



Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



CRSS Graduate Handbook

Revision for Summer 2026

Purpose of This Handbook

This handbook is intended to guide graduate students through the policies, procedures, and resources of the Crop and Soil Sciences Department (CRSS) at UGA. It supplements [graduate school policy](#), which contains authoritative, university-wide policies governing all graduate programs. In the event of any conflict between this handbook and the Graduate School, the Graduate School policies take precedence. The best place to start is the page for current graduate students on the Graduate School [website](#).

Students are responsible for knowing both the CRSS policies in this handbook and the UGA Graduate School policies in the Graduate Bulletin.



This handbook was last updated on 7 MAY 2026.

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General Information

CRSS Program Information

The Department of Crop and Soil Sciences (CRSS) is a multifunctional, multidisciplinary department committed to excelling as an authority in the crop, soil and environmental sciences. The department supports research, teaching and UGA Cooperative Extension programs at the Athens, Griffin and Tifton campuses. As a respected provider of both leading-edge technology and science-based knowledge, we serve a clientele that includes students, farmers, agribusinesses, consumers, nonprofits and governmental agencies.

The purpose of the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences is to:

- Provide baccalaureate and graduate education in crop, soil and environmental sciences that promotes excellence in student achievement and prepares students to effectively contribute and excel in a changing world;
- Inquire into the nature of plant growth, crop production, soil characteristics and the environment through the discovery, interpretation and creative application of knowledge; and
- Serve the public through timely education of producers, consumers and agribusinesses using relevant, accurate, unbiased, research-based information.

The objective of this program is to provide students with a fundamental understanding of the scientific method, to develop their ability for critical thinking and to provide them with strong communication and technical skills as well as in-depth knowledge in one of the following areas:

- Plant breeding and genetics
- Biotechnology, weed management and physiology
- Crop production and management
- Forage production and utilization
- Fundamental soil sciences (soil chemistry, physics, microbiology and biogeochemistry)
- Agricultural micrometeorology
- Soil erosion and conservation
- Soil fertility and plant nutrition

Students admitted to the master's degree program in crop and soil sciences can apply to the new **dual master's degree program** between the University of Georgia and the [University of Padova, Italy](#). Students spend one year at UGA taking classes and one year at the University of Padova engaged in research.

Upon completion of the program, the student receives a master's degree in crop and soil sciences with an emphasis in sustainable agriculture from UGA and a *laurea magistrale* in sustainable agriculture from the University of Padova.

CRSS Contacts

Below are lists of current contacts across the three campuses.

Contacts over all campuses:

Head of Department – [Dr. Jodi Johnson Maynard](#)

Director of Graduate Studies – [Dr. Aaron Thompson](#)

Graduate Program Administrator – [Joshua Rubin](#)

Business Support Leader – [Niki Walden](#)

Athens Campus Contacts:

Administrative Specialist – [Caleb Neely](#)

Business Operations Professional – [Samantha Starnes](#)

Assistant to the Head of Department – [Mary Sinsheimer](#)

Griffin Campus Contacts:

Business Manager – [Jennifer Evans](#)

Administrative Associate – [Becky Wood](#)

Accountant – [Tabitha Crowley](#)

Exam Proctoring – [Melissa Todd](#)

IT – [Lee Taylor](#)

Tifton Campus:

Senior Business Manager – [Samantha Thompson](#)

Business Manager – [Abby Deltoro](#)

Business Manager – [Tearston Adams](#)

Main Business Administrative email: tifbus-css@uga.edu

Exam Proctoring – [Skyler Folds](#)

Administrative Associate – [Mallory Marchant](#)

Administrative Associate – [Natalie Rippy](#)

Major Professor

CRSS does not sponsor lab rotations for incoming graduate students. Graduate students need to identify a Major Professor before they are accepted. Although students may change Major Professors, most assistantships and other sources of funding may not be transferable among faculty. No faculty member is required to serve as the Major Professor for any student.

Director of Graduate Studies

The Director of Graduate Studies is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School upon recommendation and approval by the Department Head. The Director of Graduate Studies acts as a liaison between the Graduate School and the Department. The duties for this position are listed in the Graduate School's *Graduate Program Administration Handbook* and include signing documents related to graduate student activities and maintaining official CRSS graduate student documents. The current Director of Graduate Studies for CRSS is Dr. Aaron Thompson.

Graduate Student Files

Graduate student files are maintained in the CRSS main office in Athens. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Administrative Manager & Graduate Program Administrator are responsible for their safekeeping.

Logos

Graduate students should feel free to use the department logos on presentations and other materials that are official UGA or graduate student activities. When a student receives a travel award for a presentation, we require that you display our departmental logo on the poster or acknowledge the department in the oral presentation.

These are currently available as .eps or .png files. You can access them through them from the [CAES OMC Brand site](#).

Please keep in mind the [UGA Visual Style Guide](#) when formatting materials.

Some logo examples:



Student Expectations and Responsibilities

General Expectations of all Students

Not only will graduate students be learning new techniques and information, but graduate school is also a period when students get to hone their scientific reasoning, and their organizational and team-working skills. To gain full advantage of the experience, students should take ownership of their research and education and acknowledge that they have the primary responsibility for the successful completion of their degree.

Accordingly, students should attend and actively participate in all lab meetings, smaller group meetings, and lab activities; maintain detailed, organized and accurate lab records, and be responsive to advice and constructive criticism.

During their graduate career, students are expected to learn to plan, design, analyze and conduct high quality scientific research, including wet lab, computational, greenhouse and/or field experiments; learn how to present and document their scientific findings; be engaged with their research group and others at UGA; and keep up with the literature.

Publication Expectations

Graduate students in CRSS are expected to conduct research suitable for publication in peer-reviewed journals. Discuss publication expectations and authorship with your Major Professor early in your program and see [UGA's authorship policy](#).

Adherence to UGA policies

Students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior while enrolled in the graduate program and to act in a manner that demonstrates integrity and respect for others and the campus environment. All students should be familiar with:

- [Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- Work Place Violence Policy

Changing Major Professors

If a student finds it necessary to change programs and Major Professors, they should first consult with the Director of Graduate Studies. There is no guarantee that another program or professor is available and note that funding (assistantships) will not likely transfer between faculty members. Students are encouraged to address concerns early and consult the Ombudsperson (<https://ombuds.uga.edu/>) as a confidential, neutral resource.

Academic Honesty

Every student agrees to abide by [UGA's Academic Honesty Policy](#). It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the policy. The policy is located on the Office of Instruction website. Violation of academic honesty may result in the following: Receipt of a failing/unsatisfactory assignment or course grade, placement of a dishonesty notation on transcript, suspension, dismissal, or expulsion. *Note that not being familiar with the policy does not serve as an excuse for transgressions.*

Generative AI in course and theses/dissertations

UGA's [Policy](#) states that use of technology, including generative AI tools, is unacceptable unless otherwise authorized by the instructor of record. Instructors are encouraged to explicitly state their policy on the use of Generative AI in general or for specific assignments.

Effective January 19, 2024. "Per the Graduate Bulletin, the master's thesis demonstrates independent judgment in developing a problem from primary sources, and a dissertation represents originality in research, independent thinking, scholarly ability, and technical mastery of a field of study. It is the responsibility of the advisory committee to review and evaluate the thesis or dissertation as a representation of a student's individual effort. As such, the use of generative AI in theses and dissertations is considered unauthorized assistance per the Academic Code of Honesty and is prohibited unless specifically authorized by members of the advisory committee for use within the approved scope. If approved by the advisory committee, the extent of generative AI usage should be disclosed in a statement within the thesis or dissertation."

Assistantships and Employment

Research Assistantships

Most graduate students receive financial aid in the form of Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) from their Major Professor. CRSS does fund some GRAs, but these are awarded in consultation with the student's Major Professor. CRSS has a few teaching assistantships (GTAs), which have additional requirements to meet [UGA TA policy guidelines](#). All students receiving a GRA or GTA receive out-of-state tuition waivers and in-state tuition fee reductions of \$25 per semester. All students will still pay mandatory fees. Please see the [Bursar's page](#) for additional information on these fees. In addition, all graduate students on graduate assistantships are required to enroll in a mandatory health insurance program (or opt out) that is partially subsidized by the University. Additional information on health insurance can be found at the [Human Resources](#) web page. Renewal of a GRA or GTA beyond the 1st year for MS degrees and the 2nd year for PhD degrees is contingent upon adequate progress towards degree, satisfactory job performance, and availability of grant funding.

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

Students supported by federal funding (NSF, NIH, USDA-NIFA) are required to complete Responsible Conduct of Research training. Even if not federally funded, all students are encouraged to complete RCR training. Check with your Major Professor and see the [Graduate School's RCR](#) resources for details.

Work Requirements

Assistantships are part-time jobs to help students defray the cost of their education **and thus can be unrelated to their thesis/dissertation research**. The number of hours of work required for your assistantship is on your offer letter but is a minimum of 15 hrs per week (some weeks may require more; some may require fewer). The type and schedule of work is solely at the discretion of the Major Professor or PI in charge of the assistantship. It may (and often does) correspond directly to your thesis work, but not always.

Thesis/Dissertation Research

Thesis/dissertation research is a degree requirement, not a job responsibility. Hence, any work required to execute their research is **in addition to** the work responsibilities associated with an assistantship.

Data Ownership

Research notes, data, and reports are owned by UGA and must be left with the Major Professor when the student graduates or leaves the program. A student may take copies, but not originals.

Vacation Time Off, Official Holidays, and Religious Holidays

Graduate Research Assistants do not earn vacation time beyond the [13 official university holiday days](#). If the religious holidays you typically observe are not part of the official holiday schedule, we want to make all reasonable efforts to accommodate those holidays as well. Outside of that, CRSS recognizes that regular time off is necessary for mental health. Vacation/time off (including religious holidays that are not part of the 13 official university holiday days) must be coordinated with the Major Professor. Plan ahead and let your Major Professor know (ideally at least one month in advance) of any planned absences.

Assistantship termination upon Graduation

Assistantships come with a tuition waiver. If the assistantship is terminated early, the waiver is withdrawn, and the student will owe out of state tuition for the semester (~\$15,000). Hence, an assistantship cannot be terminated before the last day of class.

Students who will graduate before the end of the semester must therefore request a tuition waiver from the graduate school. The request should be made no later than the start of the semester when they will graduate.

Once a student graduates, they may not remain on an assistantship past the date of the commencement ceremony. Hence, if the student will stay on, it must be as a postdoc or technician. Arrangements to create and advertise these positions must be made no later than the start of the semester of graduation.

Enrollment and Academic Standing

Course Registration, CRN Numbers, & Minimum Enrollment

Students on a graduate assistantship must register for a minimum of 12 hours during Fall and Spring semester, and a minimum of 9 hours during Summer session, which is considered full

time. However, CRSS recommends students register for 18 during spring and fall, and 12 during summer if they are on an assistantship. The maximum semester course load for any student is 18 hours per semester.

Students who do not have an assistantship must register for a minimum of 3 hours of credit during any semester in which they use University facilities and/or faculty/staff time. This includes semesters in which they are completing comprehensive examinations and defending their thesis or dissertation.

Ensure you register for the correct section. You will notice that many courses are listed in triplicate in *Athena*, differing only by CRN number. The three sections correspond to the three campuses and affect your fees directly. Register for the section with the CRN that corresponds to your campus (Athens, Griffin, or Tifton). Clicking on the course title will identify the campus section.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

All graduate students must maintain continuous enrollment as defined by the UGA Graduate School. In brief, this means registering for a minimum of 3 credit hours in at least two semesters per academic year until degree completion. Doctoral students must maintain fall and spring enrollment until the residency requirement is met. For full details see the [Graduate School policy](#).

Leave of Absence from Graduate Program

Students experiencing unusual circumstances may request a leave of absence using the [Request for Leave of Absence from Graduate Enrollment \(G133\) form](#). A leave requires approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and the Dean of the Graduate School. Students should discuss their situation with their Major Professor and the DGS before applying. For full details see the [Graduate School policy](#).

Graduate First seminar

This is a UGA requirement for all new graduate students. The [GradFirst seminar](#) series supplements discipline-specific training in graduate students' academic programs. GradFirst seminars are 1-credit courses (GRSC 7001). CRSS has department specific, in person GradFirst courses for each campus. Please check with the program coordinator for details the semester you wish to enroll.



Satisfactory GPA

A student must maintain a 3.0 (B) average on the graduate transcript and on the program of study. Graduate students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation by the Graduate School. If their GPA is still below 3.0 after a semester on probation, they will be dismissed from the Graduate School. No course with a grade less than C may be included in the program of study. For full details see the [Graduate School policy](#).

Unsatisfactory grades for CRSS 7000/9000

When a student earns a grade of 'U' in CRSS 7000/9000, the advisor should explain the reason for the grade and provide expectations the student needs to follow to make satisfactory progress by the end of the following semester. Continued unsatisfactory performance may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Ombudsperson

The University of Georgia [Ombudspersons](#) are designated individuals who serve as independent, neutral, and informal resources for UGA students, faculty, and staff. Rather than serving as advocates for individual members of the University community, these individuals are advocates for fairness, and they function as a source of information and referral. They assist, to the extent possible, in informally resolving concerns brought to their attention. They serve as third-party information providers who remain neutral while assisting individuals in having their concerns addressed through appropriate channels, including those related to discrimination and harassment.

International Students

International students should be aware of additional requirements including higher English proficiency requirements in serving as a [teaching assistant](#), maintaining your visa status, and work authorization limits. Consult [International Student Life](#) and the Graduate School's international student resources for details.

Progress Evaluation and Dismissal

Annual Graduate Student Evaluation

Paperwork required: The Major Professor must fill out the *Annual Graduate Student Evaluation form* and review with the student **by May 30** every year.

UGA requires all graduate students to undergo an annual evaluation of their progress towards accomplishing their degree objectives. Major Professor and student will sign the evaluation form electronically to be included in the student's file. The student's signature does not signify agreement with the evaluation- it merely signifies that the evaluation took place. This evaluation will be conducted in May and must be submitted no later than May 30th of each year.

In case of a generally 'poor' or 'deficient' evaluation, the Major Professor should enumerate in the comments section of the evaluation clear guidelines the student needs to follow to make satisfactory progress and specify a clear time frame in which the student must show adequate progress. Examples of guidelines may include specific research tasks to be completed, courses to be taken, grades to be achieved in certain courses, or others.

More frequent evaluations may be requested by the student or Major Professor. If so, the Director of Graduate Studies or Department Head should be present at the evaluation.

Annual Report on Student Activities

Paperwork required: Every student must fill out the *Annual Report of Student Activities form* **by December 15** every year.

UGA's Office of Assessments requires each program to monitor their students' professional development. In the past, the program's Administrator would email students to obtain the necessary information. To streamline the process, students are asked to provide the necessary information by filling out the *Annual Report of Student Activities* form.

Dismissal from Graduate Program

A student failing to make adequate progress towards degree objectives may be dismissed from the graduate program by the Graduate Committee in consultation with the student's Major Professor. There are two types of dismissal; one is failure to make progress toward a degree, which is the purview of the CRSS Department, and includes dismissal for failing the written or oral

comprehensive exams more than once each. The second is failure to maintain satisfactory grades for more than one semester, which is an automatic dismissal by the Graduate School.

Request for Reconsideration by Graduate Committee

A student dismissed from the CRSS graduate program (not to be confused with being dismissed from the UGA Graduate School) may submit a letter to the Graduate Committee (submit to DGS) to ask for reconsideration if the letter provides new information regarding reasons for the failure to make adequate progress towards their degree. The student has 30 days in which to file an appeal from the date of notification of their dismissal.

Dismissal Appeal to CRSS

If the dismissal is upheld by the Graduate Committee, a student dismissed from the CRSS graduate program has 15 days during which they may submit an appeal letter to the Department Head. Upon receipt of the appeal letter, the Department Head will appoint a new committee of three faculty members not serving on the Graduate Committee to handle the appeal. The appointed committee will decide within 30 days of receiving the appeal, based on information obtained from the student, their Major Professor, and the Graduate Committee.

Dismissal Appeal to the College

If a dismissal has been upheld by the CRSS, then the student has 30 days in which to appeal the decision to CAES, as per the [instructions](#).

Dismissal Appeal to the Graduate School

A dismissal upheld by the college may be appealed to the dean of the Graduate School within 30 days of the college's decision. When students are terminated by the Department, but not simultaneously by the Graduate School, they may apply for admission to another graduate program if they wish to do so. For full details see the [Graduate School policy](#).

Travel

Travel Authorization

All graduate students must obtain an approved Travel Authorization (TA) before engaging in any University of Georgia–related travel, regardless of whether reimbursement is expected. This requirement applies to travel funded by university accounts, grants, or external sources, as well as no-cost travel conducted on behalf of UGA.

After completing approved travel, graduate students must submit an Expense Report in UGA OneSource to request reimbursement for eligible out-of-pocket expenses. Employees should submit travel reimbursement within 45 calendar days after completion of the trip or event. Expenses submitted more than 60 calendar days after completion of the trip or event, if reimbursed, are taxable income per the IRS (Internal Revenue Service).

BEFORE YOU BOOK ANYTHING

UGA Travel Compliance Reminder

Failure to comply with UGA and State of Georgia travel policies may result in nonreimbursable or taxable expenses.

- Do NOT book travel prior to Travel Authorization approval (when required)
- Airfare must be booked directly with the airline (no third-party sites)
- Only approved airfare classes may be selected
- Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, and similar lodging are NOT permitted
- Use approved rental vendors and UGA account codes only
- Itemized receipts are required for all expenses
- Expense reports must be submitted within 60 days



Questions before booking? Contact the Business Office

Athens: Samantha Starnes – Samantha.Starnes@uga.edu

Griffin: Becky Wood – Rebecca.wood@uga.edu

Tifton Business Administrative Email – tifbus-css@uga.edu

The department's travel policy can be reviewed in its entirety at this link: [CRSS Travel & Expense Compliance Policy](#).

UGA Drivers

All UGA drivers must complete the following annual training and submit a driver acknowledgment form, accessible through the last slide in the training module. [UGA Motor Vehicle Policy Training](#) If a student drives for their project *three or more times per week*, they are considered a primary driver and must also complete [an annual MVR](#) through the UGA Policy Department.

CRSS Travel support

CRSS encourages its graduate students and postdoctoral scientists to gain experience in presenting their work and gaining exposure to other audiences. Therefore, a student presenting a paper or poster at a professional conference may apply for a travel award from CRSS to help defray the cost of travel. The guidelines below will be used in considering all travel requests.

- Applicants must be reporting results of their research and be the primary author of the oral or poster presentation.
- The meeting or conference must be of regional, national, or international importance. Commodity-specific meetings also qualify.
- Applicants are limited to one travel award per UGA fiscal year (July 1 through June 30).
- Accompanying the request should be evidence that the research has been accepted for presentation along with a copy of the abstract to be presented.
- Please submit travel requests to the CRSS Program Administrator at least one month prior to travel dates.

Meeting these criteria is not a guarantee of funding. Funding is contingent on availability of funds in the Department. CRSS funding may be added to travel assistance from other sources. Funding recipients are strongly encouraged to use these funds to match travel fund requests from the UGA Graduate School.

Graduate School Travel grants

The Graduate School also offers Travel Grants. CRSS travel funding can be used as matching funds. Check the [Graduate School Travel Grant website](#) for deadlines and conditions.



Mental Health and Wellness

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact [Student Care and Outreach](#) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

- If you need help managing stress, anxiety, relationships, and others, please visit [BeWellUGA](#) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Disabilities Statement

Students with a documented disability by the UGA [Disability Resource Center](#) should follow DRC guidelines for courses. Considerations for other aspects of the degree program should be discussed with the student's committee and with the DGS. *Please note that CRSS is unable to accommodate any disability without documentation from the Disability Resource Center.*

Work-Life Resources

- [Mental Health Initiative](#)

- [Student Care and Outreach](#) – helps coordinate care and assistance for all students who experience hardship or other unseen circumstances
- [The Graduate Student Emergency Fund](#) – helps graduate students who experience an unexpected financial hardship
- [UGA Pride Center](#) – helps foster an inclusive, informed community for LGBTQIA+ individuals through collaboration, education and advocacy
- [International Student Life](#) – Assisting international students to cope with life in the USA.

Resources for Students

CRSS Graduate Student Association

All CRSS graduate students are strongly encouraged to participate actively in the CRSS Graduate Student Association (CRSS GSA). The CRSS GSA is an organization made up of all graduate students in the department. The CRSS GSA exists to provide a framework for developing professional, academic, and social networks and to foster an inclusive environment for graduate students, in recognition of the importance of positive peer relationships. The GSA also advocates for graduate students at the Department and University levels. Each campus (Athens, Tifton, and Griffin) will have their own GSA chapter. Descriptions of GSA officer structure and duties can be found in the CRSS GSA Constitution. The president of each chapter will also serve as a campus representative. Campus Representatives are responsible for attending regularly scheduled CRSS-GSA executive meetings, providing campus-level feedback to the larger executive board, and representing the interests of their campus graduate student body.

CAES Greenhouses and Growth Chambers

The college has numerous greenhouses and growth facilities in all campuses. Those in Athens can be [reserved and used](#) for a fee.

CAES Experiment Stations and Research & Education Centers

The CAES maintains [experimental farms](#) for research at all the major ecological zones of Georgia.

UGA Statistical Consulting Center

[The Statistical Consulting Center](#) will help students plan and design their experiments and analyze their data. Consult before you start!

UGA Writing Support at the Libraries

“Support to UGA students, staff, and faculty at any stage of the writing process.” [Available](#) through the English Department and through the UGA Libraries.

UGA Core Facilities

Need specialized equipment, access to analytics or electron microscopy? Check out the 16 specialized [core facilities](#) on campus.

EndNote

UGA students may download a copy of EndNote from the [UGA library website](#). Using EndNote to manage your literature and citations for your proposal, thesis/dissertation, and manuscripts will spare from having to reformat your citations for different formats and purposes.

Professional photos (free)

For social media, portfolios, etc: UGA [Career Center](#). Photos can also be obtained from the UGA myID office for a nominal fee.

Fellowships and Awards

Broadus Browne Research Awards

These are the CAES top research awards for its graduate students, named after plant breeder and first director of the Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station in Athens. Applications are due the last Friday in January; instructions are on the [Broadus Brown award website](#).

As each unit can only submit 1 MS and 1 PhD nominee, CRSS students wishing to be considered must submit a draft of their application materials by **Dec 15**, and the Graduate Committee will select the final nominees from CRSS.

3MT

The CAES holds a 3MT competition in early August. Each unit can nominate 1 MS and 1 PhD student for the 3MT competition. To select these students, CRSS will hold a 3MT competition each year on or about June 15. Thus, students wishing to compete should notify the CRSS program Administrator by **April 15**.

NSF Graduate Research Fellowships

These provide an annual stipend for the graduate student, and a cost-of-education allowance to cover tuition and fees. Limited to only one application submitted the 1st year of graduate school. Students must be a US citizen, US national, or permanent resident. Check out [the website for guidelines and deadlines](#) (which are usually in late fall).

NIFA Predoctoral Fellowships

These provide an annual stipend and a cost-of-education allowance to the institution. Applicants must be a US citizen, US national, or permanent resident, and they must have passed comprehensive exams. Check out [the website for guidelines and deadlines](#) (usually late fall).

Department of Energy: Office of Science Graduate Fellowship (SCGF) Program

These fellowships support outstanding graduate students working on bioenergy-related projects. More information is available on the [program website](#).

The Master of Science (M.S.) Degree Program

Advisory Committee

Paperwork required: Use the [Enrolled Student Progress Portal](#) (the AdvCmte tab) to select or propose members of your Graduate Advisory Committee. Instructions are available in the *How To* link on the AdvCmte tab of the student portal. Advisory Committees should be established by the end of the 1st year (3 semesters).

The Advisory Committee is comprised of the student's Major Professor, who serves as chair and must be a member of CRSS, and at least two other members. The majority of the committee, and the Major Professor, must have graduate faculty status at UGA.

The Advisory committee along with the Major Professor share responsibilities to monitor graduate student progress and guide the student toward timely completion of their degree program. The advisory committee is charged with framing and approving programs of study, advising students on required research skills, guiding the design of thesis research project, reading and approving the final thesis document, and approving the final oral examination (defense).

This committee will approve the student's program of study and thesis plan and administer the final oral examination. The student will keep the Advisory Committee informed of progress being made.

Program of Study

Paperwork required:

Graduate students are required to create and submit a [Program of Study](#) in DegreeWorks at least twice as part of their graduation requirements. The first program of study (Partial Plan, 2 semesters) should be submitted at the beginning of the program (before starting classes) and then a full plan should be submitted after conferring with their committee in DegreeWorks (Full Plan).

M.S. students must have 30 credit hours to graduate, which must include 21 hours of course work, 12 hours of which must be graduate level courses only (i.e., not split undergraduate/ graduate courses, e.g., 4100/6100). No more than six hours of Research (CRSS 7000) or three hours of Thesis (CRSS 7300) will be counted on your program of study. M.S. students may transfer 6 graduate course credits from another institution. Fill out the [Request for Transfer Credit](#) form (G134) to request transfer credit.

The following courses are required for graduation:

- GradFIRST seminar (1 cr hr, GRSC 7001) taken the first year.
- CRSS usually has a section for their students – check with the program administrator for information.
- one Graduate Statistics course (e.g., STAT 6220 or FANR 6750 or higher)
- one course of Research Seminar (e.g., CRSS 8100)
- Thesis Writing (3 cr hrs, CRSS 7300)

The final course selection is made by the student with the advice and consent of their Major Professor and their advisory committee. The student will work with their Major Professor and Advisory Committee on the initial program of study by their first semester. An overall GPA of 3.0 or better must be maintained on all courses in the Program of Study, with no grade below a **C** on any course.

A final Program of Study must be approved by the Advisory Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies and is due to the Graduate School by the end of the second week of classes of

the semester of graduation. However, students are strongly advised to have their Advisory Committee approve their coursework well before most of their courses are taken. Committees are under no obligation to approve a program of study 'after the fact' and may require additional coursework if they are not consulted before the student has completed their coursework.

All Graduate School requirements for a master's degree must be fulfilled within a six-year time frame, beginning with the first registration for graduate courses listed on the program of study and ending with the final semester of the sixth year.

Continuous enrollment is required (minimum of 3 hrs if not holding a GRA/GTA, or 18 hrs if holding GRA/GTA) in at least two semesters per academic year (Fall, Spring, Summer).

Thesis Proposal

As per the graduate school, "**A Master's thesis demonstrates independent judgment in developing a problem from primary sources.**" A thesis proposal approved by the Advisory Committee must be submitted to the Administrative Manager by the end of the first year (3 semesters = 12 months for full-time students). These items become a permanent part of the student's file and record. The thesis proposal is to ensure that a student starts early on a research project suitable for a thesis. A draft plan of the proposed research will be formulated together with the student's Major Professor by the end of the first semester. The full proposal must be finalized and approved by the student's Advisory Committee by the end of the second semester at a scheduled committee meeting, with committee members present, either physically or digitally. Committee members must receive a copy of the proposal at least 7 days prior to the scheduled meeting.

As a minimum, these research proposals should contain the research objectives and rationale, a proposed research approach, a research timeline, and a review of all pertinent literature. The level of detail in the materials and methods section is at the discretion of the student and the committee members. Students are encouraged to prepare a slide presentation of their proposed research to present at their committee meeting.

Faculty are encouraged to assign the research hours (CRSS 7000) a grade of "U" for students who do not have their proposal approved by the deadline. At the committee's discretion, a student may receive an additional semester to finalize the proposal before the student is assigned a "U."

Thesis

Paperwork required: *Submit your dissertation for a preliminary [ETD Format Check](#).*

Paperwork required: *Fill out the [ETD Submission Approval](#) form (G129) by the established [deadline](#) for the student's graduation semester for a first format check. Instructions for formatting the thesis or dissertation can be found [here](#).*

Thesis release options: Theses normally become available upon a student's graduation, as per Option 1 of form G129 above. However, sometimes a thesis may contain

- Patentable materials currently protected by patent application, or being considered for patent application;
- Sensitive information that is protected by a confidentiality agreement with a research sponsor or funding agency; or
- Materials anticipated for timely publication with a publisher who has restrictive pre-publication or post-publication policies.

If so, the student may choose Option 2 on the G129 to request an embargo (withhold) from the UGA Library for a period of two years from the date of degree conferral. This option requires

written justification and prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. To request an embargo, a letter from the Major Professor must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School in advance of the ETD submission deadline. The letter should include detailed documentation of the need for embargo.

Embargo requests must be received by the Dean of the Graduate School at least four weeks prior to the ETD submission deadline. Embargo approval paperwork should be submitted with the G129 form by the Graduate School deadline.

Thesis to Advisory Committee: Please submit an electronic copy of the thesis to the Advisory Committee at least two weeks prior to oral defense. This draft is one that is approved by the Major Professor as being complete and editorially correct. Students should follow formatting guidelines based on the [UGA Theses and Dissertations Student Guide to Preparation and Processing](#).

The thesis must demonstrate unity and purpose. All parts of the thesis must contribute to the stated objectives of the research. The methods used in the research must be described adequately to permit an independent investigator to replicate the work. The thesis will obtain final approval after the suggested changes made by the advisory committee are completed.

The thesis will be revised as required by the examination committee.

Time Limits

Master's degree students must complete all degree requirements, including all coursework on their approved program of study and defend their thesis within six years as specified by the Graduate School. For full details see the [Graduate School Policy](#).

Application for Graduation

Paperwork required: Fill out the Application for Graduation form, available on [Athena](#). Due no later than Friday of the second full week (the first full week for summer) of classes in the semester that you plan to graduate.

Students must enroll for a minimum of three credit hours during the semester in which degree requirements are completed.

Late Filing: A \$50 late fee applies if graduation forms are not filed by the deadline. See the Graduate School Important Dates & Deadlines page for full details: <https://grad.uga.edu/current-students/important-dates-deadlines/>.

Change in Graduation Date: If you cannot complete requirements in the semester you applied for graduation, notify the CRSS Program Administrator and the Graduate School at gradinfo@uga.edu to cancel and reapply the following semester.

Final Exam (Defense)

Paperwork required: Fill out the [Approval Form for Master's Thesis and Final Oral Examination](#) (G140) prior to your examination. It will be routed to your committee members for their approval.

Paperwork required: *Every committee member must fill out the [Student Exam Performance Evaluation Form](#) that they will receive by email prior to the exam.*

A final examination on both the program of study and the thesis is required and will be administered by the Advisory Committee. Defense of the thesis will be by an oral examination. All members of the Advisory Committee must participate in the entire defense, and the committee must approve the defense with no more than one dissenting vote.

Exit Interview

All students should schedule an exit interview with the department head prior to graduation. The exit interview and survey are important tools for assessing and improving our programs. Both the survey and interview provide an opportunity to share feedback, offer suggestions, and reflect on your overall experience. Please contact [Mary Sinsheimer](#) to schedule.

Commencement & Convocation

Paperwork required: Fill out the Commencement Information if you will participate in the commencement ceremony.

Besides the formal commencement ceremony, the CAES also hosts a separate convocation ceremony, with details announced a few weeks before the ceremony. All students are encouraged to attend both ceremonies.

M.S. transfer to Ph.D. Program

An M.S. student requesting to transfer to a Ph.D. program prior to completing all requirements for a M.S. degree must have finished 1 year of study during which they maintain a minimum GPA of 3.5 and demonstrate acceptable performance in research as determined by the student's Advisory Committee at a formal meeting.



The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree Program

Advisory Committee

Paperwork required: Use the [Enrolled Student Progress Portal](#) (the AdvCmte tab) to select or propose members of your Graduate Advisory Committee. Instructions are accessible from a “How To” link on the “AdvCmte” tab of the student portal. Advisory Committees should be established by the end of the 1st year.

The Advisory Committee is comprised of the student’s Major Professor, who serves as chair, and at least four other members, at least one of whom is not from CRSS. The majority of the committee must have graduate faculty status at UGA. These committee members must be selected by the student together with their Major Professor. If a student has co-Major Professors, they both share the role of chair and then the committee must include at least three other members. No more than two co-Major Professors are allowed. Committee members with no official UGA relationship may serve as voting members on the advisory committee after nomination by the DGS and approval of the dean of the Graduate School. The student should submit a CV of the non-affiliated person along with a justification to the CRSS Program Administrator along with a justification for inclusion of that person on the committee. A nominee must have a terminal degree in their field and distinguished academic credentials in the field of study. A non-affiliated person appointed to a graduate student’s committee must attend meetings associated with the appointment.

The Advisory Committee along with the Major Professor share responsibilities to monitor graduate student progress and guide the student toward timely completion of their degree program. The advisory committee is charged with framing and approving programs of study, advising students on required research skills, directing and approving the comprehensive examinations, guiding the design of thesis/dissertation research projects, reading and approving the final dissertation document and approving the final oral examination (defense). The student will keep the Advisory Committee informed of progress being made.

Replacements for original members of the advisory committee must be approved by the dean of the Graduate School prior to their service in any capacity. A revised advisory committee form for showing the reconstituted committee must be submitted to the Graduate School via the Enrolled Student Progress Portal.

Program of Study

Paperwork required:

Graduate students are required to create and submit a [Program of Study](#) in DegreeWorks at least twice as part of their graduation requirements. The first program of study (Partial Plan, 2 semesters) should be submitted at the beginning of the program (before starting classes) and then a full plan should be submitted after conferring with their committee in DegreeWorks (Full Plan).

Ph.D. students must have 30 hours to graduate, which must include a minimum of 16 hours of 8000 or 9000 level course in addition to 6 hours of dissertation research (CRSS 9000), and 3 hours of dissertation writing (CRSS 9300). One hour of GradFirst seminar is required during the first or second semester if not already taken during MS degree (retaking it will not count towards the required 30 hrs. An overall GPA of 3.0 or better must be maintained on all courses in the Program of Study, with no grade below a C on any course.

The following courses are required for PhD students to graduate:

- GradFIRST seminar (1 cr hr, GRSC 7001) taken the first year.

- 21 hours of graduate coursework (6000 level and above; with a minimum of 16 hours of 8000-9000 level credits) excluding independent study courses (e.g., CRSS 9000/9300)
- 3 hours of dissertation writing (CRSS 9300)
- 6 hours of dissertation research (CRSS 9000) and the remainder in research or relevant lower-level courses
- one graduate Statistics course (e.g., STAT 6220 or FANR 6750 or higher)
- one course of Research Seminar (e.g., CRSS 8100)
- one pedagogy course (GRSC 7700 or an approved equivalent based on the UGA [TA policy](#))

Note that any given course cannot be used for two degrees. Students who took PhD-required courses for their MS should not retake the courses. Instead, they need to work with their committee to identify suitable courses to take in their place.

Ph.D. students may transfer 9 graduate course credits from another institution after beginning at UGA, as long as those courses did not count towards another degree at the previous institution. Fill out the [Request for Transfer Credit](#) form (G134) to request transfer credit.

The final course selection is made by the student with the advice and consent of their Major Professor and their advisory committee

The student will work with their Major Professor and Advisory Committee on the Preliminary Program of Study. This is a departmental form, which should be approved by the Advisory Committee no later than the end of the 1st year, and well before most of their courses are taken. Committees are under no obligation to approve a program of study ‘after fact,’ and may require additional coursework if they are not consulted before the student has completed their coursework.

The final Program of Study is a Graduate School form and must be approved by the Advisory Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies. Any changes in courses in the Final Program of Study or committee make-up must be approved and on file with the Graduate School by the time the notification of the preliminary oral comprehensive examination is given and prior to admission to candidacy. All courses on the Program of Study be taken within an **eight-year** time limit.

Research Prospectus

(due by the end of the second year, 24 months after starting for full time students)

As per the Graduate School, “The dissertation must represent originality in research, independent thinking, scholarly ability, and technical mastery of a field of study.” The Major Professor and Advisory Committee shall guide the student in dissertation planning. The student is required to prepare a dissertation prospectus which provides an introduction, rationale, and description of the proposed research to be conducted, along with a literature review of all the pertinent literature and a proposed research timeline. The level of detail in the materials and methods section is at the discretion of the student and the committee members. The prospectus must be presented to, and approved by, the Advisory Committee before significant research is undertaken, and no later than the end of the student’s second year. Students are encouraged to prepare a slide presentation of their proposed research and pertinent background information to present at their committee meeting.

Approval of the dissertation prospectus signifies that the members of the Advisory Committee believe that it proposes a satisfactory research study. A copy of the approved prospectus must be emailed to the CRSS Program Administrator and becomes a permanent part of their record.

Faculty are encouraged to assign the research hours a grade of "U" for students who do not have their proposal approved by the deadline. At the committee's discretion, a student may receive an additional semester to finalize the proposal before the student is assigned a "U."

Residency Requirement

At least two consecutive semesters of full-time work must be spent in resident study on one of the three UGA campuses. The residency requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree is interpreted as 30 hours of consecutive graduate course work that is included on the approved program of study.

Time Limits

Doctoral students must complete all coursework and be admitted to candidacy within **eight years** of matriculation. After admission to candidacy, students have **five years** to complete the dissertation and graduate; otherwise, candidacy expires, and comprehensive exams must be retaken. Students experiencing extenuating circumstances may petition for an extension (maximum of 24 months, total time not to exceed 10 years). The petition requires support from the Major Professor, DGS, and Department Head. For full details on time limits, extensions, and the petition process, see the [Graduate School Policy](#).

Comprehensive Examination

Paperwork required: The student must notify the CRSS program Administrator **three weeks** prior to the oral exam, who will submit Form G118 to the Graduate School for posting at least two weeks prior to the oral exam.

Paperwork required: Every committee member must fill out the [Student Exam Performance Evaluation Form](#) that they should receive by email prior to the exam.

Paperwork required: Your committee members will also receive form G168, Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Form from the Graduate School, where they indicate if you passed/failed the exam.

The Graduate School requires that all Doctoral students pass a Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination before they are admitted to candidacy for the Doctoral degree. The Program of Study form must be submitted before taking the comprehensive exam. Students planning to take the Written Comprehensive Examination should meet with their Advisory Committee to discuss the examination. The final step before Admission to Candidacy is the Oral Comprehensive Examination, administered by the Advisory Committee. The written comprehensive examination is given after a student has completed the bulk of their course work. This should be taken before the start of the third year in residence in the doctoral program. The format and requirements (length of exam, and restrictions of materials, etc.) are the purview of the committee. Consult with your committee early about this.

The Oral Comprehensive Examination is scheduled once the student has passed the Written Comprehensive Examination. This is usually at least two weeks after the Written exam, to allow committee members time to review the answers and ensure the student has passed. Oral exams are announced by the Graduate School.

The Oral Comprehensive Examination may include, but is not limited to, the presentation, discussion, and defense of the dissertation prospectus. The Oral Comprehensive Examination should include an evaluation of the broad knowledge needed to complete the dissertation. The Exam may also include topics directly related to the dissertation prospectus. To pass each examination, there can be no more than one 'no' vote. Abstention is not an appropriate vote for the comprehensive examination. The results of both examinations will be reported to the Graduate School within two weeks following the oral examination.

All members of the Advisory Committee must be physically present or have electronic means of meeting for the entire period of this Examination. Once the Oral Comprehensive Examination has been passed, the student will be admitted to candidacy for the Doctoral degree.

Repeat policy: It is CRSS policy that students who fail to pass either exam are allowed one additional chance to retake the exam, after which they will be dismissed from the program if they fail to pass the second attempt.

If the dissertation is not completed within 5 years of being admitted to candidacy, the student must pass another set of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examinations and be readmitted to candidacy.

Admission to Candidacy

Paperwork required: Fill out the [Application for Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degrees](#) (G162) after passing the oral comprehensive exam. This form is due at least two months prior to graduation.

To be admitted to candidacy, a Ph.D. student must have: completed all admission prerequisites, filed a final Program of Study, met residency requirements, passed comprehensive exams, and maintained a 3.0 GPA. After admission to candidacy, a student must register for a combined minimum of 18 credit hours of dissertation or other graduate credit to complete the degree. For full details see the [Graduate School Policy](#).

Application for Graduation

Paperwork required: Fill out the Application for Graduation form, available on Athena. Due no later than Friday of the second full week (the first full week for summer) of classes in the semester that you plan to graduate.

A student must apply for graduation no later than Friday of the second full week (the first full week for summer) of classes in the semester of the anticipated graduation date to permit the Graduate School to review the student's file. These [deadlines](#) are published on the Graduate School Website for three semesters in advance. Students must enroll for a minimum of three credit hours during the semester in which degree requirements are completed. The application for graduation is submitted electronically in Athena and requires no signatures.

Late Filing: A \$50 late fee applies if graduation forms are not filed by the deadline. See the Graduate School Important Dates & Deadlines page for full details: <https://grad.uga.edu/current-students/important-dates-deadlines/>.

Change in Graduation Date: If you cannot complete requirements in the semester you applied for graduation, notify the CRSS Program Administrator and the Graduate School at gradinfo@uga.edu to cancel and reapply the following semester.



Dissertation Completion

Paperwork required: Submit your dissertation for a preliminary [ETD Format Check](#).

Paperwork required: Fill out the [ETD Submission Approval](#) form (G129) by the established [deadline](#) for the student's graduation semester for a first format check. Instructions for formatting the thesis or dissertation can be found [here](#).

Dissertation release options: Dissertations normally become available upon a student's graduation, as per Option 1 of form G129 above. However, sometimes a dissertation may contain:

- Patentable materials currently protected by patent application, or being considered for patent application;
- Sensitive information that is protected by a confidentiality agreement with a research sponsor or funding agency; or
- Materials anticipated for timely publication with a publisher who has restrictive pre-publication or post-publication policies.

If so, the student may choose Option 2 on the G129 to request an embargo (withhold) from the UGA Library for a period of two years from the date of degree conferral. This option requires written justification and prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. To request an embargo, a letter from the Major Professor must be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School well in advance of the ETD submission deadline. The letter should include detailed documentation of the need for embargo.

Embargo requests must be received by the Dean of the Graduate School at least four weeks prior to the ETD submission deadline. Embargo approval paperwork should be submitted with the G129 form by the Graduate School deadline.

The Graduate School will not accept a dissertation until the student has been admitted to candidacy for the degree, which starts as soon as the Graduate School is notified that the student passed their comprehensive exam. The year on the title page of the dissertation or thesis will be the same year in which the degree is conferred. The theses or dissertation will not be forwarded to the University Library until the degree has been conferred.

All requirements for the thesis or dissertation must be completed no later than two full weeks prior to graduation (see "[Important Dates & Deadlines](#)" on the Graduate School website). The

final copy will not be accepted as the official copy until the Graduate School has received the signed approval form for the thesis or dissertation defense and the ETD submission approval form. These forms are due by the same deadline as the final copy of the thesis/dissertation.

Dissertation for Advisory Committee: In addition to the Graduate School deadlines, a final draft of the dissertation must be submitted to the Advisory Committee no later than two weeks before the final examination. This draft is one that is approved by the Major Professor as being complete and editorially correct. Students should follow formatting guidelines based on the [UGA Theses and Dissertations Student Guide to Preparation and Processing](#).

By the deadline listed for the graduation semester, a complete formatted copy of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School for a first format check.

As per the Graduate School, a dissertation

- presents original research or scholarship
- demonstrates the student's ability to understand and critically evaluate the literature of the field
- reflects the student's mastery of appropriate research methods and tools
- shows that a student can address a major problem, arrive at successful conclusions, and report results in a literate fashion.

The Graduate School also states that "all parts of the dissertation or thesis must contribute to the stated objectives of the research. The methods used in the research must be described adequately to permit an independent investigator to replicate the work."

The Graduate School must receive proof of permission to use articles that have been published or accepted for publication.

Exit Seminar/Oral Defense

Paperwork required: Fill out the [Approval Form for Doctoral Dissertation and Final Oral Examination](#) (G164) as soon as defense is scheduled.

Paperwork required: *Every committee member must fill out the [Student Exam Performance Evaluation Form](#) that they should receive by email prior to their exam.*

The final examination will consist of a seminar presentation of the student's research, followed by the defense/final exam. Questioning in the defense will emphasize the topic of the thesis or dissertation, but questions may be raised in any appropriate area.

The student and committee chair must appear in person for both components of the defense, but other committee members can participate via teleconference or video conference, provided that the comments of all participants can clearly and consistently be heard. If the Major Professor is not able to attend the defense in person, they can designate a substitute chair who is a current member of the committee. Under extenuating circumstances with approval by the Department Head and DGS, a defense can be held completely remotely.

All CRSS students, staff, postdoc, and faculty members are invited and encouraged to attend the exit seminar. The CRSS program Administrator will notify the Department members of the time and place of the final seminar and exam. An oral defense of the student's dissertation with the Major Professor and Advisory Committee must take place by the Graduate School deadline.

To pass, there can be no more than one 'no' vote, and the Major Professor (and co-Major Professor if any) must vote to pass. Abstention is not permitted.

****It is the student's responsibility to abide by Graduate School deadlines for graduation. Please check the [Graduate School](#) website under Current Students, Important Deadlines and Dates.**

Exit Interview

All students should schedule an exit interview with the department head prior to graduation. The exit interview and survey are important tools for assessing and improving our programs. Both the survey and interview provide an opportunity to share feedback, offer suggestions, and reflect on your overall experience. Please contact [Mary Sinsheimer](#) to schedule.

Commencement & Convocation

Paperwork required: Fill out the [Doctoral Commencement Information](#) form if you will participate in the commencement ceremony.

Besides the formal commencement/hooding ceremony, the CAES also hosts a separate convocation ceremony, with details announced a few weeks before the ceremony. All students are encouraged to attend both ceremonies.

