

Biology Program of Study Guidelines

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The Program of Study (PoS) documents the graded courses and research hours to be taken to satisfy the course-based requirements of the graduate degree. There is flexibility to design Programs of Study tailored to the backgrounds and research interests of individual students. This should ideally be a collaborative process between the student, PI and other committee members, and can be a good topic of discussion during the student's first committee meeting. A good program of study needs to meet the formal requirements of the degree being sought but should also be carefully tailored to give both specific training needed for the student's graduate research and also the general knowledge expected of anyone with a graduate degree in that area of biology.

The [KSU Graduate Handbook](#) is an excellent resource for questions about Programs of Study that aren't addressed in these guidelines.

Biology MS Program of Study:

- 30 credit hrs total.
- At least 22 hrs graded coursework (typically 22-24 hrs),
- At least 18 of the graded hours must be at the 700 level or above.
- 6-8 hrs research credit (BIOL 898).
- BIOL 863 (Professional Skills and Ethics) is the only required course.
- All courses in the major field of study must be at the 600 level or above.
- No more than 6 hrs of supporting coursework at the 500 level can be included.
- No more than 3 hrs of 'Problems' (e.g., BIOL 891) or other individualized study courses are allowed.
- Some transfer credit from prior graduate coursework may be possible- see below for details.

Biology PhD Program of Study:

- 90 credit hrs total.
- 24-30 hrs graded coursework.
- At least 15 of the graded hours must be at the 800 level or above.
- At least 30 hrs research credit (BIOL 998), but typically 60-66 hrs.
- BIOL 863 (Professional Skills and Ethics) is the only required course.
- All courses in the major field of study must be at the 600 level or above.
- For students with a prior master's degree, no more than 6 hrs of supporting coursework outside the major field of study can be at the 500 level. For students without a prior master's degree, no more than 12 credit hrs at the 500 level are allowed.
- No more than 6 hrs of 'Problems' (e.g., BIOL 891) or other individualized study courses are allowed.
- Some transfer credit from prior graduate coursework may be possible- see below for details.

Microbiology PhD Program of Study:

- 90 credit hrs total.
- 24-30 hrs graded coursework.
- At least 15 of the graded hours must be at the 800 level or above.
- At least 30 hrs research credit (BIOL999) but typically 60-66 hrs.
- BIOL 863 (Professional Skills and Ethics) is required.
- Microbiology PhD students are also required to take BIOCH 755 and 765 (Biochemistry I and II) but these can be waived with permission of the committee and graduate program director.
- All courses in the major field of study must be at the 600 level or above.
- For students with a prior master's degree, no more than 6 hrs of supporting coursework outside the major field of study can be at the 500 level. For students without a prior master's degree, no more than 12 credit hrs at the 500 level are allowed.
- No more than 6 hrs of 'Problems' (e.g., BIOL 891) or other individualized study courses are allowed.
- Some transfer credit from prior graduate coursework may be possible- see below for details.

Creating your Program of Study

The PoS should be submitted to the Graduate School by the end of your second semester of graduate study. The PoS form is also how you notify the Graduate School of the initial membership of your supervisory committee.

- MS committees consist of the major professor and at least **2** other KSU graduate faculty members
- PhD committees consist of the major professor and at least **3** other KSU graduate faculty members, one of whom must be from outside Biology.
- Committee members are normally members of the graduate faculty at KSU, but faculty members from other institutions can be included to provide specialized expertise. Contact the Biology graduate program director in advance if you wish to do this as there is paperwork involved and it requires the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

Programs of study are submitted by the student on a web form and subsequently routed electronically for approval by your PI ('Major Professor'), the other members of your committee and the Biology Graduate Program Director. After approval by all committee members and the GPD, it will be reviewed by a degree analyst at the Graduate School who checks that it meets the requirements of the degree.

Program of Study online form: <https://gradforms.ksucloud.net/program-of-study/>

Changing your Program of Study

You may need to revise your Program of Study after it has been approved. For example, a planned course may no longer be offered and an alternative course may need to be substituted, or you and your committee may decide to change specific classes as your needs and interests evolve.

Program of Study Change form: <https://gradforms.ksucloud.net/program-change/>

You may also find yourself needing to change the membership of your supervisory committee. This can be accomplished with the *Committee Change form*: <https://gradforms.ksucloud.net/committee-change/>

When you apply to schedule your final examination and defend your thesis/dissertation, the Graduate School will check that you have actually taken all the courses listed on your PoS. It is best to make any changes to the PoS *before* you submit the Request to Schedule Final Examination. The PoS can still be changed at that point, but you don't want to find yourself preparing to defend and then realize at the last minute that you don't have the right number of credits in a specific category or some other major problem.

Things to watch out for when preparing your PoS

-Your research hours will span multiple semesters but they should be entered on a single line showing the total number of planned research hours and entering 'multiple' in the 'semester' field. Be sure to list the correct research credits for your degree program: Biology MS (BIOL 898), Biology PhD (BIOL 998), Microbiology PhD (BIOL 999). If you've taken research credit under different course numbers for rotations, etc. then do list those separately. Rotation credit (BIOL 891) should be listed on a separate line for each lab you rotated in.

-Make sure that what you have written down meets the requirement of the degree- the right number of total credits, graded credits, upper level credits, research credits etc.

-Make sure that all the details of course names, numbers and credit hours are correct- the Graduate School will check all of this and may send your PoS back for revision if there are errors.

-PoS forms and most of the other graduate school forms must be approved by your committee but also by the Biology Graduate Program Director (currently Michael Veeman, veeman@ksu.edu). The Director of the Division of Biology can also give this program-level approval if the GPD is unavailable. There is a space on the web form to list the GPD's contact info together with all your other committee members. There's a separate space above where you can list an optional 'Graduate Program Advisor'. Biology does not have a staff member with this role so you don't need to list anyone there (you don't need to list the GPD twice).

Transfer credit

You may be able to transfer some credit from prior graduate-level training to your degree here. This can apply to students who have a prior graduate or professional degree, students who switched from one grad program to another, or students who took some graduate level courses after undergrad but not as part of a formal degree program. You cannot transfer graduate coursework taken as part of your undergraduate degree. The rules for transfer credit are quite intricate and are detailed in the KSU Graduate Handbook in sections [2D.5 and 2D.6](#) for MS students and sections [3D.5 and 3D.6](#) for PhD students. In general, MS students can transfer up to 10hrs of prior graduate coursework. PhD students can

transfer up to 30 credits from a prior master's degree and also up to 10 additional credits of other graduate coursework. See the KSU Graduate Handbook for full details.

There is a section on the Program of Study web form for transfer credit. If you have a prior MS degree, you can simply list the degree and request 30 hours of transfer credit. This counts towards the 90 hours required for the PhD degree but note that you still need to meet the degree requirements for graded coursework. Most PhD students with prior MS degrees will still take 15 hours of graded credits at the 800 level or above and at least 24 graded credits total. In some cases, it may be appropriate to have prior graduate coursework count towards the graded credit requirements for your current degree. This is at the discretion of the committee, and it is common to only transfer courses seen as deeply relevant to your degree here. For other graduate coursework you need to list the specific courses you wish to transfer. These must be approved by your committee, who assess whether they are relevant to your graduate study in the Division of Biology, and also by the Graduate School, who make sure they meet all the technical requirements. The Graduate School needs to be sent official transcripts for any coursework that you want to count as transfer credit (they will often have these already from your application to KSU).