



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Ecology &
Conservation Biology

Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology

Graduate Policies and Procedures



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Introduction and Overview

The Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology conducts interdisciplinary research across all levels of biodiversity, from genes to ecosystems, to confront the grand challenge of conserving natural resources in a rapidly changing world. This research is integrated with undergraduate and graduate teaching programs to prepare the next generation of leaders in conservation science.

We strive for preeminence among academic programs in ecology and conservation biology. Our faculty is dedicated to advancing interdisciplinary research and teaching, informing conservation and management solutions, and preparing students as future leaders who will solve complex environmental problems in Texas and across the world.

The faculty and staff of the Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology will make every effort to ensure that your experience as a graduate student in our department is challenging, rewarding, and preparatory for a career in ecology, conservation biology, or natural resource management.

Overviews of our graduate programs can be found at eccb.tamu.edu.

Departmental Contacts

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Ms. Cindy Jarrott, Business Coordinator
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Student Support Resources

Academic Success Resources

Texas A&M University's Graduate and Professional School offers a host of services to support progress in your academic pursuits, ensuring that you have the tools for success. Resources include thesis and dissertation guides, training and mentoring programs, conflict resolution, professional development, wellbeing, and mental health, writing center tools and advising, and more: <https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources>.

Student Safety, Health, and Wellness Resources

A collection of media, information, and resources to help students plan, react, or recover from an emergency: <https://eccb.tamu.edu/health-and-safety>.

Student Academic and Professional Resources

Information and resources to assist students in a successful graduate program: <https://eccb.tamu.edu/academic-and-professional-resources>.

The Graduate and Professional School (GPS)

The Graduate and Professional School (GPS) is the University office responsible for administering the graduate programs of Texas A&M. The office is in Nagle Hall on Main Campus. All petitions, requests, and proposals submitted to and approved by GPS. GPS publishes a Graduate Student Calendar every semester that lists dates for all deadlines for graduate program degree requirements. The calendar is available at <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/dates-and-deadlines/dates-and-deadlines>. Much of the necessary graduate information needed, along with forms relative to graduate programs is available on the GPS website at <http://grad.tamu.edu>. Please allow 14 business days for processing and 30 days for document approvals.

International Student Resources

<http://iss.tamu.edu>

Most international students enrolled at TAMU are enrolled at the graduate level. There are many resources and services on campus specifically to help and guide international students and to provide support to facilitate their transition to student life in the United States and at Texas A&M. The International Student Services (ISS) office provides answers to questions regarding U.S. customs, government regulations, registration procedures and problems, campus community facilities, medical care, banking, shopping, and entertainment.

ISS can also help students with questions regarding immigration-related matters, provide counseling regarding federal regulations, and aid in the processing of documents and applications that impact student status. The office also provides personal advising regarding cultural adjustment and socialization issues, readjustment to home country, academic concerns, health questions and concerns, emergency assistance (family tragedy, etc.) banking, transportation, and many other necessary concerns. It also acts as a liaison for the students to best represent their interests and to provide a link with government, business, University, and community officials.

Other Helpful Resources

Graduate Catalog <http://catalog.tamu.edu>
Details and steps to degree completion

Graduate and Professional School
<https://grad.tamu.edu>
Academic process, forms, dates, deadlines

Registrar
<http://registrar.tamu.edu>
Academic calendar, registration details

Writing Center <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu>
Writing support, consultations, workshops, thesis/dissertation retreats

Student Business Services <https://sbs.tamu.edu>
Tuition and fees information, Aggie ID, loans

Career Center <http://careercenter.tamu.edu>
CV writing, job postings, career/job search, graduate student workshops

Student Counseling Services
<http://scs.tamu.edu>
Career counseling, stress management, crisis intervention, etc.

University Libraries <https://library.tamu.edu>
Research and study, research collections, study space; search for resources

Medical Sciences Library
<https://msl.library.tamu.edu>
Carolyn Jackson, csj@library.tamu.edu

Disability Services <https://disability.tamu.edu>
Accommodations, coordination, evaluation referral, adaptive technology

Rec Center
<https://recsports.tamu.edu>
Recreational sports facility

Student Business Services <https://sbs.tamu.edu>
Tuition and fees information, Aggie ID, loans

Disability Services <https://disability.tamu.edu>
Accommodations, coordination, evaluation referral, adaptive tech. services, etc.

Veterans Services Office
<https://aggie.tamu.edu/financial-aid/veterans>
Veterans funding, financial aid, resource and support center, thesis/dissertation support groups

Multicultural Student Services
<https://dms.tamu.edu>
Services and programs for African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American students

Women's Resource Center
<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/wrc>
Support for and awareness of issues affecting women

Parking <https://transport.tamu.edu>
Parking permits, citations, parking maps

Buses <https://transit.tamu.edu>
Bus routes, schedule, live bus location

Counseling and Psychological Services
<https://caps.tamu.edu>
Career counseling, stress management, crisis intervention, etc.

Student Health Services <https://shs.tamu.edu>
On-campus health care

University Police <https://upd.tamu.edu>
979.845.2345
Protection of persons and property of Texas A&M University

Aggie Dining
<https://dineoncampus.com/tamu>
Dining locations, menus, meal plans

Corp Escort
<https://www.tamu.edu/emergency/procedures/safetySupport.html>
979.845.6789
Members of the Corp of Cadets provide escorts any time during the fall and spring semesters for

extra security while walking on campus.

Aggie Dining

<https://dineoncampus.com/tamu>

Dining locations, menus, meal plans

Texas A&M Title IX Officer

<https://titleix.tamu.edu>

Professional staff contact for students who have been sexually assaulted, harassed, stalked, or who are in a violent relationship.

Student Legal Services

<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/sls/services>

Legal services for students

LGBTQ+ Pride Center

<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/lgbtq/get-involved>

Support through the education, advancement, and championing of the broad spectrum of sexual, affectional, and gender identities

Ecology and Conservation Biology Graduate Degrees

The Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology (ECCB) offers graduate programs leading to **M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Ecology and Conservation Biology**. The M.S. and Ph.D. degrees train students for careers in research and management of terrestrial and aquatic ecological systems, as well as other fields linked to ecology and conservation biology. The M.S. offers a thesis and non-thesis option, allowing flexibility in both graduate education and preparation for a variety of career trajectories. Fields of study include, but are not limited to ecology, conservation biology, biogeochemistry, ecohydrology, global change, ecological restoration, forestry, spatial sciences, genetics, systematics, and evolution.

Graduate Catalog

The official policies of Texas A&M University are published annually in the Graduate Catalog. It is the responsibility of each graduate student to read and be familiar with the policies as set forth in the Catalog, which is published annually. The catalog is available electronically at <https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate>.

The Department states again that it is “the graduate student’s responsibility and duty to become familiar with all policies that affect their graduate program and to correctly follow all policies in a timely manner.”

Student Rules

<https://student-rules.tamu.edu>

Rules that govern student conduct and student activities at Texas A&M University and that describe faculty and staff obligations in their work with students. Each student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with and to comply with the *Texas A&M University Student Rules*.

Scholastic Requirements

This document summarizes policies and procedures to be followed by graduate studies in Ecology and Conservation Biology. Students should consult the [Graduate Catalog](#) or [Graduate and Professional Studies](#) as the final authority on all matters discussed in the handbook.

Grade Point Average

Graduate students must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (4.0 scale) for all courses which are listed on the degree plan; as well as for all graded graduate and advanced undergraduate coursework (300 and 400 level) completed at Texas A&M and eligible for application toward a graduate degree. Graduate students will not receive graduate degree credit for undergraduate courses taken on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) basis. Graduate courses on the degree plan may not be taken S/U, except for 681, 684, 690, 691, 692, 693, 695, and 697. Graduate courses not on the degree plan may be taken S/U.

If either a student’s cumulative GPA or the GPA for courses listed on the degree plan fall below 3.0, the student will be considered scholastically deficient and may be dismissed from the University unless the minimum GPA is regained by the end of the next long semester. Individual fellowships have different requirements for minimum GPA to remain eligible for the fellowships.

Credits and Course Requirements

Students come into the field of Ecology and Conservation Biology with diverse interests, science backgrounds and career goals. As such, you can tailor your degree plan with the help of your major advisor and advisory committee.

The seminar course (ECCB 681) is required for M.S. and Ph.D. students. Other than the seminar course, there is no core curriculum (departmental or university) at the graduate level. However, students earning graduate degrees in Ecology and Conservation Biology are encouraged to have competency in fundamental areas of the field, such as ecology, natural resources management, spatial inventory and analysis, human dimensions, and biodiversity.

Additional information can be found in the Texas A&M University Graduate Catalog at <https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/colleges-schools-interdisciplinary/agriculture-life-sciences/ecology-and-conservation-biology>.

Degree	Minimum credit hours	Course Requirements/Limitations
<p>Doctor of Philosophy</p>	<p>64 credit hours beyond a master's degree <i>(Students typically take around 24-30 hours of formal coursework plus research hours.)</i></p> <p>96 credit hours beyond a bachelor's degree <i>(Students typically take around 40-50 hours of formal coursework plus research hours.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2 credit hours of graduate seminar are REQUIRED (ECCB 681). · Research credits (ECCB 691) · 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, must not have been used for another degree or certificate
<p>Master of Science (thesis)</p>	<p>32 credit hours <i>(Students typically take around 24 hours of formal coursework plus research hours.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 1 credit hour of graduate seminar is REQUIRED (ECCB 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 (must be taken for a letter grade) · 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, must not have been used for another degree or certificate
<p>Master of Science (non-thesis)</p>	<p>36 credit hours <i>(Students typically take at least 30 hours of formal coursework plus directed studies.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Maximum 2 hours of seminar (681) · Any combination of 684 (internship) or 685 (directed studies) may not exceed 25% of the total credit hour or 9 hours. · Maximum 8 hours of 685 (must be taken for a letter grade) · Maximum 8 hours of 684 · 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, must not have been used for another degree or certificate

Steps Leading to a Master of Science Degree

There are several steps that must be successfully completed to fulfill the requirements for the M.S. degree in Ecology and Conservation Biology. These include:

Committee

Graduate students must identify an advisory committee chair prior to being admitted to the graduate program. In their first semester, students should consult with their committee chair (and co-chair, if applicable) and establish their committee members. All committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty at Texas A&M University.

Graduate Faculty members can be found on the Graduate School website at <https://gradcom.tamu.edu/faculty>. Faculty and other additional members can be appointed who are not members of the Graduate Faculty according to the guidelines at <https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/graduate-faculty>. Students should meet with ECCB Department Head or Associate Department Head for more information regarding special or “extra” committee appointments if questions arise.

Master of Science committees are composed of the chair and at least 2 additional members. One of the additional members may be a co-chair. The chair must be from ECCB. At least one of the remaining members must be from another TAMU department or Faculty. Adjunct faculty from other agencies may serve as committee members representing the department to which they are adjunct if they are members of the Graduate Faculty.

Degree Plan

In consultation with their advisory committee, students must submit a degree plan at <https://ogsdps.tamu.edu> that adheres to the minimum credit hours, course requirements and limitations. Once submitted, the degree plan will route to the graduate advisor for requirement verification, then the student's advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval. The degree plan must be submitted to GPS before the end of the student's second long semester and no later than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. Should a student fail to submit the degree plan by the deadline, a registration hold will be placed on the student's account by GPS (October 1 for degree plans due in the fall and March 1 for degree plans due in the spring).

Seminar

M.S. students are required to register for 1 credit of ECCB 681 (or other approved 681) during their degree program. Non-thesis master's students are encouraged to register for 1 credit of ECCB 681, but not required.

All students will present a Final Thesis or Dissertation Research Seminar prior to the final examination. This too will be cooperatively planned and advertised to the academic community. The final defense/seminar must be approved by the Department Head at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled date.

Proposal

Students must develop a detailed research proposal. This research proposal, consisting of a maximum of ten pages of narrative, should review pertinent literature and summarize methods to be used in the proposed research. The proposal should optimally be submitted and approved before the research

starts. At the latest, the proposal should be submitted before the end of the second-long semester (fall or spring). The proposal should include:

- a. Justification and rationale (summarize previous research on the subject, providing specific literature citations; identify problems that the study will help resolve).
- b. Statement of hypothesis (or specify questions the research is designed to answer).
- c. Objectives (specify what hypotheses will be tested; define the limits of the proposed study).
- d. Procedures (identify methods to be used to accomplish objectives, including data analysis).
- e. Budget (prepared for experience, where practical; do not include in GPS copy).

A student's research project should be designed to produce a publishable product for a refereed journal. It is in the best interest of the student and the committee to ensure the proposal is approved prior to the start of the research. The student should report regularly on research progress to the advisor and the advisory committee to prevent unexpected surprises or misunderstandings and to gain approval of any redirection.

The proposal is submitted by the student through the DocuSign Research Proposal and Approval Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/research-proposal-approval-form>) which routes to the student's graduate advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval. The document must be submitted no less than 20 business days prior to the submission of the Request for the Final Examination. More information on the proposal requirements may be found at <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/research-proposal-approval-form>.

Apply for Degree and Pay Graduation Fees

These items must be accomplished during the first week of the student's final semester. Students should note this and all deadlines are available on the Graduate and Professional School website at <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/dates-and-deadlines/dates-and-deadlines>.

Complete Residence Requirements

Graduate students who have lived outside of College Station and attended classes at the College Station campus in a sporadic fashion must verify they have met the residence requirements. These requirements state the student must reside and attend classes at the College Station campus for one long semester. The Graduate and Professional School will confirm the residence requirement has been fulfilled before the student may defend their thesis.

Final Examination/Defense

Although the final oral exam tends to focus on the thesis or professional paper, additional issues may be addressed as an outgrowth of the normal discussion of the student's research or professional activities. Requests to schedule final oral exams/defenses must be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the scheduled date requested, and only after approval to schedule has been received from all advisory committee members. If the request for scheduling includes a petition for changes to the degree plan or advisory committee, then the request must be submitted at least 5 weeks ahead of the scheduled date.

Final oral examinations must be held on the College Station campus; however, students may request by petition, well in advance of scheduling the exam, that it be held off campus. Examinations via Zoom must also be requested in advance with a statement indicating location of each member and the student.

The DocuSign Request of Final Examination Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/request-and-announcement-of-the-final-examination>) must be submitted to GPS at least 10 business days prior to the exam. The form will route to the student's advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval. The Report of Final Exam will be emailed directly to the advisory committee chair who must submit the final exam results within 10 business days of the scheduled exam.

All students will present a final thesis seminar prior to the final examination. This will be cooperatively planned and advertised to the academic community. The final defense/seminar must be approved by the advisory committee and advertised at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled date.

Thesis

Specific information on paper format and style as well as submission deadlines can be found at <https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources/thesis-dissertation-services/general-formatting>. In addition to meeting all GPS requirements, students must provide a copy of their thesis (in final form) to each member of their committee.

The thesis should be in a proper format for publication and should be "tightened" to a readiness for submittal by use of appendixes for non-essential information. The major role of the student's advisory committee is to offer guidance on study design and interpretation of results. It is not the committee's responsibility to edit careless writing. A polished draft (including all manuscript components and page numbers) must be delivered to the advisory committee for review after the student and major advisor have agreed upon editorial changes; this should occur well before the anticipated date of the final examination. It is the student's and advisor(s)' responsibility to make certain that the document is in good form both in terms of grammar and scientific style. Committee members have the right to reject documents that fail to meet these guidelines. Committee members should be given at least two weeks to review the draft before the student attempts to schedule the final exam/defense. The final exam is to be scheduled only after the advisory committee agrees that the thesis or dissertation is ready for defense.

Committee members should return the corrected thesis to the student two weeks after receipt. Thus, the student should check with committee members to ensure they have the time to review the document. If the student delivers the final draft to the committee one month prior to the exam, this allows two weeks before the scheduled exam/defense date for the student to make recommended changes. Final approval of style and content for graduate student documents (proposals, theses, professional papers) is the responsibility of each student and their graduate committee.

The student's thesis must be submitted electronically as a single PDF file at <https://etd.tamu.edu>. In addition to the thesis submission, the DocuSign Written Thesis Approval Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/written-thesis-approval-form>) must be submitted along with the DocuSign Copyright and Availability Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources/thesis-dissertation-services/copyright-and-availability-form>). The Written Thesis Approval Form will route to the student's advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval.

Professional Paper (Non-thesis only)

In lieu of a thesis, M.S. non-thesis must complete a professional paper. Students may receive up to 6 hours of 685 credits for the professional paper. The professional paper should cover relevant areas of

ecology and conservation biology, may be an account of an internship that highlights the scientific and managerial principles the student learned and applied during the experience. This paper is formulated in consultation with the student's advisory committee and may be based on literature reviews, surveys, and other sources. Student's must receive committee approval on the proposed project and paper before beginning work on it. Students should report regularly to their advisory committee chair and full advisory committee to apprise them of progress on the project and paper and to gain approval of any redirection. The professional paper does not need to be submitted to GPS thesis office for approval.

Specific information on paper content and style may vary considerably and is typically decided by each student's graduate committee. Full-time non-employed students will be encouraged to complete an off-campus internship. Students may receive up to 4 hours of 684 credits for an internship. Students are also encouraged to submit a copy to the library to keep in a digital repository. Final approval of style and content is the responsibility of each student and their graduate committee.

Steps Leading to a Doctor of Philosophy Degree

There are several steps that must be successfully completed to fulfill the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in Ecology and Conservation Biology. These include:

Committee Structure

Graduate students must identify an advisory committee chair prior to being admitted to the graduate program. In their first semester, students should consult with their committee chair (and co-chair, if applicable) and establish their committee members. All committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty at Texas A&M University. The major role of the student's advisory committee is to offer guidance on study design and interpretation of results.

Graduate Faculty members can be found on the Graduate School website at <https://gradcom.tamu.edu/faculty>. Faculty and other additional members can be appointed who are not members of the Graduate Faculty according to the guidelines at <https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/graduate-faculty>. Students should meet with ECCB Department Head or Associate Department Head for more information regarding special or "extra" committee appointments if questions arise.

Doctor of Philosophy committees are composed of the chair and at least 3 additional members. One of the additional members may be a co-chair. The chair must be a ECCB graduate faculty member, and at least one member must be from another TAMU department. Adjunct faculty from other agencies may serve as committee members representing the department to which they are adjunct if they are members of the Graduate Faculty. External committee members (not in the TAMU graduate faculty list) are allowed, but do not count toward the 4-member count, and their contributions are not formally documented in student record.

Degree Plan

In consultation with their advisory committee, students must submit a degree plan at <https://ogsdps.tamu.edu> that adheres to the minimum credit hours, course requirements and limitations. Once submitted, the degree plan will route to the graduate advisor for requirement verification, then the student's advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval. The degree plan must be submitted to GPS before the end of the student's fourth long semester and no later than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. Should a student fail to submit the degree plan by the

deadline, a registration hold will be placed on the student's account by GPS (October 1 for degree plans due in the fall and March 1 for degree plans due in the spring).

Proposal

Students must develop a detailed research proposal. This research proposal, consisting of a maximum of ten pages of narrative, should review pertinent literature and summarize methods to be used in the proposed research. The proposal should optimally be submitted and approved before the research starts. At the latest, the proposal should be submitted before the end of the second-long semester (fall or spring). The proposal should include:

- a. Justification and rationale (summarize previous research on the subject, providing specific literature citations; identify particular problems that the study will help resolve).
- b. Statement of hypothesis (or specify questions the research is designed to answer).
- c. Objectives (specify what hypotheses will be tested; define the limits of the proposed study).
- d. Procedures (identify methods to be used to accomplish objectives, including data analysis).
- e. Budget (prepared for experience, where practical; do not include in GPS copy).

A student's research project should be designed to produce publishable products in a refereed journal. It is in the best interest of the student and the committee to ensure the proposal is approved prior to the start of the research. The student should report regularly on research progress to the advisor and the advisory committee to prevent unexpected surprises or misunderstandings and to gain approval of any redirection.

The proposal is submitted by the student through the DocuSign Research Proposal and Approval Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/research-proposal-approval-form>) which routes to the student's graduate advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval. The document must be submitted no less than 20 business days prior to the submission of the Request for the Final Examination. More information on the proposal requirements may be found at <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/research-proposal-approval-form>.

Preliminary Examination Eligibility and Scheduling

Students should review the eligibility requirements for the preliminary exam at the end of their fourth or fifth long semester and several weeks prior to scheduling the exam. A formal Preliminary Examination (Prelim) is given by the student's advisory committee when the student is within 6 hours of completing formal degree plan coursework (i.e., except 681, 684, and 691) but must be given before the end of the semester following completion of regular coursework on the degree plan. A student must have at least a 3.0 GPR, be registered during the semester, and have previously submitted a degree plan at least 12 weeks prior to the date of the exam.

Once the student's advisor is satisfied that all prelim eligibility requirements have been met, the preliminary exam may be scheduled with the student's committee. Students must submit the DocuSign Preliminary Examination Checklist and Report at <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/preliminary-examination-checklist-and-report> prior to taking the exam. This checklist will route to the advisory committee who will wait until the exam is complete to submit the exam results.

Prelims will cover all areas within the scope of the student's doctoral program, and usually will involve

written exams from each advisory committee member, followed by an oral exam administered by the committee as a whole. The time frame from the first written exam until the oral exam should be approximately 3 weeks.

Written and oral examinations must be held on the College Station campus; however, students may request by petition, well in advance of scheduling the exam, that it be held off campus. Examinations by Zoom or other electronic means must also be requested in advance with a statement indicating location of each member and the student. No substitutions can be made for the chair of the advisory committee and the examination must be rescheduled if two or more members cannot attend. Not more than one dissenting vote is allowed for the student to pass the Prelim.

After passing the required Prelim examination, the student must complete all remaining requirements within four calendar years. If this is not done, the Prelims will have to be retaken. An extension of time-limits can be requested by submitting a "Time Limit Petition" to in DPSS.

Once the exam is complete the advisory committee chair will submit the results, both written and oral, to the DocuSign Preliminary Examination Checklist and Report, which will route to advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval. The results must be submitted to GPS within 10 business days of the oral examination. All preliminary exams, including the oral portion, MUST be completed at least 14 weeks prior to the student's dissertation defense.

Complete Residence Requirements

Graduate students who have lived outside of College Station and attended classes at the College Station campus in a sporadic fashion must verify they have met the residence requirements. These requirements state the student must reside and attend classes at the College Station campus for one long semester. The Graduate and Professional School will confirm the residence requirement has been fulfilled before the student may defend their thesis.

Apply for Degree and Pay Graduation Fees

These items must be accomplished during the first week of the student's final semester. Students should note this and all deadlines are available on the Graduate and Professional School website at <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/dates-and-deadlines/dates-and-deadlines>.

Final Examination/Defense

Although the final oral exam tends to focus on the dissertation, additional issues may be addressed on the basis of the prelims, or as an outgrowth of the normal discussion of the student's research or professional activities. Requests to schedule final oral exams/defenses must be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the scheduled date requested, and only after approval to schedule has been received from all advisory committee members. If the request for scheduling includes a petition for changes to the degree plan or advisory committee, then the request must be submitted at least 5 weeks ahead of the scheduled date.

Final oral examinations must be held on the College Station campus; however, students may request by petition, well in advance of scheduling the exam, that it be held off campus. Examinations via Zoom must also be requested in advance with a statement indicating location of each member and the student.

The DocuSign Request of Final Examination Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/request-and-announcement-of-the-final-examination>) must be submitted to GPS at least 10 business days prior to the exam. The form will route to the student's advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval. The Report of Final Exam will be emailed directly to the advisory committee chair who must submit the final exam results within 10 business days of the scheduled exam.

All students will present a final dissertation seminar prior to the final examination. This will be cooperatively planned and advertised to the academic community. The final defense/seminar must be approved by the advisory committee and advertised at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled date.

Dissertation

Specific information on paper format and style as well as submission deadlines can be found at <https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources/thesis-dissertation-services/general-formatting>. In addition to meeting all GPS requirements, students must provide a copy of their thesis (in final form) to each member of their committee.

The dissertation should be in a proper format for publication and should be "tightened" to a readiness for submittal by use of appendixes for non-essential information. It is not the committee's responsibility to edit careless writing. A polished draft (including all manuscript components and page numbers) must be delivered to the advisory committee for review after the student and major advisor have agreed upon editorial changes; this should occur well before (tentatively, at least a month) the anticipated date of the final examination. It is the student's and advisor(s)' responsibility to make certain that the document is in good form both in terms of grammar and scientific style. Committee members have the right to reject documents that fail to meet these guidelines. Committee members should be given at least two weeks to review the draft before the student attempts to schedule the final exam/defense. The final exam is to be scheduled only after the advisory committee agrees that the dissertation is ready for defense.

Committee members should return the corrected dissertation to the student two weeks after receipt. Thus, the student should check with committee members to ensure they have the time to review the document. If the student delivers the final draft to the committee one month prior to the exam, that would allow two weeks before the scheduled exam/defense date for the student to make recommended changes. Final approval of style and content for graduate student documents (proposals, dissertations, professional papers) is the responsibility of each student and their graduate committee.

The student's dissertation must be submitted electronically as a single PDF file at <https://etd.tamu.edu>. In addition to the dissertation submission, the DocuSign Written Dissertation Approval Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/written-dissertation-approval-form>) must be submitted along with the DocuSign Copyright and Availability Form (<https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources/thesis-dissertation-services/copyright-and-availability-form>). The Written Dissertation Approval Form will route to the student's advisory committee, department head, and GPS for approval.

Summary of Deadlines

Due to the size of this department, faculty members normally serve on several graduate committees, both as advisors and as committee members. Thus, faculty members often have multiple proposals,

theses, and dissertations to review each semester, typically near the end of the semester. It is in the best interest of the student to allow adequate time for review of these documents and adequate time for corrections to be made.

Specific guidelines:

- a. Degree plan should be submitted by the beginning of the second regular semester of enrollment for master's students and beginning of the fourth regular semester for Ph.D. students. Holds are added on October 1 for degree plans due in the fall and March 1 for degree plans due in the spring.
- b. Research proposal must be submitted to GPS before the end of the second long-semester for M.S. students and before the end of the fourth long semester for Ph.D. students.
- c. Proposals, theses, and dissertations will not be sent to committee members until the advisor has verified that all necessary corrections have been made. Committee members will be given at least 1 week to review proposals and 2 weeks to review theses or dissertations (before approval to schedule a final exam is requested). It is in the best interest of the student to allow time after committee review to make corrections before the document goes to GPS.

Forms

All forms and approvals are online in DPSS (Document Processing Submission System), DocuSign, or VIREO (Thesis and Dissertation Submission System). All forms will route to the advisory committee chair first, followed by advisory committee members, the department head, then the Graduate and Professional School for final approval. Please contact a graduate advisor at ECCB_RWFM_Advising@ag.tamu.edu if you have any questions.

Forms Submitted in DPSS

<https://ogsdps.tamu.edu>

- Degree plan
- MDD petition
- Change of major, degree or department
- Long form
- Petition to change coursework
- Petition to change committee
- Petition to extend time limits
- Petition for waivers/exceptions

Forms Submitted in DocuSign

- Research Proposal Form
- <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/research-proposal-approval-form>
- Preliminary Examination Checklist and Report <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/preliminary-examination-checklist-and-report>
- Request and Announcement of Final Exam <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/request-and-announcement-of-the-final-examination>
- Written Dissertation Approval Form <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/written-dissertation-approval-form>
- Written Thesis Approval Form <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/written-thesis->

[approval-form](#)

- Thesis, Dissertation, and Record of Study – Copyright Availability
<https://grad.tamu.edu/academics/academic-success-resources/thesis-dissertation-services/copyright-and-availability-form>
- Letter of Intent <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms/letter-of-intent>

Forms Submitted in Terra Dotta (International Students only)

<https://tamu-iss.terradotta.com>

*List LeAnn Hague or Tayl as the Graduate Advisor

- 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)

Graduate Student Orientation

The University holds a campus-wide graduate student orientation one week before classes begin in both the fall and spring semesters. This orientation covers graduate degree requirements, proper conduct of research, and other important issues and available campus resources.

ECCB holds a departmental new graduate student orientation for all ECCB and incoming graduate students each fall. Incoming spring students are encourage to attend the fall orientation. Students are contacted directly with orientation details.

Teaching Assistant Training

New graduate teaching assistants must complete four mandatory training prior to teaching:

1. FERPA
 - a. After processed on payroll by HR, TA must login to <https://sso.tamus.edu> and click **TrainTraq**. At the top of the browser in TrainTraq, click **Course Catalog** and type **FERPA** in the course name field to select and complete the course.
2. TAI Certificate of Completion from Teaching Assistant Institute (TAI)
 - a. To earn the certificate of completion, each new TA must review the instructions and deadlines at <https://cte.tamu.edu/graduate-student-support/teaching-assistant-institute>.
 - i. Register for a TAI Session in the Event Registration System by semester deadline.
 - ii. Complete the TAI Online Preparation Course in Gateway by semester deadline.
 - iii. Complete TAI content modules and quizzes in Canvas by semester deadline.
3. ECCB Teaching Methods Training Course (only offered in fall semesters)
 - a. A mandatory 1 credit, 2-day workshop/training course is held prior to the start of the fall semester for all new ECCB TAs. Students must enroll in the course under the fall schedule of courses by Aug 1. *Note: Students who will take BIOL TA Training are exempt from this training—contact Lindsay Hutchins to coordinate this exemption.*
4. Van Safety Training
 - a. TAs who are required to drive a university van as part of the TA course duties must complete van safety training annually. Contact Theresa Bramson to set-up the training. No fee will be charged for the training since it is part of the course TA duties.

Health Insurance

Graduate Student Employee Insurance

All students who are on a 0.50 FTE (20 hours per week) assistantship may elect to participate in the graduate student insurance plan through their employment. There is a 60-day waiting period for the employer insurance contribution. Additional group-health insurance to cover spouse and/or children may be purchased. Insurance information and enrollment may be completed in Workday. More information may be found at <https://employees.tamu.edu/benefits/grad-benefits.html>.

Graduate Student Fellowship Insurance

Students receiving some fellowships and 0.25 FTE assistantships are not automatically covered on the graduate student insurance plan. Some fellowships provide insurance reimbursement. Please refer to your offer letter and/or email Miki McClenton at mmcclenton@tamu.edu with questions. More information may be found at <https://employees.tamu.edu/benefits/postdoc-fellow.html>.

International Student Insurance

International students must comply with all ISS insurance requirements. More information can be found at <https://iss.tamu.edu/Health-Insurance>.

Self-funded students may purchase insurance through the student health plan. More information can be found at <https://tamu.myahpcare.com>.

Tax Information

Under current tax law, all assistantships are subject to taxation by the Internal Revenue Service. The Reform Act of 1986 allows for exclusion of specific education-related costs such as tuition, fees, books, and supplies. Students should keep accurate records and receipts of financial expenses. Questions and requests for assistance in completing tax returns should be addressed to the IRS or a private tax consultant.

Tuition

The tuition calculator may be found at <https://tuition.tamu.edu>.

Fees not included in tuition calculator estimate:

- Course related educational enhancement, equipment access, lab and/or field trip fees
- Optional fees (housing, meal plans, parking, etc.)
- International student admin fee of \$200-\$500— per semester charged to third-party sponsored students
- International Student Service fee of \$46 per semester.
- International student insurance
- Orientation fees
- Distance education differential tuition and fees
- General deposit \$100 fee (may be refunded after graduation)
- Parking
- Athletic passes
- Thesis/dissertation fees

Financial Assistance

Teaching Assistantships (GAT)

Available either as matching for graduate fellowships or through a competitive application process. If you are interested in a teaching assistantship, complete the Graduate Teaching Assistant application at <https://tx.ag/taapp> and discuss it with/inform your main advisor. The department will send a call for GATs each fall and spring for the upcoming semester.

Research Assistantships (GAR)

Grant-based graduate student support. Contact your faculty advisor on the availability of research assistant positions.

Assistantships versus Wage Positions

Approximately 95% of current full-time, on-campus graduate students in ECCB are supported by departmental teaching assistantships, grant-based research assistantships, or internal and external graduate fellowships and grants. If employed as an assistant (GAT or GAR), submitting a timesheet is not required. However, bi-weekly wage positions (Research Assistant or Student Worker) require that a timesheet be submitted for each pay period by the deadline provided by Human Resources. Registration is not required for wage positions as it is for assistantships.

Departmental Fellowships

Graduate assistantships and fellowships are available to qualified incoming graduate students matriculating each fall semester when funds are available. Outstanding prospective doctoral students are given priority for awards. However, exceptional prospective master's students (thesis-based) are also considered, where applicable. Scholarship awards vary depending on the availability of funds each year. A list of available fellowships is at <https://eccb.tamu.edu/financial-support>.

Other Funding Opportunities

The Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology offers Presentation Travel Grants and Open Access Grant, pending available funding. A call for applications will be emailed to students periodically throughout the semester when funding is available.

Course Registration

All students are required to maintain continuous registration until such time as they complete all requirements for graduation unless a specific leave of absence is granted by the department. Summer registration is not required by the university but may be required by the advisory committee or to meet assistantship/fellowship/scholarship or other requirements.

Faculty advisors may require more hours depending on the amount of time or other resources they must commit to a student's research and/or thesis/dissertation. If final thesis/dissertation corrections have been cleared by GPS before the last day to register in a particular term, registration is not required. Students participating in a non-thesis degree program are not required to maintain continuous enrollment once coursework is complete but must be registered in the semester they want to graduate. A student must be registered in the semester(s) in which prelims, final defense of the thesis/dissertation, and graduation are scheduled. International students should check with ISS on additional enrollment requirements that may affect their visa status.

Full-time Enrollment

Fall: 9 credit hours

Spring: 9 credit hours

Summer: 6 credit hours

Registration Tips

- Registration tutorial videos and guides are located on the My Record tab in Howdy under the Student Tutorials & FAQs.
- Extra fees apply to any course with a section number between 700 and 799. When possible, only enroll in courses with section numbers between 600 and 699 during the fall and spring semesters.
- All students will have a hold preventing registration each semester until the student's lab safety acknowledgement, terms of use, and location update is submitted—which will automatically remove the hold and allow registration.
- Registration dates and deadlines are available at <https://aggie.tamu.edu/registration-and-records/classes/registration/graduate-and-professional-student-registration-schedules>.
- Students on assistantships and/or fellowships must register full time as soon as possible after registration opens.
 - Tuition payments, out of state tuition waivers, and payroll for the new semester cannot be processed until a student is enrolled. Students who wait to enroll until classes begin will delay fellowship and assistantship stipends.

Continuous Registration

- Ph.D. and M.S. thesis students who have completed all degree plan coursework 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.
- Students must be registered for at least one credit during the semesters when the preliminary (Ph.D. only) and final exams are taken.
- Students must be registered for at least one credit during the semester the student graduates.
- Students with F-1 visas: minimum registration guidelines are available at <https://iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/F-1-Status/F-1-Maintaining-Status#0-2.MaintainFull-timeEnrollment>.
- Students with J-1 visas: minimum registration guidelines are available at <https://iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/J-1-Status/J-1-Maintaining-Status#0-3.MaintainFull-timeEnrollment>.
- Students on fellowships, scholarships, and assistantships must be enrolled full-time while supported on the fellowship, scholarship, and/or assistantship.
- Students who fail to enroll for two consecutive semesters (excluding summer) will be moved into an inactive status with the University. Inactivate students must apply for readmission into the graduate program.
- Under extenuating circumstances, students may petition for a leave of absence for up to a one-year. If granted, students are not required to register during the period of approved leave. would not be required to register during the leave. Students request a leave of absence via the DPSS (<https://ogsdpps.tamu.edu>), using the waivers or exemptions section of the “Long Form” petition.

Maximum Registration

You may register for a maximum of 15 hours in fall/spring, 6 hours in a 5-week summer session, and 10 hours in a 10-week, summer session. It is recommended you do not enroll for more than the standard

full-time course load. If you have tuition support from the department, college or university, the tuition payment of only cover a maximum of 9 hours in the fall and spring semester and 6 hours total in the summer. Some faculty 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 exceeding the standard full-time credit hours.

Registration Blocks and Block Removal

Students who fail to submit a degree plan and forms signed by their advisory committee prior to departmental and University deadlines will be blocked from future course registrations until documents have been submitted and approved. Blocks (holds) placed on registration by GPS for failure to submit a degree plan by the specified date will not be removed until the proper documents are turned in and approved.

Other registration blocks, excluding those for failure to submit a degree plan, placed on a student's account can be removed by contacting the Graduate Advisor. The Graduate Advisor will then draft a memo to be signed by the Department Head and send to GPS. GPS will allow the removal of a block only after all requirements are met. The student and/or their advisor should provide the Graduate Advisor with appropriate documentation or reasoning behind the deadline not being met.

Duration and Time Limits

Doctoral

- A doctoral degree generally requires at least 4 years of full-time work beyond a master's degree, or 5 to 6 years of full-time work beyond a bachelor's degree.
- All degree requirements must be complete within 10 years. Coursework over 10 calendar years old may not be applied toward your degree.
- Students have 1 calendar year after their final exam to submit their dissertation to the Thesis Office and clear. (If a student is in the 7 or 10-year time limit before the 1 year is complete, the 7 or 10-year time limit takes precedence.)

Master's

- A Master of Science degree generally requires at least 2 years of full-time work beyond a bachelor's degree.
- The non-thesis master's option typically requires at least 3 years of part-time work beyond a bachelor's degree.
- A student must complete all degree requirements within 7 years. Coursework over 7 calendar years old may not be applied toward the degree.

Residency Requirements

To meet residency requirements, which are decided by the University, a master's student must be enrolled full-time (9 hours) for one semester, while a Ph.D. student with an approved graduate degree must be enrolled full-time for two consecutive semesters. Ph.D. students without a master's degree are required to be registered full-time for the third semester. These semesters must be Fall, Spring or the 10-week summer term.

If a student will not be able to meet this requirement, a petition for waivers and exemptions can be submitted to GPS through the departmental Graduate Advisor. The waiver is only granted for those students who hold a full-time job and must provide with the petition a letter from their employer stating

they are employed. No student will be allowed to leave campus for longer than one semester (Fall/Spring) until the requirement is met.

Research Compliance

The Office of Research Compliance (<https://vpr.tamu.edu/research-compliance-and-biosafety>) is a unit of the Division of Research and Graduate Studies at Texas A&M University responsible for providing training and support to faculty, students, and staff in regulatory requirements for scientific research. Before a proposal involving research with vertebrate animals will be approved by GPS, an Animal Use Protocol (AUP) that encompasses research described in the proposal must be approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). A copy of the form entitled, "Research Proposals Involving Animal Subjects", approved by IACUC, must be submitted to GPS along with the proposal. Students should consult with their Graduate Advisor(s) concerning the status of an AUP related to their research. Research involving human subjects is overseen by the Human Subjects' Protection Program (HSPP) within the Office of Research Compliance.

Student Travel

All students who will be leaving the country for any reason other than vacation must register with the Study Abroad Office. This also applies to international students who are returning to their home country to conduct research. If a student will be leaving the country or the continental United States for anything except a vacation, please contact the Education Abroad Office (<https://abroad.tamu.edu>). International students also need to contact International Student Services.

For students traveling for research more than 25 miles from campus but remaining in the continental United States, you must submit written notification of travel to the department and submit the Travel Information Form at https://stuactonline.tamu.edu/app/form_travel prior to departure. See [University Rule 13.04.99.MI](#) for additional information.

Readmission

Students who fail to remain continuously enrolled or who are dismissed from the university and/or department must apply for readmission. A returning degree-seeking graduate student who has attended TAMU within the last 12 months will not have to submit a readmit application. A readmit application is required for all students who have not attended TAMU within the last year and require departmental approval, beyond that of your advisory committee, before being allowed to return to the department.

Probation

All students must maintain a 3.0 GPA. If the GPA falls below a 3.0 the student will be placed on probation for one semester. If, after being placed on probation for one semester, the GPA is brought to at least a 3.0, the student will be allowed to continue, if not the student will be dismissed. An appeal to continue can be made through the student's advisor to the Department's Graduate Programs Committee, Department Head, College, and GPS.

Graduate Office Assignments

Graduate office space is available to full-time M.S. or Ph.D. students. To request an office, please contact Lindsay Hutchins at lindsay.hutchins@ag.tamu.edu. Three graduate students are assigned to each office on the 2nd floor of WFES. Keypad codes to access the office is provided by Dawn Miles and

under no circumstances should it be shared with anyone. For general housekeeping rules, please contact Dawn Miles at dawn.miles@ag.tamu.edu.

Building Access

The lobby doors to access each floor of the WFES building lock outside of normal 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. business hours (except for the 4th floor, which remains unlocked until the last scheduled class of the day). Students should always keep their Aggie ID on their person to ensure access when in the building after hours. If locked out, contact Dawn Miles at 979.224.2752 to gain entry.

Only students on payroll and/or enrolled in research credits may be given access to 4th and 5th-floor faculty laboratories. Under no circumstances may doors be opened for someone without proper entry credentials. Failure to comply will result in loss of building access.

Plotter

Located in WFES 129

Wide-format plotter to print posters for professional meetings

Contact Theresa Bramson; theresa.bramson@ag.tamu.edu

Mail and Shipping

Students will be emailed when a package is received. The package and other mail may be picked-up from the mail room, WFES 150. Graduate mailboxes are alphabetically organized by last name and compiled as A-F, G-K, etc. Personal mail *can* be placed in the outgoing mailbox *if* a US postal stamp is provided.

Shipping

Contact Theresa Bramson at theresa.bramson@ag.tamu.edu or Dawn Miles at dawn.miles@ag.tamu.edu to ship a package. Please include:

- Name of person shipping package
- Account number for shipping charge
- Type of delivery (2-,3 day, overnight?)
- If dry ice is in package
- UPS or FedEx
- Name of recipient (person/business)
- Address of recipient
- Email or phone number of recipient

Mailing Address

Your Name
c/o Major Professor
Department of Ecology and Conservation Biology
2258 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-2258

Physical Address

534 John Kimbrough, College Station, TX 77843-2258

*This address is NOT to be used for the delivery of personal mail. On-campus Post Office boxes may be rented if needed: <https://reslife.tamu.edu/living/amenities/mail>

Purchasing

Procard

To check out a payment card (procard), email your approved request to ecbbbusiness@ag.tamu.edu and include:

- intended vendor
- brief description of items
- benefit/purpose of items
- estimated amount of the purchase
- account number for payment

Procards may be checked-out from Whitney Wagoner (whitney.wagoner@ag.tamu.edu) in WFES 162. Procards should be returned one business day after check-out, along with itemized receipt(s). When checking-out the card, alert Whitney if the card is needed longer than one business day.

Purchases made with the procard are tax-exempt. It is important to make sure tax is not charged BEFORE making the purchase. If taxes are erroneously charged, the purchaser must request the vendor remove all tax charged and provide a new receipt. Procards should be returned within one business day after check-out, along with an itemized receipt(s). If the card is needed longer, alert Whitney when checking-out the card.

Travel

Travel Cards/DART Cards

Travel cards are issued to students on payroll (i.e., student employees, graduate assistants) and DART cards are issued to non-employed graduate students. Graduate students should speak with their committee chair to request permission to acquire a travel or DART card. If approved, the student should email ecbbbusiness@ag.tamu.edu and copy their PI to request a travel/DART card. The email should include:

- Student name
- UIN
- Phone number

The business office will assign training to be completed in TrainTraq prior to issuing a travel/DAR card. All purchases associated with travel (conference registration, airfare, hotel, meals, etc.) should be charged to the travel/DART card. Allow ample travel card delivery time, as travel cards may take up to two weeks to be received after ordering.

Student should speak with their PI about maximum travel reimbursement amount.

Travel Authorization

ECCB employees, including graduate students, traveling on official University business must complete travel authorization forms **at least two weeks prior** to travel. This includes a Concur travel authorization request for student on payroll in addition to the Student Activities Travel Form at

https://stuactonline.tamu.edu/app/form_travel/index/createindividual. Students traveling abroad must also complete the Education Abroad Travel Form at <https://abroad.tamu.edu>.

Agency Research Vehicles

Students may be required to drive a vehicle owned by the University and/or department. Departments are responsible for ensuring the drivers are University employees, at least 18 years of age, and possess a valid driver license to drive. Drivers renting through Enterprise, or another outside rental agency, must be 21 to rent and drive.

12 passenger vehicles and larger require drivers the annual completion of van safety training. To request van safety training, contact Theresa Bramson at theresa.bramson@ag.tamu.edu, and include:

- Name
- Email
- Account number for \$10 training fee if driving is not a part of a course requirement

Non-employees MAY NOT ride in the vehicle (i.e., family, friends, and others not affiliated with ECCB or TAMU).

To rent a vehicle, complete the rental form at <https://tx.ag/eccbvans>. You will be contacted within one business day with additional rental information.