

Graduate Student Handbook

2017–2018



Department of Ecosystem Science and Management

Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
essm.tamu.edu
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Department of Ecosystem Science and Management
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

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Key resources

- **Graduate catalog:** catalog.tamu.edu/graduate

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- > details about the all the steps you must take towards finishing your degree
 - **Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS):** ogaps.tamu.edu
 - > Document Processing Submission System: ogsdpps.tamu.edu
 - > academic process, forms, dates and deadlines, Thesis Office
 - **Student rules:** student-rules.tamu.edu
 - **International Student Services:** iss.tamu.edu
 - **Registrar:** registrar.tamu.edu
 - > academic calendar, registration details, records
 - **Howdy portal:** howdy.tamu.edu
 - > course schedules, class registration, your record, eCampus access
 - **Computers and plotter**
 - > graduate student computing lab: 114 KLCT
 - key software: ArcGIS Desktop, Microsoft Visual Studio, SAS, SigmaPlot
 - Contact Madysen Rydeen (see page 4) for access to the lab.
 - > wide-format plotter to print posters for professional meetings: HFSB 302C
 - Student self-service printer
 - **Library:** library.tamu.edu
 - > Agriculture and Life Sciences Librarian:
 - Carolyn Jackson, csj@library.tamu.edu
 - **Writing Center:** writingcenter.tamu.edu
 - > writing support, consultations, writing groups, writing workshops, thesis/dissertation retreats
 - **Career Center:** careercenter.tamu.edu
 - > CV writing, job postings, career/job search, graduate student workshops
 - Contact Dr. Katie Stober, kstober@tamu.edu
 - **Disability Services:** disability.tamu.edu
 - > accommodations coordination, evaluation referral, adaptive tech. services, etc.
 - **Veterans Services Office:** veterans.tamu.edu
 - > funding and financial aid for veterans, Veteran Resource & Support Center
 - **Student Counseling Services:** scs.tamu.edu
 - > career counseling, stress management, crisis intervention, etc.
 - > thesis/dissertation support groups
 - **Student Health Services:** shs.tamu.edu
 - > on campus health care

Calendars and notifications

- The **general academic calendar** for each semester is posted online at <http://registrar.tamu.edu/Catalogs,-Policies-Procedures/Academic-Calendar>.
 - > Check this for the dates of registration, add/drop deadlines, finals, graduation and holidays.
 - > Subscribe to the calendar RSS feed for your computer, tablet or mobile device.
- The **Office of Graduate and Professional Studies calendar** for each semester is posted online at ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Calendars.
 - > Check this for the deadlines of academic process steps, such as filing your degree plan, scheduling your preliminary exams, requesting your final oral exam/defense and applying for graduation.
 - > Subscribe to the OGAPS calendar via various channels for your computer, tablet or mobile device.
- **Connect on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram**
 - > ESSM
 - www.facebook.com/essm.tamu
 - > ESSM Graduate Student Association
 - www.facebook.com/groups/ESSMGSO/
 - > Office of Graduate Studies
 - www.facebook.com/TAMUGraduateStudies
 - twitter.com/TAMU_OGAPS
 - > International Student Services
 - www.facebook.com/TAMUISS
 - twitter.com/TAMUISS
 - instagram.com/tamuiss/
 - > College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
 - aglifesciences.tamu.edu
 - www.facebook.com/aglifesciences
 - twitter.com/aglifesciences
 - > Texas A&M
 - www.facebook.com/tamu
 - twitter.com/tamu
 - instagram.com/tamu/
- **Texas A&M Today (news):** today.tamu.edu

Key People

ACADEMIC PROCESS, RESOURCES, SUPPORT

Dr. Georgianne Moore
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Dr. Katy Kavanagh
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119 Kleberg Center (KLCT)
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BUSINESS OFFICE—IN HFSB 305

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fellowships, grants, budgeting
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Alicia Howard
Travel, van training
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Miki McClenton
tuition and fees, payroll, human resources
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Facilities

BUILDINGS

- > Horticulture and Forest Science Building (HFSB)
- > Kleberg Center (KLCT)
- > Wildlife, Fisheries, and Ecological Sciences (WFES)

RESEARCH FACILITIES

- > Ecology and Natural Resources Teaching Area (1183 Fishtank Road, CS)
- > Forest Science Laboratory (1042 Agronomy Road, CS)
- > La Copita Demonstration Ranch and Research Area (near Alice, TX)
- > S.M. Tracy Herbarium (3380 University Dr. East, University Services Bldg., CS)
- > Sonora Research Area (Sonora, TX)
- > Spatial Sciences Laboratory (1500 Research Pkwy, Suite B223, Centeq Building, CS)
- > Stable Isotopes for Biosphere Science Laboratory (2nd floor KLCT)
- > Vernon Research Area (Vernon, TX)

Academic process

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

You will work with your advisor to form an advisory committee that consists of members of the graduate faculty who represent your fields of study.

- Doctoral students must have at least four committee members, including your advisor.
- Master's students (all master's degrees) must have at least three committee members.
- The committee chair (i.e., your advisor) must be from the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, and at least one committee member must be from another department.
- Students working with off-campus ESSM research faculty must have an on-campus ESSM academic co-chair.

Begin establishing connections with prospective advisory committee members right away with the guidance of your committee chair. You will formalize your advisory committee membership on your degree plan.

NOTE: Once your committee is set, you may make changes to it. You do this via DPSS (ogsdps.tamu.edu), using the change of committee section of the "Long Form" petition.

DEGREE PLAN

You will work with your advisor to develop a plan for the course work and research credits you will take. This degree plan also formally declares your degree objective and advisory committee membership. You must submit your degree plan to OGAPS for approval.

Submit your degree plan using the OGAPS Document Processing Submission System (DPSS): ogsdps.tamu.edu.

DEADLINE: As a Ph.D. student in Ecosystem Science and Management you must submit your degree plan early in your fourth long (i.e., fall or spring) semester.

DEADLINE: As an M.S. student in Ecosystem Science and Management you must submit your degree plan early in your second long (i.e., fall or spring) semester.

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not submit your degree plan by this deadline, OGAPS will place a hold on your record, blocking you from registering until your degree plan is on file.

NOTE: Please lump all 691 and 685 hours into one entry on your degree plan. This helps OGAPS track these hours more efficiently.

NOTE: Be sure to take the steps of auditing your degree plan and then submitting it after it has passed the audit process. (These options are under the "Degree Plan" tab in DPSS.) Once you have submitted your degree plan, it can route to your committee members for approval.

NOTE: After your degree plan has been approved, you may make changes to it, if necessary. You do this via DPSS (ogsdps.tamu.edu), using the course change section of the "Long Form" petition.

CREDIT AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students come into the field of ecosystem science and management with diverse interests, science backgrounds and career goals. As such, you are able to tailor your course plan with the help of your major advisor and advisory committee.

The seminar course is required for M.S. and Ph.D students and limits on certain course types apply for master's students. (Please see the table on the next page for details.)

Other than the seminar course, there is no core curriculum (departmental or university) at the graduate level at this time. However, students earning graduate degrees in Ecosystem Science and Management are encouraged to have competency in fundamental areas of the field, such as ecology, natural resources management, spatial inventory and analysis, and biodiversity.

Student learning outcomes as defined by the University:

- Master your degree program requirements.
- Apply subject matter knowledge.
- Apply a variety of strategies and tools.
- Use appropriate technologies.
- Develop clear research plans and conduct valid research.
- Communicate effectively.
- Teach and explain the subject matter of your discipline.
- Choose ethical courses of action.

CREDIT AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS: TABLE

Degree	Minimum credit hours	Course requirements/limitations
Doctor of Philosophy	64 credit hours beyond a master's degree 96 credit hours beyond a bachelor's degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 2 credit hours of graduate seminar are REQUIRED (ESSM 681). > Research credits (ESSM 691): a reasonable amount. > Maximum 9 hours of 300- or 400-level undergraduate courses. > Transfer courses allowed, graded courses only, no set limit on number of hours allowed for transfer.
Master of Science >thesis option	32 credit hours <i>(Students typically take around 24 hours of formal courses plus directed studies, seminar and research hours.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 1 credit hour of graduate seminar is REQUIRED (ESSM 681); a maximum 2 hours of seminar is allowed. > No more than 12 hours of 685 (directed studies) and 691 (research), combined, with a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maximum 8 hours of 685 ▪ maximum 8 hours of 691. > Maximum 9 hours of 300- or 400-level undergraduate courses. > Maximum 12 hours of transfer courses allowed, graded courses only.
Master of Science >non-thesis option and Master of Agriculture	36 credit hours <i>(Students typically take at least 30 hours of formal courses plus directed studies and seminar hours.)</i> <i>(Master of Agriculture: Students typically take at least 30 hours of formal courses plus internship, directed studies and seminar hours. Of these 36 credits, approximately 12 credit hours will be outside your degree option.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Maximum 2 hours of seminar (681). > No more than 12 hours of 684 (internship) and 685 (directed studies), combined, with a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maximum 8 hours of 684 ▪ maximum 8 hours of 685. > No research (691) credits are allowed. > Maximum 9 hours of 300- or 400-level undergraduate courses. > Maximum 12 hours of transfer courses allowed, graded courses only.
Master of Natural Resource Development >non-thesis (online or on campus)	36 credit hours <i>(Students typically take at least 30 hours of formal courses plus directed studies and seminar hours. Of these 36 credits, approximately 12 credit hours will be outside your degree option.)</i> <i>(Check the distance program webpage for potential distance-based courses: essm.tamu.edu/academics/graduate/degrees-and-certificates/mnrd-distance-courses/)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Maximum 2 hours of seminar (681). > Total 684 and 685 hours may not exceed 25% of your total credits, with a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ maximum 8 hours of 684 ▪ maximum 8 hours of 685. > No research (691) credits are allowed. > Maximum 9 hours of 300- or 400-level undergraduate courses. > Maximum 12 hours of transfer courses allowed, graded courses only.

PLEASE NOTE: These are minimum hours that the Department, College and OGAPS set. Your advisory committee may require additional hours depending on the scope of your research and previous coursework.

REGISTRATION

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- You register for classes through the “My Record” tab in the HOWDY portal.
 - “Pre-registration” is what the first weeks of registration are called. For spring semester registration, these typically start in mid-November. For summer and fall semester registration, these typically start in mid-April.
 - “Open registration” starts immediately after pre-registration and runs up to 5:00 p.m. on the last working day prior to the first day of class, with a few days around graduation when registration is not available.
 - The terms “hours” and “credits” are used interchangeably.
 - Registration schedules are posted at registrar.tamu.edu/Courses,-Registration,-Scheduling/Registration-Schedule/Graduate.
 - If you register after the published registration deadline, you will incur a late fee. (See sbs.tamu.edu/accounts-billing/tuition-fees/schedule/#FEE_LATE.)

Please note: Research (691), Directed Study (685), Internship (684) hours

When you register for these, sign up for the section connected to your advisor. If there is no section available with your advisor, please contact Madysen Rydeen to get one established.

In absentia sections

You may register in absentia in a course offered on an individual basis [such as 684 (professional internship), 685 (directed study) or 691 (research)] and conducted away from the College Station campus and other TAMU System campuses or research/extension facilities. “Facilities” includes physical locations as well as human resources. By registering in absentia, you avoid certain fees. If you have an assistantship or fellowship, you may not register in absentia. If you are eligible to register in absentia, be sure that there is an in absentia section available with your advisor. If there is none, please contact Madysen Rydeen to get one established.

Minimum registration

- Students on an assistantship or fellowship must register full time. Full time means:
 - > Fall semester: 9 hours
 - > Spring semester: 9 hours
 - > Summer session: 6 hours
- Continuous registration: Ph.D. and M.S.-thesis students who have completed all coursework on the degree plan, other than 691 (research) credits, must register for at least one credit every fall and spring semester until all requirements for the degree are fulfilled.
- You must be registered in the semester when you take your preliminary exams (Ph.D. students), take your final exam and submit your dissertation or thesis (all Ph.D. and M.S.-thesis students), and graduate (all Ph.D. and M.S.-thesis students).
- Summer enrollment is only necessary if you have funding during the summer session or if you plan to take your preliminary exam or defend your thesis/dissertation during the summer or graduate in August.

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- Students with F-1 visas: minimum registration guidelines are on the International Student Services web site at iss.tamu.edu/ISS/media/ISS-Files/ISS-PDF/Current%20Students/F1VisaRegulations.pdf.
 - Students with J-1 visas: registration guidelines are on the International Student Services web site at iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/J-1-Status.
 - Students with financial aid: You must be enrolled a minimum of half-time (5 hours in fall and spring semester and 3 hours in the summer session) to be eligible for financial aid and to keep outstanding student loans on automatic in-school deferment. If you drop below half-time enrollment at any point during the semester, the Scholarships & Financial Aid Office will report you to the National Student Clearinghouse as enrolled less than half-time and your student loans will enter a grace period, at the end of which you will enter repayment. Please check with the Scholarships & Financial Aid office (Financialaid.tamu.edu/Contact-Us) to make sure you are in compliance with the terms of your student loans or aid.
 - Failure to register: If you do not register for two consecutive long semesters (i.e., fall and spring), you will be considered inactive. In order then to continue with your degree, you then would be required to apply for readmission to the university and program.
 - Leave of absence: Under extenuating circumstances, you may petition for up to a one-year leave of absence. If granted, you would not be required to register during the leave. You request a leave of absence via the DPSS, using the waivers or exemptions section of the “Long Form” petition.

Maximum registration

- You may register for a maximum of:
 - > 15 hours in a fall or spring semester.
 - > 6 hours in a 5-week summer session.
 - > 10 hours in a 10-week summer session.
- The ESSM department recommends that you do *not* register for more than the standard full-time course load of 9 hours in fall and spring semesters and 6 hours total in the summer session.
- If you have tuition support from the department, college or university, most often this tuition payment will cover a maximum of 9 hours in a fall or spring semester and 6 hours total in the summer session
- Some advisors or sponsors may cover more than 9 hours in a fall or spring semester and 6 hours total in the summer session. Please check with your advisor or sponsor before registering for more hours than 9 hours in a fall or spring semester and 6 hours total in the summer session.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: PH.D. AND M.S.-THESIS STUDENTS

- > **Ph.D. students:** You are expected to conduct independent research that makes a unique and significant contribution to a particular field of study.
- > **M.S. students on the thesis track:** You are expected to conduct original research approved by your graduate committee.
- > Your research project should be designed to produce a publication in a refereed journal.

In consultation with your advisor and graduate committee, you will develop a research project. This must then be formalized in a research proposal. Once your committee has met and approved your research proposal, you will submit it to OGAPS, along with the Proposal Approval form, signed by each committee member and the department head.

RESEARCH COMPLIANCE: All proposals are reviewed by the Office of Research Compliance and Biosafety. Before you commence your research or submit your proposal, check if your research needs specific approvals: rcb.tamu.edu/more/resourcehub/obtainapproval.

NOTE: Your advisory committee should approve your proposal before you commence the research. You should report regularly to your major professor and your full advisory committee to apprise them of progress in your research and to gain approval of any redirection of your research.

FORM: Get the Proposal Approval form on the OGAPS forms and information webpage, academic process forms section: ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Forms-Information.

DEADLINE: As a Ph.D. student in Ecosystem Science and Management you must submit your research proposal by the end of your fourth long (i.e., fall or spring) semester.

DEADLINE: As an M.S. student in Ecosystem Science and Management you must submit your research proposal by the end of your second long (i.e., fall or spring) semester.

Generally, a research proposal entails about 10 pages of narrative that encompasses:

- **Justification and rationale:** summary and critique of previous current and relevant research on the subject, specific literature citations, and identification of particular problems that your study will help resolve.
- **Statement of hypotheses:** specific questions your research is designed to answer.
- **Objectives:** specifics of what you will accomplish to test your hypothesis, limits/boundaries of the proposed study.
- **Procedure:** methods to be used to accomplish objectives, including research site description, experimental design, research methodology, and timeline for data collection and analysis.
- **Budget:** Where practical, construct a budget for experience, but do not include it in the OGAPS copy.

PRELIMINARY EXAMS: PH.D. STUDENTS

Doctoral students: You must complete both written and oral preliminary examinations, which you will schedule when you have finished all but about 6 hours of the formal coursework on your degree plan [i.e., everything except 681 (seminar), 684 (internship) or 691 (research) hours]. These exams are based on your prior coursework and knowledge of the scientific literature in your general area of expertise. Usually the “prelim” involves a written exam from each advisory committee member, followed by an oral exam administered by the committee as a whole.

Ph.D students are expected to complete their preliminary examinations by the end of the fifth regular semester (not including summer sessions).

For full guidelines on the preliminary exam, see the graduate catalog: catalog.tamu.edu.

FORM: To make sure you are otherwise eligible to take your preliminary exams, refer to and complete the Preliminary Examination Checklist, available on the OGAPS forms and information webpage, academic process forms section: ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Forms-Information.

Within ten days of passing your exams, you must submit this checklist along with the Report of the Preliminary Examination form to OGAPS. (Both forms are part of the Preliminary Exam Checklist file.)

NOTE: If you fail your preliminary exam: One retake is allowed, generally after six months. If you fail your preliminary exam a second time, OGAPS sends a letter to the department head, and you must either drop to the M.S. or leave/find another department

NOTE: You must complete your final examination (i.e., your doctoral dissertation defense) within four calendar years of your preliminary exam, or you must retake the preliminary exam.

ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY: PH.D. STUDENTS

Per the graduate catalog (catalog.tamu.edu), to be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree, a student must have:

- completed all formal coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690, and 691;
- a 3.0 graduate GPR and a degree plan GPR of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan;
- passed the preliminary examination (written and oral portions);
- submitted an approved dissertation proposal; and
- met the residence requirements.

The final examination will not be authorized for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

DISSERTATION, THESIS, PROFESSIONAL PAPER

Ph.D. and M.S.-thesis students

The culminating product of your graduate research is a dissertation (Ph.D. students) or thesis (M.S. students on the thesis track.) You will present a polished, grammatically correct, properly formatted draft of your thesis or dissertation to your advisory committee after you and your advisor have agreed on the content. Your committee members have the right to reject documents with grammatical or formatting errors or that fail to meet high standards of scientific style.

- > **Thesis Office review:** Once your advisory committee has deemed your dissertation or thesis acceptable, usually at the time of or shortly after your final exam, you must submit your dissertation or thesis to the Thesis Office, along with an approval form signed by your committee members. The Thesis Office reviews each dissertation and thesis for adherence to university guidelines for quality and consistency. You must receive their approval of your manuscript. The OGAPS calendar lists deadlines for clearing the Thesis Office in order to graduate in any given semester.

FORM: Thesis and dissertation approval forms are under the “Thesis/Dissertation Forms and Information” heading on ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Forms-Information.

M.S.-non-thesis, Master of Natural Resource Development and Master of Agriculture students

A professional paper is required as the culminating product of your studies. The professional paper covers a relevant area of ecosystem science and management, or for Master of Agriculture students, may be an account of your internship that highlights the scientific and managerial principles you learned and applied during that experience. This paper is formulated in consultation with your advisory committee and may be based on literature reviews, surveys and other sources. Be sure to have your committee approve your proposed project and paper before you begin work on it. You should report regularly to your major professor and full advisory committee to apprise them of progress on your project and paper and to gain approval of any redirection. You do not need to submit your professional paper to the Thesis Office for approval.

WRITING RESOURCES & SUPPORT

- > Thesis Office: ogaps.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Thesis-and-Dissertation-Services
 - guidelines and resources for preparing and submitting your manuscript, Thesis Manual
- > TAMU Writing Center dissertations and theses support: writingcenter.tamu.edu/Students/Student-Splash/Graduate-Students
- > P.O.W.E.R. writing studios (Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research): power.tamu.edu
 - writing support program; sessions scheduled regularly throughout the year
- > OGAPS training/tutorials: ogaps.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Workshops-and-Tutorials
- > Student Counseling Services thesis/dissertation support groups: scs.tamu.edu

FINAL EXAMINATION

Ph.D. students

After your advisory committee accepts your dissertation for defense and you have completed all coursework on your degree plan [with the exception of any final research (691) hours], you must schedule a final oral examination. The final exam involves a public seminar on your doctoral research, immediately followed by a formal dissertation defense with your advisory committee. Your seminar lasts approximately one hour, consisting of a presentation and time for questions from the audience.

M.S.-thesis students

After your advisory committee accepts your thesis and you have completed all coursework on your degree plan, except for those hours for which you are currently registered, you must schedule a final comprehensive examination. This involves a public seminar of your thesis immediately followed by a formal examination with your advisory committee, addressing the content of your thesis as well as your prior coursework. This exam may be written, oral or both.

M.S.-non-thesis, Master of Natural Resource Development and Master of Agriculture students

After your advisory committee accepts your professional paper and you have completed all coursework on your degree plan, except for those hours for which you are currently registered, you must schedule a final comprehensive examination. This involves a formal examination with your advisory committee, addressing the content of your paper as well as your prior coursework. This exam may be written or oral or both.

ALL STUDENTS:

- > Once you and your committee have set a date for the final examination, you must formally schedule the exam by submitting the Request for Final Examination form to OGAPS at least 10 working days prior to the exam. The OGAPS calendar lists deadlines for taking your final exam and submitting this form in order to graduate in any given semester: ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Calendars.

FORM: Request for Final Examination form is under the “Academic Process Forms” heading on ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Forms-Information.

NOTE: You also must advertise the date, time and location of your defense seminar to the ESSM faculty and students by posting flyers in KLCT and HFSB and distributing the information over email at least one week in advance. Contact Madysen Rydeen for a flyer template.

FORMS AND SIGNATURES

Dr. Moore, Associate Department Head for Graduate Studies, may sign all forms or approve forms in DPSS. If Dr. Moore is not available, then the department head may sign. Some forms also require approval and signature from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences associate dean for graduate programs. Please contact Madysen Rydeen if you have questions.

Forms you file via DPSS (ogsdpss.tamu.edu)	Forms you file via paper (ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Forms-Information)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree plan • MDD petition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > change of major, degree or department) • Long form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > petition to change course work > petition to change committee > petition to extend time limits > petition for waivers/exceptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Examination Checklist and Report • Proposal Approval Page for Thesis, Dissertation • Request and Announcement of the Final Examination • Request for Exemption from Final Examination • Request for Letter of Completion • Letter of Intent to Pursue Another Graduate Degree • Graduation Cancellation Form • Special Request Letter • Thesis and dissertation approval form • Course add/drop form • Grade change form • Reduced course load form (for F-1 and J-1 visa holders) • Curricular Practical Training department form (for F-1 visa holders) • Optional Practical Training department form (for F-1 visa holders)

Academic standards

You are expected to maintain a minimum GPA and make steady progress toward a degree and commensurate academic accomplishments.

To remain in good standing with the department:

- You must maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA on the degree plan and cumulatively, with no grade lower than C in any course on your degree plan. (New students are allowed one probationary semester.)
- If your GPA falls below 3.0 after your first semester:
 - You will not be allowed to take preliminary or final exams until your GPA improves.
 - The department will place you on academic probation, giving you at least one semester to raise your GPA.
- Students with fellowships must maintain a minimum 3.25 GPA, with one semester of probation if you fall below this threshold.
- If you earn a D, F, or U (unsatisfactory) in a course on your degree plan, you must retake the course and earn at least a C or S, arrange a grade change with the instructor, or remove the course from your degree plan. (This final option does not remove the course from your record, and it would still count in your overall GPA, but it would then not count toward your degree plan credit hours.)
- Make suitable progress towards degree completion.

If you are declared to be NOT in good standing (i.e., academic probation):

- A registration hold will be placed on your account.
- You and your major advisor will be notified that you are NOT in good standing and that a registration hold has been placed on your account.
- In order to register, you must meet with your major advisor to chart a course for returning to a status of good standing, then submit this plan in a memo signed by you and your advisor to the graduate programs coordinator and the associate department head for graduate programs.
- In most cases, you will have one semester to return to a status of good standing. The associate department head for graduate programs may grant you additional time, but only after reasonable notification and justification are reviewed as submitted by memorandum from you through your major advisor.
- If you remain not in good standing, then you will not be eligible for financial support from departmental funds (i.e., research and teaching assistantships).
- Continued status of not in good standing can result in the termination of your degree program.

Duration and time limits

Doctoral students

- A doctoral degree generally requires three years of full time work beyond a master's degree, or four to five years of full time work beyond a bachelor's degree.
- You must complete all degree requirements within ten years. Course work over ten calendar years old will expire and may not be applied toward the degree.
- Once you reach both 99 credit hours and 21 semesters (including summers), you will be charged out-of-state tuition.
- You have one calendar year after your final oral exam to get your thesis or dissertation cleared through the Thesis Office. (If you will hit up against the ten-year time limit before this one year is out, the ten-year time limit takes precedence.)

Master's students

- A master's degree generally requires at least two years of full time work beyond a bachelor's degree.
- You must complete all degree requirements within seven years. Course work over seven calendar years old will expire and may not be applied toward the degree.
- Thesis-option students: You have one calendar year after your final oral exam to get your thesis or dissertation cleared through the Thesis Office. (If you will hit up against the seven-year time limit before this one year is out, the seven-year time limit takes precedence.)

NOTE: While the department discourages you from taking longer than the time limits outlined above to complete your degree, you may request an extension of these time limits. You do this via DPSS (ogsdpss.tamu.edu), using the time limit extensions section of the “Long Form” petition.

Residency

Ph.D. students

- If you hold a master's degree, you must register for two consecutive semesters (one academic year) with a minimum of 9 credit hours each (any combination of formal classes or research hours) on the College Station, TX, campus.
- If you hold a bachelor's degree but no master's degree, you must register for three semesters with a minimum of 9 credit hours each (any combination of formal classes or research hours) on the College Station campus. Two of those semesters must be consecutive (one academic year); the third need not be adjacent to this one year.

M.S. students

- You must take at least 9 credit hours during one semester on the College Station campus (any combination of formal classes or research hours).

Master of Agriculture and on-campus Master of Natural Resource Development students

- You must complete 12 credit hours on the College Station campus.

Master of Natural Resource Development-Distance students

- You have no residency requirement.

NOTE: To obtain a waiver of the residency requirement, you must submit a petition to OGAPS. You do this via DPSS (ogsdpss.tamu.edu), using the waivers and exceptions section of the "Long Form" petition.

Master's to PhD.

Switch to Ph.D. before completing the M.S.

- Current TAMU students who start a master's degree and would like transition to the doctoral program without first completing the master's must submit updated application materials for review by the ESSM Graduate Programs Committee:
 - > a new statement of purpose;
 - > an updated resume/CV;
 - > three (3) new letters of recommendation (preferably from professors); and
 - > funding details of how the PhD program will be supported.
 - You also will need to submit an MDD petition in DPSS (<https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/>).
- ➔ Associate Department Head signs off on MDD petition if the ESSM GPC supports the transition to the PhD.

Complete the M.S. and then continue on to the Ph.D.

- Current TAMU students who complete a master's degree and would like to continue on for a doctoral degree must submit updated application materials for review by the ESSM Graduate Programs Committee:
 - > a Letter of Intent (<http://ogaps.tamu.edu/OGAPS/media/media-library/documents/Forms%20and%20Information/Letter-of-Intent-Form.pdf>)
 - > a new statement of purpose
 - > an updated resume/CV
 - > three (3) new letters of recommendation (preferably from professors).
- You also must identify a faculty member who is willing to serve as your advisor and have arrangements for funding a doctoral program.
- You do not need to submit a new ApplyTexas application, transcripts or GRE scores. These the graduate advisor will pull from your previous application file.
- Deadlines are the same as for new applicants.
- The Graduate Programs Committee will review these letter-of-intent-based applications along with the other applications submitted for that semester.
- If these you are admitted to the Ph.D. program, the Associate Department Head for Graduate Programs will sign the letter of intent.

Funding

There are opportunities for funding beyond any current grant money or fellowship support.

- Travel grants
 - > Travel must be to a professional meeting. Travel to research sites is not eligible.
 - > OGAPS Research and Presentation Grants: ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Funding-Opportunities/Research-and-Presentation-Grant-Guidelines
 - > Graduate Student Council Travel Awards: www.gpsctamu.org
 - For students in ESSM to be eligible for these awards, the department must have a student representative to the GSC; this representative must attend meetings regularly.
 - > ESSM travel grants
 - Available periodically. We will notify you whenever we are accepting applications for travel grants.
- Departmental fellowships and research grants: essm.tamu.edu/academics/graduate/financial-support/
 - > We will notify you whenever we are accepting applications for departmental fellowships or research grants.
- College of Agriculture and Life Sciences fellowships: aglifesciences.tamu.edu/academics/graduate/funding-opportunities/
- Master's students:
 - > Willie May Harris Fellowship
 - > National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships
- Doctoral students:
 - > National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships
 - > Tom Slick Graduate Fellowships
 - > Wasko Graduate Merit Fellowship
 - > Willie May Harris Fellowship
 - > OGAPS Dissertation Fellowship
 - > Phil Gramm Doctoral Fellowship

Student life

DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

- ESSM Graduate Student Association
- Departmental seminar: Tuesdays at 3:45
 - > Offered each semester, a mix of invited speakers and student presentations. You should attend even when you are not registered for the course (ESSM 681)
- ESSM fall picnic: typically mid-October.
- ESSM spring reception: typically coincides with Family Weekend in April
- TAMU Graduate and Professional Student Council: www.gpsctamu.org
- Student chapters of professional organizations:
 - > *Society for Ecological Restoration Student Guild*, Advisor: Dr. Georgianne Moore
 - > *American Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing*, Faculty advisor: Dr. Sorin Popescu
 - > *Range Club*, Faculty advisors: Dr. Mort Kothmann and Dr. Bob Knight
 - > *Texas A&M Chapter of the Society of American Foresters*, Advisor: Judith Turlington

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities to present research on campus

- GIS Day, poster exhibition, library.tamu.edu/services/map_gis/services.html: November
- Ecological Integration Symposium, eeb.tamu.edu/eis/: March 2017
- Student Research Week, srw.tamu.edu: March 2017

Opportunities to present research in Texas

- Texas Society for Ecological Restoration annual conference: chapter.ser.org/texas
- Society for Range Management Texas Section annual meeting: rangelands.org/texas/
- Houston Regional Ecology and Evolution Student Symposium, University of Houston: eesymposium.weebly.com
- Texas A&M University System Pathways Student Research Symposium

Seminar series in other TAMU departments

- Agricultural Economics: agecon.tamu.edu/news-events-seminars
- Applied Biodiversity Science: biodiversity.tamu.edu/events/abs_seminars
- Biology: www.bio.tamu.edu/SEMINARS/index.htm
- Ecology and Evolutionary Biology: eeb.tamu.edu/seminars/
- Entomology: entomology.tamu.edu/seminars/
- Geosciences: geoweb.tamu.edu/about/seminar-schedule/index.html
- Molecular & Environmental Plant Sciences: meps.tamu.edu/index.html
- Soil and Crop Sciences: soilcrop.tamu.edu/media/seminar-videos/
- Water Management & Hydrological Science: waterprogram.tamu.edu

Academy for Future Faculty: gta.tamu.edu

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- > Professional development opportunities in the area of college teaching
 - > AFF seminars and workshops are FREE for graduate students
 - > Fall and spring seminar series presentations

Center for Teaching Excellence: cte.tamu.edu/Graduate-Student-Support

- > Teaching resources, support and workshops for graduate students

Graduate certificate programs

- Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems and Graduate Certificate in Remote Sensing: ssl.tamu.edu/education/graduate-certificate-program
- Graduate Certificate in Military Land Sustainability: military.tamu.edu/education
- International Agriculture and Resource Management Graduate Certificate Program: aglifesciences.tamu.edu/international-programs/students/international-degrees-certificates/
- Bush School of Government and Public Service Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management: bush.tamu.edu/certificate/cnpm

Organizations

- Women in Science and Engineering: outreach.science.tamu.edu/wise.php (They host an annual professional development conference.)
- Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences: www.facebook.com/tamumanrrs/
- Student organizations in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences: aglifesciences.tamu.edu/service-outreach/organizations

Writing resources

- > TAMU Writing Center: writingcenter.tamu.edu
- > P.O.W.E.R. (Promoting Outstanding Writing for Excellence in Research): power.tamu.edu

Graduate Career Services: careercenter.tamu.edu

- > Offers workshops and seminars on job preparation, job searches/applications in both the academic setting and in other options for master's/doctoral degree holders.
- > Career closet

Office of Graduate and Professional Studies professional development resources: ogaps.tamu.edu/Buttons/Professional-Development-Opportunities

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

MSC Fall Open House: Sunday, September 4, 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.
mscopenhouse.tamu.edu

Student Activities office search for student organizations:
studentactivities.tamu.edu/app/search/index

Suggestions for success

- > Develop a strong and close professional relationship with your major professor.
- > Develop strong and close professional relationships with other professors and with your fellow graduate students.
- > Use your office. This creates opportunities for departmental interactions.
- > Become a member of a professional society, attend their annual meetings and give talks or posters based on your research. This will facilitate development of your professional network.
- > Keep up with the new literature in your fields of interest. Science changes rapidly and you need to be at the forefront of knowledge.
- > Make your degree program your top priority. It's a very demanding undertaking to handle your courses, maintain your research program and keep up with the new literature in your field.
- > Make it a goal to become a leader in your field.
- > Plan ahead. It is your responsibility to know the deadlines for key steps in your degree program and give yourself enough time to complete things well in advance of those dates.
- > Respect professor's and staff members' time. Professors and staff are here to work with and assist you, but remember they have other commitments, as well. Whenever possible, give them enough lead time to help you with questions or issues. Provide your advisor and committee members at least one week to review your proposal drafts and two weeks to review your dissertation, thesis or professional paper.

Summary: key steps and milestones

- > Develop your *research plan*.
- > Construct your *graduate advisory committee*.
- > Develop a *degree plan* itemizing all classes you will take.
- > Develop a *research proposal*.
- > If in PhD program, complete comprehensive *oral/written exams*.
- > Complete proposed lab and fieldwork to *collect data*.
- > Statistically evaluate your data.
- > Attend professional meetings to present your research.
- > Submit *manuscripts* to journals for publication.
- > Write your *thesis/dissertation*.
- > *Defend* your dissertation/thesis to your graduate committee.

CHECKLIST FOR MASTER'S STUDENTS

- Meet with your major professor before registering for your first semester. (It also is a good idea to check in with your advisor before you register in any semester.)
- Have your final transcript from your bachelor's degree sent to the Office of Admissions, if applicable.
- Meet regularly with your major professor to develop your research plan (thesis option) or project for your professional paper (non-thesis option).
- Establish your graduate advisory committee. (See page 5.)
- Develop a degree plan itemizing all classes you will take and submit it to OGAPS early in your second long semester (i.e., spring or fall semester). (See page 5.)
- Develop your research proposal (thesis option) in consultation with your advisor and advisory committee and submit it to OGAPS. (See page 10.)
- Complete proposed lab and fieldwork to collect data (thesis option) or complete your project tasks (non-thesis option).
- Statistically evaluate your data.
- Write your thesis (thesis option) or professional paper (non-thesis option). (See page 12.)
- International students: Confirm that you have met English language proficiency requirements.
- Meet the residence requirement. (See page 17.)
- Early in your last semester, apply for graduation online through the Howdy portal.
- Confirm that all your degree plan courses are met and that your degree plan and advisory committee information on file are up-to-date.
- Submit to OGAPS paperwork for any changes to your degree plan or advisory committee.
- Attend a pre-submittal conference offered through the Thesis Office or review the online pre-submittal conference.
- Submit your thesis or professional paper to your advisory committee.
- Schedule your final exam with your committee and submit to OGAPS the final exam request and announcement form. (See page 13.)
- Distribute to ESSM faculty and students an announcement of your defense presentation.
- Present and defend your thesis or professional paper to your graduate committee.
- Make any necessary corrections to your thesis or professional paper.
- Non-thesis option students: Deliver to the associate department head for graduate programs a copy of your professional paper, signed by your committee members.
- Thesis option students: Deliver to the Thesis Office the thesis approval form and upload your thesis to the Thesis Office. (See page 12.)
- Make any corrections the Thesis Office requires.
- Clear the Thesis Office.
- Complete exit interview/survey with the department.
- Arrange for a graduate cap and gown.
- Graduate!

Please note: Also check the OGAPS Steps to Fulfill Master's Degree Requirements:
ogaps.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Getting-a-Degree/Master-s-Degree-Requirements

CHECKLIST FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

- Meet with your major professor before registering for your first semester. (It also is a good idea to check in with your advisor before you register in any semester.)
- Have your final transcript from your bachelor's/master's degree sent to the Office of Admissions, if applicable.
- Meet regularly with your major professor to develop your research plan.
- Establish your graduate advisory committee. (See page 5.)
- Develop a degree plan itemizing all classes you will take and submit it to OGAPS early in your fourth long semester (i.e., spring or fall semester). (See page 5.)
- Develop your research proposal in consultation with your advisor and advisory committee and submit it to OGAPS. (See page 10.)
- International students: Confirm that you have met English language proficiency requirements.
- Schedule and complete preliminary exams. (See page 11.)
- Complete proposed lab and fieldwork to collect data.
- Statistically evaluate your data.
- Write your dissertation. (See page 12.)
- Meet the residence requirement. (See page 17.)
- Early in your last semester, apply for graduation online through the Howdy portal.
- Confirm that all your degree plan courses are met and that your degree plan and advisory committee information on file are up-to-date.
- Submit to OGAPS paperwork for any changes to your degree plan or advisory committee.
- Attend a pre-submittal conference offered through the Thesis Office or review the online pre-submittal conference.
- Submit your dissertation to your advisory committee.
- Schedule your final exam with your committee and submit to OGAPS the final exam request and announcement form. (See page 13.)
- Distribute to ESSM faculty and students an announcement of your defense presentation.
- Present and defend your dissertation to your graduate committee.
- Make any necessary corrections to your dissertation.
- Deliver to the Thesis Office the dissertation approval form and upload your dissertation to the Thesis Office. (See page 12)
- Make any corrections the Thesis Office requires.
- Clear Thesis Office.
- Complete exit interview/survey with the department.
- Arrange for a graduate cap and gown.
- Graduate!

Please note: Also check the OGAPS Steps to Fulfill Doctoral Degree Requirements—
ogaps.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Getting-a-Degree/Doctoral-Degree-Requirements

and

Steps to Fulfill Preliminary Exam Requirements—
ogaps.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Getting-a-Degree/Preliminary-Exam-Requirements

proposals:

NOTE: These are departmental deadlines that supersede the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies graduation calendar. Plan accordingly. If you do not submit your proposal by this deadline, the department will place a hold on your record, blocking you from registering until your proposal is on file. Additional time may be granted by the Associate Head for Academic Programs, but only after reasonable notification and justification are reviewed as submitted by memorandum from the student through the Advisory Committee Chair.

CAREER CENTER INFORMATION:

MYTH #1: If I have X number of publications, Y GPA, and research experience with Z, then I'll probably get at least one tenure-track job offer.

FACT: There are FAR more Ph.D. graduates each year than tenure-track positions.

MYTH #2: There are not any opportunities for me other than teaching or research. So, if I can't be a professor, I'm pretty much stuck.

FACT: There are many career paths available to Master's and Ph.D. graduates in EVERY field.

If you're interested in:

- exploring career options or developing a back-up plan
- polishing and perfecting your written application documents
- learning what you can do each semester to increase your chances of success
- developing and building a strong Network of professional contacts
- practicing your interview technique

...then visit the Career Center in 209 Koldus.

If you'd like to make a one-on-one appointment, call 979-845-5139.

If you'd like to bring your documents by without an appointment, graduate walk-in hours are M & F 8:30-11:00am and W 1:30-4:00pm.

Also, you can email any documents or questions to me at kstober@tamu.edu

Dr. Katie Stober '05

Associate Director for Graduate Student Services

Career Center, Texas A&M University