

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

A reference of guidelines,
requirements, regulations,
and procedures for Masters,
Doctoral, and Certificate
graduate students in the
WVU Davis College

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Graduate Admissions

Students from across the country and around the world travel to West Virginia University to work with the internationally recognized faculty of the Davis College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Master's and doctoral degree candidates pursue opportunities in varied programs. Two graduate certificates are also available for students. Research and educational centers supplement classroom instruction. To be considered for **Regular** admission as a degree-seeking graduate student at WVU, an applicant must have a baccalaureate degree with a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale or an average of 3.0 or higher for the last 60 credit hours, meet all criteria established by the degree program, and be under no requirements to make up deficiencies. The Davis College of Agriculture and Natural Resources requires that the student must:

1. Have an adequate academic aptitude at the graduate level as measured by the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), or the New Medical College Admissions Test (New MCAT) for **some** programs.
2. Provide three letters of reference from persons acquainted with the applicant's professional work, experience, or academic background.
3. Submit a written statement of 500 words or more indicating the applicant's goals and objectives relative to receiving a graduate degree.
4. International students must submit proof of [English language proficiency](#).
5. The specific graduate programs may have additional requirements for admission.

Students may be admitted as a **Provisional** graduate student when the student possesses a baccalaureate degree but does not meet the criteria for regular admission. The student may have incomplete credentials, deficiencies to make up, or may have an undergraduate scholastic record that does not meet grade point requirements for regular admission. After successful fulfillment of the deficiencies, the student will be granted regular graduate student status.

A **non-degree** student is a student not admitted to a program. Admission as a non-degree student does not guarantee admission to any course or program. A student must present evidence of a baccalaureate degree. A maximum of twelve credit hours of work as a non-degree student may be applied to a graduate degree if the student is later accepted into a graduate program.

WVU utilizes an on-line graduate application process. Go to <https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/> for further information and to apply for admission.

To assist students in continuing their education at the graduate level, many graduate programs offer research or teaching assistantships. West Virginia University annually employs 1,500 graduate students. All graduate assistants are eligible to apply for a remission of tuition and some fees. Programs encourage students to apply for these positions. Information on funding and assistantships can be found at <http://www.davis.wvu.edu/future-students/graduate/funding-and-assistantships>

Graduate Programs

Master's Programs:

- [Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design](#)
- [Animal Physiology](#)
- [Forestry](#)
- Human and Community Development
- [Nutritional and Food Science](#)
- Plant and Soil Science
- [Wildlife and Fisheries Resources](#)

Doctoral Programs:

- [Animal, Food, & Nutrition Sciences](#)
- [Natural Resources Science](#)
- [Human & Community Development](#)
- [Natural Resource Economics](#)
- [Plant & Soil Sciences](#)

Graduate Certificates:

- [Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Analysis](#)
- [Sustainable Trails Development](#)

Deadlines

Note: It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of all set deadlines and to make sure they are met. All electronic forms are available on the college webpage, and specific dates can be acquired on the Davis webpage

Plan of Study – completed by the end of first semester of study for Masters and Certificate students, by the end of the first year for Ph.D. students. [Plans of Study](#)

Promotion to Candidacy – Ph.D. only – should be submitted by the advisor after successful completion of qualifying examination and any other program requirements for candidacy. Should be completed before significant amounts of research are conducted. Students must complete their doctoral degree within 5 years of being promoted to candidacy. [Promotion to Candidacy](#)

Application for Graduation – approximately three months prior to graduation date, specific dates can be found on the [Registrar's Office](#) website

Intent to Defend – must be submitted two weeks prior to final examination for master's candidates and three weeks prior to final examination for Ph.D. candidates. [Intent to Defend](#)

Oral Defense must be completed before ETD submission of thesis or dissertation. Recommendation is a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the ETD submission deadline.

ETD Submission of Thesis/Dissertation – must be submitted by the deadline each semester set by the WVU library. [ETD Submission](#)

Enrollment Requirements

- Full-time enrollment in regular (fall and spring) terms is 9 cr. Full-time enrollment during the summer term is 6 cr.
- Students funded with a graduate assistantship **MUST** be enrolled full-time during regular terms and be enrolled in at least 1 cr during the [summer](#).
- Doctoral candidates **MUST** be enrolled in at least 1 cr each regular term to maintain candidacy status.
- Students typically need to be enrolled for at least 1 cr in the term they intend to graduate to allow for access to University systems and College resources. Exceptions must be approved by the Associate Dean for Academics
- International students may have additional enrollment requirements.

Definitions for New or Returning Graduate Students

As a graduate student coming to the Davis College for the first time, you may be wondering where to start. There are many requirements that you must fulfill in order to earn your graduate degree. The following describes some of the many required forms and processes.

Graduate Committee: a committee composed of faculty members who will oversee and review your research and course of study.

Plan of Study: a binding agreement between you and your committee members. This plan is required and specifies your intended course of study, total credit hours, proposed research topic, and members of your graduate committee. It should be completed and submitted for approval by the end of the first semester for M.S. and certificate students, or by the end of the first year for Ph.D. students.

Qualifying Exam: Oral and/or written qualifying examinations will be administered during the program by the Qualifying Examination Committee. Upon satisfactory completion of the qualifying examination and course requirements, the student will be eligible for admittance to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree program.

Intent to Defend Form: required form that indicates tentative approval of the student's written thesis, dissertation, or problem report. This sheet should be completed two weeks prior to final examination date for M.S. students, three weeks prior to final examination date for Ph.D. candidates. Committee member's approval of this form indicates approval of the scheduled defense date/time and receipt of the thesis/dissertation/problem report.

Thesis: depending on the intended degree, a thesis may be required for your master's degree. A thesis is a report of the designated research project that is usually composed of an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions which must be approved by your committee members.

Dissertation: report of original research in partial fulfillment of doctoral degree requirements that must be completed and approved by your committee members.

Problem Report: depending on intended degree, a problem report may be required for your master's degree. Specific requirements for a problem report are dependent on the program of study and graduate committee recommendation. A problem report is NOT submitted to the WVU Library.

Institutional Review Board: if you intend to use human subjects in your research, you must submit your intentions to the IRB for approval prior to proceeding with any experiment, survey, questionnaire, etc. This board was designed to prevent any possible human harm that might be brought about by research. In many cases, exemptions may be granted by submitting an Application for Exemption.

Animal Use and Care Committee: if graduate research involves animals, the researcher may have to develop a protocol statement to the Animal Use and Care Committee for approval. Check the ACUC web page for protocol submission forms and instructions.

Defense: prior to graduation and official submission of your thesis or dissertation, you must defend your research to the members of your committee. This will consist of presenting your research process and findings for examination and answering questions about your project. Committee members must sign the approval page to be included in your thesis or dissertation. All dissertation [defenses](#) are open to the public and the university community and must be posted on the University calendar by the college or school dean or designee. Defenses should be scheduled at least 2 weeks prior to the ETD submission deadline to allow for adequate time for edits to the thesis or dissertation.

Electronic Thesis and/or Dissertation Submission: all theses and dissertations are required to be officially submitted electronically following your successful defense. A complete guide to electronic submission can be found at <https://etd.lib.wvu.edu/>.

Application for Graduation: An application for graduation is REQUIRED for all degrees, including graduate certificates. To do so, login to [STAR](#) and click *Student Services and Housing*. From there, click *Student Records* and then *Apply to Graduate for Doctoral, Professional and Masters Students*.. Students need to complete their application by the WVU Registrar's posted [deadline](#) each semester. Applications for graduation must be submitted online.

Advising and Committee Selection

ADVISING

Faculty members advise the students in the Davis College. Upon entering graduate school, you will be assigned an advisor from your School or academic discipline who may remain your advisor throughout your graduate career unless substitutions are made or another advisor is chosen.

COMMITTEE SELECTION

Students enrolled in a thesis, dissertation, or problem report-requiring degree need a [graduate committee](#). Shortly after entering graduate school, you should choose the members of your graduate committee. The committee is typically composed of 3-4 faculty members. The majority of these, two of three for master's students and three of four for doctoral students, must hold regular graduate faculty status (refer to the following list of graduate faculty). It is sometimes recommended that not all committee members be from the same discipline, and at least one must be from outside your department for Ph.D. candidates. One of the members will serve as committee chair or in some cases there may be 2 members that serve as co-chairs. Your committee must approve your plan of study, and you will defend to members of your committee. A substitution can be made at the time of defense for one of your committee members in the event that he/she is unavailable; however, no more than one of your committee members may be substituted.

Students enrolled in a coursework-only master's degree do not need a full graduate committee, but their advisor must have regular graduate faculty membership.

GRADUATE FACULTY

Faculty in the Davis College may be regular or associate members of the graduate faculty.

Regular Membership

Regular members may chair students' committees or direct master's and doctoral research, theses, and dissertations.

Associate Membership

Associate members may not chair students' committees or direct master's theses and doctoral dissertation (or equivalent).

A more detailed description of graduate faculty membership and a list of members by college can be found on the Office of Graduate Education and Life webpage. [Graduate Faculty](#)

Graduate Assistantships

There are several opportunities for financial assistance and employment for students who attend graduate school in the Davis College. Students may be employed by the college or in the industries in which they hope to find permanent employment once they graduate. Valuable knowledge and experience can be gained by taking advantage of these opportunities. Also, tuition waivers are available to those students who qualify. West Virginia University annually awards about 1500 graduate assistantships and about 200 fellowships. All graduate assistants and fellows are required to be enrolled full-time (nine hours or more) in fall and spring semesters, one hour in the summer. International students may have different requirements for enrollment. It is important to note that graduate assistants are expected to perform duties satisfactorily, as specified by the graduate professor to which they are assigned, unlike fellowships, which require no service in return.

Graduate Teaching Assistant: A person who holds a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) is obligated to teach courses, laboratory classes, or, for other forms of instructional assistance, the equivalent of work not to exceed, on average, 20 hours per week. These assistantships are generally available only through the academic units. No graduate student can be appointed to a GTA position after the second week of the semester.

Graduate Research Assistant: A graduate research assistant (GRA) is a graduate student whose duties consist of assisting in the research of a faculty member with an obligation not to exceed, on average, 20 hours per week in any semester. Since graduate research assistantships are primarily funded by grants and other third party sources, and since the arrival of these funds at the University often does not coincide with the beginning of an academic semester, University policy is that the deadline for GRA appointments is no later than the end of the fifth week of classes.

Graduate Fellow (Ph.D.): Fellowships are awarded on the basis of academic merit and require no service in return. Graduate fellows are expected to spend fulltime in pursuit of their studies but may teach to the extent that the particular degree program requires.

Contact the Directors for more information about the availability of assistantships, and contact the Associate Dean of Academics or the [University Office of Graduate Education and Life](#) regarding university level fellowships.

The Davis College does allow students to hold assistantships outside of the College and will approve requests for tuition waivers in such cases.

All graduate assistants must be evaluated on their performance at the end of each semester. A [sample evaluation form](#) can be found on the Office of Graduate Education and Life webpage.

WVU Guide to Preparation of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations

IMPORTANT WEB ADDRESSES

WVU Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Your one-stop shop for guidance on the arrangement, format and submission of your manuscript.

<https://etd.lib.wvu.edu/prepare>

WvuScholar Institutional Repository System

Where your ETD will be deposited, and where you can browse past Electronic Theses and Dissertations. <http://wvusolar.wvu.edu>

Filing Dissertation Electronically

Dissertations and Theses will be submitted electronically. Students should review all information at

<https://etd.lib.wvu.edu/>

Web Resource Links

[ASGS](#) (Association for Support of Graduate Students)

Contains many helpful resources and support services for the master's and doctoral student

[Google Scholar](#)

A Web search engine that enables you to search specifically for academic scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed papers, theses, dissertations, books, preprints, abstracts and technical reports from all broad areas of research.

[GradSchools.com](#)

The most comprehensive online source of graduate school information.

[Intensive English Program](#)

A WVU program in the Department of Foreign Languages which offers special services for international students needing to improve their English proficiency.

[WVU Curriculum Matrix](#)

The official University listing of Board approved degree programs organized by college and degree program (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctoral, Professional, and Non-Degree options).

[WVU Davis College](#)

[WVU Davis College Graduate Student Association](#)

Bridging and enhancing the academic, intellectual and social opportunities of the graduate students of the Davis College.

[WVU Davis College Graduate Student Enhancement Grants](#)

College level grants to support research and travel to conferences.

[WVU Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Program](#)

[WVU Graduate Catalog](#)

Consult the WVU Graduate Catalog online for the latest information regarding graduate program policies

[WVU Libraries](#)

Online access to all your research needs

[WVU Office of Graduate Education and Life](#)

Access the WVU Office of Graduate Education web site for the latest information regarding graduate programs

Instructions to Graduate Advisors and Department Chairs

1. Remind all finishing graduate students to electronically submit the WVU Registrar's Application for Graduation and Diploma.
2. Check the student's record to be sure it is correct and complete and meets the requirements specified on the student's plan of study. Then establish a date for the final examination that is mutually acceptable to the candidate and all committee members.
 - a. Minor modifications to a plan of study (i.e., swapping a small number of courses) can be accomplished by the committee chair emailing the Associate Dean for Academics, with committee members copied on email, and requesting the change.
 - b. Major modifications to a plan of study (i.e., changing more than 3 courses or changing committee members) require the submission of a new plan of study.
3. The student should submit an Intent to Defend form **TWO weeks before a Scheduled final master's exam and THREE weeks before a doctoral exam**. All committee members will receive an electronic request to approve the form. All approvals must be received before the final shuttle sheet link will be shared with the committee. **No final examination is valid if given to a student PRIOR to clearance by the Associate Dean or designee as indicated by receiving email confirmation of a completed Intent to Defend form.** Doctoral examinations are announced in the Calendar of Events published by the WVU News Service and are open to the public. Thus, they should be scheduled in a room that will accommodate visitors.
 - a. Examinations should be scheduled at least 2 weeks prior to the ETD deadline to allow the student time to complete revisions. No doctoral or master's examinations will be given during final exam week.
4. Theses or dissertations must be at the completion stage before the final examination is scheduled. Each committee member should be furnished a copy of the completed draft of a thesis two weeks, and a dissertation three weeks, prior to the scheduled examination. This will allow each committee member sufficient time for review and recommendations.
 - a. Problem reports required in some master's degree programs are not a part of University requirements. Their preparation only need to meet the requirements of the graduate program. They are deposited only with the Department unless otherwise specified.
5. The results of the examination are to be recorded on the electronic Shuttle Sheet. All committee members will receive a link to the Shuttle Sheet on the scheduled day/time of the defense. Each committee member MUST record the student's name, their name, their role on the committee and their vote of Pass/Fail within 2 business days of the scheduled defense. It is necessary to report failures. A student is considered to have failed their defense if there is more than one Fail vote among members of the committee.

A student may have no more than two chances to pass the final examination before ultimate suspension from the degree program.

6. Ensure the student has the completed [WVU Libraries ETD Committee Signature Form](#) PRIOR to the ETD submission deadline. All committee members MUST sign this form. The electronic Shuttle Sheet is NOT sufficient to meet this requirement.
7. Remove incomplete grades at least one week before the graduation date.
8. Submit final grades for the current semester as soon as possible, but under no circumstances later than the specified deadline for that term.
9. Information for any course taken by the graduating student at other institutions and transferred to WVU should be submitted following the [graduate transfer credit](#) form before the Intent to Defend form is submitted.
10. Students need to have active student status (i.e., registered at least within the prior 2 years) to graduate. Students need to be enrolled in the term they graduate to provide them access to University systems and College resources. Exceptions need to be approved by the Associate Dean for Academics.

IN SUMMARY, it is stressed that the Graduate Advisor must screen the record of the finishing graduate student during the final semester, remove all incomplete grades, approve the Intent to Defend form and electronic Shuttle Sheet, and submit final grades for the current semester no later than the published deadline. Students whose grades are not received within one week after completion of these terms may not be graduated.

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West Virginia University is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

In accordance with Federal law and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Reasonable accommodations will be made to provide this content in alternate formats upon request. Contact the WVU Division for Land-Grant Engagement Communications at 304-293-4222. For all other ADA requests, contact WVU Division of Campus Engagement and Compliance ADA Coordinator at ADA@mail.wvu.edu or 304-293-4750.