Biology M.S.

Degree: Master of Science
https://www.towson.edu/fcsm/departments/biology/gradbiology/

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Greater Baltimore is a center of biotechnology and biomedical research. In addition, the region’s rapid growth and development have stimulated environmental concerns and placed strains on the education system. As a consequence, graduates with master's-level training are sought by research facilities and private laboratories, environmental consulting firms, zoos, aquaria, and public and private secondary schools. The Master of Science degree in Biology is intended to provide students with advanced training in sub-disciplines of biology. Students may earn a degree through a thesis or non-thesis option.

The thesis option provides the necessary background and experience for those who plan further study for their Ph.D., for those whose employment requires research training, and for those who wish to teach in community colleges. This option includes a combination of course work and the completion of a major research project. The results of this project will be prepared for publication in the form of a thesis. Students will select their course work and research efforts in one of two areas: Molecular, Cellular and Microbiology, or Organismal Biology and Ecology. Graduate teaching and research assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis to full-time thesis students.

The non-thesis option is designed for those who want a broader background in biology, including secondary school teachers or students planning to apply to professional schools. This option allows students to obtain a degree entirely through course work. Research opportunities are available but not required for the degree. A diverse course offering is available in the evenings to accommodate working students.

Admission Requirements

- A minimum of 24 undergraduate units in biology
- Course work in general chemistry, organic chemistry and physics.
- A GPA of 3.00 in previous biology course work. An overall GPA (i.e., in biology and all other courses) of 3.00 is required for full admission. Overall GPA calculations for admission are based upon the last 60 units of undergraduate course work. Students lacking key prerequisites and/or having a GPA of 2.75-2.99 may rarely be given conditional admission. Any student admitted conditionally will be required to make up deficiencies in prerequisites and/or achieve a GPA of 3.00 in their first three graduate courses taken at Towson University.

Non-immigrant International Students

Program Enrollment: F-1 and J-1 students are required to be enrolled full-time. The majority of their classes must be in-person and on campus. See the list of programs that satisfy these requirements (https://www.towson.edu/academics/graduate/admissions/international/programs-complying-j1-f1-regulations.html), and contact the International Student and Scholars Office (https://www.towson.edu/academics/international/issso) with questions.

Admission Procedures: See additional information regarding Graduate Admission policies (https://www.towson.edu/academics/graduate/admissions/policies.html) and International Graduate Application (https://www.towson.edu/academics/graduate/admissions/international) online.

Application to the Program

Please complete the online application (https://www.towson.edu/academics/graduate/admissions/apply), including the following:

- General application form, application fee, official transcripts and three letters of recommendation from instructors or supervisors familiar with the student’s record, aptitude and potential for graduate work. Email addresses of references to be included on application form.
- A one-page personal statement explaining why you plan to pursue a graduate degree in biology, your curricular and/or research interests and your future career and/or educational plans.
- Students who are applying to the thesis option must have the written support of a faculty member who is willing to serve as their thesis adviser prior to the application deadline. Therefore, thesis-degree applicants should contact potential research faculty by January 10th. A successful interview with the potential research mentor and the Graduate Committee is required before an applicant can ultimately be accepted into the thesis-degree program.

Application Deadlines

- April 15* for the fall term (*Thesis-degree applicants should contact potential research faculty by January 10th).
- October 31 for the spring term

Degree Requirements

Thesis and non-thesis students are required to complete 30 units of course work. Students may take a maximum of three courses at the 500 level and no more than two courses in disciplines outside of Biology (with the exception of ENVS 604), and only with the prior approval of the student’s advisory committee or assigned adviser.

Thesis Option

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BIOL 796</td>
<td>PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS OF BIOLOGY</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIOL 797</td>
<td>GRADUATE SEMINAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIOL 896</td>
<td>BIOLOGY THESIS</td>
<td>6</td>
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Research Area:

- Molecular, Cellular and Microbiology
- OR Organismal Biology and Ecology

Additional Biology Courses (includes ENVS 604) 3-12
- Non-Biology Courses 0-6
- Non-Thesis Research 0-3
- BIOL 701 | NON-THESIS RESEARCH               | 1-3   |
- BIOL 703 | INDEPENDENT STUDY                | 1-3   |

- All course work must be approved by the student’s thesis advisory committee. Appropriate course work will be based on the student’s undergraduate background, area of research and career objectives. Students must select courses and focus their research efforts in one
of two areas: Molecular, Cellular and Microbiology, or Organismal Biology and Ecology.

- All students must complete and successfully defend a thesis before the degree is awarded.

### Non-thesis Option

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<tr>
<td>Required Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biology Courses (includes ENVS 604)</td>
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<td>Non-Biology Courses</td>
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<td>Non-Thesis Research</td>
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<td>INDEPENDENT STUDY</td>
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- Students will select course work with assistance and approval of an adviser from the Biology graduate faculty. Course selections will be based on the student's undergraduate background, purpose for pursuing the M.S. degree, current or planned career.

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of biological principles and communicate those principles in oral and written form.
2. Students will be able to read, understand and critically review scientific literature within a selected area of biology, including evaluation of experimental design.
3. Students will be able to design, conduct and defend original research projects (for Thesis students).
4. Students will be able to conduct advanced instruction in undergraduate laboratories and classroom lecture settings (for Teaching Assistants).

### Courses

**BIOL 502 GENERAL ECOLOGY (4)**

Effects of the abiotic and biotic environment on distribution and abundance of organisms: organization of biological communities, ecosystems, evolution of different reproductive strategies and application of ecological principles to natural resource conservation. Several day-long trips required. Prerequisites: BIOL 205 and/or BIOL 207 or equivalents.

**BIOL 506 LIMNOLOGY (4)**

Physical, chemical and biological factors that affect fresh-water organisms, and some of the standard methods used to analyze these factors. Average of 3 laboratory hours per week. Prerequisites: BIOL 205, BIOL 207 or equivalents; BIOL 402/ BIOL 502 or equivalent recommended.

**BIOL 508 CELL BIOLOGY (4)**

The molecular and morphological organization of the cell in relationship to cellular activities with emphasis on eukaryotic cells. Average of 3 hours of laboratory or discussion per week. Prerequisites: BIOL 207 or BIOL 222/ BIOL 222L (BIOL 214); CHEM 330 or CHEM 331 or equivalents.

**BIOL 510 CONSERVATION BIOLOGY (4)**

Application of ecological theory to conservation of biological diversity. Exploration of past and present processes leading to and maintaining diversity and how such processes are impacted by human disturbance. Average of three laboratory hours per week. Prerequisites: BIOL 202 and 10 hours of biology or combination of 10 hours from biology, geography, or physical science.

**BIOL 513 EVOLUTION (3)**

Concepts of biological evolution, the history of the development of these concepts and current topics in evolutionary biology. Prerequisites: BIOL 205 or BIOL 207 or equivalents.

**BIOL 515 MEDICAL MICROBIOLOGY (4)**

Pathogenesis of bacterial, viral, rickettsial and fungal diseases with emphasis on medically important bacteria and microbiological techniques. Recommended for students pursuing a career in medical sciences. Either this course or BIOL 518, but not both, may count toward an M.S. degree in Biology.

**BIOL 518 MICROBIOLOGY (4)**

Biology of micro-organisms with emphasis on bacteria. Microbial morphology, physiology and genetics, and the role of micro-organisms in natural processes and disease. Laboratory will include methods of observing, isolating and identifying bacteria. Prerequisites: Either this course or BIOL 515, but not both, may count toward the M.S. degree in Biology.

**BIOL 519 ENVIRONMENTAL MICROBIOLOGY (3)**

Biology and ecology of microorganisms in natural and anthropogenic environments. Culture-based and molecular methods for detection, evaluation, and manipulation of microorganisms and their metabolism. Prerequisites: BIOL 202 (or permission of instructor), BIOL 309, CHEM 132, CHEM 132L, BIOL 318 (or BIOL 215) recommended.

**BIOL 521 IMMUNOLOGY (4)**

Fundamental principles of immunology with emphasis on the nature of antibodies and antigens, blood groups, antibody-antigen reactions, hypersensitivity, autoimmunization, tumor immunology, artificial grafting and the preparation of vaccines. Prerequisite: BIOL 315/515 or 318/518 or equivalent.

**BIOL 525 DISSECTION OF THE UPPER EXTREMITY (2)**

Gross anatomical dissection of the human upper extremity including the muscles, nerves and blood vessels which supply the appendage. Special emphasis will be placed on development of techniques which assure careful and accurate dissection. Will be offered only in the Minimester. Prerequisite: BIOL 221/221L (BIOL 213) or equivalent, and consent of instructor.

**BIOL 527 NEUROMUSCULAR MECHANISMS OF THE UPPER BODY (2)**

Gross anatomy of the human upper extremity and cranial nerves. Upper extremity emphasis includes muscle action, innervation, and major spinal cord pathways. Olfactory, optic, auditory and vestibular functions of cranial nerves are stressed. One lecture and two laboratory periods per week. Prerequisites: Undergraduate course in human or vertebrate anatomy and permission of instructor.

**BIOL 528 VIROLOGY (3)**

Cell and molecular biology of viruses. General virology, including pathogenesis and mortality, interaction with the immune system, and some medically relevant viruses. Prerequisites: BIOL 315/515 or BIOL 318/518 or BIOL 408/409/602.

**BIOL 532 VASCULAR PLANT TAXONOMY (4)**

A study of the history and principles of vascular plant systematics with laboratory time devoted to collection and identification of plants in the local flora. An average of 3 laboratory hours per week. Prerequisites: BIOL 205, BIOL 331/531, the equivalents or consent of instructor. Lab/Class fee will be assessed.
BIOL 535 PLANT ECOLOGY (4)
Environmental factors and processes which control plant distribution, plant communities and vegetational biomes of North America. An average of 3 laboratory hours per week with two required three-day weekend field trips and a Saturday field trip emphasizing examples from Maryland and the mid-Atlantic states. Prerequisites: BIOL 205 or equivalent.

BIOL 536 PLANT PHYSIOLOGY (3-4)
Life functions of plants as related to structure at all levels: cells, organs and the complete organism. Consideration of the interaction of environmental and genetic factors on plant metabolism. Prerequisite: BIOL 205 or BIOL 208 and CHEM 132/132L (CHEM 111), CHEM 330 recommended.

BIOL 546 TROPICAL ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION (3)
Evolution and ecology of tropical ecosystems. Mechanisms that maintain tropical diversity, species interactions, anthropogenic impacts, and conservation strategies. Prerequisites: Biol 202 either BIOL 205 or 207 or 208, or consent of instructor.

BIOL 547 TROPICAL FIELD ECOLOGY (4)
Field course set in the tropical rainforest. Includes exploration of different tropical ecosystems and training in techniques to carry out field research. Students will develop a research proposal and conduct their independent research projects including data collection, statistical analyses, write up, and an oral presentation of results. Permit required. Prerequisites: Permission of instructor.

BIOL 552 WETLAND ECOLOGY (4)
Wetland ecology and wetland management, with special focus on wetland of the Mid-Atlantic region. Emphasis is on biological, physical, chemical, and ecological aspects of wetlands. Course also deals with valuation, classification, delineation and management of wetlands for biotic resources and water management. Average of three laboratory hours per week. Two mandatory Saturday field trips. Prerequisites: BIOL 202 and BIOL 205, or BIOL 207 or BIOL 208. Lab/Class fee will be assessed.

BIOL 553 INVERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY (4)
Aquatic and terrestrial species of phyla from the Protozoa through the Echinodermata with special emphasis on local forms. Economic, ecological and taxonomic considerations. Average of 3 laboratory hours per week. Prerequisite: BIOL 207 or equivalent.

BIOL 554 ANIMAL PARASITOLOGY (3)
Major groups of animal parasites and their vectors. Emphasis will be placed on pathogenesis of medically relevant organisms. Lecture discussions will incorporate an examination of relevant primary literature. Prerequisite: BIOL 309 or permission of instructor.

BIOL 555 FISH BIOLOGY (4)
Introduction to the evolutionary history, functional biology, ecology and conservation of fishes. Laboratory experiences emphasize both identification of fishes and experiments designed to understand their functional biology. Independent research project and weekend field trips are required. Average of 3 hours of lecture and 3 hours of lab per week. Prerequisite: BIOL 207 and CHEM 132/132L (CHEM 111) or equivalents; BIOL 325 or equivalent recommended.

BIOL 556 ORNITHOLOGY (4)
Evolutionary history, morphology, physiology, behavior and ecology of birds. One daylong weekend field trip and several early-morning weekday field trips required. Prerequisite: BIOL 207 or equivalent.

BIOL 558 MAMMALOLOGY (4)
Evolution, comparative morphology, systematics, and distribution of mammals. Representative life histories are considered. Average of three laboratory hours per week.

BIOL 560 HISTOLOGY (4)
Tissues of the vertebrate body. Average of 2 laboratory hours per week. Prerequisite: BIOL 222/222L (BIOL 214) or equivalent. Lab/Class fee will be assessed.

BIOL 561 ENTOMOLOGY (4)
Laboratory and field course in insects. Identification and recognition of the more common families and orders and a study of their structure, behavior, ecology, economic importance and control. Average of 3 laboratory hours per week. Prerequisite: BIOL 207 or equivalent.

BIOL 563 DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY (3)
Embryonic development of animals, including differentiation, morphogenesis, pattern formation, and organogenesis. Emphasis on cellular and molecular mechanisms governing these processes. Average of three laboratory hours per week. Prerequisite: BIOL 309 and either BIOL 222/222L (BIOL 214) or BIOL 325.

BIOL 567 HERPETOLOGY (4)
Systematic survey of the modern reptiles and amphibians. Emphasis is placed on the evolution of morphological and behavioral traits which have enabled the reptiles and amphibians to successfully exploit their individual habitats. Laboratory includes systematic classification, student seminars and field work. Average of 3 laboratory hours per week. Prerequisite: BIOL 207 or equivalent.

BIOL 568 ENDOCRINOLOGY (3)
Endocrine mechanisms regulating homeostasis and functional integrity of animals with emphasis on vertebrates. Prerequisite: BIOL 222/222L (BIOL 214) or equivalent.

BIOL 570 ADVANCED PHYSIOLOGY (4)
Physiological topics discussed at the molecular, cellular, organ, organ system and whole organism levels. Emphasis on integrating knowledge gained in prerequisite physiology courses and recent discoveries. Laboratory component will emphasize the scientific method, data interpretation and quantitative skills. Topics may include: osmoregulation, gas exchange, nutrient delivery and use, thermoregulation, locomotion and regulation via the neural and endocrine systems. Prerequisites: BIOL 222/222L (BIOL 214) or BIOL 325, CHEM 132/132L (CHEM 111) (CHEM 332 and BIOL 207 or 208 recommended).

BIOL 571 ANIMAL BEHAVIOR (4)
Introduction to modern study of behavior including the development and control of behavior as well as the evolution and adaptive value of behavior. Two recitation hours per week. Prerequisite: BIOL 207 or BIOL 208. BIOL 202 also strongly recommended.

BIOL 581 DIRECTED READING IN BIOLOGY (1-3)
Independent reading in an area selected by the student in consultation with the instructor.

BIOL 582 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & SERVICE LEARNING IN THE TROPICS (3)
Designed for those majoring in the sciences or education fields with an interest in environmental education. Coursework will take place largely in the tropics of Costa Rica. Emphasis will be placed on the application of forest ecology concepts to PreK12 environmental education and human use and management of natural resources in the tropics. Prerequisite: Permission of instructor required.
BIOL 584 SEMINAR IN ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION AND BEHAVIOR (3)
Discussion and analysis of current research in ecology, conservation biology, environmental science, evolution and animal behavior. Prerequisites: 12 credit hours in Biology, including Biol 202 and one or more of the following: Biol 310, Biol 347, Biol 371, Biol 402, Biol 410, Biol 435, or permission of the instructor. Repeatable.

BIOL 589 SPECIAL TOPICS IN BIOLOGY (3)
Current topics in varying areas of biology. May be repeated provided a different topic is covered. Prerequisite: a suitable background in the area emphasized.

BIOL 601 CURRENT TOPICS IN BIOLOGY (3)
Current topics in a specific area of biology. The area will vary each time the course is offered. May be repeated provided a different topic is covered. Prerequisite: a suitable background in the area emphasized.

BIOL 602 MOLECULAR BIOLOGY (3)
Overview of the base principles of molecular biology including: macromolecules, nucleic acid/protein interactions, replication, transcription, translation, mutations, DNA repair mechanisms, gene regulation and tools and applications of recombinant DNA technology.

BIOL 603 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION FOR BIOLOGISTS (3)
Information, techniques, and skills useful in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data in the Biological Sciences. Topics include introduction to the role of statistical analysis in the biological sciences, hypothesis testing, experimental design, and current controversies in use of statistics in the biological sciences. Graduate students only. Prerequisites: None.

BIOL 604 MECHANISMS IN ANIMAL PHYSIOLOGY (3)
Functional design of animal organ systems and discussion of selected adaptations permitting survival in challenging environments. Prerequisite: Students must meet the requirements for admission to the master's degree program in Biology.

BIOL 605 BIOCHEMICAL ADAPTATIONS (3)
Characterization of adaptational challenges facing biochemical systems and how these systems have been modified through evolution to permit comparable structures and processes to be persistent in all organisms and in all environments. The underlying unity of biochemical design existing in the face of remarkable adaptive diversification is a theme. Prerequisites: Biol 604 or upper-level advanced undergraduate course in physiology.

BIOL 607 EVOLUTIONARY AND ECOLOGICAL PHYSIOLOGY (3)
The study of how physiological characters evolve and contribute to organismal success and the nature of research in this field. Prerequisites: Previous evolution and/or physiology course highly recommended.

BIOL 608 SYSTEMATIC BIOLOGY (3)
Theory and procedures of modern systematics with emphasis on data gathering, use of morphological and/or molecular characters, analysis, and interpretation of results. A variety of approaches for analysis of systematic/phylogenetic data and methods for determining support of phylogenetic hypotheses will be explored. Prerequisites: open to graduate students and advanced undergraduates; formal prerequisites are limited to the biology core classes throughout the junior year (Biol 200/ Biol 200L [Biol 201], Biol 202, Biol 205, Biol 207, Biol 208, Biol 432 or equivalent).

BIOL 609 COMMUNITY ANALYSIS AND BIOASSESSMENT (3)
Principles of design of environmental sampling studies, statistical analysis of data composed of multiple species, and environmental variables. Use of statistical software for data analysis projects. Emphasis on application of these methods in bioassessment of aquatic ecosystems, as well as community ecology and evolution. Prerequisite: Biol 610 or Env 604 or equivalent at the upper-undergraduate level.

BIOL 610 POPULATION AND COMMUNITY BIOLOGY (3)
Processes in biological populations, including population growth, competition and predation, analyzed by the use of conceptual-systems models and simple mathematical models. Prerequisite: Biol 402/502, Biol 413/513 or equivalents.

BIOL 612 MOLECULAR ECOLOGY AND EVOLUTION (3)
Use of molecular techniques in ecology and evolution. Application of DNA sequencing, PCR analysis and DNA fingerprinting to understanding genome evolution, the species concept, evolutionary basis of behavior, population structure and gene flow and efforts in species conservation. Reading and discussion of recent scientific literature. Prerequisites: Biol 602 or permission of instructor.

BIOL 614 APPLIED BIOTECHNOLOGY (3)
Overview of basic recombinant DNA technology, gene expression and regulation; medical, agricultural and ecological examples of applied biotechnology; regulations, risks, benefits and bioethics of biotechnology. Prerequisites: Biol 602 or permission of instructor.

BIOL 615 PATHOGENIC MICROBIOLOGY (3)
Pathogenic bacteria and viruses, including virulence of causative agents, epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of representative bacterial and viral diseases. Prerequisite: Biol 421/521, Biol 315/515 or 318/518 or equivalents.

BIOL 616 MEMBRANE BIOLOGY (3)
Structure, function and biogenesis of biological membranes. Emphasis on role of membrane in cellular homeostasis, energy transduction and interaction with the extracellular environment. Multidisciplinary perspective taken, drawing on information from molecular biology, cell biology and biophysics. Extensive use of current literature. Prerequisites: Biol 602 or permission of instructor.

BIOL 618 MOLECULAR MEDICINE (3)
Molecular biology as it applies to medicine, including molecular genetic approaches to clone/detect disease genes, analysis of gene function based on human/microbial homologies, prenatal and neonatal diagnosis/screening, tracking infectious disease outbreaks, molecular therapies for disease and impact of human genome project. Ethical issues raised by application of molecular methodology also discussed. Prerequisites: Biol 602 or permission of instructor.

BIOL 619 ENVIRONMENTAL MICROBIOLOGY (3)
Topics to be covered include: the historical importance of environmental microbiology, the different methods of molecular genetic analysis, microbiologically mediated biogeochemical cycles and their global importance, the adaptability of microorganisms to different environments, microbial functional metabolic plasticity facilitating xenobiotic compound degradation, and the use and importance of metagenomics in environmental microbiology. Prerequisites: None.

BIOL 621 CELL SIGNALING (3)
Analysis of the signal transduction pathways used by cells to communicate with each other and with their outside environments. Special emphasis on cell signaling pathways involved in the regulation of immune responses. Prerequisites: Biol 408/508 and Biol 421/521 or equivalent are recommended.
**BIOL 622 GENE EXPRESSION AND REGULATION (3)**
Examining how changes from the DNA level to the protein level alter
the resulting gene’s final expression. Special emphasis on eukaryotic
mRNA stability and translatability and on eukaryotic post-translational
modifications. Prerequisites: BIOL 602 or permission of instructor.

**BIOL 650 MODERN MICROSCOPY AND MICROTECHNIQUES (3)**
Histology of the majority of tissues in the human body through
time and microscopic examinations. Preparation of specimens
for microscopic examination. Use and relevance of various types
of microscopy: dark-field, phase contrast, fluorescence, confocal,
transmission electron-, and scanning electron.

**BIOL 651 ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE IN INTEGRATED
STEM EDUCATION (3)**
Students investigate place-based education, environmental literacy, and
outdoor applications of biology education, and consider how teachers
teach and students learn about life science and environmental concepts
in the context of integrated STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and
Mathematics) education in grades PreK-12. Not for credit towards M.S. in
Biology.

**BIOL 654 LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY (3)**
Spatial and temporal landscape heterogeneity: how it arises, its
quantification and its influence on population, community and ecosystem
dynamics over multiple scales. Prerequisites: Upper level undergraduate
course in ecology or permission of instructor.

**BIOL 655 THE BIOLOGY OF CANCER (3)**
Overview of human cancer including risk factors, causes, types,
epidemiology, the genetic basis of the disease, molecular and cellular
alterations, diagnosis, treatment and current research. Extensive use of
seminal and current literature. An upper level cellular or molecular biology
course is recommended.

**BIOL 701 NON-THESIS RESEARCH (1-3)**
Field or laboratory research in addition to and/or unrelated to any thesis
research. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 units. Graded S/U.
Prerequisites: student must submit research proposal prior to enrollment
and obtain approval of program director.

**BIOL 703 INDEPENDENT STUDY (1-3)**
Independent exploration of the concepts, research techniques and recent
discoveries in a sub-discipline of the biological sciences in collaboration
with a faculty mentor. Prerequisite: Student must submit study proposal
prior to enrollment. Requires special permit from graduate program
director. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 credits.

**BIOL 796 PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS OF BIOLOGY (2)**
Information, techniques, and skills useful in completing a MS degree,
gaining employment and functioning as a professional biologist, or
obtaining access to Ph.D programs. Topics include literature retrieval,
the publication process, obtaining funds for research, presentations at
national meetings, job hunting, and professional ethics.

**BIOL 797 GRADUATE SEMINAR (1)**
Student reports and discussion dealing with biological research. An
outline of the seminar and bibliography are required. A maximum of 1
credit is allowable for an M.S. degree in Biology.

**BIOL 896 BIOLOGY THESIS (1-8)**
Thesis research. See program director for permit.

**BIOL 899 THESIS CONTINUUM (1)**
Continuation of thesis research.