![University of Wisconsin-Madison logo]

Forestry MS, PhD & Doctoral Minor

Program Handbook

2025-2026

Forest and Wildlife Ecology

Reference this handbook to learn about the unique policies, requirements, procedures, resources, and norms for graduate students in the MS, PhD, and Doctoral Minor programs.

Last updated: Summer 2025

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Navigating Policy and Resources at UW-Madison

This handbook is one of many sources to consult as you become familiar with the policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms of graduate education at UW-Madison:

Program Handbook

On your program's website or Guide page

Detailed reference for your program's unique requirements, policies, procedures, resources, and norms.

May refer you to other sources for policy detail.

Graduate Guide

guide.wisc.edu/graduate

Master catalog of all graduate programs on campus & the official source for your program's policies and requirements.

May reference other sources of policy.

Graduate Student Life

gradlife.wisc.edu

Info about life as a Badger graduate student in Madison that will support your overall well-being.

AP&P

grad.wisc.edu/ academic-policies

The Graduate School's "Academic Policies & Procedures" that defines key components of graduate education on our campus.

Policy Library

policy.library.wisc

Database of university-wide policies.

Not sure where to start?

Find resources curated for prospective and current students, as well as faculty & staff, at:

grad.wisc.edu

How to Use This Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to consolidate useful program and institutional information into one place. Graduate students should utilize this handbook to better understand program requirements, expectations, policies, and procedures. Other campus and program resources are also detailed.

Who to Contact for Questions

Many of your questions about how to meet expectations and thrive as a graduate student will be answered by the various sources of policies, procedures, requirements, resources, and norms listed above. Several key positions in this department and on campus are ready to answer your remaining questions:

Graduate Program Manager
Each graduate program will have at least one department staff person typically called a Graduate Program Manager who serves as a point person for program policy and procedures. Graduate Program Managers are well versed in most elements of graduate education that extend beyond academic instruction in your program and will likely be your first stop for questions related to anything in this handbook.

Director of Graduate Studies
Each graduate program has one faculty member designated to direct its educational vision and structure.

Names and contact information of your Graduate Program Coordinator and Director of Graduate Studies can be found on your program's page in the *Graduate Guide* (guide.wisc.edu/graduate). Simply navigate to the "Major/Degree" tab, click on your program's name, and look for the contact information box on the righthand side.

Faculty Advisor
Each student will be assigned a faculty advisor in each graduate program in which they are enrolled. Your faculty advisor(s) will be a key source of guidance for your academic development. Further definition can be found here: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232. Guidelines for finding, changing, and working with your advisor can be found in the Advising & Mentoring section below.

The name and contact information of your faculty advisor can be found on your Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors."

Graduate School Services
For general inquiries and graduate student services from the Graduate School, see the operations and front desk contact information on this contact page: grad.wisc.edu/contacts.

Department & Program Overview

The Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology (F&WE) offers graduate education and training in a number of areas leading to the Master of Science and/or the Doctor of Philosophy in forestry or wildlife ecology. The program takes pride in its outstanding research reputation and the success of graduates working throughout the world. The wildlife ecology program was founded by Aldo Leopold in 1939 and has maintained his vision and legacy of excellence in current research and graduate training activities. Leopold's career spanned two professions, forestry and wildlife conservation, so the program strives to maintain excellence in both fields.

Master's and doctoral work in forestry is offered in the following areas: forest ecology, silviculture, forest ecosystem analysis and management, landscape ecology and planning, forest stand dynamics, forest restoration ecology, tree physiology, remote sensing of forests and natural resources, natural resource policy, social forestry, forest management, ecosystem services, and economics of forests and natural resources.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology (F&WE) is committed to creating a welcoming environment for all students, staff, and faculty. We are striving to make all members of FWE, regardless of their identity, feel respected and included in our department community and in our scientific disciplines. We are also working to provide fair and equitable opportunities to individuals belonging to historically marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds.

Fostering an environment where everyone is welcomed, valued, and encouraged to participate is a core value of F&WE. We are dedicated to supporting and promoting each other in our collective mission of providing research, instruction, and outreach that advances conservation and management of ecosystems.

Forest and Wildlife Ecology Values Diversity – As scientists who study natural resources, we understand the value of diversity to the natural world. We recognize that populations of species possessing high genetic diversity are more resilient to changing environmental conditions. And we know that ecosystems possessing high species

diversity are healthier, with greater productivity and increased sustainability. Furthermore, diversity of ecosystem functions enhances environmental stability and affords the world numerous ecological services, including resources used by humans. Likewise, we unequivocally believe that diversity among people brings value to our department and our fields of study, as well as to our society as a whole. Diversity in the F&WE community provides an invaluable source of creativity and strength. Simply put, F&WE values diversity – in all its various forms.

F&WE does not tolerate discriminatory, hostile, or toxic behavior by any department member. If you experience such behavior, please contact the Graduate Program Manager, Department Administrator, or HR representative. Learn more here.

The Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (JEDI) of our department has students, staff and faculty members and is open to new members. If you would like to find out more about how to get involved with the JEDI committee, please contact the current committee chair, or any member.

How to Get Involved

As a graduate student at UW-Madison, you have a multitude of opportunities to become involved on campus and in your academic discipline. This involvement often enhances your academic, professional, and personal growth through developing advanced leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. It also provides opportunities for professional networking.

In Our Discipline

UW Environment and Sustainability Student Organizations
Bird Conservation Alliance
Center for Biological Diversity
Conservation International
Ecological Society of America
Environmental Information Association
Latinos Outdoors
National Association of Environmental Professionals

National Ecological Observatory Network
Natural Areas Association
Old Growth Forest Network
The National Audubon Society
The National Wildlife Federation
Sierra Club
Society of American Foresters
Society for Ecological Restoration
Wilderness Society

On Campus & In the Community

The Wisconsin Idea is the principle that education should influence and improve people's lives beyond the university classroom. For more than 100 years, this idea has guided the university's work.

You will find a list of ways to engage in campus and local community life at:

[The Graduate School's Current Student Page](#)

If you are a student actively involved in leadership and service activities, consider nominating yourself for membership in the following honor society:

[Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society](#)

Getting Started as a Graduate Student

This section guides you through important steps to take as you begin your journey as a graduate student at UW-Madison.

New Graduate Student Checklist

Be sure to review all steps listed on [The Graduate School's New Student Page](#).

Newly admitted international students should review the step-by-step guide, [Becoming a Global Badger,](#) on the International Student Services (ISS) website.

In Our Program

As a newly admitted graduate student, you will work with your faculty advisor, Russell Labs HR, and the Graduate Program Manager to finalize your admission and onboard into the program.

Meet with your faulty advisor to review prerequisite coursework prior to first term enrollment. Any deficiencies will be discussed and completed in the first semester or two.

All new graduate students in Russell Labs will attend an orientation in late summer. This event is meant to introduce you to Russell Labs, review policies and procedures,

answer questions, and meet other new and current students. More information will be provided over the summer from the Graduate Program Manager.

Advising & Mentoring

Advising relationships are a central part of academia, important to both the experience and development of students and faculty members alike.

The Graduate School's definition of an advisor can be found here: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232. Your advisor has two main roles: 1) To assist you in acquiring the highest possible level of knowledge and competence in the field, and 2) to chair the committee that will determine whether you have performed at an acceptable level in each of your degree milestones (see "Degree Requirements" section below for further information on building your committee). Other roles of your advisor may include tracking your progress in completing your degree, assisting with course selection and planning your academic path, and helping you identify possible research mentors, committee members, and research opportunities.

Both the student and advisor are responsible for making their expectations clear to each other. Clearly outlining expectations for both the student and advisor are a crucial starting point for a strong relationship. The Graduate School has several mentorship resources to help students and faculty advisors create a positive mentoring relationship. it is strongly recommended a student create an Individual Development Plan (IDP). IDPs help students assess their current skills and identify their academic and professional goals. Students may share all or some of their IDP with their faculty advisor to identify the support and guidance needed to achieve their goal. Your IDP is likely to change and need revisions. Revisit with your faculty advisor as needed.

In addition to a formal advisor, you are encouraged to develop a broad network of individuals who can provide academic and professional mentorship during and beyond your time as a graduate student.

Finding & Selecting an Advisor

Your advisor should be a faculty member in the program whose expertise and research interests match closely with those that you intend to acquire. Your faculty advisor will be selected upon admission into the program as they will have recommended you based on prior conversations.

No faculty member is obligated to accept a student's request to serve as advisor. Formal acceptance to serve as an advisor is indicated by verbal or written agreement and formal offer letter.

Changing Your Advisor

As the advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement, it may be terminated by either party. A change in advisor may impact funding support. If you decide that you would prefer working with a different advisor, discuss this with the prospective advisor to find out if funding is available. Guaranteed funding from the new advisor must be in place to switch.

Below are some questions to consider asking in your initial discussion, though it is not a complete list. You should spend some time identifying what is most important to you in your graduate training and ask questions accordingly.

Questions to Ask of Prospective Advisors
Adapted from IPiB handbook

- What thesis projects would be available to me if I were to join your group?
- Would these projects expose me to a variety of different approaches?
- In general, how available will you be to answer questions I might have?
- What is your philosophy regarding the amount of guidance the advisor should provide to a student during preparation of the thesis proposal, literature seminars, thesis writing, etc.?
- What are your expectations for the amount of time I should spend each day/week in your group/lab?
- What regularly scheduled activities (e.g., group meetings, joint group meetings, research clubs) does your group participate in that provide an opportunity to get outside input on my research project and to hear about the work of other students and postdocs?
- Do you encourage your students to attend seminars and journal clubs, including those that may be outside of their narrow field of interest/research?
- Do students in your group/lab have the opportunity to attend professional meetings where they can interact with colleagues/researchers from other institutions?
- Do you include your graduate students in professional activities that will familiarize them with their field of interest/research, such as reviewing manuscripts and meeting with visiting speakers?
- How long do you think it should take me to get my degree?

- What are your former graduate students (if any) doing now?
- What is your general philosophy of graduate training and what goals do you have for your graduate students?

If you change your advisor, you must notify the Graduate Program Manager by email. If your funding source changes due to advisor change, please notify Russell Labs HR.

Every graduate student must have an advisor or else they may be suspended from graduate study at UW-Madison by the Graduate School. Be sure to follow procedures to re-select a new advisor (described above) prior to finalizing the termination of your current advising relationship. You can confirm that the name of your advisor has been updated in the official record by looking in your Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under "Academic Progress" and then "Advisors.

Degree Requirements

Master's Degree

All students in the Forestry MS Program are responsible for being aware of the following requirements to complete the degree.

Requirements

For all current requirements to complete your degree (e.g., credits, courses, milestones, learning outcomes/goals, etc.) see your program's page in the *Graduate Guide*: https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/forest-wildlife-ecology/forestry-ms/#requirementstext

The Forestry MS has no prescribed graduate coursework due to the diversity of research areas available. Students select appropriate graduate-level coursework in consultation with their advisor and a graduate advisory committee.

Committee

Master's committees advise and evaluate satisfactory progress, evaluate a thesis, and/or sign a degree warrant. This program requires the following composition for a master's advisory committee:

- A minimum of three committee members. One member must be the student's primary advisor.
- Two of the three committee members committee must be UW-Madison graduate faculty or former UW–Madison graduate faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement.
- If a student wishes to have a non-faculty member or non-UW Madison person serve as a committee member, an external committee member request form will need to be submitted to the Graduate Program Manager.
    a. UW-Madison faculty more than one year past retirement or resignation are considered external committee members.

For general guidance from The Graduate School on the role and composition of committees see the following policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201.

The initial meeting between you and your advisory committee will involve completing the [Certification Form](). This form details your intended progress in the program by listing prior coursework and recommended coursework to be completed.

Thesis

Research Topic

Your faculty advisor will provide guidance on selecting your thesis topic. If you find that your topic and/or mentoring needs no longer align with your advisor, see "Advising & Mentoring" section on how to change advisors. Note that your committee composition may or may not need to change as well in this scenario, depending upon your new advisor's guidance.

Form & Content

The Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology does not have distinct formatting requirements. Instead, students should follow the Graduate School's requirements which can be found online at https://grad.wisc.edu/current-students/masters-guide/.

Final Defense

A student should determine a date when all committee members can be present for a final defense. Once that date is determined, the student should submit a [final warrant request]() at least four weeks prior to their final defense.

Students are responsible for scheduling their final defense. They should also provide their committee with a final draft of their thesis at least two weeks prior to their defense.

Master's Degree Checklist: Timeline & Deadlines

The Graduate School maintains a list of steps to complete your master's degree, including deadlines and important things to know as you progress toward graduation: [grad.wisc.edu/current-students/masters-guide](). In addition to what is posted on this webpage from the Graduate School, you must meet all required steps of the program.

- Review [important dates and deadlines]() early on to ensure timely graduation.
- Schedule final defense. All committee members must be present for the final defense.
- Submit the [final warrant request]() at least two weeks before final defense.

- [Apply](#) for graduation in Student Center.
- Obtain all advisory committee members' e-signatures on electronic warrant.
- Email Graduate School the following by the term deadline:
    a. PDF copy of final thesis
    b. A signed copy of the [Minds@UW Distribution License form](#)
    c. A signed copy of the [Proxy authorization form](#)

Russell Labs will cover the cost of at least one personal hard-bound copy of a student's thesis. Staff will be in touch to complete this request.

Doctoral Degree

All students in the Forestry PhD program are responsible for being aware of the following requirements to complete the degree.

Requirements

For all current requirements to complete your degree (e.g., credits, courses, milestones, and learning outcomes/goals) see your program's page in the *Graduate Guide*: https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/forest-wildlife-ecology/forestry-phd/#requirementstext

The Forestry PhD prescribes no specific graduate coursework due to the diversity of research areas available, and students select appropriate graduate-level coursework in consultation with their advisor and a graduate advisory committee.

Committee

Doctoral committees advise and evaluate satisfactory progress, administer qualifying, preliminary, and final oral examinations, evaluate a thesis or dissertation, and/or sign a degree warrant. Your advisor chairs your committee and provides individualized guidance on how to select committee members. This program requires the following composition for doctoral advisory committees:

- Five committee members – faculty advisor and four other committee members. All five members will be dissertation readers.
- At least one member must have a major appointment outside of the Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology.
- Four of the five committee members must be UW-Madison graduate faculty or former UW–Madison graduate faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement

a. At least three of the members of the committee will be from Forest & Wildlife Ecology; two members must be departmental faculty members and one member can be an affiliate professor or adjunct professor.
- If a student wishes to have a non-faculty member or non-UW Madison person serve as a committee member, an external committee member request form will need to be submitted to the Graduate Program Manager.
  a. UW-Madison faculty more than one year past retirement or resignation are considered external committee members.

Qualifying Exam

The department does not require a qualifying exam.

Preliminary Exam

The preliminary examination is a significant milestone in a doctoral student's academic career. It is given to assess knowledge of areas within the academic discipline. Passing the preliminary exam, obtaining approval of the minor, if the major program requires it, and completing all the major course requirements culminate in admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree.

Students' eligibility to take the prelim examination(s) is determined by their program.

Please note students must satisfy the following Graduate School's requirements to request a prelim warrant:

- Completed the minimum 32 credits of graduate-level coursework
- Have a minimum 3.0 GPA
- Added a required doctoral minor
- Graded courses cannot have any grades of NR, I, U or P. Research courses, like 990, can remain a P until the student's final semester.

Procedure

Students must complete the following steps before the preliminary examination,

- Contact the committee to find a date that allows everyone to participate in and administer the preliminary examination.
- Request a preliminary examination warrant at least four weeks from your preliminary exam.

Written Proposal

The research proposal for the preliminary exam should describe all planned chapters of the dissertation. The proposal should provide strong justification for the research plan, including its theoretical background and the significance of the work. Methods should be described in sufficient detail to allow the committee to assess the validity and feasibility of what is planned. The format of the proposal can follow different models (e.g. NSF/NASA research proposal).

Oral Exam

This is a 2-to-3-hour oral examination administered by the full committee. It includes discussion of the research proposal, and the student may be questioned extensively about their knowledge in topics related to the proposal and their field generally. It is expected that the student will have prepared well for this meeting, and it is usually wise to seek advice from each committee member about what to expect.

Exam Outcomes

If the student passes their preliminary exam, it is the student's responsibility to obtain all appropriate e-signatures on the warrant. You can request signatures directly from MyGradPortal. Once the preliminary warrant is fully signed, the Graduate Program Manager will submit the signed warrant for final processing to become a dissertator.

If a student's performance on the preliminary exam is deemed unsatisfactory by their advisory committee they may, at the discretion of the committee, be allowed to retake the exam. The nature and timing of any retake should take place with the full committee within 12 months of the original exam. Students are required to pass their preliminary exam to remain in the program.

Dissertator Status

Students will receive an email from the Graduate School when they are granted dissertator status. This email contains important information about the rules of being a dissertator. Take time to review [dissertator status eligibility requirements](#).

The three most important rules of being a dissertator are:

- Students must maintain continuous registration by enrolling for three credits every fall and spring (and summer if funded) until they graduate, otherwise they will be assessed a degree completion fee.

- Students should not enroll in any courses except research credits or a required departmental seminar unless they have an extenuating circumstance.
- Students have five years to take the final oral examination and deposit their dissertation. The five-year clock starts on the first day of instruction of the term (Fall, Spring, or Summer) immediately following the completion of the preliminary examination. Failure to complete their degree within this period may result in students having to retake the preliminary examination and be re-admitted to candidacy.

Dissertation & Final Oral Exam/Defense

Research Topic

Your advisor can provide guidance on selecting your dissertation topic. If you find that your topic and/or mentoring needs no longer align with your advisor, see "Advising & Mentoring" section on how to change advisors. Note that your committee composition may or may not need to change as well in this scenario, depending upon your new advisor's guidance.

Form & Content

The Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology does not have distinct formatting requirements for your dissertation. Instead, students should follow the Graduate School's requirements which can be found online at https://grad.wisc.edu/currentstudents/doctoral-guide/.

Procedure

The Final Oral Examination is a 2-to-3-hour process. A public defense of the student's dissertation occurs first, immediately followed by an examination administered by the full Graduate Committee after the student has submitted a draft of the PhD Dissertation to each committee member and the major professor has agreed that the student is ready to defend. The purpose of the examination is to question the student intensely about the work presented in their dissertation and ascertain that it meets all the committee's expectations.

Helpful links for writing your research proposal and dissertation

- UW Writing Center's Writers Handbook
- Writing Center's Rules on writing ethics and plagiarism
- Graduate School's Dissertation Help

Doctoral Degree Checklist: Timeline & Deadlines

The Graduate School maintains a list of steps to complete your master's degree, including deadlines and important things to know as you progress toward graduation: grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide. In addition to what is posted on this webpage from the Graduate School, you must meet all required steps of the program (outlined below).

- Review important dates and deadlines early on to ensure timely graduation.
- Submit your final warrant request
- Apply for graduation in Student Center
- Complete Doctoral Exit Surveys
    a. Survey of Earned Doctorates
    b. Graduate School's Doctoral Exit Survey
- Pay the dissertation deposit fee ($90) in GradPortal and submit dissertation.

Russell Labs will cover the cost of at least one personal hard-bound copy of a student's dissertation. Staff will be in touch to complete this request.

Doctoral Minor

The Graduate School requires PhD students to complete a minor before they can be granted dissertator status. There are two minor options:
1. Option A External Minor
2. Option B Distributed Minor

Requirements

Option A External Minor: Requires a minimum of 9 credits in a single department/program. Selection of this option requires the approval of the minor department/program. In an Option A minor please contact the department for more information on the minor requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/academic-programs/).

Option B Distributed Minor: Requires a minimum of 9 credits in one or more departments/programs and can include course work in the major department/program. Selection of this option requires the approval of the major department/program.

Option A minors appear on the transcript with the name of the minor (e.g., Statistics). An Option B minor always appears on the transcript as Distributed. For more information on the Graduate School's minor requirements go to https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/minors/.

Most students opt for Option B Distributed Minor

Students are required to list the courses being used towards the minor requirement on their certification paperwork. If a student is pursuing an Option A minor, and the minor department requires paperwork for their needs, the student should also submit a copy of this additional minor paperwork as part of the certification.

Some students are exempted from the minor requirement. There are additional academic opportunities available to graduate students. Students may pursue a joint or double degree or earn a graduate-level certificate while pursuing a Forestry PhD. Often PhD students who pursue a joint degree or a graduate-level certificate are exempt from having to pursue a minor.

Students interested in these options should contact their faculty advisor or check out the Graduate School's information online at https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/minors/ for more information.

Enrollment Requirements

You are responsible for following Graduate School policies related to course enrollment requirements and limitations:

Minimum Enrollment Requirements
policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1208

Adding / Dropping Courses
grad.wisc.edu/documents/add-drop

Auditing Courses
policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1224

Canceling Enrollment
grad.wisc.edu/documents/canceling-enrollment

Continuous Enrollment Requirement for Dissertators
policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1204

Enrollment Accountability
grad.wisc.edu/documents/enrollment-accountability

Non-dissertator maximum credit load is 15 graded credits taken at 300-level or above during the fall and spring semesters and 12 credits during the summer term. Any exceptions to the maximum credit load permitted must be obtained via the Credit Overload Request form.

A valid enrollment minimum does not count the following types of courses,
- courses numbered below 300
- courses taken pass/fail
- audited courses

Funding, Employment, and Finances

"Funding" is a term used to describe university employment or support to cover some or all your costs of graduate education. It varies in kind, amount, and level of guarantee.

- Most students are funded through Research Assistantships with their faculty advisor. Teaching assistantships are another source of funding students may opt

to explore. Their availability on campus is limited. Please work with your advisor to discuss options.

- Funding is generally year-round.

The Graduate School maintains policies related to graduate student funding/employment:

Maximum Levels of Appointments
Concurrent Appointments for Fellows/Trainees
Enrollment Requirements for Graduate Assistants
Eligibility for Summer RA, TA, PA, and LSA Appointments

Guaranteed Funding

Students must secure guaranteed funding commitments from their faculty advisor prior to being recommended for admission to the Graduate School.

- An MS student will not be accepted unless two years of guaranteed funding support is provided.
- A PhD student will not be accepted unless three years of guaranteed funding support is provided.

Exceptions will be reviewed and decided on a case-by-case basis by the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee. Examples of exceptions include a student who is funded through their place of employment, a student with veterans funding through the G.I bill, or an external fellowship. Because our department does not offer TA support, TA only support is not sufficient due to our concerns about providing a supportive learning environment.

Finding Funding Without a Guaranteed Appointment

Campus-Wide and External Sources

To help you find resources to pay for costs related to graduate education, the Graduate School provides a comprehensive overview of the funding process on campus as well as descriptions of the types of funding available, sources of funding, minimum stipend rates and benefits, and links to applicable human resources policies (e.g. GAPP) at:

Graduate School: Funding and Financial Aid
External Fellowship Database
UW-Madison Libraries Grants Information Collection

In Our Program/Department

In addition to campus-wide and external sources of funding, our program/department offers sources of funding that are awarded on a competitive or need-basis.

Students do find Teaching Assistant (TA) positions within the department and outside. Discuss options with your advisor or browse [UW Graduate Assistantships](#) openings.

College and Departmental Scholarships can be found [here](#).

Additional Policies & Resources

[Graduate School Policy: Residence for Tuition Purposes](#)
[Employee Disability Resources](#)
[Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (GAPP)](#)

Academic Exception Petitions

Requests for exceptions to those requirements set by the Forest & Wildlife Ecology department will be considered by the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee. Email academic exception requests to the Graduate Program Manager.

The request should include a justification statement and a detailed explanation of the substitution proposed to meet the requirement. The following requirements for the MS and PhD degrees are under the purview of the UW Graduate School and cannot be modified:
- composition of the advisory committees
- standards defining Academic Satisfactory Progress
- minimum credit requirements

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Your continuation as a graduate student at UW-Madison is at the discretion of your program, the Graduate School, and your faculty advisor. Any student may be placed on probation or dismissed from the Graduate School for not maintaining satisfactory academic progress, and this can impact your academic standing (detailed below), financial aid (see this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1040), or funding (consult your sources of funding, as applicable). Our program has its own definition of satisfactory academic progress and related procedures that supplement Graduate School policy, as described in this section.

Definition

Information about how the Graduate School determines satisfactory academic progress can be found at this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1218. In addition to the Graduate School's monitoring of satisfactory academic progress, this program regularly reviews the satisfactory academic progress of its students, defined as the following:

The Department of Forest & Wildlife Ecology follows the Graduate School's guidelines regarding satisfactory progress in terms of grades and GPA. Graduate students are expected to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher every term for courses in the 300-level and above. If a student does not meet the minimum GPA the Graduate School will put them on probation and the student may ultimately be suspended if they are not able to raise their GPA to the minimum level. The same holds true if a graduate student carries two or more incomplete grades over multiple semesters.

Continuation in the Graduate School is at the discretion of a student's program, the Graduate School, and a student's faculty advisor. Students may be disciplined or dismissed from the graduate program for any type of misconduct (academic, non-academic, professional, or research) or failure to meet program expectations regardless of their academic standing in the program. Students should meet regularly with their faculty advisor to ensure that they are meeting program expectations. If a student is not meeting program expectations this will be communicated in writing to the student by the faculty advisor.

Separate and apart from a violation of Professional Conduct, a student may face University disciplinary action regarding the same action. Concerns about infractions of professional conduct may be effectively handled informally between the student and the advisor/faculty member. However, if a resolution is not achieved, the issue may be advanced for further review by the program. Examples of disciplinary actions could include, but are not limited to written reprimand, imposition of reasonable terms and conditions on continued student status, removal of funding, probation, restitution, removal of student from an in-progress course, failure to promote, suspension, or dismissal.

Annual Progress Report

All PhD students are required to meet with their advisory committee annually to discuss their academic and research progress. The faculty advisor and student will be responsible for completing and submitting the Annual Progress Report form to the Graduate Program Manager by July 1 through degree completion.

Not Meeting Academic Expectations

Student progress will be reviewed through coursework and their research development. If the advisor and advisory committee find at any time that a student has failed to achieve satisfactory progress in the academic expectations set in this handbook, the student will be notified and given an opportunity to submit a response within a set time period (typically two weeks). The advisor and graduate committee will review the response within two weeks and determine if further action is needed.

Students may be dismissed from the program. Students may, alternatively, be placed on probation for one semester and then reviewed by their advisory committee and Academic Affairs Committee following the probationary semester. Students placed on probation may be dismissed or allowed to continue based upon review of progress during the probationary semester. If a student wishes to appeal any decision stemming from this review process, they can do so within two weeks of the date of the decision letter through submitting a letter to the chair and requesting a new hearing with the addition of a faculty member external to the original advisory committee.

Graduate School's information on satisfactory progress:
https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1218

Graduate School's information on GPA:
https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/gpa-requirement/

Graduate School's information on probation:
https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/probation/

Graduate School's information on incomplete grades:
https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/incompletes/

Grievance Process

If a student feels unfairly treated or aggrieved by faculty, staff, or another student, the University offers several avenues to resolve the grievance. Students' concerns about unfair treatment are best handled directly with the person responsible for the objectionable action. If the student is uncomfortable making direct contact with the individual(s) involved, they should contact the Department Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, or the Graduate Program Manager.

For more information seethe Graduate School Academic Policies & Procedures: Grievances & Appeals: https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/.

The student is encouraged to speak first with the person toward whom the grievance is directed to see if a situation can be resolved at this level.

1. Should a satisfactory resolution not be achieved, the student should contact the Department Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, or Graduate Program Manager to discuss the grievance. Any of the above people will facilitate problem resolution through informal channels and facilitate any complaints or issues of students. The first attempt is to help students informally address the grievance prior to any formal complaint. Students are also encouraged to talk with their faculty advisors regarding concerns or difficulties if necessary. University resources for sexual harassment, discrimination, disability accommodations, and other related concerns can be found on the UW Office of Equity and Diversity website: https://oed.wisc.edu/.
2. Other campus resources include
   - The Graduate School http://grad.wisc.edu/
   - McBurney Disability Resource Center http://mcburney.wisc.edu/
   - Employee Assistance Office http://eao.wisc.edu/
   - Ombuds Office http://ombuds.wisc.edu/
   - University Health Services http://uhs.wisc.edu/
   - UW Office of Equity and Diversity https://oed.wisc.edu/
3. If the issue is not resolved to the student's satisfaction the student can submit the grievance to the Graduate Program Manager in writing, within120 calendar days of the alleged unfair treatment.
4. On receipt of a written complaint, a faculty committee will be convened by the Graduate Program Manager to manage the grievance. The program faculty committee will obtain a written response from the person toward whom the complaint is directed. This response will be shared with the person filing the grievance.
5. The faculty committee will determine a decision regarding the grievance. The Graduate Program Manger report on the action taken by the committee in writing to both the student and the party toward whom the complaint was directed within 15 working days from the date the complaint was received.
6. At this point, if either party (the student or the person to whom the grievance is directed) is unsatisfied with the decision of the faculty committee, the party may file a written appeal. Either party has 10 working days to file a written appeal to the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Academic Affairs Office.

7. Documentation of the grievance will be stored for at least 7 years. Significant grievances that set a precedent will be stored indefinitely.

The Graduate School has procedures for students wishing to appeal a grievance decision made at the school/college level. These policies are described in the Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures: https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/.

Personal Conduct Expectations

Professional Conduct

The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards maintains detailed guidance on student rights and responsibilities related to learning in a community that is safe and fosters integrity and accountability. You are responsible for keeping aware of their policies and procedures, found at the following page: conduct.students.wisc.edu

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapter 14. For further information on this law, what constitutes academic misconduct, and procedures related to academic misconduct, see:

The Graduate School

Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Academic

Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards

Academic Misconduct Website
Academic Misconduct Flowchart

Non-Academic Misconduct

Non-academic misconduct is governed by state law, UW System Administration Code Chapters 17 and 18. For further information on these laws, what constitutes non-academic misconduct, and procedures related to non-academic misconduct, see:

The Graduate School

Academic Policies & Procedures: Misconduct, Non-Academic

Office for Student Conduct and Community Standards

Non-Academic Misconduct Website

University of Wisconsin System (UWS)

Chapter 17: Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures
Chapter 18: Conduct on University Lands

Research Misconduct

Graduate students are held to the same standards of responsible conduct of research as faculty and staff. Further information about these standards and related policies and procedures can be found at:

The Graduate School

Academic Policies & Procedures: Responsible Conduct of Research

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education

Research Policies

Hostile and Intimidating Behavior (Bullying)

Hostile and intimidating behavior (HIB), sometimes referred to as "bullying," is prohibited by university policy applicable to faculty, academic staff, and university staff. For further definition, policy, and procedures related to HIB see: hr.wisc.edu/hib. Students who feel they have been subject to HIB are encouraged to review the informal and formal options on the "Addressing HIB" tab of this website.

Process and Sanctions for Violations of Conduct Standards

The Graduate Academic Affairs Committee (GAAC) administers the regulations established by the faculty. It makes sure students are meeting the program expectations and imposes sanctions when appropriate. Faculty and faculty committees determine whether the quality of a student's work and conduct are satisfactory, while the GAAC determines whether the student is satisfying the academic requirements in a timely fashion and meeting program conduct expectations. Students who are falling behind academically or do not meet conduct expectations are first warned, then put on probation, and then dropped from the program if they cannot complete the requirements

or remedy their conduct. Within boundaries set by the faculty, the GAAC is authorized to take account of individual circumstances and problems, and to grant extensions of deadlines and waivers of requirements.

The Office of Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) also have grounds to issue one or more of the following:

- Reprimand
- Probation
- Suspension
- Expulsion
- Restitution
- A zero or failing grade on an assignment/exam

- A lower grade or failure in the course
- Removal from course
- Enrollment restrictions in a course/program
- Conditions/terms of continuing as a student

Incident Reporting (Hate, Bias, Sexual Assault, Hazing, Students of Concern, Bullying)

The Office of Student Assistance and Support maintains a portal to report incidents of hate, bias, sexual assault, hazing, dating/domestic violence, stalking, missing students, and students displaying other concerning behaviors at UW-Madison:

Office of Student Assistance and Support Incident Reporting

As noted above in "Personal Conduct Expectations," students who feel they have been subject to hostile and/or intimidating behavior (i.e., bullying) are encouraged to review the informal and formal options for addressing this behavior (including filing complaints when desired) at:

Human Resources Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Website

Professional Development

When you participate in professional development, you build skills needed to succeed academically and thrive in your career. The following are professional development activities that we recommend for your consideration. Required professional development will be detailed in "Degree Requirements" above.

On Campus

The Graduate School develops and curates a wide variety of resources for professional development, including a tool to assess your skills, set goals, and create a plan with recommended activities on campus (e.g., the popular "Individual Development Plan" or IDP) as well as programming to help you explore careers, prepare for a job search, build your network and learn from alumni, manage projects, communicate about your research, and much more.

DiscoverPD helps master's and doctoral students at UW-Madison advance their academic and professional goals with customized recommendations based on a skills self-assessment. The 400+ professional development recommendations available in the DiscoverPD database are available in a range of formats to best meet your diverse needs, including in-person, virtual, asynchronous, and synchronous opportunities. All of this can be found at:

[Professional Development from the Graduate School](#)

The Graduate School communicates professional development opportunities through an e-newsletter, *GradConnections*, that all graduate students receive at their wisc.edu email. Graduate students in traditional graduate degree programs receive the newsletter weekly during the academic year and every other week in the summer. Graduate students in online degree programs receive the newsletter every other week during the academic year and monthly during the summer.