

MASTER OF NATURAL SCIENCE (M.N.S.) IN BIOLOGY

The Master of Natural Science (MNS) degree is designed to strengthen an individual's background in biological sciences for secondary school teaching or for work in nature interpretation or environmental education centers. The student must possess or be working toward a standard teaching certificate, or under exceptional circumstances, be employed or have specific career objectives that would not require teacher certification (as approved by the Graduate Programs Committee). This degree emphasizes subject matter and is a non-thesis program. It is not designed to prepare students for a doctoral program with a research emphasis or requirement. The degree is granted upon successful completion of a minimum of 30 graduate-level credits and satisfactory performance on a comprehensive written and oral examination.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The MNS degree is primarily a coursework degree and therefore differs from the MS degree in Biology in several important ways. It does not require course prerequisites for admission. To complete the program MNS students need not demonstrate breadth through coursework in each of the Core Areas, are exempt from the Experimental Design/Statistics requirement, and do not complete a Thesis. MNS students must meet Admission, Residency, and Transfer of Credit requirements, and minimum Performance Levels.

A minimum of 30 graduate credits is required to complete the MNS degree program. Courses numbered 500 and above, and completed with a grade of B or better, are the only courses which may be applied toward the degree. It is expected that the courses will enhance both the breadth and depth of the student's biological content knowledge. At least 20 of the credits must be in the Biological Sciences. Biology Teaching Methods (BIOS 513) is strongly recommended. A proposed plan of study should be submitted to and approved by the student's advisory committee by the end of the first semester.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The student must select a major advisor, and in consultation with them, select at least one additional faculty member from the Department of Biological Sciences to serve on an advisory committee. An additional member of the graduate faculty from outside of the Biology department must serve on the committee as the Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR). The GFR is selected by the Office of Graduate Studies, though students may recommend to the Dean of Graduate Studies a faculty member in another Department to serve as a GFR. The initial committee meeting should be held in the first semester of the program, however the GFR need only attend the final oral comprehensive examination.

WRITTEN AND ORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

The comprehensive examination consists of a written and an oral portion. The written examination tests the student's knowledge of biological and educational topics commensurate with the student's program of study. The oral examination assesses the student's capability to communicate answers effectively and areas of weakness indicated by the written examination.

The written comprehensive examination must be completed no later than six weeks before the end of the student's last semester. Each member of the student's committee (excluding the GFR) will submit a section of the examination on which the student will be expected to write. The entire examination should be designed to require no more than 10 hours for completion. Each committee member will individually determine whether the student passed his/her section of the examination; the student must pass at least 75% of these sections. If the written examination is not passed, the committee may recommend that the student not proceed further in the program or that the student re-take those portions of the written examination that were not passed.

The oral comprehensive examination should be scheduled within two weeks of satisfactory completion of the written examination and no later than three weeks prior to the end of the semester. The oral examination will consist of questions posed by the student's advisory committee after they have reviewed the results of the written examination. Failure to pass the oral examination can result in the recommendation that the student not proceed further in the program or that the oral examination should be re-taken at a later date. Failure to pass the comprehensive examination twice results in automatic termination from the program.