

**Plan of Governance
Appendix D**

**Department of Environmental Science and Technology
University of Maryland**

**Policies Regarding Expectations of Graduate Students,
Advisors and Graduate Advisory Committees**

Approved April 2, 2009
Updated April 21, 2011

Assignment of an Academic Advisor

Admission to the ENST graduate program is dependent on the availability of at least one faculty member in the proposed major area of study who is willing to assume the responsibility of advising the student. The assignment of an Advisor is generally made by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Department's Graduate Committee, the prospective Advisor, and the graduate student. Much of the success of a graduate education depends on the close and effective relationship between students and their Advisors. As soon as possible after the student arrives, they should contact their Advisor to begin discussions regarding the plan of study and research.

Meetings between Students and Advisors

It is expected that regular interactions will occur between graduate students and their academic advisors, but the frequency and nature of the meetings will vary from case to case. Sometimes, informal exchanges will suffice, while in other circumstances, more formal meetings will be needed. At a minimum, at least one meeting will be held each semester, to review and evaluate the progress of the student toward their coursework and research goals.

Formation of the Student's Advisory Committee

Advisors are responsible for appointing an Advisory Committee, preferably in consultation with the student. This Advisory Committee will assist the student with the development of a plan of study, and with the planning and organization of thesis or dissertation research. The Advisory Committee should be formed as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than the end of the second semester after the student's entry into the Department's graduate program. This committee will ordinarily be nominated to serve as the student's Examining Committee, so it should be appointed with attention to Graduate School requirements for the composition of an Examining Committee.

The function of the Advisory Committee is to provide guidance to the student in all aspects of the graduate program. It is important to establish a strong working relationship with the Advisory Committee, and the student is encouraged to make good use of the collective expertise of this group of faculty. The Advisory Committee will meet with the student at a minimum of once each year to discuss the student's progress both academically and with respect to research.

Developing a Plan of Study

The student's plan of study should be drafted through consultation between the student and Advisor with input from the Advisory Committee. The ENST Plan of Study form is to be completed no later than the end of the second semester of study. It is to be approved and signed by the Advisor and all members of the Advisory Committee before filing with the Director of Graduate Programs.

Doctoral Students Advancement to Candidacy

Doctoral students must pass a written and an oral comprehensive exam and prepare a written research proposal that must be approved by the student's Advisor and members of the Advisory Committee before the student will be advanced to candidacy.

Developing a Research Proposal

A written Research Proposal is to be developed by the student with the assistance of the Advisor and the Advisory Committee. Copies of the proposal should be sent to committee members at least one week prior to a meeting of the committee, called to review and discuss the proposal. Comments, criticisms and suggestions by the committee should be considered for the development of a revised final proposal. The review of the research proposal is among the most important functions of the committee and is arguably its best opportunity to provide criticism and to ensure research rigor. All committee members must demonstrate their approval of the proposal by signing the ENST form for this purpose; this signature may occur at the end of the proposal review meeting or following review of the revised proposal. For MS students, the revised proposal should be submitted to the ENST Office of Graduate Studies by the end of the second semester of study. For PhD students, the revised proposal should be submitted by the end of the second year of study and prior to being advanced to Candidacy, although there may be advantages to the student of completing this earlier. At a minimum, the Research Proposal should include a clear statement of research objectives, a literature review, and a description of the experimental approach¹. A cover sheet signed by the student's Advisor and members of the Advisory Committee indicating their approval of the Research Proposal must be attached when the proposal is submitted. All research at the University must be conducted in accordance with federal guidelines and University policy regarding the use of human subjects, animal subjects, radioactive materials, genetically engineered organisms, biological materials, select agent toxins, highly toxic gases, scientific diving, boats, and chemicals.

Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive exam is intended to demonstrate that a student has adequate general knowledge, background and understanding to hold a PhD in a given field, and to undertake doctoral level research; it is not an evaluation of the student's research proposal. The comprehensive examination for doctoral students includes a written part followed by an oral part, both of which are coordinated by the student's advisor. The Advisory Committee² conducts both parts of this examination, and then informs the Department (Director of Graduate Studies) of the

¹ Committee expectations for the student's research proposal should be commensurate to the degree objective of the student (ie. proposals are expected to be more comprehensive for students in PhD vs MS programs).

² By the time of the comprehensive exam, the student's committee is required to reflect the campus requirements for the dissertation defense and include five members of the graduate faculty.

results³. The written part is composed of portions contributed by committee members and administered over a maximum of a two week period⁴. The oral part of the comprehensive exam is intended to provide an opportunity to further explore questions and issues raised in the written exam and should be scheduled within one month of the written part; all committee members are expected to participate in the oral exam. A student will have passed the exam if they receive four positive votes from committee members present at the oral portion of the exam. Students failing the comprehensive examination may retake it one time after a period of six months of the date of the first examination. A second failure will result in termination of the student's program unless a petition from the student to the ENST Graduate Committee is approved to allow the student to change from a Ph.D. to an M.S. program.

Graduate Seminar ENST 798

During each semester, the weekly ENST Graduate Seminar is an important centerpiece of our departmental community. It is the place where our graduate students and faculty have the opportunity to inform the larger group about their proposed or current research, and to benefit from constructive dialogue with a broad spectrum of the faculty and graduate community. Therefore, it is expected that all members of the ENST department will organize their schedules to attend this weekly event. All ENST graduate students are expected to attend weekly ENST Graduate Seminars.

Academic Probation

The minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) required by the Graduate School for graduation is 3.0, and grades below C are unacceptable for graduate credit. If a student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 at any time, the student must meet with the Advisory Committee as soon as possible in the semester following the occurrence of this deficiency. The purpose of this special meeting is to discuss the situation and to help the student set guidelines for its correction. A student whose cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0 average for two consecutive semesters of enrollment will not be permitted to re-enroll, and the Department will recommend termination of their admission by the Graduate School.

Compliance with Requirements

Responsibility for compliance with Departmental and Graduate School requirements rests with the student under the guidance of the Advisor and Advisory Committee. Students should be familiar with Graduate School requirements as outlined in the current issue of the Graduate Catalog.

³ A departmental form requires signatures of the committee members indicating the outcome of the comprehensive examination. A separate graduate school form requires the signature of the student's advisor and the ENST Director of Graduate Studies.

⁴ The written portions of the exam may be closed book or open book, at the discretion of the individual contributing the questions, but in all cases, questions from any single committee member should be able to be completed within a single day

Student Progress and ENST Benchmarks of Progress

Assuming a student enters the ENST graduate program having met our basic admission requirements, is supported on an assistantship, and is making normal progress toward completion of the degree, we expect the student to reach each of the following benchmarks in the time period indicated below.

| Benchmarks for Full Time ENST PhD Students. | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|----|--------|----|--------|----|--------|----|
| | Year 1 | | Year 2 | | Year 3 | | Year 4 | |
| | S1 | S2 | S1 | S2 | S1 | S2 | S1 | S2 |
| Initial meeting with academic advisor | X | | | | | | | |
| Formation and meeting of advisory committee | | X | | X | | X | | X |
| Completion of Plan of Study | | X | | | | | | |
| Completion of departmental teaching plan ⁵ | | X | | | | | | |
| Completion of Entrance Seminar | | | | X | | | | |
| Complete the majority of formal coursework | | | | X | | | | |
| Complete the comprehensive exams | | | | | X | | | |
| Approval of dissertation proposal | | | | X | | | | |
| Advance to candidacy | | | | | | X | | |
| Complete/defend the dissertation | | | | | | | | X |
| Complete the program/graduate | | | | | | | | X |
| Submission of Annual Report | | X | | X | | X | | X |

| Benchmarks for Full Time ENST MS Students. | | | | |
|---|--------|----|--------|----------------|
| | Year 1 | | Year 2 | |
| | S1 | S2 | S1 | S2 |
| Initial meeting with academic advisor | X | | | |
| Formation and meeting of advisory committee | | X | | X |
| Completion of Plan of Study | | X | | |
| Completion of departmental teaching plan ⁵ | | X | | |
| Completion of Entrance Seminar | | X | | |
| Complete the majority of formal coursework | | | X | |
| Approval of research proposal | | X | | |
| Complete/defend the thesis | | | | X ⁶ |
| Submission of Annual Report | | X | | X |

⁵ The “departmental teaching plan” is that plan by which each student supported as a graduate assistant intends to complete their two section teaching experience. The teaching assignment is to be coordinated by the student through their academic advisor in consultation with the Undergraduate Coordinator and the Directors of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies. Usually this is completed during the latter part of the Spring semester in preparation for the following academic year.

⁶ In order for research in some disciplines to be publishable, it must include data from two summer field seasons, and in those cases, a more reasonable benchmark to *Complete/defend the thesis* would be the 1st (Fall) semester of Year 3.

The responsibility to meet these benchmark falls primarily to the graduate students themselves, although we fully expect student progress toward benchmarks to be overseen and encouraged by the student's Advisor. Student progress will be reviewed annually by the ENST Graduate Program Office. Students who fail to meet a benchmark within the allotted time frame will be notified, along with their Advisor, that they have been placed on probation, and will be given six weeks to present a plan for remedy. The policy of the Department is that graduate student funding will be renewed annually so long as the student is making satisfactory progress, as determined by our established benchmarks. Therefore, if a student fails to remedy the situation and complete the benchmark within the approved time period specified in their plan, or within a one semester probation period, they will face the possible loss of financial support. In such cases, prior to termination of financial support, personal interviews will be held with the student and the student's Advisor to determine if there are unusual or extenuating circumstances that should be considered.