

# Department of Marine Sciences

## Fall and Spring Graduate Student Committee Meetings

### Overview

**All Marine Sciences graduate students are required to have one Advisory Committee meeting each Fall and Spring Semester.** A written report (date, persons in attendance, brief comments with respect to student progress and plans) of each meeting is to be sent to the MASC Graduate Student Coordinator, who will forward a copy to the MASC Performance Committee. The *Graduate Student Committee Meeting Report* form may be found below, or a copy may be obtained from the MASC Graduate Student Coordinator.

For the student's first year in the program, meetings will be scheduled by the chair of the student's Advisory Committee. Following that, it is the responsibility of the student to schedule the meetings. It is desirable to have all committee members in attendance at each meeting, however the realities of travel schedules and other commitments means that this will not always be the case. **It is recommended that meetings be scheduled to include all members when possible, but a majority of committee members must be in attendance at any given meeting.**

**If a student fails to hold a meeting twice within a 12-month period (i.e., skips 2 required meetings), the student may be considered "not in good standing" and will become ineligible to enroll the next semester.**

Committee meetings are an important opportunity not just for evaluation of the student's progress towards a degree, but also to get input from your assembled committee to determine exactly what is required of you in order to earn your degree. Regular committee meetings are an important tool for monitoring your progress, and can also serve as a "sanity check" for your work. You should ask your committee members for an honest appraisal of your progress. If you have a difference of opinion with your advisors, discuss it with them and be open to their suggestions for a solution without being defensive. If after talking to your advisor and to the members of your committee you still feel that the problem is not being addressed, talk to the members of the MASC Performance Committee (committee chair is the Director of Graduate Studies, Prof. John Bane, [bane@unc.edu](mailto:bane@unc.edu)).

### To Get the Most from Your Committee Meetings

The following are suggestions to students for how to get the most out of a committee meeting:

1. Make an **Outline** of the meeting and pass out copies to your committee. The Outline should cover all the topics you plan to address in your meeting – please see the Outline template below for suggestions. You can ask your advisor to help you make sure that the meeting moves along and you don't get bogged down on one topic.
2. Give a short (10-20 minute) **PowerPoint Presentation** of what you've done since the last committee meeting, and what you plan to do before the committee sees you again.

Discuss your research progress, how your classes tie into your thesis or dissertation plans, and strategies for upcoming projects. Especially if you think you haven't made impressive gains since the last committee meeting, this is a good time to get input on any sticking points you're having in your progress towards the degree. Your last slide can be a timeline of short-term and long-term goals. Then you can start with this slide in your next committee meeting, noting your progress in these goals.

One aspect you should endeavor to include in the discussion of your own research activities is progress made by others in your field – research results, new methods, ongoing controversies, and so on. This will encourage you to do a literature search at least twice a year, and it will help to keep your committee up to date. It doesn't have to be anything major, just a mention of two or three papers read, things heard in seminars, or posters seen at meetings.

3. Immediately after the meeting, write up a **Report** of what transpired. Summarize what you told your committee about your work, and list their key comments about it, as you understand them. This is a formal requirement, and the completed Report will be archived in your file for future reference (the Graduate Student Committee Meeting Report form is found on the last three pages of this document). Print out a copy and make sure everyone on your committee reads it, comments on it, and signs it. Then give the completed and signed Report to the Student Services Manager ([Rachelc@unc.edu](mailto:Rachelc@unc.edu)). This way, if you feel you may have misinterpreted what your committee wants you to do, you can review their comments. The goal of the Report is not to have a polished plan of research, but to make sure everyone is in agreement about what you are supposed to be spending your time working on. Use this to your advantage; for instance, if your committee agrees that you have finished a requirement, the Report will reflect that.

Remember that committee meetings are FOR YOU. These are opportunities to spell out exactly how you are going to fulfill the requirements for your degree. It's not every day that you have a group of experts giving your research their undivided attention, so take advantage of that. If you are struggling with something, committee members can help you get un-stuck. There's no reason to be nervous, or put it off. You may think you haven't done much work since your last committee meeting, but when you write it all down on the outline and in the PowerPoint, you may be surprised at everything you've done. In a committee meeting you can step back and look at the larger picture of your progress towards your degree. This can be helpful not only for making you feel like you are making real progress, but also for improving the quality of your future work.

## **Suggested Committee Meeting Outline**

Students may use this as an outline for an Advisory Committee meeting.

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**Your Name, Meeting Date:**

**Committee Members Present:**

**Committee Members Absent:**

### **I. What has happened since our last meeting (date of that meeting)**

- A. List classes you've taken, fellowships you've applied for, papers you've worked on, meetings you've attended, or classes you've taught. Discuss any impacts these things have had on your progress towards your degree.
- B. Discuss any research gains you've made either in the lab or in the field. This is also a good time to get advice on things that aren't working in lab or in the field.

### **II. Future Research Directions**

- A. Whatever is appropriate for your work.

### **III. Determine timeline for the following**

- A. Future classes to take, conferences to attend, field trips, addition of committee members, teaching assistantships, summer workshops.
  - B. Interdisciplinary seminar, research seminar, written and oral exams, Master's By-Pass, Thesis or Dissertation defense.
  - C. In general, make sure everyone agrees about which degree you're working towards and what sorts of requirements they have for you to get it.
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