Plant and Environmental Sciences
Interdepartmental Graduate Program

Graduate Student Handbook

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http://www.grad.clemson.edu/forms/index.php
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http://www.grad.clemson.edu/deadlines.php
Introduction

This guide has been prepared to assist in orientation of new graduate students into the Plant and Environmental Sciences Graduate Program, and to aid them in obtaining the maximum benefit from their studies. It is intended to clarify Plant and Environmental Sciences policy toward academic performance, assistantship obligations, research plans and records, and general intellectual and professional development.

These guidelines supplement the current edition of the Clemson University Graduate School Announcements at http://www.grad.clemson.edu/. Students should familiarize themselves with the Graduate School regulations. Those sections of the Announcements relating to the Major Advisor, the Advisory Committee, and filing a Graduate Degree Curriculum are particularly relevant during the early stages of a student’s degree program.

Graduate School Policies and Regulations can be found at: http://gradspace.editme.com/Policies.

Graduate School Forms can be found at: http://www.grad.clemson.edu/forms/index.php.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, GRADUATE PHILOSOPHY

An academic environment of integrity is one in which students, faculty and staff interact with each other from a position of mutual trustworthiness. As a member of the consortium of institutions comprising the Center for Academic Integrity, Clemson University has committed itself to preparing a community of scholars dedicated to integrity in teaching, research, scholarship, mentorship and the acquisition and display of professional values of trust, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect.[1] It is an expectation that Clemson graduate students avail themselves of the many opportunities and resources both on and off campus to learn how to engage in professional practice with integrity. The Graduate School and the community of scholars engaged in graduate-level education will vigorously and expeditiously respond to charges of violations of academic integrity.

In order to promote an academic environment of integrity, all students, faculty and staff must commit to fostering honesty in academic work. Each individual has an important role in ensuring that Clemson’s policy on academic integrity is respected and used most effectively as a mechanism for teaching versus a mechanism for punishment. The Graduate School encourages all faculty and students to take a proactive role in eradicating ignorance of violations of academic integrity.

- Faculty must be clear on syllabi and in verbal instructions to students on the academic expectations for completing assignments.

- Graduate programs must engage students in discussions about disciplinary-specific issues and professional practice relative to academic integrity, and may include expectations, procedures and consequences aligned with professional licensing or certification requirements beyond those listed here.

- Faculty might inform students of national cases of academic dishonesty by other faculty and graduate students so as to heighten students’ awareness of the necessary seriousness of making a commitment to honesty in their work and implications of not doing so.
Students must be proactive in asking for clarification on procedures for completing assigned work.

**Recommended Schedule for Completion of Degree Requirements**

1. **One Month Prior to Registration**
   a. Obtain information packet including catalog, guidelines, etc.
   b. Meet or correspond with your advisor and the program coordinator.

2. **Within One Month After Arriving on Campus**
   a. Introduce yourself to faculty members and staff of your home department.
   b. Become acquainted with department operational policies in laboratory, greenhouse or field, vehicle and supplies use. You will find the relevant information in the departments' main office.
   c. Learn about your department. Become acquainted with research projects and faculty in other departments associated with the PES program.

3. **Prior to End of First Semester**
   In consultation with major advisor:
   a. Expand search within college for expertise needed for your research.
   b. Choose area for concentration, if interested. Begin project literature review.
   c. Prepare provisional research outline.
   d. Select Advisory Committee members.

4. **The Second Semester**
   a. Meet with advisory committee members individually, discuss your research program, and receive guidance.
   b. Consider applying for any of the fellowships. As always, consult with your advisor.

5. **Prior to End of Second Semester, MS Graduate students:**
   a. Prepare Preliminary GS2 Form, Graduate Degree Curriculum (see Additional Information), list courses to be taken and schedule advisory committee meeting See website [http://www.grad.clemson.edu/forms/index.php](http://www.grad.clemson.edu/forms/index.php).
   b. Complete literature review; submit your research plan for discussion by advisory committee.

6. **The Second/Third Semester, PHD Graduate Students:**
   a. Prepare Preliminary GS2 Form at the beginning of the second year of the doctoral program
   b. Prepare detailed research proposal by the end of the third semester.
   c. Schedule Advisory Committee Meeting.
   d. Comprehensive Examination should be taken when courses are close to completion. Use GS5 Form, Results of the PhD Comprehensive Exam. See website [http://www.grad.clemson.edu/forms/index.php](http://www.grad.clemson.edu/forms/index.php)
7. Reporting during the course of the graduate program (see Appendix I)
   a. Keep major professor informed on progress of your research. This is a mark of
      a good graduate student.
   b. Schedule meeting with advisory committee at least once a year.
   c. Prepare a one-page summary after each meeting with advisory committee.
      The summary needs to be accepted and signed by your advisor and place in
      your file.
   d. Provide bibliography of your presentations, abstracts, seminars, and
      publications to the PES Graduate Program Coordinator.
   e. Prepare and present Introductory Seminar (one of the two seminars required)

8. At beginning of Final Semester Prior to Graduation
   a. File GS-4 Form, Application for Graduation and Diploma Order (see Additional
      Information) should be submitted online.
      See website (http://www.grad.clemson.edu/forms/index.php)
   b. Submit progress report for discussion by advisory committee.

9. During the Final Semester
   a. Provide advisory committee members with final draft of thesis or dissertation at
      least fourteen days prior to final examination.
   b. Arrange date of final seminar fourteen days in advance. Prepare final seminar
      abstract for distribution.
   c. Arrange date of defense.
      MS Students: Use GS7M Form, Final Exam and Thesis Approval Form
      PHD Students: Use GS7D Form, Dissertation Defense and Approval Form
   d. Submit thesis or dissertation to Graduate School as required.
   f. Submit a bound copy of thesis or dissertation to department chair.

10. Provide Evaluation of Graduate Experience
    a. Share with your advisor, department head, and program coordinators any
       comments that could contribute to improvement of our program.
    b. Complete the PES Program Questionnaire (see Appendix II).

11. Keep in touch after graduation and provide contact information.
Academic Areas and Requirements

Introduction

The Plant and Environmental Sciences Program offers areas of study leading to two graduate degrees: Master of Science (MS) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Students with baccalaureate degrees in agronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, horticulture, physics, plant science, soils, or other appropriate disciplines may pursue graduate studies in PES.

The PhD and MS (thesis option) are research degrees that require a dissertation or thesis, respectively. The MS (Non-thesis option) is a terminal degree and it may be suited for students who will pursue a career in business, education, or administrative areas that will not require substantial research experience. See website [http://www.grad.clemson.edu/programs/DegreeRequirements.php].

Areas of specialization are normally allied with those of the major professor. For example, in the crop and horticulture sciences these include plant breeding and genetics; forage systems; physiology, ecology; production and management; cellular biology, molecular genetics and biotechnology, and weed science. The soil sciences include chemistry, physics, microbiology and biochemistry, fertility and plant nutrition, and pedology. The study program will be determined by the student, the advisor and the advisory committee. The goal of the PES program is to strengthen the student’s academic background without neglecting the need for a broad understanding of applied sciences.

University-wide rules are followed regarding the selection of an advisory committee and course requirements. Some details are given here, but the student is referred to the latest edition of the Clemson University Graduate School website [http://www.grad.clemson.edu/], [http://www.grad.clemson.edu/programs/collegeofagriculture/catalogGrad.htm], and at [http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/html/catalogGrad.htm].

Academic Deficiency Correction

Students may be required to correct deficiencies in supporting basic sciences as well as deficiencies associated with sciences related to their specific projects. The advisory committee and the student will decide whether undergraduate deficiencies are to be corrected by auditing or by enrolling in the supplemental courses.

Total Credits and Course Requirements

See Graduate School catalog under College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences [http://www.registrar.clemson.edu/html/catalogGrad.htm] for credit requirements. For MS students at least one-half of the student’s graduate course program as listed on the GS-2 form must be at the 800 level; one-half may be at the 600 level. Only the MS Non-thesis program may include 700 level courses, if offered.
Note: Clemson University Graduate School Announcements:

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY/EDUCATION DEGREE, COURSEWORK, LENGTH (INTERIM POLICY)**

The advisory committee aids the student in developing a degree curriculum which includes the selection of specific courses and their sequence. At Clemson University, a minimum of 30 credits past the masters and 60 credits past the bachelors degree are required for the doctoral degree. A minimum of 18 hours of doctoral research is required. Should the direction of study or research interest change, the student may request the appointment of a new advisor. Coursework leading to the Doctor of Philosophy/Education degree is planned to give the student a comprehensive knowledge of his/her field of specialization and a mastery of the methods of research. The degree is not awarded solely on the basis of coursework completed, residence, or other routine requirements. The final basis of granting the degree is the student's grasp of the subject matter of a broad field of study, competence in planning and conducting research, and ability to express him/herself adequately and professionally orally and in writing.

**MASTER'S DEGREE, CREDITS REQUIRED**

**Master of Arts or Master of Science, thesis option.** Each program includes a minimum of 24 hours of graduate credit and six hours of master's thesis research (891). At least one-half of the total graduate credit hours required by the advisory committee, exclusive of thesis research, must be selected from courses numbered 800 or above.

**Master of Arts or Master of Science, nonthesis option.** Each program includes a minimum of 30 hours of graduate credit, none of which may be master's thesis research. At least one-half of the total graduate credit hours required by the advisory committee must be selected from courses numbered 800 or above.

There are no foreign language requirements for graduate degrees. However, students are encouraged to acquire foreign language skills.

Minimum credit load for graduate students is nine credits/semester for those in a doctoral program or a thesis option master's program. The minimum load for non-thesis master’s program candidates is nine credits. The minimum enrollment for summer is three credits/session for all candidates.

**Minor**

The student and his/her advisory committee will decide whether declaration of a minor study area in another program is appropriate. If the minor is elected, a minimum of 6 semester hours is required for the MS and 12 for the PhD program. At least one committee member should be selected from the minor department.
Seminar Requirement

Graduate students are required to enroll in two semesters of a seminar course. Students may sign up for PES 825, or, with the help of their advisors, choose another departmental seminar course that fits their program and schedule needs. Many departments offer seminar courses for credit. Some departmental seminars may only be offered one semester each year. Some departments may have additional requirements other than simple enrollment in the class.

In addition, all graduate students are required to present two seminars during the progress of their degree program. Students will present their research in an accurate and interesting manner to an audience of their peers. Students may use their exit seminar to fulfill one half of this requirement. Students are encouraged to take every opportunity to present seminars in a public forum for their own professional development.

Special Problems Courses

Special problems courses in disciplines related to the PES program are intended to acquaint students with techniques other than those needed immediately for his/her thesis or dissertation research. These courses can expose students to new research avenues and broaden their knowledge.

Teaching

Teaching experience for all MS and PhD students (awarded research assistantship) is strongly encouraged. This experience can generally be satisfied by one semester of participating in formal class instruction. Graduate students should show initiative in helping new graduate students and undergraduate students in their research. The teaching experience can be conducted under the supervision of the advisor. Doctoral candidates may be asked to conduct a lecture or lecture series under similar supervision. The teaching experience provides valuable training in communication and could be the only teaching experience obtained before embarking upon a career. Please see SAFES GTA Guidelines ( Appendix IIa).
Role of Faculty

The Advisor

A sound and confident relationship between student and advisor is essential for a successful graduate experience. The advisor has numerous obligations to the student. He/she will assist with arranging course programs, orientation in the department, selecting a research problem, acquiring materials for conducting research, completing administrative forms, and selecting additional committee members. It is a duty of the advisor to assist the student in forming good habits of keeping records, organizing time, and evaluating the efficiency of procedures. The advisor must be accessible, provide leadership and encouragement, and be willing to discuss personal problems with which the student has not been able to cope alone.

The Advisory Committee

A minimum of three faculty members shall be selected for a student seeking a master's degree. A minimum of four faculty members shall be selected for a student seeking a doctoral degree. The majority of the advisory committee, including the major advisor, must be comprised of Clemson University faculty from the department offering the particular degree and who hold full-time positions carrying eligibility for tenure. Persons not employed by the University may serve if they have been appointed to an adjunct faculty status. We encourage composition of the committee be diverse and at least one faculty should be from outside the department.

Also [http://gradspace.editme.com/AcademicRegulationsA thruD#committeecomp](http://gradspace.editme.com/AcademicRegulationsA thruD#committeecomp)

“Emeriti faculty may serve as advisory committee members but may not serve as chair of the advisory committee.”

“Part-time visiting and other nontenure-track faculty employed by Clemson University may serve on the advisory committee but may not serve as chair. Persons not employed by the University may serve on the advisory committee; if they serve as one of the statutory members of the committee, they must be appointed to adjunct faculty status. All duly appointed committee members have full voting status on the outcomes of all examinations given by the committee. It is possible for co-chairs to direct the activities of the advisory committee. This special arrangement must be made with the consent of the dean of the Graduate School.”

The advisory committee approves the student's graduate degree curriculum, supervises the graduate program, administers comprehensive examinations, administers the final doctoral oral examination, and initiates the recommendation for awarding of the degree.

The committee is selected by the student and advisor and approved by the Department Chair or Program Coordinator. Concurrent with the submission of the graduate degree curriculum, the Department Chair or Program Coordinator will forward recommendations to the Dean of the college, who will, if he/she approves, then transmit the recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School.

It is recommended that the Preliminary GS2 Form be submitted to the Graduate School during the second semester of graduate study (see page 3-5). A full committee meeting
for discussion of the course of study should be held before completion of the GS2 Form (the first meeting).

A preliminary outline of the student’s research proposal should be presented at the first meeting, with a brief written copy provided for each committee member. A detailed proposal should be prepared by the end of the second semester (MS students) or by the end of the third semester (PhD students). The student should feel free to confer with any committee member when assistance is needed.

The student is responsible for timely completion of work and submission of required forms. A Progress Check List is given in Appendix I.

Changes in committee membership and the academic program must be approved by the major advisor, department head or the program coordinator, and the Graduate School. A final GS-2 Form must be submitted to Enrolled Student Services at the beginning of your final semester (see Deadlines at http://www.grad.clemson.edu/deadlines.php for exact date due).

Research Program

Graduate Student’s Obligations

The MS (thesis option) and PhD degrees indicate that a recipient has the ability to recognize problem areas in need of investigation and to design experiments leading to new information in these areas. The PES program, therefore, considers research to be extremely important in fulfilling the degree requirements. Please see Research Assistantship Contract (Appendix III)

Sufficient attention can seldom be given to both research and courses in a 40-hour week. Students are given keys to the necessary laboratories so that they may invest the time required to obtain credible and publishable results. The amount of time devoted to research may bear little relationship to the number of credit hours obtained in PES 891 or PES 991.

Choice of a research project is determined through in-depth discussions between the student and the advisor. Restrictions may be imposed by the source of the major professor’s funding, i.e., grants that include stipends for graduate assistants and other funds given in support of specific research areas. More latitude in the choice of problems will be allowed the PhD student and more independent initiative will be expected from him/her.

Accurate and orderly laboratory, greenhouse, or field operations are critical components of valid research. Students should become familiar with bio-safety rules and sign the appropriate forms associated with laboratory practices. Equipment should be cleaned and returned to its proper location immediately after use. Malfunctions should be reported and corrected immediately. Students are responsible for or should be involved in laboratory upkeep because technical and janitorial services are limited.
Records of experimental methods and results are essential to good research. Each student should keep accurate records of experiments, data, and analyses. The records should be organized in a form readily available for inspection by the advisor and be available to the advisory committee during meetings. Appropriate photographic records should be assembled as work progresses. Records should be duplicated regularly, with copies kept in separate locations in case of loss. A student should leave documentation, including electronic files with the advisor upon departure.

**Graduate Assistantships**

Most of the graduate assistants in PES are awarded quarter-time or half-time research assistantships (see Appendix III). In some cases, three-quarter time assistantships are available. Graduate assistants contribute to research or service to the department, and are enrolled for a minimum of 9 credit hours per semester. Summer session requirements for all students are satisfied by enrollment in three credits of research (PES 891 or PES 991) each session. All graduate research assistants are expected to enroll each Fall, Spring and in both Summer sessions.

The average times required for one-half and one-quarter time assistants to complete the MS and PhD degree requirements are two or three and four or five years, respectively. Specificity of research and the student’s performance will correlate with the period required for completion of the program. Field research problems may justify a time extension. Although exceptional students may complete the requirements sooner, it is not uncommon to take longer than indicated above.

**Preparation of Thesis or Dissertation**

The following website outlines the electronic manuscript submission process that you will go through prior to graduation [http://www.grad.clemson.edu/assets/pdf/theguide01.pdf].

As sections of the document are completed, they should be reviewed by the advisor, who will assist the student in organizing the material, developing scientific style and discuss the proposed interpretation and conclusions. The student is expected to summarize how his/her research impacts the future direction of the research program.

The advisor should approve a draft of the thesis or dissertation before it is reviewed by other members of the committee. Reviewers are obligated to return the document promptly. The final draft should be given to the advisory committee members a minimum of two weeks prior to the final examination.

If disagreements concerning the thesis or dissertation arise between the student and a committee member, the argument will be arbitrated in the presence of the advisor and Department Chair.
Publications

Graduate students are expected to prepare their research results for publication in a timely manner prior to graduation. Publications are important to the student, to the department and to the faculty involved in the graduate program. Publications that appear in the technical journals requiring peer review are documentation of research accomplishments, and serve as an important criterion for continued commitment of funds by those who have supported the research. List of the publications, presentations and other scholarly achievements must be submitted to the department before graduation.

Generally, if a student has not presented a manuscript in draft form by the end of the first semester following graduation, the advisor may proceed to prepare a publication and the graduate student can be assigned junior authorship.

Examinations

Candidates for graduate degrees are given examinations by their advisory committees at prescribed stages in the students’ programs. The advisor coordinates the examination. Candidates for the master’s degrees are given a final oral examination at the conclusion of their thesis preparation. Doctoral candidates are given a comprehensive examination near the end of their formal course work and a final oral examination (dissertation defense). All examinations are open to all faculty members. The student will usually be notified of the results immediately after conclusion of the examination.

MS Students:

Examination questions may cover the basic sciences as well as subject matter from courses taken for the degree. The purposes of the final examination include: testing the student’s comprehension of course work, ability to apply knowledge gained from courses, and general knowledge.

The MS (thesis option) candidate will defend his/her thesis at the time of the final oral examination. Written examinations may be given under unusual circumstances such as inability of a committee member to attend the examination.

PhD Students:

Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive written and oral examinations will be administered when most course work has been completed. The committee meets with the student and sets the rules for the examination. The examination must be no less than six months and no more than five years before the degree is awarded. The written portion will precede the oral examination. Written examinations should be evaluated and returned to the student with appropriate comments before the oral examination. The oral examination will often include questions covering areas where weakness was demonstrated on the written examination. Please consider that the oral examination might last three or more hours.
From http://gradspace.editme.com/AcademicRegulationsAthruD#committeeecomp

“A doctoral (Ph.D., Ed.D.,) student becomes a candidate for the doctorate (or is "admitted to candidacy") upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination for the degree and submission to the Office of Enrolled Student Services Form GS5-D, Doctoral Candidacy. Once admitted to candidacy, the student has five years to complete all requirements for the doctorate degree.”

At the conclusion of the examination, the committee will decide whether the re-examination should be required, or whether the student should be dismissed from school. If the student does not pass oral examination, at least one semester must elapse before re-examination or as recommended by Advisory Committee members.

Final Examination

The final examination for the PhD candidates is primarily a defense of the dissertation although questions may be used to determine improvement in academic areas in which weaknesses have been displayed. The candidate will be judged on the clarity and confidence with which the research is presented as well as the interpretations and conclusions reached in the dissertation.

Additional Policies and Suggestions

Bio-safety and Policies on Equipment and Supplies

Department policies on laboratory practices, the use of vehicles and machinery, and procedures to follow in submission of travel expenses will be explained by the advisor or by the appropriate administrative officer. Instructions to follow in case of injury are kept in individual laboratories and in the main office. The student should become acquainted with these procedures soon after arrival at the University. The student should become acquainted with bio-safety and hazardous materials regulations and sign the required Institutional Biosafety Committee forms.

Office supplies and equipment such as paper, notebooks, pencils, and copying facilities are provided for research and teaching activities. These are not for personal use.

Most offices and laboratories in the department are equipped with telephones. Students should consult with their advisor concerning the long distance telephone and fax policy. Except in cases of emergency, office telephones are for official use only.

Office space will be assigned by the home department’s administrative assistant in consultation with the student’s advisor.

Vacation Policy

Neither the Graduate School, the PES Program, nor the department provides specific regulations for graduate student vacations. The need for an occasional break is acknowledged; however, it should be planned by informal agreement with the advisor.
Before leaving campus, the student should arrange for care of research materials and performance of official duties. Record books, desk, and laboratory areas should be left in order. Communication of the student with the advisor is critical.

Recreation and Cultural Activities

Students are encouraged to enroll in broadening courses in the humanities and social sciences. Excellent athletic facilities are available at little or no cost.

Enhancing Professional Development

Service to Department

Participation in the departmental functions, including open meetings, faculty seminars, and search committees is highly recommended.

Professional Meetings

Participation in professional meetings at state, regional, and national levels is strongly encouraged. Students may be required to present their research results at a local meeting, and are encouraged to present them at a regional or national meeting as part of the search for a suitable job and as a start toward incorporation into the scientific community.

Because funds are limited, departmental support cannot be provided consistently for student attendance at meetings, especially at distant locations. Advantage should be taken of meetings that are scheduled nearby and of available space in official vehicles. Efforts will be made to assist with funding for at least one major meeting during the student’s tenure. In some instances, the advisor will lead the student to seek travel funds from external sources.

Professional Organizations

Students should affiliate with appropriate professional societies, e.g. American Association of Plant Biologists, American Society of Agronomy, American Society for Horticultural Science, Botanical Society of America, American Genetics Association, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America, or the International Turfgrass Society. Student memberships, at a greatly reduced rate, include subscription to the society journal, participation in national and local activities, and use of the placement services. Professional certification can be pursued through professional agricultural and horticultural societies. Students are encouraged to do so.
Graduate Student Association

Students are encouraged to participate in the Graduate Student Association. An organizational meeting is held each year to elect a departmental representative to the Steering Committee of the Graduate Student Association. Other meetings are held throughout the year. Interaction with fellow students is a necessary component of graduate student training.

Recognitions

Election to honor societies signifies research excellence and scholarship. Superior scholars are frequently awarded fellowships. These recognitions aid in documenting the student’s success in his chosen field of study. The major advisor should inform the deserving student of opportunities.
# Appendix I

## CHECK LIST/ PROGRESS REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Planned Date</th>
<th>Accomplished Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>First enrolled in MS/PhD/Non-degree Program</td>
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<td>Course Plan (Form GS-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal Draft 1</td>
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<td>Draft 2</td>
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<td>Advisory Committee Meeting and Report</td>
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<td>Teaching Experience</td>
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<td>Research Publications</td>
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<td>Seminar I</td>
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<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Exam (PhD students only)</td>
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<td>Draft of Thesis/Dissertation to Advisor</td>
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<td>Seminar II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft of Thesis/Dissertation To Advisory Committee Members</td>
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<td>Final Examination (Form GS-7)</td>
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<td>Electronic submission of signed thesis/dissertation to Graduate School</td>
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<td>Submission of the bound copy of thesis/dissertation to department office</td>
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<td>Exit interview with Department Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>List of publications, presentations, and other scholarly contributions submitted to the department</td>
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<td>Graduation</td>
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<td>Submission of PES Questionnaire (Email or send to PES Coordinator)</td>
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Appendix Ila

General Guidelines for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) in the School of Agricultural, Forest, and Environmental Sciences (SAFES)

Thank you for agreeing to help teach and mentor students in SAFES courses at Clemson.

**Responsibilities** – Faculty are responsible for setting the objectives/goals of the course; its policies, procedures, material and pace and you are a bridge between faculty member and student. Besides the general guidelines below, the faculty member responsible for the course will determine any specific responsibilities. These will be shared with you in writing and both you and the faculty member will sign an agreement form, which will be kept in your file.

In general, the following apply:

- You will be responsible for helping organize, teach, setup, and dismantle the weekly labs. You will also be asked to prepare, grade, record grades for quizzes, exams and assignments.
- The first thing you need to do is get a copy of the syllabus and look at the goals, objectives, grading procedures and schedule of events.
- Make sure that you know early in the semester what will be expected of you on a weekly and long-term basis.
- If an unavoidable personal (e.g., illness, family emergency) or professional (e.g., presentation at a meeting) conflict arises, let the instructor know as soon as possible; your own class activities or other personal events are not acceptable excuses for missing a class or lab you’ve been assigned to or for avoiding other TA responsibilities.
- If you are particularly interested in a specific topic or want additional experience ask if you can be responsible for that lab or lecture exercise.
- Ask to be included in the instructor section of the Blackboard course setup so that you receive all correspondence to the students about the course and can also access the gradebook and email distribution list.

**Time Commitments** – Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) on a SAFES assistantship are expected to spend up to an average of 10 hours per week per lab helping with department courses. Some of these hours will be fixed – times when lectures and labs meet; and others more flexible (making up, copying and/or correcting quizzes or exams). Some weeks will have less rigorous time commitments than others.

- Review the course syllabus and look for conflicts with your research and class schedules. Let the instructor know as soon as possible about these potential conflicts.
- Ask if you will be expected to have set office hours or use email to respond to student questions and concerns. This should be conveyed to all students in the class.

**Conflict Resolution** – In teaching situations, there is always potential for disagreements.

- In the case of conflict with a student, it should be immediately brought to the attention of the faculty member in charge of the course.
- Conflicts with the course instructor should first be addressed with that instructor and, failing resolution, taken to the Graduate Program Coordinator; unresolved issues will involve the School Director.
- Don’t let situations fester. You also have access to the college dean’s office and student ombudsperson if the issue cannot be resolved locally; however, these are secondary avenues in the event that others fail.

**Privacy, Friends and Amorous Relationships** –

- The Family Education Rights and Privacy (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. section 1232g) ([http://www.clemson.edu/privacypolicy.html](http://www.clemson.edu/privacypolicy.html)) applies to public and private institutions. It provides
students with certain rights with respect to their educational records. This affects how we post/distribute grades and corrected quizzes and exams.

- As an instructor in the course, you and the faculty member may discuss grades and other student issues. It is essential for you to maintain confidentiality and professionalism toward everyone in the class.

- Personal relationships with students in your class:
  - [Website](http://www.clemson.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-handbook/universitypolicies/amorous-relationships.html)
  - When relationships go beyond friendship, especially in the classroom or workplace, they have the potential to morph into something damaging to all concerned.
  - A teacher, instructor, or GTA is perceived as having power or authority over students. Clemson University’s brochure, “Sexual Harassment What You Need to Know,” specifically includes graduate students (GTA, GRA, etc) in the policy.
  - Even if both parties agree (now) to a relationship, it may become problematic later if the relationship doesn’t work out. In addition, others observing the relationship may be uncomfortable and have the right to file a complaint. It’s best by far to avoid this situation.

**Students with Disabilities** – Some of our students will present the instructor with a confidential letter from Clemson’s Student Disabilities Services Center (Redfern Health Center). This letter may list specific criteria that we should incorporate into our teaching or assessment for this student. These accommodations are required under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. We will try to work with each of these students to provide an environment conducive to teaching and assessment. If these accommodations become problematic, discuss them with the faculty member in charge of the course.

**Academic Integrity (Dishonesty, cheating)**

- [Website](http://www.clemson.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.html)
- If you believe that a student has violated Clemson’s Academic Integrity Policy (cheating, plagiarism, giving unauthorized aid to another) you should immediately bring the allegation to the attention of the faculty in charge of the course.
- The faculty member will discuss with you the evidence and situation to determine whether a formal written charge of academic dishonesty should be filed.
- It is the responsibility of the faculty member to decide the course of action and follow-through (resolution) to any alleged incident of academic dishonesty.

**Safety and Emergencies** – In SAFES, some work with animals, equipment, and situations that can be hazardous. We need to make sure that we look out for the welfare and safety of ourselves and our students.

- All GTAs should have completed any training required by Clemson’s compliance committees with respect to animals, hazardous material, or recombinant DNA use (ask the faculty member in charge of the course what training is required or appropriate).
- In the event of a medical or other emergency – Immediately call 9-1-1. In a medical emergency clear the area and keep the patient calm and quiet. Send someone to help direct the EMTs to the lab. Also notify the CU police: 656-2222.
- Do not administer first aid unless you have been certified to perform these functions. In the event of a fire: activate the fire alarm system, clear the lab / building and call 9-1-1.

**Final words** – The concepts of professionalism, respect, patience, common sense and knowledge are intimately intertwined and integral in the teaching process. You will need a healthy dose of all of these attributes this semester. We hope that you have an enjoyable and rewarding teaching experience.
Appendix Ilb  

Graduate Student Graders – SAFES 
Guidelines

Thank you for agreeing to serve as the grader for a SAFES course. The assignment was made on the basis of class size and number of sections. The individual faculty member you’re assigned to assist will give you specific instructions about how he/she wants grading to be done. The following are some general guidelines in addition to more specifics from the faculty member:

- The first thing you need to do is meet with the faculty member and get a copy of the syllabus; look at the goals, objectives, grading procedures and schedule of events.
- You will likely be expected to attend all class meetings and to help proctor exams.
- If you have a conflict on any particular day, let the instructor know as soon as possible; unavoidable personal (illness, family emergency) or professional (presentation at a meeting) are acceptable excuses but other personal events are not.
- Make sure that you know early in the semester what will be expected of you with regard to timeliness of grading, etc.
- Ask to be included in the instructor section of the Blackboard course setup so that you receive all correspondence to the students about the course and can also access the grade book and email distribution list.

Conflict Resolution – In teaching situations, there is always potential for disagreements.
- In the case of conflict with a student, it should be immediately brought to the attention of the faculty member in charge of the course.
- Conflicts with the course instructor should first be addressed with that instructor and, failing resolution, taken to the Graduate Program Coordinator; unresolved issues will involve the School Director.
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  - As an instructor in the course, you and the faculty member may discuss grades and other student issues. It is essential for you to maintain confidentiality and professionalism toward everyone in the class.

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  - When relationships go beyond friendship, especially in the classroom or workplace, they have the potential to morph into something damaging to all concerned.
  - A teacher, instructor, or GTA, is perceived as having power or authority over students. Clemson University’s brochure, “Sexual Harassment What You Need to Know,” specifically includes graduate students (GTA, GRA, etc) in the policy.
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- Do not administer first aid unless you have been certified to perform these functions. In the event of a fire: activate the fire alarm system, clear the lab / building and call 9-1-1.

**Final words** – The concepts of professionalism, respect, patience, common sense and knowledge are intimately intertwined and integral in the teaching process. You will need a healthy dose of all of these attributes this semester. We hope that you have an enjoyable and rewarding teaching experience.
Appendix III

Graduate Research Assistantship Contract

This will be generated by the HR Administrative Assistant for the School. It must be signed by Advisor and School Director before it is sent to the student to sign. Signed form and personnel paperwork will need to be filled out as soon as possible in order to be able to start on contracted date.

CLEMSON UNIVERSITY GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP CONTRACT
NOTE: This is a generic guideline; wording may be different as needed.

Date: ____________________________

Name of recipient: ____________________________

Type of assistantship: ____________________________

Sponsoring unit: ____________________________

Supervisor: ____________________________

Stipend amount: ____________________________

Appointment dates: From ______________ to ______________**

Hours per week: This appointment will require that you provide 30, 20 or 10 hours per week (or whatever number of hours you assign; minimum number of hours is 10 and maximum number of hours is 30. (International students are restricted by law to a maximum of 20 hours per week per semester.)

Duties: Be as specific as possible in describing the nature of the work that the student will be required to perform. Identify again the type of award (teaching, research, laboratory, grader, etc.)

Loss of research funding: In the unlikely event unforeseen loss of research funding occurs, the assistantship is not committed beyond the University’s availability of funds.

Renewal criteria: Contingent upon availability of funds, this offer of financial assistance will be reviewed at the end of each semester/term and may be renewed based on satisfactory performance in your academic program as well as in your assistantship responsibilities.

Other requirements:

Mandatory Health Insurance: All graduate students are required to maintain health insurance while enrolled at Clemson. The fee for 2011-2012 is $1433.00, which includes a $750.00 subsidy from the University.

English language ability: Graduate Teaching Assistants must demonstrate English language ability.

Full-time enrollment: In order to maintain a graduate assistantship, a student must maintain full-time enrollment: minimally 9 credit hours during the academic semesters and 3 credit hours during each summer term.

*International Student Arrival: International students on assistantship without a U.S. Social Security Card/Number must arrive on campus, register for classes and report to the International Services Office (E-301 Martin Hall) a minimum of 20 days prior to the University’s official “late enrollment” period (for Fall 2012, late enrollment begins August 20; for Spring 2013, late enrollment begins January 7).
Commitment to Clemson University: Clemson University is a member of the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and subscribes to the resolution below regarding fellowships, assistantships and traineeships. (A copy of the CGS resolution accompanies this offer.)

Students are under no obligation to respond to offers of financial support prior to April 15; earlier deadlines for acceptance of such offers violate the intent of this Resolution. In those instances in which a student accepts an offer before April 15, and subsequently desires to withdraw that acceptance, the student may submit in writing a resignation of the appointment at any time through April 15. However, an acceptance given or left in force after April 15 commits the student not to accept another offer without first obtaining a written release from the institution to which a commitment has been made. Similarly, an offer by an institution after April 15 is conditional on presentation by the students of the written release from any previously accepted offer. (CGS)

Signatures:

Department Chair: ___________________________ Date: ______

Department: _________________________________

I hereby ___accept or ____decline this offer of financial assistance from Clemson University.

Student’s signature: __________________________ Date: ______

PLEASE RETURN A COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT TO:

Name: ______________________________________

Mailing address: ____________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Fax: ________________ E-mail: _____________________________

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# Appendix IV

## GRADUATE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The questions below relate to your experience as a graduate student in the Plant and Environmental Science Program at Clemson University. Your responses will be helpful in making future improvements to the program. Please be assured that this questionnaire is confidential.

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

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<th>disagree</th>
<th>agree</th>
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### Coursework and Faculty

1. The courses in my major were rigorous.  
2. The courses in my major provided me with a strong academic foundation in my own research area.  
3. The courses in my major gave me a broad background in plant science.  
4. Faculty expectations for my classroom performance were fair.  
5. Faculty were knowledgeable in their fields.  
6. Faculty were concerned with providing a good education.  
7. (for PhD students) The expectations for the comprehensive examination were clearly communicated.  
8. (for PhD students) The comprehensive examination was a fair assessment of my knowledge.

### Advising relationships

9. I had an effective relationship with my graduate advisor.  
10. My advisor provided me with clear guidance and expectations for my performance in graduate school.  
11. My advisor provided me with regular, constructive feedback on my progress.  
12. My advisor gave me sufficient opportunities to present my work to groups outside Clemson University.  
13. My advisor helped me to find a position/post-doc/job during the final stages of my degree program.  
14. I had access to all the resources (equipment, library materials, reagents, computers, software, etc.) necessary to support my research project.
Professional development

15. I made significant improvements to my presentation ability during my graduate program. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I made significant improvements to my writing skills during my graduate program. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I was trained effectively in the most current techniques and theories of my research discipline. 1 2 3 4 5
18. I have made useful contacts with other researchers and workers in my field outside Clemson University. 1 2 3 4 5
19. I am well-prepared professionally and academically for my next position. 1 2 3 4 5
20. If given the opportunity, I would have liked to have been more involved in teaching a lecture or lab course. YES NO

Comments:

21. I have a job or further training opportunity in my field that will begin after graduation. YES NO
   If yes, please describe:

   If no, please describe the type of position you will be looking for:

Interaction with students and faculty

22. I have had opportunities to interact with other PES students and faculty in a social context. 1 2 3 4 5
23. I have had opportunities to interact with other PES students and faculty in a professional context through seminars, journal clubs, etc. 1 2 3 4 5
24. I would have liked to have more opportunities to interact with other students and faculty. 1 2 3 4 5
   If so, please describe:
Please provide specific comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the PES program in each of the following areas. What is being done well, and what can be improved?

Coursework and faculty

Advising

Professional preparation

Other