

Table of Contents

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK	4
FOREWORD	4
INTRODUCTION	5
Academic Advising	5
Activating Your NetID.....	6
Registration Procedure	6
MSU’s Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy.....	6
MSU Web Help Line	7
Transportation	7
<i>Motor Vehicle Registration</i>	7
<i>Buses</i>	7
<i>Bikes</i>	7
Health Services.....	7
I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW	8
Program Highlights.....	8
II. PROGRAM COMPONENT/PLAN OPTIONS	8
Masters of Science in Forestry (M.S.)	8
Doctor of Philosophy in Forestry (Ph.D.)	8
Graduate Certificate in Forest Carbon Science, Policy and Management (TRANSCRIPTABLE)	9
Graduate Certificate in Spatial Ecology (TRANSCRIPTABLE).....	9
Graduate Certification in College Teaching (TRANSCRIPTABLE).....	9
Second, Joint, or Dual Master’s Degrees	9
Dual Major Doctoral Degrees.....	9
Doctoral Comprehensive Exam.....	10
Official Plan of Study	10
III. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	10
Application Procedure and Admission Requirements	10
Master’s Degree Program Requirements	11
Doctoral Degree Program Requirements	12
Maximum and Minimum Credits	13
Language Requirements	14

Residency Requirements	14
GradPlan.....	14
Graduation Application.....	15
IV. SELECTION OF THESIS/DISSERTATION ADVISOR	15
Eligible Advisors	15
Role and Responsibilities of Advisor	15
Departure of Advisor from University	15
Changing Advisors.....	15
V. FORMATION OF THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE	16
Master’s Program Examining Committee	16
Doctoral Guidance Committee	16
VI. THESIS/DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION	17
Master’s Programs Thesis Defense and Final Oral Examination	17
Doctoral Program Dissertation Defense and Final Oral Examination.....	17
VII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	17
Guidance Committee Progress Review.....	17
Annual Progress Report	18
Acceptable Academic Standing.....	18
Dismissal	18
Student Academic Files.....	19
VIII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: INTEGRITY AND SAFETY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES..	19
Guidelines on Authorship and Institutional Data Policy	19
Responsible Conduct of Research Training.....	19
Travel Safety.....	19
IX. STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION	20
Graduate Hearings.....	20
X. WORK RELATED POLICIES	21
MSU’s Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy.....	21
Graduate Assistantships.....	21
Course Load Requirements.....	21
Appointments and Responsibilities	22
Assistantship Levels	23
Stipends and Benefits	23

Additional Benefits, Other Information	24
Teaching Requirements	24
Vacation for Students	24
Graduate Assistant (not covered by the GEU Contract) Illness, Injury, and Pregnancy Leave Policy	24
AAGA – Academic Achievement Graduate Assistantships	25
Fellowships.....	25
Financial Aid	25
Grief Absence Policy	26
Work in Absentia.....	26
Workspace and Use of Facilities	26
Supplies for Research Projects.....	26
Reimbursement by Direct Pay Voucher.....	26
Scientific Instruments and Microcomputers.....	27
Statistical Consultation Service.....	27
Equipment Use.....	27
Use of University Vehicles.....	27
Travel Requests.....	27
Copy Machine	27
Telephones.....	27
Departmental Keys.....	27
D2L – Desire2Learn	28
XI. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES	28

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

FOREWORD

Welcome to the graduate program in MSU's Department of Forestry!

This handbook provides a summary of University, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Department of Forestry policies and academic regulations affecting Forestry graduate students. More complete statements about University and College level policies and regulations are published in the Academic Programs Handbook and the University Formatting Guide for Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. It is the responsibility of the graduate student to understand these regulations.

The Forestry faculty offers numerous programs of study. For the most part these programs are flexible and a program of study can be developed to meet individual student needs and interests. This handbook provides you with most of the information you will require to insure that your program fits the policies of the various academic units you will interact with as a graduate student in the Forestry Department at Michigan State University.

All of us on the Forestry faculty are keen to work with you to assure a rewarding intellectual experience. We wish you the best as you pursue graduate studies in Forestry.



Dr. Richard K. Kobe, Chairperson
Department of Forestry

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Forestry offers graduate programs leading to the Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. In addition to standard forestry degrees, the following interdepartmental programs are available:

Specialization in Resource Economics jointly administered by faculty from the Departments of Agricultural Economics; Economics; Fisheries and Wildlife; Forestry; Community Agriculture and Recreation, Resource Studies

Specialization in Plant Breeding and Genetics jointly administered by faculty from the Departments of Crop and Soil Sciences, Forestry, and Horticulture

Joint program in Forestry-Urban Studies administered by faculty from the Department of Forestry and the Urban Affairs Program

Dual major in Ecology, Evolutionary Biology and Behavior

Doctoral Specialization in Environmental Science and Policy

Students may develop other dual degrees by making special arrangements with the appropriate academic units. For doctoral students, visit page 16 for more information regarding dual doctoral degree programs.

Qualified students with undergraduate degrees in forestry or related fields can usually complete the requirements for the Master of Science degree in two academic years and the Ph.D. in four to five academic years.

The Department of Forestry prides itself on matriculating graduate students from a wide range of academic backgrounds who share an intellectual interest in forestry. MS graduates typically go on to careers with state and federal land management agencies, land conservancies, NGOs, or private industry. PhD graduates pursue careers as college or university faculty, federal research positions (i.e. US EPA, USDA-Forest Service), NGOs as well as state and federal land management agencies.

Academic Advising

If you have questions about the graduate program in the Department of Forestry, please contact the Director of Graduate Studies in Forestry, Dr. David Rothstein, Associate Professor of Forest Ecology/Biogeochemistry.



Dr. David Rothstein
126 Natural Resources Building
Michigan State University
480 Wilson Road
East Lansing, MI 48824
517.432.3353
rothste2@msu.edu

WELCOME TO MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Activating Your NetID

As a student of Michigan State University you will utilize various electronic resources and electronic mail. Students should activate their MSU NetID and e-mail account as soon as possible when they are admitted. It is very important to do this even if you already have another e-mail account.

By setting up your MSU NetID as soon as you receive your PAN, you will be able to use your e-mail account to:

- Reserve a space in an Academic Orientation Program (AOP) via the web
- Access information about your financial aid package (if this applies to you)
- Receive information and complete required forms regarding immunization
- Receive official communications from MSU that are sent to you via e-mail only
- Access your schedule/enrollment, grades, academic, student accounts, holds, address, and financial assistance data from the [StuInfo Website](#).
- Publish a personal web page
- Access dial-up services
- Access public computer labs

When you arrive on campus, many professors will communicate with you regarding class assignments, examinations, papers, etc. via your MSU e-mail account. Should you choose to do so, you may forward e-mail sent to your MSU e-mail account to your personal e-mail account.

Visit the [NetID Activation](#) to activate your MSU NetID and email account.

Registration Procedure

The Registrar's Office will be sending you enrollment information, which will contain an assigned PID number (Personal Identification Number) and a PAN number (Personal Access Number).

For international students, clearance from the Office for International Students and Scholars (105 International Center) is needed. Foreign or international students must have health insurance prior to registration. They should also be sure that course credit load is consistent with the terms of their visa. Information on visa regulations is available from the Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS).

MSU's Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy

All graduate students are required to complete an annual online training program, which has been customized to address the unique experiences of graduate students. Students will not be able to access important academic information in the StuInfo system, including grades, until they complete this training. Please note that graduate students who are also employed as graduate teaching assistants or research assistants are also required to complete an online education program for employees.

At the beginning of each academic year, students will receive an email, sent to their MSU email account, with instructions to complete the training program. The training program is provided by MSU's vendor, Student Success. Students will use MSU's secure single sign-on to access the course, but your password and other sensitive information will not be provided to the vendor.

Individuals who believe they may have an overwhelming or intense emotional reaction to the content of the online training programs should contact the Office of Institutional Equity at (517) 353-3922 or titleix@msu.edu to request accommodation. For reasonable accommodation requests, please contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at (517) 884-7273 (RCPD).

More information can be found at [RVSM Programs Website](#).

MSU Web Help Line

If you have general computing questions you may contact MSU IT Services Help Desk at (517) 432-6200; ithelp@msu.edu or online at [MSU IT Services Help Desk](#).

Transportation

Motor Vehicle Registration

Required student registration of motor vehicles can be done through the Michigan State University Police Department online at [MSU Police Department Permits](#). Fellowship recipients who received an MSU Fellowship of \$1,000 or more per semester qualify for a graduate assistant parking permit. To receive this permit, graduate students must go to the Parking Office with a letter from their Department Administrator stating the validity of their fellowship along with a MSU Spartan ID card and current vehicle registration. More information can be found at [MSU Police Department Student Permit Information](#).

Buses

All campus bus service is provided by the Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA). Service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during Fall and Spring Semesters. CATA operates on eight on-campus fixed routes serving all University apartments, residence halls, commuter lots, and the main campus. Additionally, CATA provides service to off-campus apartments in the Lansing, East Lansing, Okemos and Haslett areas year-round. Discounted fares are available to individuals with a valid student ID. Passes can be purchased at the MSU ID Office, select Sparty Stores in some of the residence halls as well as the Sparty Store in the Union, and other convenient campus locations. Passes are available on a fixed use, route-based, or duration of use basis. More information can be found at [CATA Bus Services On Campus](#).

Bikes

When a bicycle is possessed or operated on campus, it must be registered, parked and locked at a bike rack and in operable condition. MSU, City of Lansing, City of East Lansing and Meridian Township registrations (permits) are acceptable if current, valid, and adhered to the stationary frame-post below the seat, facing the handlebars. To register your bicycle, you must have the serial number from your bike. Also, you will need to know the bicycle make, color and whether the style is male or female. Bike permits can be obtained at no cost online at [MSU Police Department Bike Permits](#). More information can be found at [MSU Police Department Bike Information](#).

Health Services

Olin Health Center is the primary health care facility for MSU students. Olin Health Center is home to primary care, psychiatry, allergy/immunizations, sports medicine, and health education services. Laboratory, radiology, pharmacy and physical therapy are also located at Olin. An appointment is necessary for most student health services at Olin. More information can be found at [Olin Health Services](#).

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

To ensure forests for our future, our global society needs to find the optimal balance between protecting forest ecosystems and the demand for forest products. As this challenge becomes more complex, professionals trained in the principles of forest ecology, soil science, and silviculture as well as in political science, sociology, and the humanities, will be in great demand in the next ten to twenty years and beyond. The Forestry Department at Michigan State University offers Master of Science and Doctoral degree programs that can provide you with the knowledge, skills, and resources to meet this challenge effectively. Career opportunities in research, management, teaching, extension, or consulting are available with private corporations, environmental organizations, universities, environmental consultants, and governmental agencies.

The Department of Forestry is committed to recruiting and retaining a diverse group of graduate students. The importance of appreciating diverse perspectives among peers and faculty is integral to the professional development of all graduate students. With diversity and professional growth in mind, it is required that graduate students attend all Hanover Seminars and visitor/recruitment lunches. Attendance at these events reflects upon your Department citizenship and will be taken in account when annual fellowship decisions are being made.

With each program of study built specifically for individual students, the timeline at which you should reach stages in your training will differ. However, by the end of your program it is expected that you should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the learning outcomes defined for your program (PhD, Plan A MS, or Plan B MS) in the Department of Forestry's Learning Outcomes and Assessment document [link].

Program Highlights

YEAR 1 – FOR 802 (Forest Science Research) must be taken in your first semester. Your guidance committee must be appointed by the end of second semester. Your program plan of study must be submitted by the end of second semester.

YEAR'S 2 – 8 Complete all course requirements in program plan of study. Master's students must pass a final oral examination and submit their thesis via ProQuest for approval by the Graduate School. Doctoral students are required to take an oral and written comprehensive exam covering the major and related fields. Doctoral students must pass a public defense of their dissertation and submit their dissertation via ProQuest for approval by the Graduate School.

II. PROGRAM COMPONENT/PLAN OPTIONS

Masters of Science in Forestry (M.S.)

Students pursuing a M.S. in Forestry may choose between Research-Intensive (Plan A) and Professional (Plan B) Tracks. Both degree tracks require a total of 30 credit hours. In addition to coursework, students in the Research-Intensive track are expected to conduct original research leading to the completion of a thesis. This work is expected to result in at least one publication in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. In the Professional Track, the focus is primarily on coursework, although the students are required to complete and defend a final professional project.

Doctor of Philosophy in Forestry (Ph.D.)

Students pursuing a Ph.D. in Forestry will work with their major professor and guidance committee to build a program of study tailored to assist them in successfully completing their dissertation research and meeting their career goals.

A description of all the programs of study offered is located here [Forestry Programs of Study](#)

Graduate Certificate in Forest Carbon Science, Policy and Management (TRANSCRIPTABLE)

The Graduate Certificate in Forest Carbon Science, Policy, and Management offers participants the interdisciplinary tools and conceptual background to plan, implement, manage and evaluate forestry-based, climate-change mitigation activities. The Certificate gives participants an edge in competing for employment in carbon mitigation projects of corporations, governments, and non-governmental organizations. Each of the three courses required to complete the certificate are now available online so participants can complete their training from anywhere in the world with an internet connection. More information on the Graduate Certificate in Forest Carbon Science, Policy and Management is located here [Forest Carbon Science, Policy and Management](#).

Graduate Certificate in Spatial Ecology (TRANSCRIPTABLE)

The Graduate Certificate in Spatial Ecology provides interdisciplinary training necessary to develop inference about ecological phenomena using appropriate spatial theory, statistics, modeling approaches and data management tools. Students gain the necessary skills to address tomorrow's complex ecological challenges. More information on the Graduate Certificate in Spatial Ecology is located here [Spatial Ecology Certificate](#).

Graduate Certification in College Teaching (TRANSCRIPTABLE)

The University Graduate Certification in College Teaching (CCT), an initiative of the Michigan State University Graduate School in partnership with MSU colleges, helps graduate students and postdocs organize, develop, and document their teaching experiences. Through professional development activities – workshops or seminars, coursework in disciplinary teaching methods, a mentored teaching project – participants will build and consolidate their preparation for college and university teaching. The program culminates in an eportfolio that will help participants prepare for academic job interviews and plan for their professional development as early career faculty. More information is located here [Certification in College Teaching](#).

Second, Joint, or Dual Master's Degrees

A candidate for a second master's degree, or for joint or dual master's degrees, from Michigan State University may request the application of up to 9 credits, appropriate to both programs, from the first master's degree program to the second or from one master's program to another. These 9 credits must have been earned within the time limitations of the college concerned. Credits used to satisfy the requirements of one master's degree may not be used to satisfy the residency requirements of another master's degree. The candidate must obtain written approval from both programs indicating which 9 credits will be shared. Credits applied to a Second, Joint, or Dual Master's Degree Program are not eligible to be applied to any other graduate degree program.

Dual Major Doctoral Degrees

All dual major doctoral degrees must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. A request for the dual major degree must be submitted via GradPlan within one semester following its development and within the first two years of the student's enrollment at Michigan State University.

1. The intent to receive the degree in two areas must be outlined in the guidance committee report.
2. The Ph.D. Degree Plan must reflect the required standards for both departments.
3. The integrated course work must be satisfactory to both departments.
4. The comprehensive examination must be passed to the satisfaction of both departments.
5. A guidance committee including members from both departments must be satisfied that the dissertation represents a contribution meeting the usual standards in both areas.

6. There must be a single dissertation that represents an integration of the disciplinary areas.
7. Responsible Conduct of Research requirements will be as defined and approved by the guidance committee.

Doctoral Comprehensive Exam

A comprehensive examination is administered after at least 80 percent of the course work is completed. It will consist of a written exam or exams covering each of the fields of study designated by the guidance committee, and an oral exam that will be attended by the full guidance committee or designated representatives. Students must be registered during the semester in which they take comprehensive examinations. This requirement may be waived if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately following a spring semester during which the student was registered and/or prior to a fall semester in which the student will be registered.

Upon completion of written and oral portions of the exam, the guidance committee will decide during the formal session if the student passes or fails. The student will not pass if more than one committee member dissents. In case of failure, the committee may allow one examination after at least one semester of additional study. This examination must be completed within five years from the time when a student begins the first class at Michigan State University that appears on his or her doctoral program of study. In the case of a comprehensive examination that consists of more than one part, the date that the student passes the examination is the date on which he or she passes the final component of the comprehensive examination. Upon passing the comprehensive examination, a student will be classified as a Ph.D. candidate.

Official Plan of Study

A plan of study becomes official once it has been approved by the student's committee, department chairperson, and dean of the college. Master's students submit their plan of study using the OASA MS Program Plan Form. Doctoral students submit their plan of study using GradPlan.

III. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Application Procedure and Admission Requirements

Admission to Michigan State University is open to all candidates on the basis of academic preparation and ability, and the availability of space in the desired academic program, and without regard to race, color, gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, political persuasion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, height, weight, veteran status, age, or (in the case of U. S. citizens) financial need.

The applicant for admission at the graduate level must:

1. Complete the Online Application for Admission to Graduate Study, submit it with a credit card number or by electronic check or money order to cover the application fee. Send all additional materials directly to the department, school or program to which admission is sought.
2. Request the registrar of each college or university attended to send one copy of each official transcript (translated into English, if needed) directly to the department, school or program to which admission is sought. Transcripts of work taken at Michigan State University need not be requested. All transcripts must be degree-granting transcripts.
3. Have three letters of recommendation sent electronically to the chairperson or director of the department or school to which admission is sought.
4. GRE Scores are required for admission to our M.S. and Ph.D. programs. These scores must be sent directly from the GRE Scoring Office to MSU. Institution Code – 1465 and Department Code – 0108. English language proficiency must be demonstrated for applicants from non-English speaking countries. TOEFL scores must be sent directly from the TOEFL Scoring Office to MSU. Institution Code – 1465 and Department Code – 99.

5. Fulfill any additional requirements and procedures of the college and department or school to which admission is sought.

To ensure full consideration, the application for admission, the application fee, official transcripts, letters of recommendation, test scores, and other required documents must be received by the appropriate offices at least nine months prior to the anticipated first semester of enrollment.

Master's Degree Program Requirements

- The minimum number of credits required is 30 beyond the bachelor's degree.
- More than half of the credits of the total required by the program of study for a master's degree must be taken in courses at the 800 and 900 levels, except as specifically exempted by the dean of the college.
- A minimum of 6 credits in the degree program must be earned in residence on the East Lansing campus or at approved Michigan State University instructional sites.
- Complete FOR 802 – Forest Science Research during first semester of program (Plan B exempt).
- As many as 9 semester credits of graduate course work (excluding research and thesis credits) may be transferred into a 30-credit master's degree program from other postsecondary accredited institutions comparable in academic quality, if they are appropriate to a student's program and provided they were completed within the time limits approved for the earning of the degree desired at MSU. For more information, visit the Academic Program Catalog at [Academic Programs Catalog](#).
- Students in a Plan A master's degree program are required to pass an oral examination in defense of the thesis. The Major Professor schedules a final oral examination before the 10th Friday of the semester in which degree requirements are to be completed. The examining committee is selected by the Major Professor and approved by the Department Chairperson. It is made up of the Major Professor and two regular MSU faculty member. The final examination will be oral and the public portion will last approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours in length. In order to schedule a room for the Master's plan B evaluation, students must contact the Graduate Secretary with the date and time requested. The Graduate Secretary will assist the student with creating a flyer, sending the notice of examination two weeks prior, and posting flyers in the building. In case of failure, one re-examination may be scheduled at the discretion of the examining committee. The final oral examination must be passed within five calendar years from the date of enrollment in the first course included for degree certification.
- Students in a Plan B master's program are required to pass an oral evaluation in defense of the professional project. The Major Professor schedules a final oral evaluation the semester in which degree requirements are to be completed. The evaluating committee is selected by the Major Professor and approved by the Department Chairperson. It is made up of the Major Professor and one regular MSU faculty member. The final evaluation will be oral and the public portion will last approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours in length. In order to schedule a room for the Master's plan B evaluation, students must contact the Graduate Secretary with the date and time requested. The Graduate Secretary will assist the student with creating a flyer, sending the notice of evaluation two weeks prior, and posting flyers in the building. In case of failure, one re-examination may be scheduled at the discretion of the evaluating committee. The final oral evaluation must be passed within five calendar years from the date of enrollment in the first course included for degree certification.

For both **Plan A** and **Plan B**, the student must be registered during the semester in which the examination or evaluation is administered. This requirement may be waived if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately following a spring semester during which the student was registered and/or prior to a fall semester in which the student will be registered.

- **Plan A:** A minimum of 4 credits in master's thesis research (FOR 899) is required, maximum 10 credits. The thesis, an abstract of the thesis, and an abstract title page must be prepared in accordance with the specification in *The Formatting Guide-Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations*, a handbook that is

available, along with a packet of required forms relating to the thesis online at [Theses and Dissertation Submissions](#).

- **Plan B:** Evidence of ability to prepare a scholarly paper. Normally such a paper will be prepared in FOR 898 – Master’s Professional Project, maximum 6 credits. A hard copy of the final approved professional project needs to be submitted to the Graduate Secretary to be kept in the students file.
- The examining committee is responsible for evaluating the thesis and certifying to the Department Chairperson that it constitutes an acceptable thesis for the discipline.
- Occasionally, individual chapters of a thesis are submitted for publication prior to the completion of the entire thesis. Graduate students should allow their committee members an opportunity view manuscripts prior to submission. For chapters that have already been published an appropriate citation should be included in the thesis as required by the handbook *The Formatting Guide-Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations* ([Theses and Dissertation Submissions](#)).
- After the examiners have reviewed and approved the thesis and voted to pass the student on the final oral examination in its defense, the student must incorporate into the thesis any recommended change(s) and corrections before presenting it to the thesis advisor for final review and signature of the approval form. *Not later than the deadline date indicated by the Graduate School the semester in which graduation is expected*, the student must submit to the Graduate School a final electronic copy of the thesis online at [ProQuest ETD Administrator](#) and the approval form signed by the thesis advisor. An electronic copy of the thesis will reside in the MSU library and the abstract will be published online at [ProQuest](#) under Master’s Abstracts.

In addition to the main body of a thesis, the Graduate School now permits the submission of supplementary materials to ProQuest. These supplemental materials will not be reviewed by the Graduate School for formatting requirements, but they must be acceptable by ProQuest and comply with ProQuest’s criteria and storage limits. All supplementary materials need the written approval of the thesis committee chair.

Doctoral Degree Program Requirements

- The candidate must complete original research upon which a dissertation, which makes a significant contribution to knowledge is to be prepared and published.
- Normally six or more semesters of study and research beyond the bachelor’s degree are needed to complete a Ph.D. program, although time is less important than scholarly achievement.
- One year of residence on campus after first enrollment for doctoral degree credit is required to permit the student to work with and under the direction of the faculty, and to engage in independent and cooperative research utilizing university facilities. A year of residence will be made up of two consecutive semesters, involving completion of credits at the level of full-time status of graduate work each semester.
- Complete FOR 802 – Forest Science Research during the first semester of program.
- All doctoral students must register for and successfully complete a minimum of 24 credits **and no more than a total of 36 credits** of doctoral dissertation research (FOR 999). The dissertation and an abstract of the dissertation must be prepared in accordance with the specifications in the *Formatting Guide-Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations*, a handbook that is available, along with a packet of required forms relating to the dissertation online from [The Graduate School](#). It is a policy of Michigan State University to permit and facilitate dissertation research by students from developing nations in their home countries, whenever feasible.
- No more than one fourth of the plan of study can be from transfer credits. Graduate credits may be transferred from other postsecondary accredited institutions of comparable academic quality if they are appropriate to a student’s program and provided they were completed within the time limits approved for the earning of the degree desired at MSU. A student who is enrolled in a doctoral program and who is also enrolled in a master’s program at MSU may request the application of up to 9 credits, appropriate to both programs, from the doctoral program to the master’s degree program, as well. For more information, visit the [Academic Program Catalog Transfer Credits](#).

- Comprehensive examinations must be completed within five years from the time when a student begins the first class at Michigan State University that appears on his or her doctoral program of study.
- All students completing a doctoral degree must use [GradPlan](#). For more information on GradPlan, visit [The Graduate School](#).
- Doctoral candidates must pass a final oral examination in defense of the dissertation.
- Each student working toward a Doctor of Philosophy degree must conduct original research upon which a dissertation which makes a significant contribution to knowledge is to be prepared and published. It is a policy of Michigan State University to permit and facilitate dissertation research by students from developing nations in their home countries, whenever feasible.
- The examining committee is responsible for evaluating the thesis and certifying to the Department Chairperson that it constitutes an acceptable thesis for the discipline.
- Occasionally, individual chapters of a thesis are submitted for publication prior to the completion of the entire thesis. Graduate students should allow their committee members an opportunity view manuscripts prior to submission. For chapters that have already been published an appropriate citation should be included in the thesis as required by the handbook *The Formatting Guide-Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations* ([The Formatting Guide-Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations](#)).
- After the guidance committee and any appointed examiner have reviewed and approved the dissertation and after the student has passed the final oral examination in its defense, the student must incorporate into the dissertation any recommended change(s) and corrections before presenting it to the chairperson of the guidance committee for final review and signature of the approval form. *Not later than the deadline date indicated by the Graduate School for the semester in which graduation is expected*, the student must submit to the Graduate School a final electronic copy of the dissertation online at [ProQuest ETD Administrator](#) and the approval form signed by the dissertation advisor.

In addition to the main body of a dissertation, the Graduate School now permits the submission of supplementary materials to ProQuest. These supplemental materials will not be reviewed by the Graduate School for formatting requirements, but they must be acceptable by ProQuest and comply with ProQuest's criteria and storage limits. All supplementary materials need the written approval of the dissertation committee chair.

Maximum and Minimum Credits

Maximum: Graduate students may carry up to 16 credits each semester. The maximum number of credits; however, is determine by the Major Advisor. A student load above 16 credits requires approval by the CANR dean. Enrollment in doctoral dissertation research (FOR 999) credits need not be counted in determining maximum credits.

Minimum: All students using University services (faculty consultation included) for graduate work must be registered each semester. Minimum registration consists of one course of 1 credit.

Full-Time Students: In order to be considered full-time for academic purpose, students must carry the minimum number of credits per semester or summer session as defined below:

Master's level	9 credits
Doctoral level (pre-comps)	6 credits
Doctoral level (post-comps)	1 credit
Graduate – Professional level	12 credits

Full-time status for doctoral students is defined as a minimum of 1 credit for those students who:

1. have successfully completed all comprehensive exams and are actively engaged in dissertation research (DD status); or

2. are doing department-approved off-campus fieldwork related to preparation of their dissertation. This off-campus fieldwork (DG status) will be granted for one semester at a time up to a maximum of three semesters. The dean's office of the student's college will request the change of status by the Office of the Registrar at least one month prior to the beginning of the semester for which the status is requested.

Federal agencies such as the Department of Education, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Homeland Security may have separate and distinct full-time status requirements.

Language Requirements

All international applicants and applicants whose first language is not English must be able to be proficient in English as a condition for regular admission to Michigan State University. Such applicants will be required to demonstrate their proficiency by meeting certain minimum standards on any of the following tests: TOEFL – A total score of 80 with no subscore below 19 (22 for writing section) is required, MELAB, IELTS, ELC, PTEA, or CELP. All of the above tests must have been taken within two years of a student's application.

International applicants who have acceptable academic credentials may be admitted to Michigan State University on a provisional basis with average TOEFL scores of at least 70. The guidelines for regular and provisional admission based on English Language Proficiency can be found at [English Language Proficiency](#). Provisionally admitted students must take classes at the English Language Center, and restrictions are placed on the number of academic courses that they may take. Any student admitted provisionally because of an English language deficiency must correct that deficiency within one calendar year.

As the language requirement is a University policy, a decision by the English Language Center (ELC) for a student to enroll in its program is binding and is not negotiable by the student. Students who are required to attend ELC classes are obligated to show good class attendance and make an earnest effort to remove the language deficiency as soon as possible. The ELC program must be completed satisfactorily before regular admission status may be granted.

Residency Requirements

A minimum of 6 credits in the degree program must be earned in residence on the East Lansing campus or at approved Michigan State University instructional sites for master's students. One year of residence on campus after first enrollment for doctoral degree credit is required to permit the student to work with and under the direction of the faculty, and to engage in independent and cooperative research utilizing university facilities. A year of residence will be made up of two consecutive semesters, involving the completion of credits at the level of full-time status of graduate work each semester.

GradPlan

All students completing doctoral degrees must use GradPlan which can be accessed using your MSU NetID and password at [GradPlan](#). GradPlan is the web-interactive system for **Ph.D. students only** to create and store their Ph.D. Degree Plans and subsequent graduate program activities. The Department of Forestry still requires that the student completes and turns in the Report of the Guidance Committee, Record of Comprehensive Exam, and the Dissertation Final Defense form to the Graduate Secretary.

After students have entered their program plan into GradPlan, the plan is reviewed and approved electronically at several levels via the Forms Tracking Utility. The approval begins at the program level, then committee members, next by the department, and lastly by the college personnel.

Final acceptance of the dissertation by the Graduate School and the final degree certification by the department, college, and Office of the Registrar are all set up for final approval and stored electronically in GradPlan.

This brief guide will walk you through how to use GradPlan ([GradPlan Student Guide](#)).

Graduation Application

Candidate for a Master or Doctoral Degree must complete the on-line graduation application form on or before the end of the first week of the semester in which they expect to complete their degree requirements. This will assure their name is included in the commencement program.

If the student expects to complete the degree requirements during Summer semester, submit this application on or before the end of the first week of Spring semester. This will assure that the student's name is included in the Spring/Summer commencement program.

For students without MSU NetID and Password, or to apply for a previous semester, print and complete the hard copy graduation application form and fax or mail it to the Office of the Registrar.

IV. SELECTION OF THESIS/DISSERTATION ADVISOR

No one is admitted to our graduate programs without a willing advisor. The selection of a student's permanent faculty advisor will be approved by the graduate committee prior to admission.

Eligible Advisors

Must be a Michigan State University regular faculty possessing an earned Ph.D. The 'regular faculty' of Michigan State University shall consist of all persons appointed under the rules of tenure and holding the rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor, and persons appointed as librarians.

Role and Responsibilities of Advisor

The Advisor has the responsibility to meet periodically to oversee the graduate student's progress for as long as the graduate student continues in good standing. The Advisor is responsible for insuring the adequacy of the overall program, in keeping with the general policy that six or more semesters of study and research beyond the bachelor's degree are required.

- Review and sign Annual Progress Report with student each January.
- Monitor and enforce RCR requirements including holding face-to-face meetings.
- Ensure that if a student is involved with human subjects, animal subjects, and/or hazardous materials they are taking the necessary training.

Departure of Advisor from University

In the event that a student's major advisor leaves MSU before the student completes his/her degree program, the Department Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies will work with the student to find a suitable replacement.

Changing Advisors

In the event that a student and/or the major advisor has requested a change, the Department Chair and the Director of Graduate Studies will work with the student to find a suitable replacement if the student has not already done so. A Graduate Committee Form will need to be submitted to the Graduate secretary removing the previous advisor and adding the new advisor. For Ph.D. students, after turning in the form you will need to

make the change in GradPlan as well and route for approval. If the major advisor is the Department Chair, the student will work with the Director of Graduate Studies to find a suitable replacement.

V. FORMATION OF THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE

It shall be the responsibility of each graduate student admitted to a doctoral program or to a master's program that requires a guidance committee to form a guidance committee with the concurrence of the unit chairperson/director or designated representative. Composition of the guidance committee will be in accord with University, college, and department/school guidelines. In the event that a student is unable to form a guidance committee, it shall be the responsibility of the unit chairperson/director to intervene with the faculty of the unit to resolve the problem.

Master's Program Examining Committee

The Master's program examining committee shall be formed no later than the second semester of master's study. A Master's Plan A program examining committee consists of at least three MSU regular faculty; with at least one of whom is a faculty member of another Department. A Master's Plan B program examining committee consists of at least two MSU regular faculty. The student's Major Professor, who must be a faculty member in the Department of Forestry, chairs the committee. The examining committee is responsible for certifying to the Department Chairperson that the program of study is designed to assist the student in achieving their educational goals and meets the standards of the Department.

An exception may be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School to allow a non-tenure stream faculty member or an Academic Specialist to serve on a master's student's examination committee as one of the three required faculty members of a master's student's examination committee. With the approval of the chairperson or director of the department or school, an exception may be granted to allow an Emeritus faculty member to serve as one of the three required faculty members on a master's student's examination committee; in addition, an Emeritus faculty member may continue to serve as the chairperson of an examination committee.

Doctoral Guidance Committee

The guidance committee shall be formed no later than the second semester of doctoral study, or within two semesters beyond the master's degree or its equivalent. Within one semester after the committee has met, the student shall route their program of study through GradPlan for approval by the dean of the college, listing all degree requirements. This committee consists of at least four Michigan State University regular faculty at least three of whom, including the committee chairperson, possess an earned doctoral degree (preferably of the same type that the student is seeking (for example Ph.D.); and one of whom is a faculty member of another Department. The student's Major Professor, who must be a faculty member in the Department of Forestry, chairs the committee. This committee, in consultation with the student, will plan the course program, research and examinations. Normally, a major field of study, and one or more related fields of study are identified in the program.

An exception may be granted by the Dean of the Graduate School to allow a non-tenure stream faculty member or an Academic Specialist to serve on a doctoral student's guidance committee as one of the four required faculty members of a doctoral student's guidance committee. With the approval of the chairperson, an exception may be granted to allow an Emeritus faculty member to serve as one of the four required faculty members on a doctoral student's guidance committee; in addition, an Emeritus faculty member may continue to serve as the chairperson of a guidance committee. More than four persons may be members of the guidance committee. Persons who are not Michigan State University regular faculty who can contribute to the student's program may serve as members of the guidance committee and assist in the work of the committee,

providing that the number of such persons does not exceed the number of regular faculty on the committee. In consultation with the student, the guidance committee plans the entire program, including examinations, and thereafter supervises it, making modifications as needed until the degree is completed.

VI. THESIS/DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

Master's Programs Thesis Defense and Final Oral Examination

Students in a **Plan A** master's degree program are required to pass an oral examination in defense of the thesis. However, students in certain programs are required to pass an oral examination that covers both a defense of the thesis and course work. *This examination must be scheduled within the time frame determined by the department the semester in which graduation is anticipated.* The examination for a Plan A master's degree is administered by an examining committee consisting of at least three Michigan State University regular faculty members (as defined in the *Faculty Handbook*). At the discretion of the examining committee, the presentation and defense of the thesis may be open to members of the academic community. The thesis and the student's performance on the oral examination must be approved by a majority vote of the examining committee.

A final examination or evaluation is required for students in a **Plan B** master's degree program. The examination or evaluation is administered in accordance with department or school and college rules by a committee consisting of at least two Michigan State University regular faculty members (as defined in the *Faculty Handbook*). The content and format of the examination or evaluation are specified by the department or school and college.

For both **Plan A** and **Plan B**, the student must be registered during the semester in which the examination or evaluation is administered. This requirement may be waived if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately following a spring semester during which the student was registered and/or prior to a fall semester in which the student will be registered.

Doctoral Program Dissertation Defense and Final Oral Examination

The final oral examination in defense of the dissertation is conducted and evaluated by the major advisor and the guidance committee. Other interested faculty members and members of the public may attend the presentation portion of the examination without vote. Only guidance committee members may attend the examination portion of the defense per individual unit guidelines. The dissertation and the student's performance on the final oral examination must be approved by a positive vote by at least three-fourths of the voting examiners and with not more than one dissenting vote from among the Michigan State University regular faculty members of the guidance committee.

The final oral examination must be scheduled for a date not earlier than two weeks after the dissertation and abstract have been submitted to the chairperson of the guidance committee, other guidance committee members, and any appointed examiner. The student must be registered during the semester in which the final oral examination is taken.

VII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Guidance Committee Progress Review

The guidance committee will review at least once a year the graduate student's progress in his or her research or creative activity as well as plans for work in the coming year (*GSRR 2.4.8*). A report on the results of this

review will be signed by the members of the guidance committee and by the graduate student. This report will be filed with the chair/director of the academic unit and will be placed in the graduate student's file, together with any response that the graduate student may attach to the report of the guidance committee.

Annual Progress Report

Once a year, due January 31st, the faculty advisor and the graduate student will complete the appropriate portions of the annual progress report form ([Current Forestry Graduate Student Forms](#)). The faculty advisor and graduate student will then meet to discuss this evaluation and, both the faculty advisor and the graduate student will sign the completed annual progress report. The completed, signed form will be submitted to the Department Chair and placed into the graduate student's file. Graduate students who wish to appeal any part of the faculty advisor's evaluation may do so in writing to the Department Chair, and this appeal will be filed together with the annual progress report. The DOF Graduate Committee will review annual progress reports and schedule a meeting with the student to discuss any aspects of his or her studies that appear relevant for successful completion of the graduate program, including problems that may hinder progress, and any appeal of the faculty advisor's evaluation (see above). Recommendations based on this review will be communicated in writing to the faculty advisor and the graduate student within two weeks of the meeting, and that report will be placed in the graduate student's file.

Acceptable Academic Standing

Graduate students are expected to make satisfactory progress toward completion of their programs. To maintain acceptable academic standing, graduate students must:

1. Achieve specific milestones relevant to their program (i.e. formation of guidance committee, approved program of study, comprehensive exam, etc) within the timeframes described above.
2. Be making acceptable progress towards their degree as evaluated by the guidance committee and major advisor in annual reports as described above.
3. Have attained a 3.0 or higher grade point average in course work, exclusive of collateral courses, by the end of their third semester of residence, with no individual course grade below a 2.0. All graduate students must maintain at least a 3.0 overall grade point average thereafter. In addition, a student may have grading postponed on no more than one-third of their attempted credits to maintain acceptable academic standing.

In the event that a student fails to meet one or more of these criteria for acceptable academic standing, they will receive a warning letter alerting them that they are on probationary status and outlining the steps that must be taken and a timeframe to regain acceptable academic standing. Students will be required to meet with their major advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss the circumstances leading to the warning letter and a strategy for corrective action. A copy of the letter will be placed in the student's file.

Dismissal

A student placed on probationary status (see Acceptable Academic Standing above), who fails to meet the steps outlined in their warning letter within the timeframe specified, may be dismissed at the end of the semester based on a decision by the major advisor, Director of Graduate Studies and Department Chair.

Students admitted to the department on a provisional basis must meet certain requirements that are specified in their admission offer letter. Failure to meet these requirements may result in dismissal based on a decision by the major advisor, Director of Graduate Studies and Department Chair. Students can be admitted provisionally for English Language deficiencies or subject-matter deficiencies. Those admitted with subject-matter deficiencies will be transferred to regular status when collateral courses are successfully completed. You will be notified promptly of the decision taken by the Department.

Failure to pass the comprehensive examination within two attempts will result in dismissal from the PhD program.

In the event of a dismissal decision notice will be given to the student by the Department Chair with a copy forwarded to the Dean of the College.

Students should be aware of University policies that describe their rights and responsibilities in situations of probationary status ([Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities](#)) and can learn more about their rights and options by visiting the [University Ombudsperson's website](#).

Student Academic Files

The Graduate Secretary maintains a departmental file for all graduate students in the department containing; official application materials, official program communication including offer letter, annual progress reports, required program forms, and funding information.

Students have the right to view the contents of this file and may do so by contacting the Graduate Secretary.

VIII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: INTEGRITY AND SAFETY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Guidelines on Authorship and Institutional Data Policy

The Department of Forestry is strongly committed to scholarly integrity and maintaining a safe working environment. All students and faculty are expected to appropriately attribute other persons whose labor, data or ideas are used in their own work and to never falsely claim responsibility for the work or ideas of others. MSU's Guidelines on Authorship can be found here: [Guidelines on Authorship](#) and MSU's Institutional Data Policy can be found here: [Intitutional Data Policy](#).

Responsible Conduct of Research Training

All graduate students are required to complete Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training as described in the Department of Forestry's RCR Training Plan. All students and faculty should familiarize themselves with MSU's *Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities*, which provides criteria for dismissal for unethical or dishonest behavior ([Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)). MSU's Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities can be found here: [Procedures Concerning Allegations of Misconduct in Research and Creative Activities](#).

All students working in research labs are expected to complete the Office for Environmental Health and Safety's Chemical Hygiene, Laboratory Safety, And Hazardous Waste Training course ([Office of Environmental Health and Safety](#)) before beginning work. They must also complete refresher course each year and receive laboratory-specific safety training from their major advisor. Further safety training may be required for particular laboratories or prior to performing particular activities. The faculty member in charge of the laboratory has responsibility to ensure that any additional safety training is explained to the student.

Student's conducting research involving animals or human subjects must familiarize themselves with MSU policies and complete the necessary training before beginning their research. Information on human subjects can be found here: [Human Research Protection Program](#)) and animal research here: [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee \(IACUC\)](#)).

Travel Safety

Safety while travelling for research, especially overseas travel is also important. MSU's Travel Clinic provides resources that student's should be aware of ([MSU's Travel Clinic](#)).

IX. STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Students may request a hearing to resolve a dispute with an instructor, but only after trying to settle the matter in conversations with the instructor and, if necessary, the relevant administrator. The student also may consult with the University Ombudsperson at any stage of the dispute. The general procedures for conducting a hearing for both graduate and undergraduate students are outlined in four MSU documents: Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR), the Graduate Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR), Law Student Rights and Responsibilities (LSRR), and the Medical Students Rights and Responsibilities (MSRR).

Graduate Hearings

When a graduate student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of his or her discussions with the instructor and unit head, he or she may send a written request for a hearing to the appropriate unit head (i.e., department chairperson, program director, or associate dean). There are links below to hearing process flowcharts for each specific type of grievance. Hearings for graduate student grievances should be held at the lowest possible administrative level. Most often this means the department, school, or graduate program.

[Department/School/Program Level Hearing Procedures](#)

[College Level Hearing Procedures](#)

For Graduate students the hearing request letter must include the following information:

- The student's name and PID
- The student's local address, phone number and e-mail address
- A detailed explanation of the alleged violation of student rights to justify a hearing, with reference to the specific article in the SRR, GSRR, LSRR, MSRR or Code of Teaching Responsibility
- The name of the individual the student believes violated his or her rights
- The date of the alleged violation
- The name of the MSU instructor, student or staff member, if any, who will assist the student throughout the hearing process
- The names of witnesses, if any, who will speak on the student's behalf at the hearing, if the hearing board grants the request for a hearing
- The redress sought to rectify the situation.

Deadline: The student should sign and date the letter and **submit it before the middle of the semester following the initial dispute.**

Graduate hearings initiated at the department, school or program level may be appealed to the college hearing board. Graduate hearings initiated at the college level may be appealed to the University Graduate Judiciary.

Based on the specific type of grievance, the hearing process for graduate students will follow one of the patterns listed below:

Academic Grievance Hearing alleging violations of the student rights (including grading disputes) established in the SRR, GSRR, LSRR, or MSRR:

- [For graduate students starting at the Department/School/Program level](#)
- [For graduate students starting at the College level](#)

Academic Grievance Hearing to contest an allegation of academic dishonesty:

- [For graduate students starting at the Department/School/Program level](#)
- [For graduate students starting at the College level](#)

[Academic Disciplinary Hearing to impose sanctions in addition to, or other than, a failing grade in a course for an act of academic misconduct.](#)

The academic unit will establish procedures for the timely change of the faculty advisor when such a change would best serve the progress of the graduate student in his or her program.

X. WORK RELATED POLICIES

MSU's Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy

All faculty and staff (including graduate teaching assistants and research assistants) are required to complete an online training program within 30 days of hire and biennially thereafter. This program includes foundational information on relationship violence and sexual misconduct as well as important information about MSU's policy and mandatory reporting protocols. Failure to complete the required online training will result in notification to Human Resources or Academic Human Resources, which may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Faculty and staff will receive an email, sent to their MSU email account, with instructions to complete the training program upon hire or 30 days before they are due to re-certify. The training program is provided by MSU's vendor, Student Success. Faculty and staff will use MSU's secure single sign-on to access the course, but your password and other sensitive information will not be provided to the vendor.

Individuals who believe they may have an overwhelming or intense emotional reaction to the content of the online training programs should contact the Office of Institutional Equity at (517) 353-3922 or titleix@msu.edu to request accommodation. For reasonable accommodation requests, please contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at (517) 884-7273 (RCPD).

More information can be found at [RVSM Online Education Programs](#).

Graduate Assistantships

Assistantship support is determined on an individual basis depending upon recommendations, availability of funds, fellowship and scholarship support, and grade record. Generally, when funding is limited, nationals will be given preference for funding. Assistantships are reviewed annually by the Department Chairperson and may be renewed if satisfactory progress is being made and funds are available. Students will be notified by March 31 (1) for those who will be employed for the following Summer Semester, (2) and as soon as practicable but no later than April 22 for those who will be employed for the following Fall and Spring Semesters, or for those who will be employed for the following Fall Semester, and (3) by December 1 for those who will be employed for the following Spring Semester. Assistantships are not generally available to M.S. Plan B students. Normally, graduate assistantship support is limited to the equivalent of two years, ½ time for Master's students and five years, ½ time for Doctoral students.

Course Load Requirements

Graduate assistants must be registered each semester in which they hold assistantships. The minimum and maximum credit loads are as follows:

For a **quarter–time** graduate assistant, minimum enrollment is 6 credits for master’s degree students and 3 credits for doctoral students (*including* credits in courses numbered 899 or 999); maximum enrollment is 16 credits (*excluding* credits in courses numbered 899 or 999).

For a **half–time** assistant minimum enrollment is 6 credits for master’s degree students and 3 credits for doctoral students (*including* credits in courses numbered 899 or 999); maximum enrollment is 12 credits (*excluding* credits in courses numbered 899 or 999).

For a **three–quarter–time** assistant, minimum enrollment is 3 credits (*including* credits in courses numbered 899 or 999); maximum enrollment is 8 credits (*excluding* credits in courses numbered 899 or 999).

Minimum enrollment for doctoral students who have successfully completed all comprehensive exams is 1 credit.

Deviation from the minimum enrollment requirements listed above is permitted only during:

1. Summer session, when a 3–credit minimum enrollment is allowed for all types of assistants with 1-credit minimum for doctoral students successfully completing all comprehensive exams.
2. The semester in which the degree is granted, when all types of assistants must enroll for at least the number of credits required to complete the degree or meet the university minimum registration requirement.

Any deviation from the maximum enrollment requirements listed above must have the approval of the dean of the college *prior to enrollment*.

In meeting the credit requirements, graduate assistants should be enrolled in courses that are recognized as being of graduate level unless the student's department or school has granted written permission for course work constituting an exception to this rule. Visitor credits may count as part of a graduate assistant's credit load, if approved, in writing, by the student’s department chair or unit director and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Appointments and Responsibilities

Graduate assistant is a generic term referring to a graduate student who is supported on a graduate assistantship. Graduate assistants are in one of three categories as they relate to policy in this section: research assistants, teaching assistants represented by the Graduate Employees Union (GEU), and teaching assistants not represented by the GEU.

Graduate assistantships are available only to graduate students who are actively pursuing graduate degree programs and who are making satisfactory progress toward their degrees, including maintaining at least a 3.00 grade–point average. Colleges, departments, or schools may set higher or additional standards. Assistantships may be terminated if GPA falls below 3.0.

Graduate assistants are appointed on a quarter–time, half–time, or three–quarter time basis. There are two appointment periods during the fall and spring: August 16—December 31 and January 1—May 15. During each appointment period a graduate assistant's duties to the university require an average of:

1. 10 hours per week for a quarter–time stipend.
2. 20 hours per week for a half–time stipend.
3. 30 hours per week for a three–quarter–time stipend.

Summer appointments cover the period from approximately May 16—August 15. The appointing unit is responsible for informing the graduate assistant of the distribution of duties that are related to the summer appointment.

To the extent that current policies and procedures contain provisions about wages, benefits, or other terms

and conditions of employment, they are, for teaching assistants included in the collective bargaining agreement between Michigan State University and the Graduate Employees Union.

Assistantship Levels

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, LEVEL I. Graduate students with the bachelor's degree and less than one year's experience as graduate assistants or as full-support fellows. They conduct research, perform administrative tasks or other supervised duties such as reading and grading papers.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, LEVEL II. Graduate students with a relevant master's degree or equivalent and/or one year's experience as graduate assistants or as full-support fellows in the appointing department or school or in a unit considered relevant by the chairperson of the appointing department or school. They conduct research, grade papers, or perform administrative tasks with moderate supervision. Advancement from Level I to Level II is usually routine.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS, LEVEL III. Graduate students who have successfully completed doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the department in which the student is enrolled, and have experience as a graduate RA/TE at Michigan State University, or equivalent. The minimum number of semesters shall be four (4), five (5) or six (6). The definition of equivalent experience as an RA/TE is left to the discretion of the chairperson of the appointing unit, but it is expected that only experience in research-oriented assignments will count toward the six semesters of experience as an RA. (Consistent with current practice, 1/4 time and 3/4 time appointments count the same as 1/2 time appointments, and summer semesters count the same as fall and spring semesters.)

Stipends and Benefits

Stipend levels are subject to yearly change.

For the latest information, please consult the Human Resources Web site at [Human Resources Graduate Assistant Stipend Ranges](#).

Checks are distributed on a biweekly basis. Graduate assistants at any of the three levels may be appointed on a quarter-time, half-time, or three-quarter-time basis with an appropriate adjustment in the stipend. Changes in level, stipend, or percentage of time become effective only at the beginning of a semester. Additional benefits, even though the graduate student does not enroll for 10 credits or more, include the following:

1. Tuition waiver in the amount of 9 credits for fall semester, 9 credits for spring semester, and five credits for summer session. The tuition waiver will be provided during the period of the assistantship, to a maximum of 23 credits per year. For Ph.D. students past comprehensive exams with a summer research assistantship (only following a spring assistantship, there is a 1 credit tuition benefit. Student health insurance carries over until August 14.
2. Exemption from out-of-state resident tuition. This exemption applies to a summer session that precedes or follows consecutive fall and spring appointments, regardless of whether the student was previously enrolled at Michigan State University. If the student does not have a graduate assistantship form completed before registering for summer session, he or she will pay out-of-state resident course fees and tuition. If an appointment form is submitted prior to the middle of the subsequent fall semester, the Office of the Registrar will refund the full amount of out-of-state tuition that the student paid for the summer session.
3. Specific college or program fees, applicable to all graduate students enrolled in a specific college or program, may apply and are not waived.
4. Health Insurance. Graduate assistants (domestic and international) are automatically enrolled in a health insurance plan, the premium of which is paid by the university. The plan provides the following coverage:
 - a. Fall appointment only: coverage from August 15 to February 14 of the following year.
 - b. Fall and Spring appointments—coverage from August 15 to August 14 of the following year.

- c. Spring appointment only—coverage from January 1 to August 14.
- d. Summer appointment only—coverage from approximately May 12 to August 14.

Enrolled students may also insure their eligible spouse and/or dependent children (residing with the insured).
*Reference to spouse includes MSU recognized same-sex domestic partners of graduate assistants.

For questions regarding coverage, enrollment or premium payment, contact BCN directly at 1-800- 859-8452. For questions concerning waiver processing or general information, contact the Michigan State University Human Resources Office at 1-517-353-4434 or 1-800-353-4434, or by e-mail at: solutionscenter@hr.msu.edu. The Human Resources Office is located at 1407 S. Harrison Road, Suite 140A (Nisbet Building), East Lansing, MI 48823 and on the web at [Human Resources Student Insurance](#); or visit BCN at [BCN](#).

- 5. Eligibility for treatment at Olin Health Center.

Additional Benefits, Other Information

Library privileges, intramural and recreation facilities privileges, and eligibility to join the Michigan State University Federal Credit Union.

Eligibility for student discounts on football, basketball, and/or hockey season tickets for themselves and their spouses.

Eligibility for free admission to other regularly scheduled Michigan State University athletic events when presenting a valid student ID card.

Eligibility for student discounts on series tickets to professional performing arts events at the Wharton Center for Performing Arts and Institute for Arts and Culture, including one guest ticket at the student rate.

Exemption from payment of the Social Security tax on the stipend if the student is enrolled for the minimum number or required credits. Stipends are subject to income taxes with few exceptions. The taxability of stipends is subject to review by the Internal Revenue Service. Please call the Payroll Office for more information 1-517-355-5010. Please note that tax laws are subject to continuing revision and students should verify their tax liability each year.

Teaching Requirements

All graduate students supported by Departmental funds may be required to teach at least once a year and may be required to teach more than once a year when necessary. Teaching requirements will be in the form of a TA appointment and align with the GEU contract. International students will be required to take the MSU Speaking Test to determine the nature of teaching.

Final authority for the assignment of graduate student teaching assistants is the responsibility of the Chairperson who must protect the teaching mission of the Department.

Vacation for Students

Students on graduate assistantships are given two weeks' vacation per year plus those scheduled legal holidays given to faculty and staff. When classes are not in session, graduate assistants are expected to work unless they schedule vacation days. There is no stated policy for graduate students who are not on assistantships. Graduate assistants must coordinate their vacation schedule with their Major Professor.

Graduate Assistant (not covered by the GEU Contract) Illness, Injury, and Pregnancy Leave Policy

A graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of his or her appointment because of illness or injury shall notify the administrator of his or her major unit as soon as circumstances permit. Similarly, a graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of her appointment because of pregnancy shall notify the administrator of her major unit as soon as circumstances permit.

During the illness, injury, or pregnancy the major unit shall adjust (reduce, waive, or reschedule) the graduate assistant's duties as those duties and the assistant's physical circumstances reasonably dictate. If total absence from duties becomes necessary, the major unit shall maintain the stipend of the appointment, provided the graduate assistant is still enrolled, for a period of two months, or to the end of the appointment period or of the semester, whichever should occur first.

The graduate assistant shall have the right to return to the assistantship, within the original terms of the appointment, at such time as he or she is able to reassume the duties of the position.

AAGA – Academic Achievement Graduate Assistantships

The Graduate School offers graduate programs these assistantships to help provide financial support for students who have been accepted into a master's or a doctoral degree program and whose enrollment will enhance the educational diversity of the student body of the program into which they are admitted. Criteria for awarding the assistantships include students' personal history, experience, leadership potential, and research goals, as well as their demonstrated promotion of understanding among persons of different background and ideas, and their demonstrated academic achievement by overcoming barriers such as economic, social, or educational disadvantage. In particular, the Graduate School's AAGA recruitment program is designed to assist graduate programs in attracting students who traditionally have not participated in the University's graduate programs. Programs are encouraged to nominate undergraduates who have participated in program like McNair and SROP and students who have attended an undergraduate institution such as a small liberal arts college or a HBCU or HSI.

Only U.S. citizens or U.S. permanent residents are eligible for an AAGA. All candidates for an AAGA must be accepted into a graduate program when offered the award.

Fellowships

A variety of graduate fellowships are available to Michigan State University students. Stipends and sources of support vary widely. In addition to applying for fellowships offered by the university and through the university by outside agencies, students are encouraged to apply for any outside sources of funds for which they may be eligible. Students are encouraged to consult such publications.

You can find a summary by visiting: [Graduate Scholarships, Fellowships, Loans](#).

For more information on MSU Fellowships visit The Graduate School [MSU Fellowships](#).

Financial Aid

Financial aid for graduate students is available in several forms. A number of scholarships and fellowships are awarded each year by the Graduate School to the colleges, and there are many opportunities for graduate assistant appointments for part-time teaching or research. The applicant should refer to the graduate application instruction sheet that accompanies the application for admission for details on applying for financial assistance. Applications for loans for new students are made through the Office of Financial Aid and should be returned to that office before April 1, except for such loans as may carry a later deadline date. The Office of Financial Aid should be consulted for further details at [The Office of Financial Aid](#), 517-353-5940 or via email at finaid@msu.edu.

Students already admitted to regular graduate status at Michigan State University and seeking an assistantship or other financial aid should consult the department, school, or college concerned. Since graduate assistantships and fellowships are usually awarded beginning in February for the following aid year, it is essential that applications and supporting documents be submitted in December or early in January to assure adequate consideration.

Grief Absence Policy

For master's (Plan A), master's (Plan B) with research responsibilities, and doctoral students, it is the responsibility of the student to: a) notify their advisor/major professor and faculty of the courses in which they are enrolled of the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation, b) provide appropriate verification of the grief absence as specified by the advisor/major professor and faculty, and c) complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the advisor/major professor and faculty. It is the responsibility of the advisor/major professor to: a) determine with the student the expected period of absence – it is expected that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances, b) receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student's return, and c) make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief absence. If employed as a RA or TE, the graduate student must also notify their employer. Both employer and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the bereavement policy in GEU CBU Article 18.

Work in Absentia

Candidates for the doctoral degree may, with the approval of the guidance committee, carry on some of the work in absentia. Arrangements for registration may be made by applying at the office of the dean of the appropriate college.

Workspace and Use of Facilities

The Major Professor will arrange space for the project and use of research laboratory facilities, when necessary.

If a student's proposed research project will require pesticide applications, the student must become a certified or registered pesticide applicator with the State of Michigan. Students not certified or registered will not be allowed to apply pesticides. Certified or registered pesticide applicators in the Forestry Department are not obliged to apply pesticides for uncertified students. Contact the Extension Bulletin Office in Agriculture Hall for a copy of the Pesticide Applicators Training Manual.

The State of Michigan has a Right-to-Know law for all individuals in the workplace. All students are required to complete a basic safety course on handling hazardous substances found in the workplace. Graduate students conducting procedures in faculty labs must undergo additional training and complete related safety forms for each workplace.

Supplies for Research Projects

Students must have an appropriate account number prior to ordering supplies for research projects. Supplies from off-campus require a requisition from the Major Professor.

Certain items can be obtained directly from MSU Stores and Biochemistry Stores while others must be requisitioned. Stores items are listed in the MSU Stores Catalog. In some cases MSU Stores has an open account with off-campus sources for items not carried in stock. It is necessary to check with MSU Stores before obtaining items from such sources. Supplies from MSU Stores and Biochem Stores must have the approval of the Major Professor who will indicate the account, which is to be charged. Supplies from off-campus, which require a requisition, must be obtained by filling out a requisition request, which the Major Professor can furnish, and which must be signed before it can be processed.

Reimbursement by Direct Pay Voucher

For small items (under \$50) a direct purchase may be most feasible. A direct pay voucher will be issued to reimburse the purchase upon request of the Major Professor. Again, this will only be reimbursed if approved by the Major Professor. Reimbursement can be obtained by filling out a Non-Travel Reimbursement Request Form located in the main Forestry office and attaching itemized receipts of your purchase.

Scientific Instruments and Microcomputers

A large amount of scientific equipment is available in the Department. Such equipment is assigned to specific staff members for supervision and maintenance. The graduate student with the approval of their Major Professor should initiate approval for its use. Students using scientific equipment should be sure they know how to operate instruments before attempting to use them.

Statistical Consultation Service

The Statistical Consultation Service is a free service provided by MSU through the Department of Statistics and Probability and the Computer Center. Consulting activities are designed to work together to support statistics from the inception of research to the final analysis of research results. Assistance is provided in all phases of research projects including planning, analysis, and reporting. CSTAT offers two levels of consulting, basic and enhanced which are detailed on CSTAT's website: [Statistical Consultation Service](#).

Equipment Use

Requests for the use of University vehicles and equipment require permission of the student's Major Professor. In some cases appropriate forms and/or a sign out sheet must be filled out prior to obtaining permission. University facilities are never to be applied to personal use.

Use of University Vehicles

University vehicles are only available to graduate students for authorized use and permission for use is contingent upon the approval of a properly completed travel request. Travel over 500 miles one way in University vehicles must be approved in advance by the Office of Planning and Budgets. The student must note that University's Travel Accident Insurance Policy does not apply to graduate students. Also, University general funds may not be used to travel to collect data primarily for theses and/or dissertations.

Travel Requests

Prior to all travel, a travel authorization form must be completed by the graduate student and signed by the Department Chairperson and the Major Professor. With the exception of local travel, each travel must have a separate travel authorization form processed.

Copy Machine

Copy machine use is restricted. The copy machine is for Department business only. Each Major Professor has a copy code for their lab that can be provided to students.

Telephones

Telephones are provided in graduate student rooms and laboratories. No personal long distance calls may be made from these phones. Local personal calls should be kept to a minimum. A pay telephone is available on the first floor.

Departmental Keys

See Juli Mack in 126 Natural Resources. Doors in the building are locked after hours and on weekends. Access to the building, the lounge, the graduate offices and the research laboratories will require keys. Keys for the building and the assigned graduate offices can be checked out from the Chairperson's Office by the graduate student. There is a \$10.00 key deposit required by the Department. Keys to other areas can also be obtained with approval.

D2L – Desire2Learn

D2L is an MSU-supported online learning management system. D2L help and documentation is available at [Desire2Learn Help](#).

XI. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

COGS – Council of Graduate Students <http://cogs.msu.edu>

GEU – Graduate Employees Union <http://geuatmsu.org/>

For a complete list of Student Organizations see <http://studentlife.msu.edu/student-organizations-activities>

Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide <http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/>

GSRR – Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (located within Part II of the Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide) <https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/gsrr/GSRR.pdf>

Department of Forestry <http://www.for.msu.edu/>

Academic Programs Catalog <https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=111>

Course Descriptions <https://reg.msu.edu/Courses/Search.aspx>

Academic Calendar <https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Calendar/Academic.aspx>

Schedule of Courses <https://schedule.msu.edu/>

Final Examination Policy

The final exam time and location for courses offering a final exam will be listed in the [Schedule of Courses](#) and on the class list in the [RO Instructor Systems](#). For additional information please call (517) 355-4522. <https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Calendar/FinalExam.aspx>

FERPA – Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

<https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/PrivacyGuidelines.aspx>

Graduate Student Health Insurance <https://hr.msu.edu/benefits/students/health/index.html>

Center for Academic and Future Faculty Excellence (CAFFE) <http://caffe.grd.msu.edu>

Planning, Resilience, Engagement, Professionalism (PREP) <http://grad.msu.edu/prep>

Career Success <http://careersuccess.msu.edu>

PhD Career Services <http://grad.msu.edu/PhDCareers>

Graduate Student Life & Wellness <http://grad.msu.edu/wellness>

Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution <http://studentlife.msu.edu/sccr>

Counseling Center http://counseling.msu.edu/student_services/

Office of the Ombudsman <https://msu.edu/~sarkadyk/wra210/final/>

Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships / Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities <https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/researchintegrity/guidelines.pdf>

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) <https://hrpp.msu.edu>

Research Integrity <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>

MSU Office of Regulatory Affairs Responsible Conduct of Research <https://ora.msu.edu/RCR>

MSU Scholarship Search <https://scholendow2.ais.msu.edu/student/ScholSearch.asp>

Scholarships and Grants <https://finaid.msu.edu/sships.asp>

The Writing Center <http://writing.msu.edu>

The Graduate School <https://grad.msu.edu/>