

**BIOLOGY**  
**MASTER'S STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**2023-2024**



**COLLEGE OF SCIENCE**

6300 Ocean Drive  
Corpus Christi, TX 78412  
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Websites

**BIOL:** <http://www.biol.tamucc.edu/ms/> and  
<http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/degrees/science/biology.html>

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<http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/>*

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## SECTION I. BIOLOGY PROGRAM

### **Introduction**

This handbook provides guidance to students applying for and enrolled in the Biology (BIOL) master's degree (M.S.) program at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi (TAMUCC). It contains information about the requirements for successfully completing the degree, the course of study, selecting an advisor and graduate committee, choosing whether to pursue the thesis or professional (non-thesis) course of study, and the final oral examination. This handbook should be used in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) (be sure to select correct catalog in menu). The BIOL Handbook lists requirements specific to the BIOL program that are above and beyond what is described in the catalog. Additional graduate school requirements and specific rules and procedures can be found in the [College of Graduate Studies \(CGS\) Master's Student Handbook](#) and the [TAMU-CC University Handbook](#). There is also a Style Guide available from the MS BIOL coordinator that contains detailed instructions for preparing the thesis prospectus, thesis proposal, thesis or professional paper, and master's defense seminar.

### **The M.S. in Biology**

The Master of Science in Biology is designed for graduate students who wish to become knowledgeable leaders and professionals in fields of study that range from organismal biology and ecology to the biomedical sciences. The M.S. in Biology is a very flexible program that allows the course of study to be tailored to the student's interests and career goals.

The **goal** of the M.S. in Biology is:

- To provide graduates with a broad understanding of the biological sciences as well as education, training, and skills in a specific discipline.
- To foster creative independence and critical thinking in graduates so they are competent to practice in and contribute to a variety of professions and fields of scholarship.

The **expectations** of our students are to:

- Gain expertise in specific biological field including knowledge of the relevant scientific literature related to their thesis or professional paper.
- Understand the scientific method and be able to design and conduct experiments.
- Be able to accurately describe (orally and in writing) biological research.
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct a thorough and complete survey of the relevant scientific literature pertaining to their approved topic of study.
- Demonstrate the ability to collect, organize and interpret data and produce a thesis or professional paper from an experiment, study, or project.
- Develop technical writing and communication skills that will benefit them in their professional careers.

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## **The Biology Program MS Student**

Prospective students who wish to pursue a BIOL M.S. degree should have strong life sciences backgrounds. Students accepted into the degree program will generally have undergraduate degrees in an area of the biological sciences (e.g., Biology, Ecology, Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences) with coursework that includes chemistry (e.g., general chemistry, organic chemistry, biochemistry). The BIOL faculty welcome students from diverse academic paths as well as those who have some research experience.

Graduate study provides advanced, specialized training that strengthens academic and professional competence by broadening scientific horizons as well as development of specific expertise. Graduate students must assume greater responsibility and exercise more individual initiative than was necessary as an undergraduate. The graduate faculty emphasize productive research, employ seminar methods more frequently, and anticipate higher levels of class participation. To be successful in the master's program, students must display commitment to independent study, must become familiar with past and current research, and must relate ongoing research to the investigations of other scholars.

### **Biology Administrative Staff**

**Department Chair:** Greg Buck, PhD (interim)

**BIOL Program Coordinator:** Kim Withers, Ph.D.

**Administrative Staff:** Teresa Ruiz (interim Academic Advisor), Mr. Ken Brown, Ms. Sarah Wood, Ms. Susana Reyes

### **M.S. Biology Graduate Faculty**

The M.S. Biology Graduate Faculty is housed within the Department of Life Sciences. To review faculty member research interests and to find faculty contact information go to the [Department of Life Sciences Directory](#).

### **Get Connected**

Most official college and program information for students is distributed on listservs. A full list of all university listservs may be found at [www.sci.tamucc.edu/students/listserves.html](http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/students/listserves.html). It is recommended that you subscribe to the graduate science and engineering student listserv (SciTech-GradStudents, [scitech-gradstudents@listserv.tamucc.edu](mailto:scitech-gradstudents@listserv.tamucc.edu)) (Historical fact: It is called SciTech as the college used to be Science and Technology.) Other listservs that may be of interest include: MSGSO - Marine Science Graduate Student Organization ([marigrad-list@sci.tamucc.edu](mailto:marigrad-list@sci.tamucc.edu)) and Opportunities (scholarship/internship, [opportunities-list@listserv.tamucc.edu](mailto:opportunities-list@listserv.tamucc.edu)).

## **SECTION II. ADMISSION INFORMATION**

### **BIOL Program Admissions Criteria**

Students seeking admission to a graduate degree program with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi must submit an admission application form, application fee, official transcripts, and program-specific supporting documents. All documents **must** be received by the College of Graduate Studies by the designated deadlines (see below).

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College of Graduate Studies  
6300 Ocean Dr., Unit 5843  
Faculty Center, Suite 178  
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

[gradweb@tamucc.edu](mailto:gradweb@tamucc.edu)

Phone: 361.825.2177

Fax: 361.825.2775

## **Application Submission**

Specific information on University criteria, application procedures, fees, and additional requirements for international applications are found in the [TAMUCC Graduate Catalog](#) and at the [College of Graduate Studies Website](#). To apply, complete the online Graduate Studies Application Form found at: [http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/new\\_students/application\\_process.html](http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/new_students/application_process.html)

## **Program Requirements & Information**

Below is a summary of the supporting documents required by the BIOL program:

- Completed university graduate application form.
- An essay of about 1000 words describing educational and career goals, interests as they relate to the faculty in the BIOL programs, and a statement identifying the faculty member who has agreed to serve as chair of the graduate advisory committee.
  - **Prospective students MUST have a commitment from a faculty member to chair their graduate committee and to have the student join the faculty member's lab.**
  - **If you do not have this commitment, your application will not be considered.**
- Three letters of evaluation from people familiar with your scholarly potential.
- Transcripts of all previous undergraduate and graduate work (including transcript evaluations of all work done at foreign institutions).<sup>1</sup>
- Any relevant supplemental materials such as publications or resumes that include information about relevant experiences.
- International students have additional requirements as outlined at the College of Graduate Studies [website](#). The BIOL program requires TOEFL or IELTS scores ([click here for more information](#)) for students from countries where English is not the native language. These scores must not be more than two (2) years old from the date the application was received AND must meet university criteria.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure that the application is complete and received by the deadline to assure full consideration. Acceptance into the BIOL M.S. program is competitive and based on

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<sup>1</sup> To be considered official, all required postsecondary academic records must be submitted directly from the registrar's office and bear the seal and signature of the registrar of the institution. In some foreign countries, the controller of examinations or principal may certify academic records. Official English translations, not interpretations, are required from most countries. Applicants must submit external transcript evaluations along with copies of the official transcripts. An applicant's file will not be considered complete without the submission of external transcript evaluations.

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consideration of all application materials. Students accepted into the program will typically have demonstrated an ability to succeed in an academically rigorous environment as reflected by a high GPA. Relevant life experiences may also provide a substantial basis for consideration.

Students whose GPA for the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework is less than 3.0 (4.0 scale) are not competitive. Even if accepted, students in this situation are not eligible for support (i.e., cannot be supported through teaching or research assistantships), including out-of-state tuition waiver. Students whose GPA for the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework is 2.5 or less (4.0 scale) will not even be considered for admission.

A campus visit with personal interviews involving prospective faculty mentors is recommended. To schedule a visit, please contact one of the following:

**Dr. Kim Withers**

BIOL Program Coordinator  
[Kim.Withers@tamucc.edu](mailto:Kim.Withers@tamucc.edu)  
 361.825.5907

**Mr. Ken Brown**

Sr. Administrative Assistant  
[Kenneth.Brown@tamucc.edu](mailto:Kenneth.Brown@tamucc.edu)  
 361.825.3907

## **Program Deadlines**

The BIOL and FAMA programs have two deadlines: 1) priority date deadlines and 2) late or last decision date deadlines. All students should strive to meet the priority deadline because it is used to make decisions regarding assignment of assistantships. All applications received after the priority date deadline are considered “late” applications. Deadlines are typically earlier for international students because of the time required to process visa applications for international students. For the most up-to-date application deadlines visit <http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/degrees/science/biology.html>.

<b>MS BIOL PROGRAM APPLICATION DEADLINES</b>			
	<b>Admission Semester</b>		
<i>Domestic Students</i>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer I</b>
<b>Priority</b> deadline to receive complete applications.	February 1	August 1	February 1
Decision date for <b>Priority</b> deadline	March 1	September 1	March 1
Last date for receipt of complete applications.	August 1	December 15	May 1
Decision date for late applications.	August 15	January 5	May 15
<i>International Students</i>	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Summer I</b>
<b>Priority</b> deadline to receive complete applications.	February 1	June 1	February 1
Decision date for <b>Priority</b> deadline	March 1	July 1	March 1
Last date for receipt of complete applications.	April 15	September 15	February 1
Decision date for late applications.	May 15	October 15	March 1

The acceptance process has two steps: 1) review and vote for acceptance by the designated MS BIOL program faculty, and 2) final and official acceptance by the College of Graduate Studies. The applicant will be notified of acceptance or rejection only by the College of Graduate Studies.

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## **Assistantships**

Students seeking full consideration for fellowships or assistantships (teaching or research) should have a completed application file submitted by the Priority Deadline (e.g., February 1 for Fall admission). However, applicants must apply separately for scholarships, assistantships, and fellowships at the College of Science & Engineering (<http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/students/gradfunding.html>). Remuneration for M.S. assistantships, which is currently set at \$1200/month for 9-month half-time (50%, 20 hours/week) appointments, are consistent regardless of whether a student is a teaching or research assistant. **Students are only eligible to work half-time.**

After the priority deadline, if funding is available, awards will be made on a first come, first served basis. Students who have received offers for fellowships or assistantships **must notify** the program coordinator (Kim Withers) and the College of Science TA Coordinator (named in offer letter) of their acceptance by April 15 for Fall admission and November 15 for Spring admission (if assistantships are available). Otherwise, the University will assume that the offer has been rejected and will make offers to other deserving students.

Admission to the program is decided independently of financial awards. Students must first be accepted into the program before financial awards can be considered. For details regarding graduate assistantships and scholarships, refer to <http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/index.html>, respectively.

**Teaching Assistantships:** The State of Texas requires international graduate students whose native language is not English to obtain English proficiency certification before serving as graduate teaching assistants. See CGS Graduate Assistantship Handbook for details at <http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/funding/assistantships.html>.

**Research Assistantships:** A limited number of research assistantships are available through research institutes or centers and individual faculty members. Consult with institute or center directors and individual faculty members to identify these opportunities.

**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. If you have a financial aid situation, you should discuss the situation with your faculty advisor and the Financial Aid Office before making a decision. If your studies start being extended far beyond “normal” time for completion, a situation of “excessive” hours may occur that can lead to financial aid issues. This situation rarely occurs, but if it does, see a representative at the Financial Aid Office to check what is the process for continuing.

**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 Handbook](#) provides information on how to request an out-of-state tuition waiver.

## **Graduate Orientation**

The College of Graduate Studies hosts a general Graduate Student Orientation every Fall and Spring semester. The BIOL program schedules a Program Requirements Orientation separately, usually during

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the first week of classes, to ensure that all new graduate students in the program are able to attend. **Graduate students with teaching assistantships must attend training prior to the start of the fall and spring semester.**

## SECTION III. ACADEMIC PROGRESSION

### **Enrollment Status**

All MS BIOL students with teaching or research assistantships **MUST** be enrolled full-time, which is 9 hours during the fall and spring semesters and 3 hours during the combined summer session. If a student is unsupported and chooses not to enroll for some reason, they can only remain unenrolled for two semesters after which they will be dropped from the program and will have to reapply to complete their degree. The maximum time allowed to complete the M.S. degree is seven (7) years. After this time coursework will begin to expire. Students typically, and should plan to, complete their degree within 2-3 years.

All BIOL students must follow University rules governing graduate studies including, but not limited to: residency, recency of credit, leave, transfer credit, degree plans, grade point average, scholastic probation, enforced withdrawal, out-of-State tuition waivers, and the Texas 99-hour rule. All of these rules are described in the [TAMUCC Graduate Catalog](#).

### **Choosing a Degree Track**

The BIOL MS program gives students a choice between the thesis track and the professional (non-thesis) track. The **thesis track** can be thought of as a *research-intensive degree* while the **professional track** is *coursework-intensive with a research component*. Students should have discussed which track they will pursue with their graduate advisor before being accepted into the program.

### **Fulfilling BIOL Program Degree Requirements**

Regardless of track (thesis vs professional), all BIOL masters students must:

- form a committee appropriate to program and track
- have an approved degree plan
- develop a prospectus outlining the goals and objectives of their research project
- pass a final oral examination.

In addition, thesis-track students must:

- develop a research proposal
- conduct research
- write the thesis
- give a public seminar
- defend the thesis

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**Important – It is the student’s responsibility to ensure all forms, paperwork, and other degree requirements are completed in a timely manner. Continuing stipend support is contingent upon completing these milestones.**

### **The Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC)**

After being accepted into the BIOL program and enrolling, the most important first step for is forming the graduate advisory committee (GAC). All first semester BIOL students should work closely with their primary supervisor, the faculty member who agreed to take the student into their lab, with class registration and other program issues (the program coordinator may also be consulted). Ideally, students should select a GAC, with the aid of their primary supervisor(s), by the end of their first semester. The committee should be formed no later than the end of a student’s second semester in the program. The GAC will help the student develop their overall degree program, including determining a research topic, formulating a research plan, selecting coursework, approving the degree plan, reviewing and approving the final research product (thesis or professional paper), and administering any examinations. Beyond these functions, the chair and advisory committee members should serve as valuable mentors.

Composition and size of the GAC should reflect the scope of the intended graduate program and should be developed with substantial input from the student's primary advisor(s). After the committee is formed, your primary advisor will normally become your committee chair. Individual faculty members are under no obligation to serve on your committee or to be your committee chair. The decision not to serve is usually based on some definable criteria, such as work overload or incompatible research interests.

The graduate advisory committee consists of at least three (3) members. Two members must be of the Life Sciences Department graduate faculty, including the committee chair. Additional members from outside the Life Sciences Department graduate faculty or the university may be approved by Life Sciences Department and the College of Graduate Studies (CGS). In exceptional cases, individuals holding graduate faculty rank at TAMU-CC or another accredited institution may serve as co-chair with the unanimous approval of the Life Sciences Graduate faculty on the committee. In all cases involving the appointment of a non-BIOL-program-serving faculty member, a graduate faculty status request accompanied by a curriculum vitae and a rationale for the appointment must be filed with the Life Sciences Department and CGS and provided to the respective Program Coordinator.

Students **MUST** meet with their committee ***by the end of the first long semester but no later than the end of the second long semester***. The goal of the first committee meeting is to allow students to introduce themselves and their academic and research interests to the committee and to finalize a degree plan. Students should remain in close contact with their GAC during all phases of graduate study to keep them informed of progress and setbacks. Students must meet at least annually with their GAC to update the committee regardless of progress. **Students are responsible** for calling required annual meetings of the committee and any other meetings deemed necessary by either the student or a committee member. If a student is having problems with their GAC they should speak to their respective Program Coordinator. If an advisor or committee chair decides to not serve on a student’s GAC it is the responsibility of the student to find a replacement for that member or to find a new chair, otherwise the student may be dropped entirely from the university.

On occasion, it may be necessary to replace a committee member or a committee chair. If such a situation arises, the student should consult their committee chair or the BIOL program coordinator immediately. The Program Coordinator and the other members of the committee will determine if a change is

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necessary. The removal or replacement of a committee member requires a majority agreement of the remaining committee members and the Program Coordinator. Should a dispute arise between a student and any committee member, the student should consult with their committee chair, BIOL program coordinator, or the Department Chair.

## **Degree Plan**

Each student, with input from the GAC or faculty supervisor, formulates a degree plan, which details the coursework that the student will undertake for his/her degree program. The minimum number of hours that are taken by all M.S. students is 36 credit-hours at the 5000- or 6000-level; however, many students will take more than the minimum, either because they wish to expand their knowledge, or because their committee requires additional coursework to address deficiencies. To address deficiencies, the GAC may require a student to take coursework at the 4000-level or less; these courses are regarded as foundation work and will not be counted toward the total. Up to nine (9) credit-hours of graduate-level coursework may be approved for transfer from another university or program.

*A degree plan must be filed with the Academic Advisor for Life Sciences no later than the end of the second long-semester after the student begins his/her program.* The requirements for tracks and options are listed below.

## **Thesis and Professional Paper Research Prospectus and Proposal**

See the BIOL Style Guide regarding preparing the research prospectus and proposal. The Style Guide is available from the program coordinator.

**NOTE:** For projects involving research with vertebrate animals (e.g., fish), an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) protocol must be submitted to the [Research Compliance Office](#). The protocol must be approved by IACUC **before** any data is collected that will be used in your thesis. For projects involving human subjects (even surveys), an Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol must be submitted to the [Research Compliance Office](#). The protocol must be approved by IRB **before** any data is collected that will be used in your thesis.

Students should prepare protocol and other compliance forms along with their graduate advisor(s).

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

## **BIOL M.S. – Thesis Track Requirements**

The BIOL thesis degree program requires students to propose an original research project, conduct the proposed research, and then prepare a thesis manuscript based on that research (see the BIOL Style guide for more information about the preparation of the documents required to fulfill Thesis Track Requirements). The proposed research must be approved by the GAC and conducted while the student is enrolled at TAMUCC. The thesis must include review of the relevant literature, a description and statistical analysis of research results, and a discussion of the results that contextualizes the research

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within the larger body of research in the discipline. A minimum of 36 hours are required, which can include up to 4 hours of BIOL 5940 Project Research with approval of the GAC. In addition to the required credit hours associated with the research project, there are other required and elective courses that must be taken.

Course Number	Course Title	Credit Hours	Total Credit Hours
MATH 6315	Statistical Methods in Research	3	3
BIOL 5392	Thesis Proposal (proposal must be approved by GAC to receive credit. BIOL 5392 is a prerequisite for BIOL 5393)	3	3
BIOL 5393	Thesis Research (first draft of the thesis must be produced to receive credit) BIOL 5393 is a prerequisite for BIOL 5394.	3	3
BIOL 5394	Thesis Submission (final thesis manuscript must be approved by the GAC to receive credit)	3	3
BIOL 5102	Graduate Defense Seminar (taken in the last semester)	1	1
	Elective, specialized, topical coursework approved by the GAC		23*
		<b>Total</b>	<b>36*</b>

\*minimum number of credit hours required

### **BIOL M.S. – Professional (non-thesis) Track Requirements**

The BIOL professional track MS degree is designed to provide a broad understanding of biology and will especially benefit those who are already employed and are seeking advancement or additional training to enhance their knowledge and skills. This degree is heavily weighted toward additional coursework rather than research and consists of required and elective coursework, and a research project approved by the GAC that can typically be completed in one long semester. The professional paper produced must demonstrate the student's knowledge of the relevant background literature, their ability to collect, organize and analyze data, and their ability to contextualize their data with the broader body of work within the discipline (see the BIOL Style Guide for more information about the preparation of the documents required to fulfill Professional Track Requirements). A minimum of 36 credit hours are required for graduation. **Only 2 hours of BIOL 5940 Project Research will be counted toward the degree in the professional track.**

Course Number	Course Title	Credit Hours	Total Credit Hours
MATH 6315	Statistical Methods in Research	3	3
BIOL 5397	Directed Research (taken the semester when the Professional Paper will be completed, usually the last)	3	3
BIOL 5102	Graduate Defense Seminar (taken in the last semester)	1	1
	Elective, specialized, topical coursework approved by the GAC		29*
		<b>Total</b>	<b>36*</b>

\*minimum number of credit hours required.

### **Deadlines**

#### **Thesis/Professional Paper and Oral Examination Deadlines**

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Students must be able to formally present/defend the results of their research (thesis track and some professional track) and complete the oral examination administered by their GAC (or supervisors) by deadlines that are established by the College of Graduate Studies in order to graduate at the end of the semester. These are *generally two weeks before graduation* but should be verified with your academic advisor (not GAC supervisor) at the beginning of the semester the student determines in which they will be defending.

Thesis manuscripts must be approved and signed by the GAC and submitted online along with forms and fees according to the College of Graduate Studies [schedule](#) in any given semester.

Professional papers must be approved and signed by the GAC or faculty and internship supervisors and turned in to the Academic Advisor **on or before the last day of classes** in any given semester.

### **Graduation Deadlines**

You must submit a completed application for graduation through [SAIL](#) by the posted deadline. It is highly recommended that you make an appointment with your academic advisor to review your records and be sure you are clear (i.e., all requirements met) for graduation.

Graduation deadlines are posted by the [Office of the Registrar](#).  
[http://registrar.tamucc.edu/degrees\\_graduation/apply\\_for\\_grad.html](http://registrar.tamucc.edu/degrees_graduation/apply_for_grad.html).

#### **Commencement**

For dates, times and location of the commencement ceremonies please visit <http://commencement.tamucc.edu/>.

### **Interactions With Other Graduate Students**

Graduate education is not a solitary endeavor. Students must make opportunities to discuss their projects with other graduate students and offer to assist others in the field or laboratory. Beyond generating camaraderie, this will give students a more comprehensive understanding of the many specific issues and problems in coastal and marine systems, expose them to a broad array of lab/field techniques, provide ideas for research, and provide opportunities to reciprocate in supporting each other. Attending seminars and student presentations of proposals or research will allow you to see what is expected and should be viewed as another learning experience.

## **University/Standard College of Graduate Studies Information**

This section of the handbook includes standardized information about rules and policies pertaining to graduate education at Texas A&M University. It is not intended to be comprehensive. You are strongly encouraged to read the sections of the catalog pertaining to graduate students, which will provide more detail and additional topics that may impact you. You will also find information about your program.

### **Graduate Admissions**

To be admitted to a program of graduate study, an applicant must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education in the United States or an equivalent foreign institution. Decisions concerning admission to graduate study are based on all admission criteria. To be considered for the MS Biology graduate program a minimum last 60-hour GPA of 3.0 is required as is the commitment of a faculty member chair the student's graduate committee. All applications must be made through [Apply Texas](#). For more information about the application process, visit the [Application Process](#) page on the CGS website or see the Catalog, [Graduate Admissions section](#).

Graduate students should be aware of their enrollment status, as it may impact financial aid, veteran's benefits, or other important aspects of graduate life. In addition, international students have specific requirements about enrollment status. Enrollment status for graduate students is as follows:

Full-time graduate student	Fall or spring term = 9 hours Combined summer terms = 6 hours
Three-quarter-time graduate student	Fall or spring term = 7 hours Combined summer terms = 5 hours
Half-time graduate student:	Fall or spring term = 5 hours Combined summer terms = 3 hours

### **Continuous Enrollment**

The University does not have a continuous enrollment policy for master's students. However, you should be aware of your own program's requirements, which may differ from general University requirements. Master's students should also know that if they do not attend for two years, they will be required to reapply to the University. Students should consider applying for a leave of absence (see below), especially if the time-to-degree and recency of credits requirements will be impacted by a needed absence.

### **Leave of Absence**

Students experiencing life changing or catastrophic events should consult with their program coordinator and/or department chair and request a [Leave of Absence](#) in writing from the College of Graduate Studies using the [Request for Leave of Absence form](#). A student who is in good standing may petition for a leave of absence of no more than two full academic terms. The maximum number of leave of absence requests permitted in a program is two. A request for a leave of absence requires approval in advance by the faculty advisor, Program Coordinator, College Dean, and Graduate Dean. If the Graduate Dean approves the petition, the registration requirement is set aside during the period of time of the leave. Students should be aware that leaves of absences require suspension of all activities associated pursuit of the degree. See the catalog for more information.

### **Maximum Course Load**

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<http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/>

Graduate students may not register for more than 12 hours in a regular semester, 6 hours in a single session of summer school, or 12 hours in the combined summer session (not including Maymester) without the approval of the appropriate college dean. See the [Maximum Course Load](#) section in the catalog.

### **Repetition of a Course**

There are specific policies about repeating courses for higher grades, including the provision that graduate students may retake a maximum of two courses during graduate study at the University. Each course may be repeated only once. Some courses may be repeated for multiple credit if those courses are so designated in the course description and approved by the faculty or program advisor as designated by their college. Complete catalog information may be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog.

### **Time Limit to Degree**

The requirements for a master's degree at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi must be completed within seven years subsequent to admission to the program. The seven-year period begins the first semester of enrollment and is calculated from the date of degree conferral. Credit that is more than seven years old will not be counted toward a master's degree. Exceptions will require ***strong*** justification in writing from the student requesting the exception as well as submission of a revalidation plan. Credits earned at another university are not eligible for an exception. Written approval from the major department chairperson, the dean of the college offering the degree, the Graduate Dean, and the Provost are required. See the revalidation process below.

### **Revalidation of Courses Beyond Degree Time Limit**

In order to revalidate dated courses, students should carefully attend information in the catalog (see [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog. Revalidation requests should be made using the [Revalidation Request Form](#).

If your program has shorter time-to-degree limits, it may impact recency of credit and other timelines. See program information in this handbook or seek information from your Program Coordinator.

### **Academic Requirements for Graduate Work**

**Good Standing.** Graduate Students, including degree-seeking, certificate-seeking, and non-degree-seeking students are considered in “good academic standing” if they maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) on all graduate course work and earn a grade of S (Satisfactory), IP (In Progress, or CR (Credit) on all course work that does not affect GPA. A higher GPA may be required by some programs. In such cases, the higher standard will be substituted for 3.0 in all other matters related to good academic standing. A complete discussion of academic requirements including but not limited to scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal may be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog. For information regarding the effect of scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal, see the [Financial Assistance Suspension Policy](#) in the Tuition, Fees, & Financial Assistance section of the catalog.

### **Academic Integrity**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, which include but are not limited to illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, plagiarism, or collusion in any of these behaviors. All students should familiarize themselves with the full Academic Integrity Policy as well as the processes and procedures used to address violations thereof. You can find additional information in the [Academic Integrity](#) section of the catalog. Students can also access University Rules and Procedures [13.02.99.C0.04](#): Student Academic Misconduct Cases.

### **Additional Information**

Information, policies, and procedures about tuition, fees, financial assistance, scholarships, and other topics important to graduate students can be found in the catalog. In addition to the catalog, web pages for offices and services on campus provide expanded information, forms, and contact names/phone numbers. Some of those webpages include the following:

[College of Graduate Studies](#)

[Office of Student Financial Assistance](#)

[Office of International Education](#)

[GROW](#)

[Assistantships](#)