students can choose courses from any campus and form graduate committees with any of the participating IDP faculty. The goal of the Marine Biology graduate program is to attract high-quality students interested in one or more of the sub-disciplines of marine biology who wish to pursue careers in higher education, government, or private industry. The principal strengths of this marine biology program lie in the international recognition, scholarly productivity, and extramural funding of its diverse faculty, as well as the strategic location of two of its campuses on the Gulf of Mexico.

ADMISSION TO THE MARINE BIOLOGY M.S. AND PH.D. PROGRAMS

Applicants seeking admission to the MARB Program must apply through the TAMU-CC College of Graduate Studies. The application should be submitted through the graduate studies online application form (http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/application.html).

A complete application consists of:

- Completed university graduate application form, including essay of about 1000 words describing educational and career goals, interests as they relate to the faculty in the MARB Program, and the name of a faculty member who has agreed to serve as the applicant's mentor;
- Three letters of evaluation from professionals familiar with the applicant's potential for graduate studies;
- Transcripts of all previous undergraduate/graduate work (including transcript evaluations of all work done at foreign institutions)***;**
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores that are not more than 5 years old;
- A resume or Curriculum Vitae
- Optional inclusion of relevant supplemental materials such as publications that include

information about educational and research experiences; and,

- TOEFL scores from ETS taken within the last two years for applicants from countries where English is not the native language**.

***** To be considered official, all required postsecondary academic records must come directly from the registrar's office. In some foreign countries, the controller of examinations or principal may certify academic records. Official English translations, not interpretations, are required from most countries as well as a course-by-course foreign transcript evaluation through an approved service.

****** TOEFL must be taken within two years of the date the application was received, unless the applicant's primary language of instruction was English or the most recent degree earned was from a U.S. institution of higher education.

It is the applicant's responsibility to make sure that the application is complete by the deadline (see below) to ensure full consideration. Acceptance into the MARB Program is competitive and based on consideration of all application materials. Students accepted into the program will typically have demonstrated an ability to succeed in an academically rigorous environment through high GPA and GRE scores. Relevant life experiences may also provide a substantial basis for consideration. A campus visit with one-on-one interviews with prospective faculty mentors is highly recommended.

For currently enrolled M.S. students wishing to bypass M.S. and enter Ph.D. program: Students are discouraged from bypassing the M.S. unless evidence of exemplary performance and academic preparation can be provided. This includes one or more peer-reviewed publications in a reputable scientific journal arising from work completed as part of the MARB M.S. program. Students wishing to pursue this option will be required to solicit new recommendation letters specifically addressing their potential to succeed at the doctoral level, and the major advisor must provide strong written justification for this program change. Applicants will then be re-considered by the MARB Program Faculty at both the TAMU-CC and IDP Graduate Recruitment and Admissions Committee.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Students are admitted into the MARB Program in the Fall or Spring semesters only; most students will begin in the Fall. Applications must be complete by the deadlines listed below to receive full consideration. Admission to the program is decided independently of financial awards (see "Financial Support") and applicants must apply separately for scholarships, assistantships, and fellowships.

Students seeking full consideration for fellowships or assistantships MUST have a completed application file by December 1 (Fall admission only). *After this date, any awards will be made on a first come, first served basis.*

	Fall	**Spring**
Deadline for receipt of completed application:	December 1	September 1

Approximate Decision Date: January 15 October 15

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

A limited number of fellowships and assistantships are available to MARB students. Assistantships are available at half-time (20 hour/week) 9-month appointments. Summer funding (3 mo) is the responsibility of the major advisor and/or student, and should be discussed early in the academic year.

Students who receive fellowships or assistantships must be enrolled as full-time students (at least 9 hours each for Fall and Spring, and 3 hours during the combined Summer term) in the MARB Program in approved graduate courses. Appointments are for two full semesters (Fall and Spring). Reappointment requires reapplication each year, and students should not assume that the appointment will continue automatically.

Scholarships

A limited number of scholarships are available through the College of Science and Engineering. College scholarships are advertised on the College of Science and Engineering webpage (see http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/students/gradscholarships.html).

Teaching Assistantships

Teaching assistantships are available each year. Applications are available online at: http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/students/gradfunding.html

Research Assistantships

A limited number of research assistantships are available through the program as well as individual faculty members. For the programmatic assistantships, students will be notified by the program coordinator via email in the spring semester when the application period is open. For grant-funded assistantships, students should consult with individual faculty members to identify these funding sources.

Assistantship Compensation

The College of Science and Engineering has a consistent compensation structure for all Fellowships and Assistantships. Master of Science students receive $1200/month. Doctoral students entering with a BS receive $1600/month until completing 36 hrs. At that point the rate is $2000/month. Doctoral students entering with a M.S. (and students entering with a B.S. and having completed 36 hours in the doctoral program), but not yet passing qualifying comprehensive exam receive $2000/month. All doctoral students having passed the qualifying comprehensive exam receive $2200/month. All increases start the semester following change of status. Teaching awards require six contact hours per semester.

Out-Of-State Tuition Waivers

Out-of-state tuition waivers are available to any graduate student receiving a half-time assistantship or fellowship. Students receiving a University scholarship of $1,000 or more per academic year are eligible to apply for out-of-state tuition waivers. To be eligible for an out-of-state tuition waiver, students must maintain a course load of 9 graduate hours during long semesters or 3 graduate hours during the combined summer session. The CGS Master's and Doctoral Student

Handbooks provides information on how to request an out-of-state tuition waiver.

Loans

Consult the Office of Financial Assistance for information regarding student loans.

Texas 99 Hour Rule

The Texas State Legislature has enacted a rule that provides that students at all state universities with over 99 doctoral hours may be subject to the payment of nonresident tuition. A student will generally be able to study at Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi full-time for five complete academic years, including summers, before being affected by the 99 hour rule. For students staying beyond five years, in a number of cases there is still the possibility of a programmatic or individual exemption from the rule. For more information, contact the MARB program coordinator.

For additional information on financial support, please refer to Appendix 1.

FULFILLING MARB M.S. AND PH.D. PROGRAM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Completing an M.S. is a rigorous process consisting of the following milestones:

1. form a committee
2. create and complete courses on the degree plan
3. develop a research prospectus
4. develop a research proposal
5. conduct research
6. write thesis
7. give public seminar and defend thesis

Completing a Ph.D. is an equally rigorous and demanding process of transitioning from a student to a scholar and consists of major following milestones:

A. Pre-Qualification

1. form a committee
2. create and complete courses on the degree plan
3. develop a research prospectus
4. develop and defend a research proposal
5. pass comprehensive qualifying exams

B. Post-Qualification – (i.e., “Ph.D. Candidate”)

1. conduct research
2. write dissertation
3. give public seminar and defend dissertation

Table 1. Important milestones for MARB M.S. and Ph.D. students.

Milestone	M.S.	Ph.D. w/ B.S.	Ph.D. w/ M.S.
Selection of advisor	Before entering program	Before entering program	Before entering program
Committee formed	End of 1st semester	End of 2nd semester	End of 2nd semester
Degree plan filed	End of 1st semester	End of 2nd semester	End of 2nd semester
Proposal submitted	End of 2nd semester	End of 4th semester	End of 4th semester
Comprehensive exams completed		End of 6th semester	End of 4th semester

Important – It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all forms, paperwork, and other degree requirements are completed in a timely manner. Support via programmatic Research Assistantships is contingent upon completing the milestones listed in Table 1. In addition, if a particular milestone is not accomplished by the end of the semester indicated, the student will be given a warning and must meet with the program coordinator to discuss progress towards completing the milestone. If a particular milestone is not accomplished by the end of the next semester, the student will be blocked from registering for courses until the milestone has been completed. Refer to full description of each milestone on ensuing pages.

REGISTRATION GUIDELINES

All students are required to maintain continuous registration until such time as they complete all requirements for graduation, unless a formal leave of absence has been granted (in writing) by the Dean of Graduate Studies (contact Ms. Ronnie Emanuel, S&E Graduate Advisor, for instructions on how to request a leave of absence). Students on graduate assistantships and other funding sources are required to maintain a certain number of credit hours per semester. These requirements are detailed in the University Graduate Catalog, but students holding an assistantship/fellowship in the College of Science and Engineering must be enrolled as full-time students (9 hours each for Fall and Spring semester, and 3 hours during the combined summer term).

THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

After being accepted into the MARB program and enrolling, the most important first step is forming the graduate advisory committee. ***Students should form a graduate advisory committee with the approval of their advisor by the end of their first long semester for M.S. students or by the end of the second long semester for Ph.D. students to help guide them through their degree program***. Students are ***strongly encouraged*** to meet with their committee at a minimum of once per year to seek continual guidance on their research program.

Composition and size of the committee should reflect the scope of the intended graduate studies and should be developed with substantial input from the student's advisor(s). The advisor(s) will

serve as chair(s) of the committee. The majority of the committee members must be members of the Marine Biology Participating IDP Graduate Faculty from TAMUS schools of TAMU-CC, TAMU, and TAMUG. Recognized scholars who are not a member of the TAMU-CC graduate faculty may serve on a student's committee by submitting a letter of request from the advisor, through the TAMU-CC Marine Biology Program Coordinator (currently Dr. Michael Wetz; michael.wetz@tamucc.edu; 361-825-2132), with the individual's resume attached as well as a completed "Form 2" from CGS (Graduate Faculty Status Application). The scholar may serve upon approval of the TAMU-CC CGS. See University Procedure 12.99.99.C3.01 for additional information. Only one CGS appointed scholar may be counted toward the minimum committee member composition. Note that scholars receiving "Special Appointment" status do not count towards the minimum number of required committee members. Only "Associate" or "Adjunct" faculty appointments will count towards this.

For Masters of Science in Marine Biology degrees, the committee shall consist of no fewer than three members, two of which must belong to the MARB IDP Graduate Faculty, including the advisor(s). The Chair (and/or Co-Chair) must be a member of the MARB IDP Graduate Faculty.

For Doctoral (Ph.D.) in Marine Biology degrees, the committee shall consist of no fewer than four members, three of which must belong to the MARB IDP Graduate Faculty, including the advisor(s). At least one of the members is encouraged to be from another IDP campus. The Chair (and/or Co-Chair) must be a member of the MARB IDP Graduate Faculty.

The Graduate Advisory Committee will evaluate the student's past coursework and experience to determine whether additional coursework is prerequisite to the graduate program, and will identify the courses necessary for the degree plan. Remedial coursework does not count toward the minimum required coursework for the graduate program. These courses are typically required for students without proper preparation in the biological discipline, and it should **precede** major coursework and research where possible and will be in addition to the requirement of the degree. Although the student and advisor play a major role in determining the research project and approaches, project identification and evaluation should incorporate continuing input from the entire advisory committee. The graduate advisory committee also approves the dissertation proposal and final manuscript, and administers the comprehensive/qualifying examination (Ph.D. students) and final dissertation defense/oral examination.

Upon submitting a degree plan for Ph.D. students, CGS will appoint a Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) to the committee. The role of this appointee is to serve as an impartial member of the committee to ensure the integrity of University standards as they apply to the Ph.D. process. The GFR attends both the comprehensive/qualifying exam and the final defense/oral examination.

DEGREE PLAN

The student's advisory committee, in consultation with the student, will develop a degree plan **no later than the end of the first long semester (Fall/Spring) for M.S. students or second long semester for Ph.D. students.** The plan must be on the official form approved by the advisor(s)

and committee and can be obtained from Ms. Ronnie Emanuel, Ronnie.emanuel@tamucc.edu. It is then submitted electronically for LSCI, S&E, and CGS approval.

At least 36 semester credit hours of approved coursework are required for the Non-thesis M.S. degree and 32 semester credit hours are required for Thesis M.S. degree. Coursework can be taken from TAMU-CC, TAMU, or TAMU-G. The advisor and/or committee may require additional coursework beyond the minimum required hours. For more details, refer to the Graduate Catalog. To remain in good standing, the university requires students to maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 ("B") for all graduate work undertaken.

At least 64 hours of coursework are required on Ph.D. degree plans for students with an M.S. degree; students without an M.S. degree require 96 hours on the degree plan. Coursework can be taken from TAMU-CC, TAMU, or TAMU-G. For more details, refer to the Graduate Catalog.

THESIS/DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROSPECTUS AND PROPOSAL

A Research Prospectus, a 1-page summary of the intended area of research, should be filed with the student's degree plan and committee selections. The Prospectus is a prologue to the formal Research Proposal and should be presented to the graduate advisory committee at the first official meeting of the committee. Since the Prospectus is only a prologue to the Research Proposal, input from the graduate advisory committee is expected to be limited to general comments on research focus and direction, as opposed to editorial or methodological-focused comments.

The Research Proposal (minimum of 10 pages of narrative) consists of a Literature Review and Methods sections from the thesis or dissertation. Students are required to develop a detailed proposal before most of the research begins. At the latest, the proposal should be submitted to Ms. Ronnie Emanuel, College of Science and Engineering academic advisor, **before the end of the second long semester for M.S. students and before the end of the fourth long semester for Ph.D. students.** The proposal should contain the following**:**

1. Title page. See Appendix 2 for an example of a correctly spaced and formatted title page.

2. Project Summary. Like an abstract, the Summary should be a synopsis of the proposed activity suitable for publication and not more than one page in length. It should describe the activities of the project. The Summary must clearly address, in separate statements, the two merit review criteria that are used by national science programs: 1) the intellectual merit of the proposed activity; and 2) the broader impacts resulting from the proposed activity.

3. Background & Relevance. This section summarizes the available scientific literature related to the problem or topic and explains why the proposed research is necessary.

4. Purpose, Objectives and Hypotheses. This section explicitly states the purpose of the research project. The objectives provide the steps in the research (not explicit methods) that will be used to answer the question. Hypotheses provide the explicit questions and predictions that will be tested in order to answer the larger research question.

5. Study site. If field research is planned, then a description of the study area including a map must be included. The study site should be briefly characterized in terms of physical and/or biological attributes.

6. Methods. This section describes in detail the methods of data collection and analysis you will use to meet each research objective or hypothesis. This is arguably the most important part of the proposal. Be sure to include how and when you will obtain any necessary permits.

7. Timeline. The timeline should be a table that includes distinct milestones showing the schedule for both research and academic work. Milestones should include completion of coursework, comprehensive/qualifying examinations, data-gathering for each objective or hypothesis, and analysis of each objective or hypothesis, writing of dissertation, submission to committee, and graduation.

8. Budget (Appendix 2). The budget should reflect an accurate assessment of the expenses that will be incurred during the research project and by whom they will be paid. Include financial or other support obtained from all sources.

Preparing the Research Proposal

Make all narrative material of the proposal clearly understandable to the reader through careful, well-organized writing, meaningful figures and tables, and adequate utilization of references. Use 10 or 12 characters-per-inch (cpi) type size with a plain book-type font such as Helvetica or Times Roman, not some unusual font. The same font must be throughout the proposal including figures and tables; do not mix fonts. The proposal should be double-spaced. No letters may extend beyond a left-hand margin of 1.5 inches and a 1-inch margin along the other three edges of the page. Number all pages in the proposal except the Title page. Page numbers on all numbered pages should appear in the top right corner approximately 1 inch from the top and right-hand edges of the page. Cite all references to the literature in the text using the name-date system which is the method most widely used in the sciences, e.g., Stilt (2000) or (Heron 1995; Seagull 1996; Seagull and Plover, 1996). Choose a Format Journal that uses this system. Do not cite sources by number, i.e. (1). If you use or adapt a figure from another author, cite the source in the figure caption. Generally, follow the format in the Format Journal when you develop the Literature Cited section. Use the same system of abbreviations, punctuation, underlining, and italics as the Format Journal. There is one exception (mainly applies to chemistry Format Journals): if the Literature Cited section of your Format Journal does not list the title of an article, make sure that you *do* include it to enhance the usefulness of your citations to readers. Citation of web-based material should follow the style of the Format Journal; some journals treat these as references, while others permit reference to them only within the text. The last date the URL was accessed must be included.

For doctoral projects involving research with vertebrate animals, a doctoral proposal hearing request form must be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies. One of the following

documents is required before the Office of Research Compliance can sign a doctoral proposal hearing request form involving research with vertebrate animals.

- An Animal Use Protocol (AUP) reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) that encompasses research described in the proposal
- A signed Doctoral Student Compliance Certification

Details can be found at: http://research.tamucc.edu/compliance/iacuc_grad_students.html
Students should consult with their graduate advisor(s) regarding which document is appropriate for their proposal.

M.S. students are not required to give a public proposal seminar; however, all Ph.D. students are required to present a **Dissertation Proposal Seminar** to fellow students and their Graduate Advisory Committee before most of the research begins (See Appendix 2 for example of proposal seminar announcement). This will clarify objectives, justification, methods, logic, and provide project orientation. The timing, location, and format of this presentation will be cooperatively planned by the student and the advisor, but with a public announcement to allow interested persons to attend. No qualifying examination or final defense will be scheduled until this requirement is met.

It is in the best interests of the student and the committee to **ensure the proposal is approved prior to the start of the research.** The student should report regularly on research progress to the advisor and the advisory committee to prevent last minute surprises or misunderstandings and to gain approval of any redirection.

DOCTORAL COMPREHENSIVE/QUALIFYING EXAMS

To be admitted to candidacy for the MARB Ph.D. degree a student must have a cumulative GPA and a degree plan GPA of at least 3.0, satisfy the residence requirement (completion of 9 credit hours in two consecutive long semesters), and pass the qualifying examination. Formal Comprehensive/Qualifying examinations (often referred to as "preliminary exams") for the Ph.D. may be given by the student's advisory committee if the student is within 6 hours of completing formal degree plan coursework (i.e., except Dissertation Project Research, MARB 6940) but **must** be given before the end of the fourth long semester for Ph.D. students holding an M.S. or before the end of the sixth long semester for Ph.D. students holding a B.S. An approved dissertation proposal must be on file prior to taking the qualifying exam. Students and/or committee chair should consult with Ronnie Emanuel, Ronnie.emanuel@tamucc.edu, to ensure that the proposal has been filed. *A student must be admitted to degree candidacy at least 1 year before the date of the final dissertation defense/oral examination.* CGS will not authorize a final dissertation defense/oral examination for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

Qualifying exams will cover all areas within the scope of the student's doctoral program, and will involve written exams from each advisory committee member, followed by an oral exam administered by the committee as a whole. Committee members may participate remotely if necessary, but ***must*** be present for the entire oral exam. A student will have (at most) 8 hours per day to complete the written questions from each committee member.

Each committee member will provide an evaluation of the student's performance on the written

exam. In order to proceed to the oral exam, a student must pass the written exam, as determined by the committee. Individuals unable to pass the written examination(s) may be permitted to retake the exam when sufficient time has passed to allow students to address inadequacies emerging from the first examination.

Upon completion of the oral exam, the graduate advisory committee members will then determine one final outcome ("Pass" or "Fail"). The GFR does not vote on student performance, but may ask questions and is responsible for ensuring fairness of the exam. Two or more dissenting votes in the qualifying exam constitutes "Fail". The graduate advisory committee chairman will report the results of the examination in a form to the CGS signed by all committee members. The form (Form "B") is available at: http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/forms.html under "Doctoral Program". A copy of the form should also be provided to Ronnie Emanuel.

If the student successfully passes the qualifying examination, they will be advanced to candidacy. All requirements for the degree must be completed within 7 years. If a student fails the qualifying exams, he/she may be dropped from the program OR the committee may recommend that the student complete a master's degree and be administratively withdrawn from the doctoral program. However, there is no guarantee of acceptance to master's program.

SEMINAR

All students in residence are required to register once for MARB 6102.

THESIS/DISSERTATION

Official guidelines for formatting of the thesis and dissertation can be found in the Master's and Doctoral Student Handbooks. When the thesis/dissertation draft is ready, the student must submit it to the chair of the advisory committee. The student should submit the draft as if it were the final version, ensuring that it is as complete as possible with respect to writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling, journal formatting requirements, and with all figures and tables in final format. The student should be prepared to go through the revision process numerous times before the committee chair is comfortable letting the rest of the committee review the document. A polished draft (including all manuscript components and page numbers) must be delivered to the advisory committee for review after the student and major advisor have agreed upon editorial changes; committee members should be given a minimum of two weeks prior (for M.S.) or one month (for Ph.D.) to review the document before the student schedules the final exam. The final exam is to be scheduled only after the advisory committee agrees that the thesis or dissertation is ready for defense. It is the student's and advisor's responsibility to ensure that the document is in good form both in terms of grammar and scientific style. The major role of the student's Graduate Advisory Committee is to offer guidance on study design and interpretation of results. It is not the committee's responsibility to edit careless writing. **Committee members have the right to reject documents that fail to meet these guidelines.**

Students may choose between two models of organizing the thesis/dissertation, the traditional model and the journal manuscript model. The traditional model presents the thesis/dissertation research in a single, cohesive manuscript. Information is presented sequentially and no section stands alone as a publishable document. The journal manuscript model presents thesis/dissertation

research as several discrete articles (i.e., Chapters), each appropriate for submission to a journal, bound together as the thesis/dissertation document. In the journal manuscript model, information may be repeated as necessary between articles so that each can stand alone as an academic work. The journal manuscript format must also include an overarching Introduction with a Literature Cited section that encompasses the entirety of the manuscript and a Summary/Conclusions section that brings the entirety of the research into context. Regardless of whether the traditional or journal manuscript model is chosen, the entire document must be submitted in one journal style. In other words, in the journal manuscript model, even though it is likely that articles will be submitted to several different journals, the entire thesis/dissertation must be presented in the style of only one journal. Headings and subheadings, punctuation, reference citations, and other details should follow the journal format exactly with few exceptions (details in the Master's and Doctoral Student Handbooks).

FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

Once the thesis/dissertation is completed and approved by the advisory committee, the results of the research must be presented orally and publicly. Deadlines for scheduling the thesis seminar and final defense/oral examination can be obtained from Ronnie Emanuel. Deadlines for scheduling the dissertation seminar and final defense/oral examination are posted in the calendar on the CGS website: http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/doctoral_dates.html. The final defense/oral examination should take place immediately following the seminar. Refer to Appendix 3 for seminar announcement formatting.

The final doctoral examination is scheduled by submitting the appropriate form (Form E under Doctoral Program at http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/forms.html) to the CGS. Final oral examinations must be held on campus. Examinations via TTVN may also be requested through the CGS in advance with a statement indicating location of each member and the student.

The purpose of the final defense and oral examination is to allow advisory committee members to gauge the scope of the student's understanding of the principles and significance of the discipline of the thesis/dissertation research. For Ph.D. students, it complements the doctoral qualifying examination, which measured overall knowledge in the field, by allowing a more detailed assessment of specific knowledge as it applies to the dissertation research. The exact format and scope will vary among students depending on both their advisory committee and the nature of their research. Although the final oral exam may focus on the thesis/dissertation, additional examination topics from the general sciences, biology, and marine biology may be addressed or develop as an outgrowth of the normal discussion of the student's research or professional activities.

The graduate advisory committee will decide whether a student has passed the final defense/oral examination. Regardless of whether the student passes or fails, the committee will discuss with the student their assessment of the student's performance. If a student fails, the exam may be retaken only once after at least four months have passed and will require reenrollment in MARB 6394. Results of the final exam must be reported to the CGS using Form F (http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/forms.html).

FINAL APPROVAL OF THESIS/DISSERTATION

Any member of the graduate committee, Program Coordinator, Department Chair, or CGS can reject the thesis/dissertation at any stage of the submission and approval process. Rejection of the manuscript can occur for many reasons including (but not limited to):

1. The manuscript does not conform to the required format.
2. The manuscript is messy, poorly produced, or contains grammatical or spelling errors.
3. The manuscript describes scientific data inconsistent with the research project approved in the dissertation proposal.
4. The paper contains errors, experimental and/or conceptual flaws, inappropriate analysis of data, erroneous conclusions, or other scientific inaccuracies.
5. The paper contains plagiarized work. The manuscript will be scrutinized by "Turnitin" or other similar software.

Students and their committees must allow time for this process before any document is transmitted out of the department. Final deadline to submit documents for departmental approval is 1 week before the deadline published by TAMU-CC. Final approval is the responsibility of the Department Chair. After a student has successfully presented the seminar, completed the defense/oral examination, and completed all changes to the thesis/dissertation manuscript that have been requested by the committee, she/he must submit the thesis/dissertation electronically to ProQuest. Consult the CGS Master's or Doctoral Student Handbook for details about the submission process. All students (M.S. and Ph.D.) must also complete and sign a Copyright & Availability Form (obtain from Ronnie Emanuel).

GRADUATION

TAMU-CC confers graduate degrees at the close of each regular semester and 10-week summer session. Final degree audits are conducted by making an appointment with Ronnie Emanuel of the College of Science and Engineering Advising Center for clearance the semester prior to planned graduation. These deadline dates are published each semester by the Office of the Registrar at http://registrar.tamucc.edu/degrees_graduation/apply_for_grad.html.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Each Spring, students will receive a request to fill out a progress report for the MARB IDP. Students who fail to complete the report may lose financial support for future semesters, and also have a registration block placed on them until this is completed.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

MARB Program Coordinator (michael.wetz@tamucc.edu; 361-825-2132).
MARB Academic Advisor (Ronnie.emanuel@tamucc.edu; 361-825-2654).

APPENDIX 1: FINANCIAL AID SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

General information about graduate assistantships:

- Graduate Assistantships (GAs) require that a person be a current student in one of the graduate programs in the College of Science & Engineering (S&E) at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMU-CC). In addition to being currently enrolled in a graduate program (i.e., to receive a GA, the student cannot have graduated already), the GA student must be:
    - Currently enrolled in graduate classes—the GA must be enrolled in at least 9 graduate hours for spring or fall (3 hours for summer).
    - In good academic standing—the GA student must have an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher on all graduate work at TAMU-CC. (For incoming students, the GPA of the last 60 hours of undergraduate and graduate work is used.)
    - Making satisfactory progress toward the degree—University-based assistantships are only provided for a limited time. For M.S. students, this is four long (fall or spring) semesters; for Ph.D. students, this is eight long semesters. Additional semesters of support may be requested on a semester by semester basis but may not be available. Assistantships provided through individual faculty members' funds may extend beyond these time limits.
- A GA is considered to be a 50% (half-time) employment position. The GA student is expected to work approximately 20 hours per week.
- A student with a GA is eligible for health insurance benefits.
- Having a GA makes an out-of-state student eligible to pay in-state tuition if: 1) the student is employed for 50% effort or more, 2) the student starts on or before the 12th class day of fall or spring (4th class day for summer), and 3) the student is appointed to the position for the entire semester. (Out-of-state tuition waivers are covered in a separate section below.)
- GAs are awarded in two major categories:
    - (Graduate) Teaching Assistantships (TAs). As the name implies, a TA requires that the student teach. In most cases, the student with a TA must have 6 contact hours of teaching per week. This is usually teaching three two-hour laboratories or teaching two three-hour laboratories. The other 12 hours per week (enough to make the 20 hours of a half-time appointment) are for instruction-related activities (in laboratory, lecture or both) such as preparation, clean-up, grading, proctoring, TA meetings, office hours, field trip vehicle driving, inventory, etc.
        - Application: Information about applying for Teaching Assistantships in the College of Science and Engineering is available at http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/students/gradfunding.html. Other units on campus that offer Teaching Assistantships will have their own application process.
        - Offer letter: If you are offered a TA, you will receive an offer letter signed by the Dean of the College of S&E.

- (Graduate) Research Assistantships (RAs)
  - Application: Research Assistantships are arranged through individual faculty members.
  - Offer letter: If you are offered an RA, you will receive an offer letter signed by the Dean of the College of S&E.

Financial FAQs about graduate assistantships:

- *Do I need to report GA salary as income?* Yes.
- *Do I need to report the actual monetary value of GA benefits as income?* No.

SCHOLARSHIPS

General information about scholarships

- Scholarships are "gifts" of money, usually with no expectation that the money will be repaid or that work will be performed to "earn" the money. Scholarships are often competitive. Criteria used for selection may include GPA, test scores, recommendations or other predictors of success.
- A student does **not** receive benefits such as health insurance or retirement because he or she has a scholarship.
- Having a scholarship of $1,000 or more makes an out-of-state student eligible to pay in-state tuition. (Out-of-state tuition waivers are covered in a separate section below.)

OUT-OF-STATE TUITION WAIVERS

General information about the process:

- Eligibility to pay in-state tuition is available to all students who are employed at least 50% by the university. There are no limits to the number of people who may be supported by this waiver.
- Eligibility to pay in-state tuition is available to students who have a scholarship of $1,000 or more. The university can offer only a limited number of waivers based on scholarships, so not everyone with a scholarship is guaranteed a waiver of out-of-state tuition.
- Because Texas residents do not need one, and not all out-of-state scholarship recipients receive one, an out-of-state tuition waiver is **not** automatically awarded when a student has a scholarship or assistantship. This is especially true when assistantship or scholarship decisions are made as the beginning of a semester approaches. An out-of-state student with an assistantship and/or scholarship should check on their tuition/fees bill (available online) to see if the out-of-state tuition waiver has been processed.
- Application: The tuition waiver form is separate from the offer letter for a scholarship or assistantship. This form is processed by the College of Graduate Studies. For an assistantship, the form is completed by the student and processed through the S&E Dean's Office. An assistantship offer letter, signed by the S&E Dean is necessary for the form to be signed in the dean's office.

PAYMENT OF TUITION BY A FACULTY MEMBER'S FUNDS

General information about the process:

- By Texas state law, institutions cannot completely waive a student's paying tuition. In some cases, some or all of a student's tuition and/or fees may be paid through a faculty member's funds.
- This option is not always available. It is up to the student to determine if the faculty member has the funds (and the ability) to pay the student's tuition. As financial situations can change, the student should check to make sure that the tuition payment is available each semester.

FINANCIAL AID

General information about financial aid:

- Student Loans: A student should work with the Financial Aid Office on campus to arrange a financial aid "package" that is specific to his or her individual situation. In many cases, several "packages" are possible depending on other sources of funding, the student's financial status, etc. Once the optimal "package" is arranged, the student must accept (or reject) the financial aid "package." Note that deadlines for accepting/rejecting a financial aid "package" may be earlier than notifications and deadlines associated with other sources of income (e.g., assistantships and scholarships). Accepting a year-long loan in fall means that half will be given in fall and half in spring.
- Scholarships, Assistantships, Grants: Many factors including the student's personal situation and other sources of income (e.g., scholarships, assistantships, grants) affect the availability and amount of student loans and other financial aid. It is incumbent upon the student (with the assistance of the faculty mentor and financial aid office) to explore the ramifications of the student's specific situation.

TIMELINES

Sometimes students need to make decisions on financial assistance before all information is in. For example, a student may need to accept or reject a financial aid package (loans) before he or she knows whether he or she is approved for an out-of-state tuition waiver. In those cases you should discuss the situation with your faculty advisor before making a decision.

APPENDIX 2: FORMAT OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL TITLE PAGE, BUDGET, AND SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT

Format of the Research Proposal Title Page

TITLE SHOULD APPEAR IN ALL CAPITALS AND BE CENTERED

prepared by

YOU A. STUDENT

MONTH, YEAR

for

The Graduate Committee

Marine Biology Program

Department of Life Sciences

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi, Texas

Approved: _____
Dr. A, Chairperson

_____
Dr. B, Member

_____
Dr. C, Member

_____
Dr. D, Member

_____
Dr. E, Department Chairperson

Format: *Title of Journal* used as format.

Format of the Research Proposal Budget

Table 1. Proposed budget for dissertation research.

Budget Item	Cost ($) TAMU-CC	Personal	Other*
Equipment			
Cryostat	1900.00		
Photographic light meter		30.00	
Spotting Scope, 45x		110.00	
Expendables			
Petri dishes	60.00		
Photographic film (10, 36 exposure rolls Ektachrome, with mailers)			76.00
Microslides, cover glasses			27.00
Reagent grade ethyl alcohol			80.00
Operational Expenses			
Travel, data collection		320.00	
Boat Rental	40.00		
Document Preparation			
Dissertation expenses		200.00	
Publication and reprints	300.00		
Subtotals	$2300.00	$660.00	$180.00

*Funds provided by student Grant-in-Aid-of Research from Sigma Xi

FORMAT OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT

(Note: Time, date and room are examples only)

RESEARCH PROPOSAL SEMINAR NOTICE
MARINE BIOLOGY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF LIFE SCIENCES
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI

SUBJECT:	Official Title of Your Research Proposal
SPEAKER:	You A. Student
MAJOR ADVISOR:	
DATE:	Tuesday, March 15, 2005
TIME:	3:00 p.m.
PLACE:	Center for Instruction, TAMU-CC Room 109

ABSTRACT

A 50-200 word abstract of your research proposal should appear here.

[NOTE: Students should post this notice electronically to faculty members and graduate students involved in the MARB and other graduate programs via the typical listserves.]

APPENDIX 3: FORMAT OF THE THESIS/DISSERTATION SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT

Format of the seminar announcement

THESIS OR DISSERTATION [Pick one] SEMINAR NOTICE
MARINE BIOLOGY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF LIFE SCIENCES
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI

SUBJECT: Official Title of Your Thesis/Dissertation

SPEAKER: You A. Student

MAJOR ADVISOR:

DATE: Day of week, Month Day, Year

TIME: Pick a time

PLACE: Location

ABSTRACT

The abstract of your dissertation or graduate project should appear here (shortened version if necessary). An abstract of 50-200 words length is recommended for inclusion in the Graduate Seminar Notice.

[NOTE: Students should post this notice electronically to faculty members and graduate students involved in the MARB and other graduate programs via the typical listservs.]

APPENDIX 4: MARB PROGRAM APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- ❑ Identify mentor match.

- ❑ Complete Application and submit the application fee.

- ❑ Submit an essay of not more than 1000 words describing educational backgrounds, career interests, goals and challenges. Include any relevant supplemental materials such as publications or resumes of relevant experiences. Indicate name(s) of faculty member who is willing to serve as your mentor/major advisor.

- ❑ Request 3 letters of evaluation/recommendation.
  - You should request evaluations/recommendations from individuals who are familiar with your academic achievement and potential and provide them with the required evaluation forms.
  - If you have been out of school for a number of years and are unable to contact former professors, you may request evaluations/recommendations from people such as employers who are familiar with you and who can comment on your potential to succeed in the program.
  - Completed evaluation/recommendations should be signed over the flap of the envelope by the person completing the form/letter and be mailed directly to CGS.

- ❑ Request official transcripts from all senior-level post-secondary institutions you attended. Transcripts must be sent directly to CGS. An official statement of the award of the degree or diploma is required for each degree completed.

- ❑ Request that the required test scores (GRE and/or TOEFL) be sent directly from the Educational Testing Service to CGS (Code 6849)
  - GRE and TOEFL scores must be not more than 5 and 2 yrs old, respectively.
  - International graduate students seeking assistantships must also obtain "English Proficiency Certification."

- ❑ Include copy of CV or Resume

- ❑ Apply separately for financial assistance.

- ❑ Application receipt deadlines:

	Fall Semester	Spring Semester
Domestic Students	December 1	September 1

APPENDIX 5: MARB PROGRAM FIRST-YEAR CHECKLIST

- ❑ Meet with MARB Program Chair prior to enrolling for first semester classes

- ❑ Form Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC) by end of first semester (M.S.) or second semester (Ph.D.)
  - Committee must include at least 3 (M.S.) / 4 (PhD) faculty members

- ❑ File the Preliminary Degree Plan with Ms. Ronnie Emanuel, College of Science & Engineering academic advisor, by end of 1st semester (M.S.) or 2nd semester (Ph.D.).
  - Leveling coursework
  - Elective coursework
  - Dissertation topic
  - Formulate Research Prospectus

- ❑ Meet GAC at least annually to update progress