



# CROP SCIENCES GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

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# THE DEPARTMENT OF CROP SCIENCES

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## GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS WITHIN CROP SCIENCES

The graduate degree programs available in the Department include the M.S. degree program (10KS0030MS on-campus), M.S. Bioinformatics degree program (10KS5100MS), M.S. Plant Biotechnology degree program (10KS5461MS), Online M.S. degree program (10KS0030MSU), and the Ph.D. degree program (10KS0030PhD).

The Department of Crop Sciences adheres to all University policies regarding graduate education. Students are encouraged to review these policies located in the [Graduate College Handbook](#)

### Degree requirements overview

	<b>MS in Crop Sciences</b>	<b>MS in Bioinformatics</b>	<b>PhD (with BS or BA degree)*</b>	<b>PhD (with MS degree)</b>
<b>Total credit hours**</b>	32	32 thesis option; 36 non-thesis option	96	64
<b>Graded credit hours at 400-500 level (electives) ***</b>	20 (thesis option); 27-31 (non-thesis option)	See Course Catalog for more info	32	12
<b>Qualifying exam</b>	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Preliminary exam</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes

\*This includes direct admits and students transferring from the MS to PhD programs.

\*\*Check the degree section for more specifics. More information is also available on the Course Catalog [website](#).

\*\*\*This excludes seminar and orientation. See degree section or Course Catalog for more information.

These are minimum Department and Graduate College requirements for graduation. Your advisor may have expectations that exceed these minimums. Communicate with your advisor regarding their expectations.

## **M.S. in Crop Sciences (with thesis)**

### **Requirements**

1. Complete a minimum of 32 credit hours. The 32 hours must include:
  - A minimum of 20 graded hours of graduate level coursework approved by the student's Guidance Committee.
  - CPSC 594: Graduate Professional Orientation.
  - CPSC 598: Crop Sciences Seminar during each fall and spring semester.
  - At least 4 hours of graded coursework at the 500-level in addition to CPSC 594 and CPSC 598.
  - 12 hours of Crop Sciences 599: Thesis Research
  - Only 400 and 500-level courses are considered graduate level and applicable towards the 32-credit hour total required.
2. Annual completion of student self-evaluation during spring term.
3. Completion of Graduate Student Plan with Guidance Committee by the end of the second semester of enrollment and turned into Graduate Studies Office. MS students require three individuals on their committee—two of these must be members of the Graduate College faculty.
4. Final Oral Examination.

The Final Oral Examination comprises a public presentation and defense of the student's thesis research to their Guidance Committee. The student will coordinate with their committee to schedule and discuss specific expectations for the exam. The student will also notify the Grad Studies Coordinator of the time and location of the public presentation of their research at least one week before. The Committee will determine the scope and format of the exam. The possible outcomes of the M.S. final exam are pass, fail (and elimination from the program), or incomplete. If the student receives an incomplete, the M.S. examination must be repeated within three months.
5. Submission of approved thesis to Graduate Studies Office for Departmental Format Approval.
6. Deposit M.S. thesis with the Graduate College: <https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis/submit>
7. Completion of Exit Interview Survey with Graduate Studies Office.

### **Timeline**

Most students will complete their program within two and a half years. Students who have not completed their degree within five years will be put on academic probation.

## **M.S. in Crop Sciences (without thesis)**

### **Requirements**

1. Complete a minimum of 32 credit hours. The 32 hours include:
  - 12 graded credit hours at the 500-level. Credit in thesis research does not count toward a non-thesis degree.
  - Only 4 credit hours of CPSC 593 (Independent study) may be counted toward the total.
  - CPSC 594: Graduate Professional Orientation.
  - CPSC 598: Crop Sciences Seminar during each fall and spring semester.
  - Only 400 and 500-level courses are considered graduate level and applicable towards the 32-credit hour total required.
2. Annual completion of student self-evaluation during spring term.
3. Completion of Graduate Student Plan with Guidance Committee by the end of the second semester of enrollment and turned into Graduate Studies Office. MS students require three individuals on their committee—two of these must be members of the Graduate College faculty.
4. Final Oral Examination.

The Final Oral Examination committee (generally the Guidance committee members) will determine the scope and format of the Oral Examination in advance. To clarify committee expectations, the student is urged to visit with each committee member prior to the examination. Decisions of the Committee on the examination must be unanimous. If the student fails the oral examination, the student has the opportunity to retake the exam once.
5. Completion of Exit Interview Survey with Graduate Studies Office.

### **Timeline**

Most students will complete their program within two and a half years. Students who have not completed their degree within five years will be put on academic probation.

## **M.S. in Bioinformatics with Crop Sciences Concentration (thesis)**

### **Requirements**

1. Complete a minimum of 32 credit hours including:

- 12 credit hours at the 500 level.
- 28 credit hours of graded coursework.
- 4 credit hours of CPSC 599 (Crop Sciences Research).
- 8 credit hours of graduate-level coursework within the Department of Crop Sciences.
- 12 credit hours within a general core distributed among Fundamental Bioinformatics, Crop Sciences, and Computer Science courses (contact Graduate Studies Office for list of appropriate coursework).
- 7 credit hours of courses in Computational, Quantitative, and Statistical Biology which must include CPSC 440 (Applied Statistical Methods I) or CPSC 540 (Applied Statistical Methods II).
- CPSC 598 (Crop Sciences Seminar) during each fall and spring semester. A presentation of thesis research in CPSC 598 is also required (typically during the final semester).
- Only 400 and 500-level courses are considered graduate level and applicable towards the 32-credit hour total required.

2. Annual completion of student self-evaluation during spring term.

2. Completion of Graduate Student Plan with Guidance Committee by the end of the second semester of enrollment and turned into Graduate Studies Office. MS students require three members on their committee—two of these must be members of the Graduate College faculty.

3. Final Oral Examination.

The Final Oral Examination comprises a public presentation and defense of the student's thesis research to their Guidance Committee. The student will coordinate with their committee to schedule and discuss specific expectations for the exam. The student will notify the Grad Studies Coordinator of the time and location of the public presentation of their research at least one week prior. The Committee will determine the scope and format of the exam. The possible outcomes of the M.S. final exam are pass, fail, or incomplete. If the student receives an incomplete, the M.S. examination must be repeated within three months.

4. Deposit M.S. thesis with the Graduate College: <https://grad.illinois.edu/thesis/submit>

5. Completion of Exit Interview Survey with Graduate Studies Office.

### **Timeline**

Most students will complete their program within two and a half years. Students who have not completed their degree within five years will be put on academic probation.

## **M.S. in Bioinformatics with Crop Sciences Concentration (without thesis)**

### **Requirements**

1. Complete a minimum of 36 credit hours of graded course work including:
  - 12 credit hours at the 500 level.
  - 8 credit hours of graduate-level coursework within the Department of Crop Sciences.
  - 12 credit hours within a general core distributed among Fundamental Bioinformatics, Crop Sciences, and Computer Science courses (contact Graduate Studies Office for list of appropriate coursework).
  - 7 credit hours of courses in Computational, Quantitative, and Statistical Biology which must include CPSC 440 (Applied Statistical Methods I) or CPSC 540 (Applied Statistical Methods II).
2. Annual completion of student self-evaluation during spring term.
3. Completion of Graduate Student Plan with Guidance Committee by the end of the second semester of enrollment and turned into Graduate Studies Office. MS students require three members on their committee—two of these must be members of the Graduate College faculty.
4. Final Oral Examination.

The Final Oral Examination committee (generally the Guidance committee members) will determine the scope and format of the Oral Examination in advance. To clarify committee expectations, the student is urged to visit with each committee member prior to the examination. Decisions of the Committee on the examination must be unanimous. If the student fails the oral examination, the student has the opportunity to retake the exam once.
5. Completion of Exit Interview Survey with Graduate Studies Office.

### **Timeline**

Most students will complete their program within two and a half years. Students who have not completed their degree within five years will be put on academic probation.



## Ph.D. in Crop Sciences

Students may enter the Ph.D. following completion of their M.S. or directly following their B.S. degree.

### Requirements

1. Complete a minimum of 64 credit hours including:

- A minimum of 12 graded hours of graduate-level coursework beyond the MS approved by the student's Guidance Committee. Direct BS to PhD students are required to complete 32 hours of graduate-level coursework.
- CPSC 594: Graduate Professional Orientation.
- CPSC 598: Crop Sciences Seminar during each fall and spring semester.
- Only 400 and 500-level courses are considered graduate level and applicable towards the 32-credit hour total required.

2. Annual completion of student self-evaluation during the spring term.

3. Complete at least one poster or oral presentation at a scientific meeting.

4. Complete a Ph.D. Graduate Student Plan in consultation with Guidance Committee by the end of the second semester of enrollment and turn into Graduate Studies Office. PhD students are required to have four members on their committee—three of these must be members of the Graduate College faculty and two must be tenured faculty. Members from outside of the University of Illinois are allowed following approval from the Graduate College. Students are responsible for contacting the Graduate Program Coordinator to determine if their committee satisfies University of Illinois requirements. The guidance committee should unanimously agree to any requested changes to exam deadlines.

5. For direct B.S. to Ph.D. students only; pass the qualifying exam. The qualifying exam should be completed prior to the end of the third semester. The goal of the qualifying exam is to appraise the student's ability to demonstrate important aspects of a PhD degree: knowledge of the field, ability to critically evaluate scientific literature, synthesize a written review of a research area, and orally communicate these findings and relevance to the field. Completion of the qualifying exam does not commit the student to completing their dissertation research in the same research area. However, the student may choose to use all, or part of the qualifying exam written review in their dissertation.

- The student will write a 10-15 page (single-spaced, 11 pt font) literature review of their research area. In addition to discussing relevant previous research, this review should identify open and important questions in the field. Literature cited does not count towards the page limit. Formatting can be changed at the discretion of the committee.
- The student will schedule an oral exam with their Guidance Committee and provide the written literature review to committee members at least two weeks prior to the exam.
- The oral exam will comprise a series of questions by the guidance committee regarding the written literature review. Questions may assess both the student's understanding of specific studies discussed in the review as well as adjacent studies or concepts relevant to the research area. Similarly, questions may assess the student's ability to describe how they could test the open questions discussed in their review and to propose alternative hypotheses. While notes are allowed, students are expected to have a thorough understanding of the material. Students are responsible for bringing a copy of the Qualifying Exam Result Form (page 27) to the exam.

- Following completion of the oral component, the guidance committee will convene to discuss the following aspects of the qualifying exam: 1) the quality of the student's written review, 2) the student's understanding of the field, 3) the student's ability to orally discuss scientific hypotheses.
- The committee will provide their consensus results and either pass, fail, or provide alternative recommendations for further improvement. If the committee finds that all aspects of the qualifying exam were unsatisfactory, they may require that the student be transferred to the MS program. If only portions of the exam or written review were unsatisfactory, the committee may either provide recommendations on additional coursework or require that the student redo a portion of the written review or oral exam. Any revisions must be completed within three months of the initial exam date.

6. Pass the Research Proposal Defense by the end of their fourth semester (sixth semester for direct B.S. to Ph.D. students). The goals of the research proposal and proposal defense are to assess the student's ability to concisely describe their research goals and relevance and to defend their plan to scrutiny. Furthermore, the proposal and proposal defense serve as an opportunity to address any potential issues in the student's research plan. At the discretion of the faculty advisor and Guidance Committee, the student can defend their research proposal on the date of their oral preliminary examination or as a separate event. Successful completion of the research proposal does not commit the student to completing the specific objectives for their dissertation on that specific topic. Although a guide for future plans, it is recognized that research may evolve, and students may not complete objectives as stated in the proposal. However, students should be prepared to discuss and defend these changes in their dissertation.

### *Research proposal*

- In consultation with their advisor and Guidance Committee, the student will develop a research proposal using the format below. While alternative formats may be considered acceptable, these should be pre-approved by the entire Guidance Committee.
  - Proposals should be less than 12 pages of single-spaced text (minimum 11-point font, 1" margins), figures and tables. Literature cited is not counted in the page limit.
  - Project Summary/Abstract (<300 words): A concise specific description of the activity to be undertaken including overall relevance, project goals, supporting objectives, and plans for completion.
  - Rationale and Significance: Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project and relationship of the proposed work to the larger scientific questions or problems.
  - Introduction: A clear statement of the long-term goals and supporting objectives of the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed activities significant to the proposed project, including any preliminary data collected by the student.
  - Approach:
    - Objectives: A statement of objectives or aims written in clear, concise, and logically arranged terms.
    - Methods: State the methodology or procedures used to complete the proposed project. This should include the techniques to be employed and their feasibility and rationale, expected results, methods for analysis and data interpretation, possible pitfalls or limitations and actions to reduce their impact.
    - Project timetable: Include all important phases including writing of the dissertation and publication of results.
  - Literature cited (does not count towards the 12-page limit)

- The student will consult with their Guidance Committee to schedule a proposal defense date and submit their proposal to committee members at least two weeks prior to that date.
- The Guidance Committee will evaluate the proposal for its description of relevant background information, clear objectives, strong rationale, feasibility of approaches and methods, and potential for completion by expected graduation date. During the defense, students will be expected to discuss the literature, methodology, and objectives of their proposed research. Students may also be asked questions designed to test their breadth or depth of knowledge in their proposed research area as well as their ability to think critically and develop alternative hypotheses. Following successful completion of the proposal defense, the committee members will sign the “Graduate Research Proposal” departmental form (Page 28), indicating that they have reviewed and approved the student’s PhD proposal. This form with the committee members’ signatures will be submitted to the Crop Sciences Graduate Studies office as well as an electronic copy of their proposal. The student is responsible for printing this form and bringing to the exam.
- If the Guidance Committee does not find the proposal or its defense satisfactory, the student must revise or retake that portion deemed unacceptable prior to completing the oral component of the Preliminary Exam.

7. Pass the Preliminary Exam by the end of their fourth semester (sixth semester for direct B.S. to Ph.D. students). The goal of the preliminary exam is to test the student’s breadth of knowledge in their discipline. At the discretion of the faculty advisor and Guidance Committee, the student can defend their research proposal on the date of their oral preliminary examination or as a separate event.

- Students must complete a “Request for Appointment of Doctoral Examination Committee” Students should submit their request through the [Graduate College Student Portal](#). Students should submit their committee appointment request at least three weeks before the date of the intended exam. This is essential so that the committee can be reviewed and approved by all relevant units before the exam. If the committee is not appointed before the day of the exam, it could mean that the exam will need to be rescheduled. The preliminary exam can take place in-person, virtually or in a hybrid format.
- Written component: Students will solicit written questions from each committee member to evaluate their knowledge of the field and specific research competence at least two months in advance of the oral component of the examination. Students should also discuss the general content area with each committee member. Each faculty committee member can set the specific format of their portion of the student’s examination. Based on the format, the student should arrange with each faculty member the exact schedule of when the written examination will take place. The faculty members providing these questions will grade these questions and inform the student and the advisor of the grade at least 48 hours prior to the oral exam. Students are encouraged to request the results from committee members. Students will be required to score 80% or greater on these written questions from each of their committee members in order to pass the written exam. If they do not score 80% or better on the written portion of the exam from any of the faculty committee members, they will be tested and re-evaluated for their knowledge in these areas when given the oral portion of the examination.
- Oral component: The oral portion of the exam will be held within a month after completion of the written exams. The student will consult with their committee to schedule an exam date. In the oral exam the committee members will test the student for general knowledge and their response to the questions on the written examinations. Committee members are encouraged to challenge the student with questions outside of their specific research agenda to gauge their competence and skill at communicating their work and general knowledge in a broader and interdisciplinary context. At the conclusion of the

oral component, the committee will unanimously decide to pass, fail, or defer. If a deferral decision is made then the same committee must reexamine the student within 180 days of the date of the first exam and the outcome of the second exam must be pass or fail.

- Scheduling the Preliminary Exam: Graduate students must notify the Department of Crop Sciences of their scheduled preliminary exam at least two weeks in advance. This notification should include the date, time, and location of the exam, as well as the names of the committee members. Notifications should be sent via email to the Graduate Program Coordinator.
- Reporting the Outcome: Upon completion of the preliminary exam, the committee chair must submit the graded outcome to the department within one week. The outcome should be documented on the official Preliminary Exam Report Form, which must be signed by all committee members. The completed form should be delivered to the Graduate Program Coordinator either in person or via email.

#### 8. Successfully defend and deposit their dissertation.

- The student will contact the Graduate Studies Office at the beginning of the semester when they plan to defend and graduate to review the final degree requirements, depositing process and to schedule their final defense presentation.
- The student will use the Graduate College Self-service portal to add their name to the degree list.
- The student will request the appointment of their Doctoral Final Examination committee. Students should submit their request through the [Graduate College Student Portal](#). Students should submit their committee appointment request at least three weeks before the date of the intended exam. This is essential so that the committee can be reviewed and approved by all relevant units before the exam. If the committee is not appointed before the day of the exam, it could mean that the exam will need to be rescheduled. Doctoral examinations can take place in-person, virtually or in a hybrid format.
- The student will prepare their dissertation in consultation with their advisor and in compliance with Graduate College guidelines. The student will send the dissertation to the Final Exam Committee at least two weeks before the defense.
- The defense comprises a public presentation of the student's research and a closed examination by the student's committee. The student will schedule their final exam in consultation with their committee. The advisor and at least one voting member must be physically present at the exam. Following the completion of the exam, the committee will either pass, pass pending revisions, or fail the student. Once any required revisions are completed, the signed Thesis Dissertation Approval form and one hard-copy of the dissertation should be submitted to the Graduate Studies Office for the Departmental Thesis Review.
- Deposit the dissertation with the Graduate College.

#### 9. Complete exit interview with Graduate Studies Office.

#### **Time Limit**

Ph.D. students who do not complete their degree within six years (seven for direct B.S. to Ph.D.) will be placed on academic probation.

## **Transferring from MS to Ph.D. in Crop Sciences**

Crop Sciences MS students may apply to transfer to the PhD program through two routes.

(1) Prior to completion of the MS degree. Upon acceptance, the student is then considered a direct admit PhD student and must complete all of the corresponding requirements, including the qualifying exam.

(2) Following completion of the MS degree. Upon acceptance, the student is considered a PhD student and is exempt from the qualifying exam.

*Application procedure:* Students wishing to transfer to the PhD program must contact the CPSC graduate program at least two months prior to the desired transfer. Applicants must submit two letters of recommendation from faculty, including one from the student's MS advisor. Applicants are also encouraged to update their original application personal statement. Applications will be reviewed by the Graduate Studies Committee on a rolling basis.

# GRADUATE COLLEGE INFORMATION

## Credit Loads

Full-time credit loads are described below. Enrollment for less than full-time during any semester may decrease the fees assessed by the University, but also decreases the services available to you as a student (i.e. McKinley Health Center, IMPE, etc.), and in some cases, may cause student loan deferments to be canceled. Please also note that for purposes of loan deferral only, zero credit registration in GC 599 will count as full-time registration. For more information about GC 599, please see the Graduate College website <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/>. Graduate students not registered for at least a half-time load in a particular term will be subject to Social Security and Medicare deductions for that term.

Graduate students with assistantship appointments of at least 25% (Fellowships impose different requirements, see below)

Fall and spring terms: 8 or more hours

Summer 2 term: 4 or more hours

Graduate students with fellowships (including those holding a concurrent assistantship) and graduate students with "stand-alone" tuition waivers

Fall and spring terms: 8 or more hours

Summer 2 term: 4 or more hours

NOTE: Fellows are required to maintain a full course load each term of registration unless the Graduate College Fellowship Office has approved a reduced course load. Fellows who are international students must also have a reduced course load approved by the International Student and Scholar Services.

Graduate students with 1%-24% assistantships and graduate students without assistantships

Fall and spring terms: 8 or more hours

Summer 2 term: 4 or more hours

## NOTES for International Students:

For purposes of course load, each required or recommended ESL course taken as a result of the English as a Second Language Placement Test (EPT) will count as the equivalent of 4 hours, even if the course credit is recorded as zero hours.

Fellows and international students whose first term of study is the summer term must carry a full course of study. In addition, students who hold an RA or TA for the summer term, but were not enrolled full-time for the previous spring or will not be enrolled full-time for the following fall, must also register for the summer term. Registration for all other students for the summer term is at the discretion of the research advisor. Students not enrolling for the summer may have their student health insurance coverage extended through the summer months by visiting the Student Insurance Office in Room 480 in the Illini Union Bookstore Building before the extension deadline in June.

## The Graduate Student Petition – (Graduate Student Request)

The Graduate Student Petition is used to request an exception to a Graduate College policy or deadline. These petition instructions, including all supporting documentation required for various requests, are available online at the Graduate College website <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gsas/gradpetition>. The student completes a request using the Graduate College Student Portal, and it is forwarded to the department for approval. If approved at the department level, the petition will be forwarded to the Graduate College for review. The student will be notified of the Graduate College decision directly by email. Common examples of uses of the graduate petition are acceptance of non-degree coursework towards a degree, extension of time to complete a degree, to extend time for an I (Incomplete) or DFR grade, etc. Decisions made at the departmental level may require approval of the Crop Science Graduate Studies Committee.

When filing a Graduate Student Petition, it is important for graduate students to consult with the Graduate Studies Office regarding their request for this exception to policy. Depending on the nature of the request, Graduate Student petitions require different information or supporting documentation. Two basic themes should be included on any statement provided in a Graduate Student petition:

1. **Clearly Identify the Issue**
2. **Provide Justification as to why you (the student) should be allowed an exception to this policy or deadline. This justification may include a timeline of events, medical documentation, supporting statements, or other as applicable**

### Graduate College Policy

**Probation.** The Graduate College requires a minimum overall graduate GPA of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale; however, graduate degree programs can have a higher minimum if approved by the Graduate College. The minimum GPA for **Crop Sciences is 3.0**. Students who have a lower overall graduate GPA at the end of any semester of enrollment will be placed on probation. Once placed on probation, a student will have one semester to improve their standing to Full Standing or will be dismissed from the Graduate College.

**Appeal of Dismissal.** Dismissal from the Graduate College can be appealed by petition. The Graduate College will consider petitions containing strong program support and strong justification based on other factors pertinent to the program's determination of satisfactory academic progress.

**Limited Status Admission.** A student admitted to the Graduate College on limited status due to low undergraduate GPA must meet the degree program's minimum overall graduate GPA at the end of the first semester of registration or be dismissed from the Graduate College.

## Safety and Security

Safety is everyone's business. Be careful in all you do. There is a special hazard if you are working alone. In an extreme emergency, help may be summoned by the fire alarm station. Staff and students injured during the course of work duties are requested to report promptly to either the Carle Occupational Medicine Department or the Christie Occupational Medicine Department, or to the respective emergency rooms when the occupational medicine units are closed. Although workers may see their personal physicians, the University will only pay "usual and customary" charges in these situations. Those who go first to the occupational medicine department at Christie or Carle will have all charges paid (including referrals) for compensable on-the-job injuries. Anyone who receives a work deferral for more than three days that is not issued by either of the occupational medicine departments must schedule a follow-up appointment with one of the two departments as soon as practical. It is the sole responsibility of injured workers to keep their departments and the Claims Management Office located at 100 Trade Center, Suite 103, 333-1080, informed of any work deferrals. Hours of operation for the two occupational medicine departments are:

**Carle Occupational Medicine** [http://www.carle-clinic.com/Occupational Environmental/](http://www.carle-clinic.com/Occupational_Environmental/), Carle Foundation Hospital, 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., weekdays, Telephone: 383-3077

**Christie Occupational Health Service** <http://www.christieclinic.com/department/occupational-health/>, 101 W. University Ave., Champaign, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., weekdays, Telephone: 366-1200. *Adapted from Guide to Graduate Life.*

If a fire or any emergency, call 911. Fire alarm stations are located in main corridors. Learn their location now. If you call the fire department, wait at the main entrance to direct them to the fire. Everyone should evacuate the building when the fire alarm sounds.

Do not leave valuables and easily stolen (portable) items (e.g., cameras, laptop computers, purses) where they are accessible and untended. Report "suspicious" strangers lingering in hallways or labs to the Department main office.

## Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a specific type of insidious and intolerable behavior. This behavior has a specific legal definition, and includes any unwanted sexual gesture, physical contact, or statement which is offensive, humiliating, or an interference with required tasks or career opportunities at this University. Sexual harassment can be overt or covert, physical or nonphysical, spoken or unspoken, and directed at persons of either gender. Whatever the form and wherever the setting, sexual harassment is illegal and will not be condoned by this University. The University has specific regulations and procedures for dealing with sexual harassment. Concerns about sexual harassment should be brought, in confidence, to the department head.

## Mental Health

Mental health issues are very common. The stress of graduate school can increase the likelihood of suffering from issues. There are multiple resources on campus that can assist with problems you may have:

- Mark Layng, LCPC. Embedded ACES counselor. [mLAYNG@illinois.edu](mailto:mLAYNG@illinois.edu)
- The McKinley Counseling Center <http://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>
- Emergency Dean <https://odos.illinois.edu/community-of-care/emergency-dean/>

If someone you know is suffering from a mental health crisis, you are also encouraged to reach out to one of these sources or the Department Head or Director of Graduate Studies.



## **Suggestions for Graduate Students**

The graduate program of study is designed to provide students the opportunity to achieve a high degree of competence in preparation for a professional career. Throughout the program, the student is being evaluated, both formally and informally. Grades attained in formal courses are important, but so is course selection. Typically, the most in-depth evaluation of the student's professional competence is provided by the preliminary and final exams and the thesis presentation. That competence will be reflected not only by a positive outcome to both exams but also in the letters of reference written by the major advisor and committee members.

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

**Professional Development:** <https://grad.illinois.edu/careerdevelopment>

**Teaching Certificate:** <https://citl.illinois.edu/citl-101/teaching-learning/teaching-certificates>

**Graduate College Travel Award:** <https://grad.illinois.edu/general/travelaward>

**Information On Types of Assistantships:** <https://grad.illinois.edu/assistantships>

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON GRIEVANCES**

A policy on grievance procedures for graduate students has been adopted and is listed below. We hope that no situations arise in which a student has a grievance. However, if a need should arise, the procedure stated in the policy statement will apply.

### **Introduction**

All members of the University community are expected to observe high standards of professional conduct and ethical behavior in graduate education and in the supervision of graduate research and teaching (Guiding Standards for Faculty Supervision of Graduate Students, March 31, 1997). In a large and heterogeneous scholarly community, however, problems may arise. Thus, the University articulates its policies and provides effective informal and formal procedures for resolving these problems involving graduate students.

The purpose of this policy is to protect the interests of graduate students in the Department of Crop Sciences by providing informal and formal means of seeking resolution in case of an inappropriate action of a member of the faculty or administrative staff or an inappropriate application of a department policy. Any graduate student in the Department of Crop Sciences may informally pursue or formally file a grievance when s/he believes that a decision or behavior adversely affects his/her status as a graduate student.

This Policy and Procedures on Grievances by Graduate Students in the Department of Crop Sciences specifies the policy and describes the procedures to be employed to resolve grievances by graduate students in this department. It was approved by the Graduate College on May 30, 2000. This policy does not apply in cases of academic misconduct. Breaches of academic integrity in research and publication are handled under the campus's Policy and Procedures on Academic Integrity in Research and Publication. Similarly, this policy does not apply to cases that arise under the Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to All Students ("Code"), such as capricious grading in a course (Section 26) or academic integrity (Section 33). The policies and procedures described in this document do not override or supersede any other policies as established in the University *Statutes* and campus policies.

### **Scope and Coverage**

#### **A. Definition of a Grievance**

A grievance may arise when a graduate student believes that their status as a graduate student, or University appointment based on student status, has been adversely affected by an incorrect or inappropriate decision or behavior. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

1. inappropriate application of a department or University policy;
2. being unfairly assessed on a preliminary examination;
3. being required to engage in excessive effort on assistantships;
4. being improperly terminated from student-based University appointment (teaching or research assistantships, etc.);
5. being improperly terminated from a program;
6. being required to perform personal services unrelated to academic or assistantship duties;

7. being required to meet unreasonable requirements for a graduate degree that extend the normal requirements established by the campus or by the department and are inconsistent with the scholarly standards in the discipline;
8. being the subject of retaliation for exercising their rights under this policy; or
9. being the subject of professional misconduct by a student's graduate supervisor or other faculty or staff member.

Practices or actions by a student's supervisor, other faculty member, or other member of the University community that seriously deviate from ethical or responsible professional standards in the supervision of graduate student work may constitute professional misconduct in violation of University policy.

### **Informal Procedures**

University policy strongly encourages all students who believe they have a grievance to use all appropriate avenues for informal resolution before initiating a formal grievance. Students in Crop Sciences are encouraged to discuss the issue with the faculty or staff member with whom the problem has arisen. If a satisfactory solution is not forthcoming, the student should discuss the issue with their advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies, or the Head of the department, who shall attempt to find a resolution acceptable to both parties. The student may also consult with the Graduate College, the Office of the Dean of Students, the Ombudsman Office, the Office of International Student Affairs, or other sources.

### **Formal Procedures**

#### **A. Identification of the Grievance Committee**

The Graduate Student Policy and Grievance Committee shall serve as the department Grievance Committee. This committee consists of two graduate students and nine faculty members. The committee and its chair are appointed by the Head. The chairperson of this Committee is listed in the department's *Handbook of Policies and Procedures*, available in AW-101 Turner Hall or from the student's advisor. When serving as a grievance committee, the chair is responsible for assuring that a record of the committee's investigations, deliberations, and recommendations is forwarded to the Head.

#### **B. Procedures**

1. A student in the Department of Crop Sciences may file a formal grievance with either the department head or directly with the Graduate College, as the student elects. A formal grievance should be filed promptly and must be filed in writing within 180 calendar days of the decision or behavior resulting in the grievance, regardless of whether the department procedure or Graduate College procedure is used. The written grievance should indicate the parties involved, the action or decision being contested, any applicable university, campus or unit policy, an explanation of why the action or decision is inappropriate, and the remedy sought.

2. The Head shall define the subject matter and scope of the issues related to the grievance in a written charge to the grievance committee. The primary involved parties shall receive a copy of the charge.

3. Any participant to the grievance may challenge any member of the grievance committee if there is a perceived conflict of interest. The challenge should be made in writing to the Head of the department. If the objection is prompt and reasonable, the Head shall replace the person with one who meets the stated criteria. The decision of the Head as to whether the challenge is prompt and reasonable as to the acceptability of the replacement selected may be a basis for appeal of the grievance committee's recommendation.

4. The grievance committee's investigation shall include a review of written materials presented and seeking information from the primary parties in writing or in person.

5. Within 30 calendar days of the filing of the grievance, the chair of the grievance committee shall report its recommendations in writing to the department Head. The Head may grant an extension of the time limit for good cause. The committee's report shall contain:

- a. a summary of the grievant's contentions and relief sought
- b. the response of the individual against whom or department against which the grievance was filed
- c. a general description of the investigative process
- d. a citation of relevant policies
- e. an explicit finding of fact based on the preponderance of the evidence with respect to each grievance included in the investigation panel's charge
- f. a listing of the evidence relevant to each finding
- g. an indication of whether there was a reasonable basis in fact and honest belief for the allegations in the investigated grievance
- h. a recommendation of appropriate redress for the grievant(s) and
- i. any recommended changes in policies and procedures to minimize the probability of recurrence.

6. Within 7 calendar days of receipt of the committee's report, the Head shall determine the disposition of the case and communicate the decision to the primary involved individuals. If the Head determines that the grievance has not been proved or has no merit, the Head will notify all involved parties and all persons who have been interviewed or otherwise informed that the grievance has been dismissed.

If the Head concurs with the committee's conclusion that the grievance has been sustained and has merit, the Head will proceed in accordance with the University statutes and relevant University rules and regulations. The Head may, after consultation with appropriate campus officers, prescribe redress for the grievant. In addition, the Head may initiate modifications of department policies or procedures. The Head shall notify the relevant primary involved individuals (grievant, respondent, grievance committee members) of actions taken.

7. Within 10 calendar days of receipt of written notification of the Head's determination, appeals may be made to the Graduate College as specified in the Graduate College grievance policy. This appeal can be based only upon demonstrated specific deficiencies in the application of this department grievance procedure to the student's grievance.

8. After completion of a grievance review and all ensuing related actions, the Head shall return all original documents and materials to the persons who furnished them. The department shall destroy the grievance file on a date 5 years beyond the grievant's time limit for completion of the degree. A report of the nature of the grievance and the primary involved parties shall be forwarded to the Graduate College.

## **Academic Freedoms and Rights of the Parties**

1. It shall be a prime concern of all persons who implement this policy and these procedures to protect the academic freedoms fundamental to the academic enterprise. Among other things, this includes the professional judgments of student performance that are an essential part of the graduate education process. Academic freedom, however, affords no license for the mistreatment of graduate students.

2. The rights of the primary involved individuals shall be specified in the form of a written notice or letter from the Head. The primary involved individuals have the following rights:

- a) To receive notice of the identity of the members of the grievance committee.
- b) To receive a written statement of the charge, including the subject matter being considered by the grievance committee. If additional information emerges during the committee's evaluation that substantially changes the subject matter, the parties shall be informed promptly in writing.
- c) To submit statements in writing and to meet with the committee to present information.
- d) To consult private legal counsel, or another person who may provide advice at the meeting with the committee. Prior notice of the presence of an advisor must be given and any other primary involved party may request a delay of up to 5 calendar days to arrange for the presence of an advisor.
- e) To review and respond to the grievance committee's final report.

3. Any of the parties responsible for the implementation of this policy may consult University Legal Counsel at any time during the informal or formal processing of a grievance.

### **Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest is a significant professional or personal involvement with the facts or the parties to a dispute. Any participant who has a conflict of interest in a dispute under this procedure, or a concern about a conflict on the part of another, shall report it to the Head who shall take appropriate action. If the Head has such a conflict, the Head will inform the Associate Dean of the Graduate College who will, in consultation with the dean of the academic college, decide how to address the situation.

### **Timeliness and Procedural Changes**

All procedures prescribed in this document should be conducted expeditiously. The Head for good cause may extend any of the time periods and may make other reasonable alterations of these procedures, provided that the alteration does not impair the ability of a grievant to pursue a grievance or the respondent(s) named in the grievance to defend themselves. Any alterations of these procedures must be communicated to all pertinent parties.

### **Withdrawal of a Grievance**

The grievant may submit a written request to withdraw the grievance at any time. The Head shall decide whether to approve the request. A request to withdraw shall be approved only if both parties to the action agree to terminate the proceedings. If the withdrawal request is approved, the Head shall notify the primary involved parties and the files shall be destroyed. If the withdrawal request is denied, the grievance shall continue to be processed to a conclusion according to the above procedures.

### **Termination of University Employment**

The termination of University employment of any of the primary involved individuals in a grievance, by resignation or otherwise, after initiation of procedures under this policy, shall not necessarily terminate these proceedings.

**Malicious Charges**

Bringing unfounded charges in bad faith is a violation of this and the Graduate College grievance policy. If the grievance committee determines that the allegation(s) in the grievance or the testimony of any person was unfounded and motivated by bad faith, that finding shall be communicated by the Head to the Dean of the Graduate College and the dean of the academic college. After consultation with the Provost, the deans may inform the Head of such a finding. Such finding may be the basis for disciplinary action or other personnel decision in accordance with University rules and regulations.

# M.S. GRADUATE STUDENT PLAN FOR COURSEWORK - THESIS OPTION

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_ UIN \_\_\_\_\_

Major Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Research \_\_\_\_\_

**Committee Members:** (Minimum of 3 graduate faculty members required)

1) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Advisor*) 3) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_ 4) \_\_\_\_\_

**THESIS OPTION:**

32 hours total (20 hours of graded coursework + 12 hours thesis research)

20 hours of coursework graded on an A-F scale including at least four (4) hours at 500 level

Course Number – 400 Level	Hours	Course Number – 500 Level	Hours
_____	_____	CPSC 594 Prof. Orientation	1
_____	_____	CPSC 598 Seminar Series	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Crop Sciences 599 thesis research hours (no more than 12 can be used) \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Hours Completed** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Major Advisor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# M.S. GRADUATE STUDENT - NON-THESIS OPTION

## PLAN FOR COURSEWORK

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_ UIN \_\_\_\_\_

Major Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Graduation Date \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Specialization \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members: (Minimum of 3\* graduate faculty members required)

1) \_\_\_\_\_ (Advisor) 3) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_ 4) \_\_\_\_\_

### NON-THESIS OPTION – DEGREE REQUIREMENTS:

32 hours of graded coursework comprised of: twelve (12) hours at 500 level and one (1) hour for professional orientation course.

Course Number – 500 Level	Hours	Course Number – 500 Level	Hours
_____	_____	CPSC 594 – Prof. Orientation	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Course Number - 400/500 Level	Hours	Course Number – 400/500 Level	Hours
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Total Hours Completed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Major Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**BIOINFORMATICS M.S. DEGREE**

**PLAN FOR COURSEWORK\***

\* This plan to be submitted by the advisor during the first year of graduate study and modified as required.

Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_ UIN \_\_\_\_\_

Major Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

Term of Admission \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Date of Degree \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Research \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Members: (Minimum of 3 members of graduate faculty)

\_\_\_\_\_ (advisor) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**COURSE PLAN:**

M.S.--must total 32 hours (28 graded hours for thesis and 4 hours of thesis research)

M.S.--must total 36 hours of graded coursework for non-thesis option

Must include registration in CPSC 598 each term

**1. Graded Coursework at 500 Level (12 hrs.) See reverse side for a listing of courses**

Course Number	Course Number	Hours
<u>Fundamental Bioinformatics</u>	_____	<u>4</u>
<u>Biology</u>	_____	<u>4</u>
<u>Computer Science and Informatics</u>	_____	<u>4</u>

**B. Other Graded Coursework (7 hrs.)**

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**C. Crop Sciences 598 and/or**

\_\_\_\_\_

**D. Crop Sciences 599 (thesis hours) if applicable**

\_\_\_\_\_

Total Hours

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature Date

**APPROVED:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Major Advisor Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Representative Date

# DIRECT ADMIT PH.D. GRADUATE STUDENT PLAN FOR COURSEWORK

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ UIN \_\_\_\_\_

Major Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Research \_\_\_\_\_

**Guidance Committee Members:** (Minimum of 4 members\* of the graduate faculty are required)

1) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Advisor*)      2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_      4) \_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS:**

Doctorate candidates are expected to complete the Qualifying Exam by the end of the third semester, the Preliminary Exam by the end of their sixth semester and their Final Exam by their twelfth semester. (This does not include the summers.)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Expected Date of Preliminary Exam**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Expected Date of Final Exam**

**COURSE PLAN:**

Ph.D.--must total 96 hours (a minimum of 32 hours of coursework graded on an A-F scale + 32 thesis research hours {CPSC 599})

+ 30 hours (other – seminar series/coursework/thesis research hours)

Mandatory Courses: CPSC 594 and CPSC 598

Course Number	Hours	Course Number	Hours
CPSC 594 Professional Orientation	1	CPSC 598 Seminar	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**Crop Sciences Thesis Research Hours** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Hours** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Major Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

# PH.D. GRADUATE STUDENT PLAN FOR COURSEWORK

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ UIN \_\_\_\_\_

Major Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Research \_\_\_\_\_

**Guidance Committee Members:** (Minimum of 4 members\* of the graduate faculty are required)

1) \_\_\_\_\_ (*Advisor*)      2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_      4) \_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS:**

Doctorate candidates are expected to take the Preliminary Exam by the end of their fourth semester and their Final Exam by their seventh semester. (This does not include the summer semesters.)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Expected Date of Preliminary Exam**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Expected Date of Final Exam**

**COURSE PLAN:**

Ph.D.--must total 64 hours (a minimum of 12 hours of coursework graded on an A-F scale + 32 thesis research hours {CPSC 599})

+ 20 hours (other – seminar series/coursework/thesis research hours)

Mandatory Courses: CPSC 594 and CPSC 598

Course Number	Hours	Course Number	Hours
CPSC 594 Professional Orientation	1	CPSC 598 Seminar	
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**Crop Sciences Thesis Research Hours** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Hours** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_ Major Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

DEPARTMENT OF CROP SCIENCES

**PhD Qualifying Exam**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ph.D. literature review entitled (Please attach and return with form to Grad Studies Coordinator):

\_\_\_\_\_

The literature review and associated oral qualifying exam are approved by the Guidance Committee.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

Received by \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Coordinator

on: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

DEPARTMENT OF CROP SCIENCES

GRADUATE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ph.D. research or special project proposal entitled (Please attach and return with form to Grad Studies Coordinator):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This proposal has been reviewed by the Guidance Committee of the student, and will serve to guide the research program of the student.

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Member

Received by \_\_\_\_\_  
Graduate Coordinator

on: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Advanced Studies in Crop Sciences- CPSC 593 Contract

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's UIN: \_\_\_\_\_

Curriculum: \_\_\_\_\_ M.S. \_\_\_\_\_ Ph.D. \_\_\_\_\_

GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ Hours Earned: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester Enrolled in CPSC 593: \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Research Supervisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Research Supervisor's CRN: \_\_\_\_\_

Expected Credit: \_\_\_\_\_

**List all special problems, research or thesis courses previously taken:**

Dept. and Course No.	Semester Taken	Title of Problem	Instructor	Hours	Grade
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please attach a one page description of the research project or special topic including:

- 1) Proposed project summary
- 2) Overview of research topic or special topic
- 3) Summary of research materials and methods or topics to be covered
- 4) Expected final product

**Student's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved by (Instructor's Signature):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved by (Faculty Advisor's Signature):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved by (Authorized Dept. Signature):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Responsibility**

Students must initiate the advanced study experience by discussing their interests and/or potential research opportunities or advanced study topics with individual faculty. They are responsible for making sure they meet the eligibility parameters for the course description they are interested in. Students are responsible for keeping communication lines open and making timely progress on the proposal application and the actual experience. The student should submit periodic progress reports to the faculty supervisor. The student should submit a final report summarizing the research project or special topic prior to a grade being assigned.

**Faculty Member Responsibility**

Guidance given to students should include help in defining a reasonable experience that is commensurate with credit expected. Both the expected experience and associated credit should be made clear to the student prior to enrolling in the class. The faculty member is the mentor for the research experience or special topic.

**PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED FORM TO [tjamann@illinois.edu](mailto:tjamann@illinois.edu)**