



**Time to Degree  
Annual Thesis Committee Meeting Schedules and Reports**

After students advance to candidacy, the student meets annually with their Thesis Committee according to the following time frames:

<u>Year in Program</u>	<u>Meeting Dates</u>	<u>Notes regarding the Meeting</u>
6thYear +	September 1 – October 1	Final steps to filing the dissertation are discussed and confirmed by the committee. If the student will be unable to file by the 5.5 year mark, the committee may grant a six month extension until the following May. If it is anticipated that the work will not be completed by May, the thesis committee and the student must each submit a memo to the Head Graduate Adviser by December 15 <sup>th</sup> requesting an extension. Such requests should provide details of reasons, proposed completion timeline and projected support. The GAC will review all requests for extension beyond the sixth year at their January meeting.
5 <sup>th</sup> Year	September 1 – October 1	A date for filing the dissertation is set in this meeting. Depending on the student's progress, the Thesis Committee can recommend a further meeting with the student in the Spring semester of the fifth year. At such a Spring meeting, the Thesis Committee decides whether the thesis project is unlikely to be completed in 5.5 years and thus whether to grant the student a six months extension (See below for details).
4 <sup>th</sup> Year	October 1--November 1	Project is evaluated for thesis quality and likelihood of completion in the succeeding one and one-half years. If necessary, alternate strategies are developed.
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	November 1 – December 1	A research outline and workable research plan for the next three and one half years should be established.

It is the responsibility of the student to work with the GAO to organize his/her Thesis Committee meetings within the times indicated. The mentor and any two of the three remaining members are considered a quorum. Meetings with individual Thesis Committee members will be accepted provided that the individual faculty member fills out a report and the report is countersigned by the student.

In general, students in MCB receive mentoring from all members of their thesis committees during thesis committee meetings. One aim of the GAC is to encourage and improve interactions between the student and all

members of the thesis committee. At each meeting the student presents the research accomplished to date and outlines plans for work to be completed during the coming year. Once all committee members are present, the student will briefly leave the room so that the dissertation chair can provide other members of the committee with a verbal evaluation of the student's progress to date, identifying both the student's strengths and any areas in which the student can improve. This information will help the committee members to more effectively provide advice to the student.

The student will provide a focused summary of her/his research progress as well as any technical difficulties that have been encountered. During this time, the full committee will provide comments and advice on the research, and will help to set goals for the coming year.

Toward the end of the meeting, the faculty mentor will leave the room and any remaining issues will be discussed with the student in the absence of the mentor. This third phase of the thesis committee meeting is intended to facilitate interactions with the other committee members by allowing the student to establish a closer relationship with the other committee members. It is intended to provide the student with an opportunity to identify any issues that might have been difficult to discuss in front of the mentor.

The Thesis Committee then evaluates the student's progress to his/her degree and sets specific goals that can be reasonably accomplished within the normal five and a half year period. The report sheet should be signed and dated by all committee members and returned to the GAO **within a week of the meeting date**. *The absence of filed reports will be considered a lack of significant progress toward the degree and could result in termination of funding or a recommendation for dismissal from the program.* All members of the committee should send email comments directly to the GAO as indicated on the Report form. These comments are forwarded to the student for response and all comments are then compiled, sent to the adviser for review and signature, and then placed in the student's file.

If a problem cannot be resolved, the Thesis Committee may recommend that the student should not continue in the program. The recommendation is then forwarded to the GAC for a final decision.

### **Sixth Year Extensions**

If a student is unable to complete his/her degree by the end of 5.5 years the financial support provided by the mentor may be extended five months to the University's dissertation filing date in May of their sixth year. The decision to grant extensions is the responsibility of the student's Thesis Committee and requires appropriate and documented special circumstances. Examples would include illnesses, change of mentor, a fourth rotation, and scientific problems unforeseen at the annual fourth or fifth year Thesis Committee meetings. In order for such extensions to be granted, reports of all previous Thesis Committee meetings must have been filed with the GAO, and the Thesis Committee and the student must unanimously agree with the extension. If there is disagreement on the extension within the Thesis Committee or if the student disagrees with the Thesis Committee decision, the case will be referred to the GAC. Funding and continuation in the Graduate Program beyond the May filing deadline in Spring of the 6th year will be considered on a case by case basis by the GAC upon petition by the Thesis Committee *and the student*. If such a petition is not filed by the end of January in the Spring semester of the 6th year, a recommendation will be made to the Graduate Division to terminate graduate standing.