Geology Graduate Program Timetables

This timetable is designed to show you the steps needed to graduate in two years. (Also see "Graduating in a Timely Fashion").

1. **Prerequisite courses:** Plan your schedule to complete any prerequisite courses listed on your letter of acceptance as soon as possible.

2. **Geology 595:** Must be taken in each of your first three quarters.

3. **Plan of Study:** The official form should be submitted by the beginning of your third quarter at the latest.

4. **Thesis proposal:** Begin work to select an advisor and a thesis topic immediately. (You may need to apply for research grants during January.) A good draft of your proposal should be presented to your thesis advisor early in your third quarter (Spring, for most of you). Work to assemble your thesis committee, have the proposal approved, and file your thesis-topic approval card by the end of that quarter.

5. **Advance to Candidacy:** File your Approval of Thesis Project form with the Graduate School. These are needed before you are allowed to register for thesis credits.

6. **Field and lab work:** Field work should be done and lab work well underway by the end of your first summer. Finish lab work by the end of Fall quarter.

7. **Writing:** Begin while in the field and continue as you carry out lab work.

8. **Completed thesis draft:** Give it to the Chair of your thesis committee by the middle of Winter quarter of your second year.

9. **Blue card:** File your Application for Master's Degree card by the last week of the quarter before you plan to graduate. You must register for at least two credits during the quarter you graduate or the preceding quarter.

10. **Defense draft:** You should have your thesis revised and approved for defense by mid-April of your second year for Spring graduation or by mid-May for Summer graduation.

11. **Thesis defense:** Schedule it during the first week of May or earlier for Spring graduation, by the end of Spring classes for Summer graduation. (Your defense must be at least two weeks after your thesis is approved and "tabled".)

12. **Thesis copy to Graduate School:** The final, defended, revised, signed thesis will be due to the Graduate School for the Dean's approval by about May 15 for Spring graduation and late July for Summer graduation. Dates vary from year to year.
COMPLETING YOUR THESIS IN A TIMELY FASHION

The Geology faculty is committed to helping you graduate in two years. This implies cooperation between faculty and students to ensure speedy and efficient progress on the course of study and the thesis. However, faculty accept that the time schedule for graduation is your choice (within the 5-year Graduate School limit), unless you are working under a grant made to faculty with time constraints on the completion of the grant. If you choose to take longer than two years, this is not seen as failure to meet an implied standard. You may want to take additional classes, pursue many lines of research, or have to work; any of these will require more time.

GOAL SETTING

You should be thinking about thesis topics soon after coming to Western. Opportunities for Sigma Xi, GSA, and AAPG funding require deciding on the general thesis topic by January of your first year. Thus, you should work with faculty early to ensure that deadlines for grant proposals can be met.

Although you are encouraged to pursue any topic for which the department is equipped and has the expertise, experience shows that the better the match between the problem and your adviser's current research interests, the greater will be the benefit to you.

In defining the thesis topic, faculty can help in:

*** Defining the problem and setting limits at the beginning of the research. This is a particularly difficult task as theses tend to expand in scope as they develop and easily become mini-Ph.D.s.

*** Defining the project that will address the problem. The project will normally require one summer of field work and one quarter of laboratory work and should be designed so that it can be finished a quarter and a half later.

*** Developing an initial plan to carry out the project. This involves advising on organization of the work and discussing the format of the thesis.

You are encouraged to use the Geology 595 Brown Bag presentation to do background research into the thesis topic (but should feel free to pursue other interests if you wish).

PROGRESS

Faculty play a significant role in the success of their students. By constantly reviewing progress and providing positive feedback and constructive criticism, faculty can help you to meet your goals. You will be encouraged to give poster sessions or talks at the Northwest Mining Association conference, the annual Tectonics Workshop, and G.S.A. and A.G.U. meetings, all of which provide worthwhile occasions to clarify ideas and organize data. Faculty can organize "show and tell" sessions for groups with common interests. Ultimately, you decide your activities and time table, and faculty respect those decisions.
THESIS WRITING

Theses can get out of hand! Every effort should be made to shorten the thesis, including efficient
design of maps and figures, and serious thought should be given to presenting the thesis in
"journal publication" format with appendices for large blocks of data or description of methods.

In agreeing to serve as committee chair, faculty take the responsibility to assist you in setting
goals, provide guidance on techniques and methods, and analyze your work. Faculty also agree
to be available on a regular basis. The writing of the thesis is time-consuming and often
difficult. Your are encouraged to begin writing from the beginning of the thesis-definition stage
and continue writing through the field and laboratory phases of the work. The outline of the
thesis should be developed early and revised frequently—with constant faculty review. You
should discuss time tables with faculty prior to giving them something to read; then you can
expect faculty to return material within two weeks of receiving it.

You should feel free to give chapters to other committee members at any stage of the thesis
writing, but generally give them chapters relevant to their interests. Generally, you should not
ask other committee members to read large sections of the thesis until the chair is satisfied that
the initial revisions are satisfactory. However, in the quarter you expect to defend, the faculty
are all prepared to help in whatever way they can. Allow two to three weeks for a committee
member to read your thesis, and expect to revise and have it reread, perhaps more than once,
before you are ready to defend.

THESIS DEFENSE

The committee does not sign the defense "table copy" until satisfied that the thesis is ready to
present to the Graduate School. The defense copy should be an acceptable body of work and be
complete, including legible and clear figures with complete captions and details such as a table
of contents with page numbers. You are expected to schedule your defense when your
committee members are available; the committee chair should always be present (unless away on
sabbatical). The defense is a presentation to the community and may take place on any class day
of the academic year, and during finals of Spring quarter only. As faculty are generally away in
the field, summer defenses will be scheduled only in exceptional circumstances. Permission for
a summer defense and its date must be approved by the end of Spring quarter by the thesis
committee and the department chair.

GOOD LUCK!