



Plant Pathology MS, PhD, and Doctoral Minor

Program Handbook

2025-2026

Plant Pathology Department

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.

Welcome

Training graduate students is our department's highest priority. Students energize our community, motivate faculty excellence, and advance our shared goals of sustainable food security and environmental stewardship. They play essential roles in research, outreach, and teaching, and as graduates, they ensure the future of our discipline.

This commitment is reflected in substantial investments of time, mentoring, and financial resources, including support for assistantships, student organizations, travel, and professional development.

We recognize that graduate training is challenging. Developing as an independent scientist requires persistence, self-evaluation, and resilience in the face of failure, while learning to balance external evaluation with personal scientific judgment.

To support student success, our department strives to maintain a welcoming, inclusive, and harassment-free environment. Students are encouraged to seek help when needed, and multiple departmental and campus resources are available.

This handbook outlines current departmental expectations, procedures, and resources for MS and PhD students, consistent with Graduate School guidelines. While degree requirements follow the policies in effect at entry, students must adhere to current administrative procedures and work closely with advisors and committees to meet all requirements.

We welcome you to our community and wish you a rewarding graduate experience. We look forward to your contributions and celebrating your successes.

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Navigating Policy and Resources at UW-Madison

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



How to Use This Handbook

The UW-Madison Graduate School is the ultimate authority for granting graduate degrees at the University. The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures provide essential information regarding general University requirements. Program authority to set degree requirements beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the Plant Pathology program faculty.

This handbook is intended for graduate students who are pursuing an Plant Pathology MS or PhD degree. The policies described in this handbook have been approved by all faculty in the program. Degrees and course requirements may change over time. However, students must meet the degree and course requirements in effect when they entered the program. In addition, administrative procedures and processes can change over time. Students are required to follow the procedures and processes listed in the current handbook. The information in this handbook should also be supplemented by individual consultation with your advisor and committee so that individual needs/interests and all degree requirements are met.

Who to Contact for Questions

Many 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 any 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 their program and will likely be a student's 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 a program's Graduate Program Manager and Director of Graduate Studies can be found on the program's page in the *Graduate Guide* (guide.wisc.edu/graduate). Simply navigate to the "Major/Degree" tab, click on the program 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. Faculty advisor(s) will be a key source of guidance for academic development. Further definition can be found here: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232.

Guidelines for finding, changing, and working with an advisor can be found in the Advising & Mentoring section below.

The name and contact information of a student's faculty advisor can be found in the 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 discipline of plant pathology is directed toward understanding and solving disease problems of plants. The field is broad and complex, integrating disciplines as varied as molecular biology, genetics, cell biology, organismal biology, population and community ecology, meteorology, statistics, computer science, chemistry, and physics. Plant pathology encompasses basic and applied research, employs both model systems and economically important plants, and requires both laboratory and field experimentation.

Active research programs in the department encompass this full spectrum of questions and approaches, including research on virology, nematology, fungal genetics, tissue culture, soil microbiology and ecology, forest pathology, bacterial plant pathogens, molecular biology of parasite–host interactions, microbial ecology, epidemiology, and integrated disease management strategies.

The graduate program in plant pathology educates students in the science of plant pathology and prepares them for successful careers. Students develop the following skills required to meet diverse professional situations: excellence in research; breadth and depth in plant pathology; breadth in an allied field; strong critical and analytical thinking skills; and effective communication skills. Students become sufficiently knowledgeable in all aspects of plant pathology to identify key research questions, recognize significant discoveries, and think analytically about interpretation of data.

The level of proficiency in specific areas will vary with the student's research area and career goals and will be appropriate to the student's degree program (MS or PhD). Specific areas of proficiency addressed by the PhD curriculum include etiology, diagnosis, and management of plant disease; ecology and epidemiology; genetics and physiology of plant–microbe interactions; and organismal biology. PhD students may elect an optional professional development experience as part of their curriculum. Graduates of the program attain positions in teaching, research in academic positions, government services, industry, extension services, and private practice.

The program is comprised of about 100 faculty members, graduate students, and research and support staff. It is housed in an eight-story wing of Russell Laboratories, a

teaching and research facility on the UW–Madison campus, which is surrounded by other facilities that are also devoted to biological research. Russell Labs, together with the extensive research facilities available on the rest of the UW–Madison campus and at field research stations throughout Wisconsin, provide a rich and comprehensive environment for research and graduate studies in all branches of plant pathology.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength and innovation in the Department of Plant Pathology. We value and respect the contributions of all individuals and strive to recognize bias and foster an equitable, inclusive environment. Excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity are inseparable goals.

The department and UW–Madison are committed to creating a welcoming community that serves Wisconsin and the world; more information is available through [the department's JEDI Committee](#).

Graduate students are encouraged to engage in campus and disciplinary activities, which support academic, professional, and personal growth while building leadership, collaboration, and networking skills.

How to Get Involved

In the Department

[Plant Pathology Graduate Council](#) (PPGC): The Plant Pathology Graduate Council (PPGC) promotes communication, community, and professional development among Plant Sciences graduate students. PPGC represents students on departmental committees, assists with graduate recruitment, organizes professional and social events, and serves as a student resource and advocate, including during grievance processes. Most representatives serve two-year terms.

[Plant Sciences Graduate Student Council](#) (PSGSC): The Plant Sciences Graduate Student Council (PSGSC) works with faculty, staff, and students to promote educational and social outreach and to welcome new graduate students in Plant Sciences at UW–Madison. The council consists of twelve elected positions, including officers and departmental representatives, who are nominated and elected annually by their peers for one-year terms.

[What's Eating My Plants](#) (WEMP): WEMP is a student organization dedicated to bridging the gap between the University and the greater Madison community. Our mission is to foster the Wisconsin Idea by increasing scientific agency and accessibility through outreach of our favorite science, plant pathology! We can also be found leading classroom-style activities at Latino Youth Summit, Centro Hispano, Expanding Your Horizons, and more!

In Our Discipline

- [Ecological Society of America](#)
- [Society for Conservation Biology](#)
- [American Society for Microbiology](#)
- [All the Virology on the WWW](#)
- [Society of Nematologists](#)
- [American Horticultural Society](#)
- [American Society for Horticultural Science](#)
- [Botanical Society of America](#)
- [American Phytopathological Society](#)
- [American Society of Agronomy](#)
- [Crop Science Society of America](#)
- [Soil Science Society of America](#)
- [Society of American Foresters](#)
- [Golf Course Superintendents Association of America](#)
- [USGA](#) (United States Golf Association)

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.

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

The Graduate School's Current Student Page

grad.wisc.edu/current-students

Any student actively involved in leadership and service activities may consider nominating themselves for membership in the following honor society:

Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society

grad.wisc.edu/diversity/bouchet

Getting Started as a Graduate Student

New Graduate Students

In Our Program

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

Newly admitted students should review [New Students – Graduate School | UW–Madison](#) to understand what to expect before starting. In addition, international students should review the step-by-step guide, [Becoming a Global Badger](#). Students will work

with the Graduate Program Manager, their faculty advisor, and CALS Human Resources to finalize all aspects of new student onboarding.

Russell Labs orientation is held in late August. More details will be shared in early summer.

Advising & Mentoring

Advising relationships are a central part of academia, important to both the experience and development of students and faculty members alike. Both the student and advisor are responsible for making their expectations clear to each other. Setting expectations early is key to a successful mentor/mentee relationship. This should be discussed as soon as possible.

Advisors have two main roles:

1. To assist students in acquiring the highest possible level of knowledge and competence in the field, and
2. To chair the committee that will determine whether students have performed at an acceptable level in each of their degree milestones

Other roles of an advisor may include tracking degree completion process, assisting students with course selection and planning their academic path, and helping students identify possible research mentors, committee members, and research opportunities.

Finding & Selecting an Advisor

An advisor should be a faculty member in the program whose expertise and research interests match closely with those that a student intends to acquire. Every graduate student must have an assigned faculty advisor. Students can confirm that the name of their advisor has been updated in the official record by looking in their Student Center on MyUW (my.wisc.edu) under “Academic Progress” and then “Advisors.”

There are two ways a student can join Plant Pathology graduate programs.

Direct Admissions

Direct admit students are recruited and hired to join a specific faculty member’s lab on an agreed upon start date. The faculty member will commit to fund the student during their degree program. It is common for three years of funding to be initially offered with the intent to secure additional funding through degree completion. Students may be directly admitted fall, spring, or summer semester. Master’s students can only be directly admitted.

Rotation

Laboratory rotations allow students and faculty to assess research fit, project availability, and the training environment. Rotation availability is reviewed annually.

PhD students rotate among recruiting labs during their first semester under the guidance of the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee chair, who sets the rotation schedule based on funding and research alignment. Schedule changes require approval from the faculty member and the committee chair.

At semester's end, the committee chair meets with rotation students to discuss lab placement and funding offers. A fourth rotation may be approved if needed. To remain in the program, students must secure a faculty advisor in Plant Pathology or with Plant Pathology affiliation that has funding; failure to do so may result in administrative dismissal.

Advisor selection requires mutual agreement. Students may express their preferences, and faculty indicate in writing whether they are willing to serve as an advisor. Faculty are not obligated to accept a student if the research fit or funding is not available.

Changing Advisors

The advisor-student relationship is one of mutual agreement. If a student or their advisor decides there is a more appropriate fit, the student should discuss this change with their current advisor, prospective advisor, and the Graduate Program Manager prior to formalizing. The new advisor must have funding to support the student through their degree program.

Below are some questions to consider asking a prospective advisor, though it is not a complete list. Students should spend some time identifying what is most important to them in their graduate training and ask questions accordingly.

- 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? Is meeting attendance funded by the lab?
- 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?

Mentoring Networks

In addition to a formal faculty advisor, students are encouraged to develop a broad network of individuals who can provide them with academic and professional mentorship during and beyond the graduate student years. This may include members of the student's advisory committee, faculty staff at UW, faculty and staff elsewhere, or industry professionals.

Master's Degree Requirements

The Plant Pathology department has set the following goals for the MS program:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the basic biology of microorganisms that are symbiotic with plants including fungi, bacteria, viruses, oomycetes, and nematodes
2. Demonstrate a basic understanding of:
 - a. the basic processes of pathogenesis, plant defense, and defense circumvention at the molecular, genetic, and physiological level for each of the major groups of plant pathogens and other plant associated microorganisms
 - b. The etiology, ecology, and epidemiology of economically significant diseases caused by the major groups of plant pathogensand be able to apply the understanding from a. and/or b. above in research
3. Conduct a project related to the discipline of Plant Pathology that requires specifying a problem, designing and conducting experiments, analyzing the resulting data, and reporting results/solutions
4. Convey scientific knowledge to fellow scientists in a variety of formats

These goals are to be reviewed periodically to make certain that the program does indeed meet these goals.

Advisory Committee Makeup

Master's committees advise and evaluate satisfactory progress, evaluate a thesis, and/or sign a degree warrant. For general guidance from The Graduate School on the role and composition of committees as well as an online tool to determine if a committee meets minimum requirements, see the following policy page:
policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201.

The Plant Pathology Curriculum Committee is responsible for approving the composition of all graduate committees. Minimum graduate school requirements for the graduate committee are as follows:

- The chair or co-chair of the committee must be Graduate Faculty from the student's major program – generally the funding faculty advisor
- Master's thesis committee must have at least three members, two of whom must be UW Graduate Faculty or former graduate Faculty up to one year after resignation or retirement.
- The third committee member can be external, defined as not a tenured or tenure-tracked faculty member at UW-Madison, and must meet the following criteria.
 - a. Supply expertise not available by UW-Madison faculty
 - b. Hold an equivalent degree to the degree being sought by the student
 - c. Not be related to the student

- Prior approval is needed. Complete the [External Committee Member Request Form](#) and return to the Graduate Program Manager.

Program Requirements

For all current requirements to complete a degree (e.g., credits, courses, milestones, learning outcomes/goals, etc.) see the program's page in the *Graduate Guide* at <https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/plant-pathology/>.

To find past versions of program requirements, see the [Guide Archive](#) and search for a specific program and year to reference.

Course Requirements

How a student progresses towards completing their degree requirements depends on prior coursework and experience. Students should consult with their major advisor and committee to plan out coursework.

Seminar

Regular seminar attendance is part of a student's academic and professional growth. All Plant Pathology graduate students are expected to attend the Plant Pathology departmental seminar (PL PATH 923), regardless of enrollment in the class.

MS students must register for 1 credit of PL PATH 923 in their final semester. This is their exit seminar. Students will have one hour to present and take questions. Students who complete their degree during the summer term should enroll for PL PATH 923 the preceding spring.

The exit seminar should:

- provide the audience with an appreciation of the context of the research
- provide a clear statement of the goals and objectives that were addressed
- provide a brief but clear explanation of the methods and experimental approach
- present the data obtained and the method of analysis
- present interpretations and conclusions based on the data

Thesis

Plant Pathology students must submit a thesis to the Graduate School. Plant Pathology students must meet the following requirements:

- publicly present thesis by enrolling in PL PATH 923 in final semester
- present in an oral defense to the student's advisory committee

Thesis Topic

A student's topic will be selected in collaboration with their major advisor and advisory committee. The topic will align with the research theme of the lab.

If a student finds that their topic and/or mentoring needs no longer align with their advisor, see “Advising & Mentoring” section on how to change advisors. Note that committee composition may or may not need to change in this scenario, depending on the new advisor’s guidance.

Form & Content

The Plant Pathology department does not have distinct formatting requirements. Students should follow the Graduate School’s requirements, which can be found online at <http://grad.wisc.edu/currentstudents/degree/>.

Final Oral Examination

When a student has completed the research and written a thesis to the satisfaction of the major professor and the research committee, they schedule the Final Oral exam. The oral examination covers the thesis and the general field of the major. When the candidate passes the examination, the committee signs the final oral defense warrant. If significant thesis revisions are requested, the committee may wait for these revisions to be completed prior to signing the warrant.

The candidate may not take the final oral examination until all other requirements for the degree have been satisfied.

Completing Your Master’s Degree

Master’s Degree Checklist: Timeline & Deadlines

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

- Enroll in PL PATH 923 for final term and schedule exit seminar. Summer graduates should enroll in PL PATH 923 the preceding spring term.
- Schedule final defense date. All committee members must be present for their final defense – physical or remote.
- Request a [final warrant](#) as soon as defense date is set.
- [Apply](#) for graduation in Student Center.
- Complete and include with the final thesis submission to Graduate School:
 - A signed copy of the [Minds@UW Distribution License form](#)
 - A signed copy of the [Proxy authorization form](#)
- Obtain all advisory committee members' e-signatures on electronic warrant by term deadline.
- Email final thesis copy as PDF to Elena Hsu. Include campus ID, Minds@UW Distribution, and Proxy authorization forms.

Russell Labs covers the cost of hard-bound thesis copies. Students receive one personal copy, with additional copies provided to the faculty advisor and the department library. Staff will be in touch to complete this request.

Doctoral Degree Requirements

The Plant Pathology department has set the following goals for the PhD program:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the basic processes of pathogenesis, plant defense, and defense circumvention at the molecular, genetic and physiological level for each of the major groups of plant pathogens and other plant associated microorganisms
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the basic biology of microorganisms that are symbiotic with plants including fungi, bacteria, viruses, oomycetes, and nematodes
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the etiology, ecology, and epidemiology of economically significant diseases caused by the major groups of plant pathogens
4. Construct disease management strategies for the different groups of important plant pathogens
5. Demonstrate excellent problem-solving skills and a deep conceptual understanding of the science of Plant Pathology
6. Convey knowledge in a variety of formats to diverse audiences including the public, students, and fellow scientists

These goals are to be reviewed periodically to ensure that the program meets them.

Advisory Committee Makeup

Doctoral committees advise and evaluate satisfactory progress, administer preliminary and final oral examinations, evaluate a dissertation, and sign a degree warrant. A student should work to establish an advisory committee by the end of their first year for optimal time to degree. The department of Plant Pathology has set the following requirements for a PhD committee

- Must have at least five members; representation of two UW departments is required.
- Three of the five members must be Plant Pathology faculty member or affiliates.
- Four of the five members must be UW-Madison graduate faculty members.
- One committee member can be external, defined as not a tenured or tenure-tracked faculty member at UW-Madison, the external committee member must meet the following criteria.
 - a. Supply expertise not available by UW-Madison faculty
 - b. Hold an equivalent degree to the degree being sought by the student
 - c. Not be related to the student

- Prior approval is needed. Complete the [External Committee Member Request Form](#) and return to the Graduate Program Manager.
- All committee members are dissertation readers.

A student's advisor chairs their committee and provides individualized guidance on how to select committee members. The advisory committee provides guidance and oversight over the course of a student's graduate studies, not limited to course selection, course substitutions and waivers, and professional development. Discuss any potential changes to an established committee with the faculty advisor.

For general guidance from The Graduate School on the role and composition of committees as well as an online tool to determine if a committee meets minimum requirements, see this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201.

Annual Progress Report

All doctoral students are required to meet annually with their advisory committee to review progress. This meeting should be documented by completing the Annual Progress Report form. Return final signed forms to the Graduate Program Manager no later than July 1 of each year.

Program Requirements

For all current requirements to complete a degree (e.g., credits, courses, milestones, learning outcomes/goals, etc.) see the program's page in the *Graduate Guide* at <https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/plant-pathology/>.

To find past versions of program requirements, see the [Guide Archive](#) and search for a specific program and year to reference.

Course Requirements

How a student progresses towards completing their degree requirements depends on prior coursework and experience. Students should consult with their major advisor and committee to plan out coursework.

Seminar Requirement

Students must register for a total of 2 credits of PL PATH 923 – proposal and exit seminar; each taken for 1 credit.

The seminar should:

- provide the audience with an appreciation of the context of the research
- provide a clear statement of the goals and objectives that were addressed
- provide a brief but clear explanation of the methods and experimental approach
- present the data obtained and the method of analysis
- present interpretations and conclusions based on the data

Proposal seminar – completed no later than the end of a student's second full academic year. Students will have a maximum of 25 minutes to present and take questions. Two students per seminar session.

Exit seminar – scheduled in the student's final semester. Students will have one hour to present and take questions. Students who complete their degree during the summer term should enroll for PL PATH 923 the preceding spring term.

Teaching Requirement

PhD students are required to complete one semester of PL PATH 799. The chair of the curriculum committee will arrange PL PATH 799 assignments. Teaching Assistantships outside the department will not satisfy the program's teaching requirement.

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

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. For 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 coursework 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/>.

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.

Students may pursue a joint or double degree or earn a graduate-level certificate while pursuing a Plant Pathology 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.

Research Topic

A student's topic will be selected in collaboration with their major advisor and advisory committee. The topic will align with the research theme of the lab.

The advisory committee can provide guidance on selecting a dissertation topic. If a student finds that their topic and/or mentoring needs no longer align with their advisor, see "Advising & Mentoring" section on how to change advisors. Committee composition may or may not need to change in this scenario, depending on the new advisor's guidance.

Dissertation Form & Content

The Plant Pathology department does not have distinct formatting requirements. Students should follow the Graduate School's requirements, which can be found online at <http://grad.wisc.edu/currentstudents/degree/>. Students may search the [Library catalog or Library database](#) to view past submissions of Plant Pathology PhD graduates.

Qualifying Exam

The Qualifying Exam is designed to test students' understanding of broad concepts and core principles of Plant Pathology. Students will normally take the Qualifying Exam after taking PL PATH 300, 505, 559 and 602, or their equivalents, and complete all graded degree requirements. Typically, this will be during a student's third year in the program but could be sooner for students entering with a master's degree.

The chair of the Qualifying Exam committee will coordinate with eligible students to schedule the exam during the semester it will be administered. Substantive changes to the qualifying exam will only apply to students if they are communicated at least four weeks prior to the exam.

Exam questions are written each year by the faculty and will cover the following topics:

- Ecology and epidemiology
- Genetics and molecular biology
- Etiology and disease physiology
- Disease control

The exam occurs every December. The exam is administered in two sets of four questions with four hours for each set of questions. The exam questions may be open, limited-open, or closed book, as indicated by the question's author. Students will write exams on an internet-disabled computer. The exams will be typed and anonymized for the graders.

The Qualifying Exam is graded pass/fail. Students must pass seven of eight questions, with a 70% answer considered passing. Two committee members grade each question; a third member will resolve ties. Failed questions may be retaken once. Failing twice ends PhD eligibility, though pursuing a Master's may be considered.

Students will be given written feedback from the Qualifying Exam committee on all their answers. This feedback should accurately reflect the feedback used to assign the pass/fail grade to each question before the exams are de-anonymized. Students are encouraged to contact the Qualifying Exam committee members with questions.

Students needing special assistance to read questions or write the exam should [review accommodation eligibility through McBurney Disability Center](#) and communicate this need to the Qualifying Exam Committee early in the term of the exam. Students whose native language is not English may use a bilingual dictionary during the Qualifying Exam.

Preliminary Exam

Each PhD candidate must pass an Oral Preliminary Exam to demonstrate knowledge of their research background, hypotheses, impacts, and contingency plans. The exam also provides committee feedback to help refine the research project. It is usually taken after meeting PhD candidacy requirements but may occur earlier if the student has a well-developed project and is likely to succeed. Passing it is required before completing the final defense.

The Oral Prelim exam should be taken the semester after passing the qualifying exam. The exam is given by the student's thesis committee and led by the Oral Prelim chair, to be selected from among the Plant Pathology faculty of the student's research committee. Students should make a request for the chosen committee member to chair the exam at the time that the exam is scheduled. The major professor may not chair the exam.

Prior to the oral prelim exam, students will prepare a written prelim proposal and distribute it to members of their advisory committee two weeks in advance of the exam. The proposal should include a 250-word abstract, background information, clearly stated hypotheses, the approaches that will be used to test the hypotheses, a description of the expected findings, limitations of the proposed work, and backup plans. The proposal shall be:

- no more than 15 pages, including all text, figures, and tables; the abstract and references cited are not included in this page limit
- no more than 6 lines per inch and no less than one inch page margins
- pages should be numbered

After prior consultation and agreement by the advisory committee a student may alter these guidelines, including increasing the length of the research proposal if needed to best describe the proposed research.

The student's advisor or advisory committee may suggest a more specific format for the proposal. If the committee has no preference, students may choose to write their proposal in the format of a grant application. Exam questions usually focus on the student's research and the developing area of expertise. The Oral Prelim is an

opportunity to pinpoint areas that may be beneficial to study in more detail.

Passing the Oral Prelim is determined by the research committee based on the quality of the proposal and the student's reasoning, critical thinking, and communication skills. Students who do not pass may retake the exam once, typically within four months (up to one year by petition). The committee chair must provide written feedback within one week of either exam attempt. Students who fail a second attempt must leave the Plant Pathology program.

Dissertator status is granted the semester after successful completion of the preliminary exam. Students will receive an email from the Graduate School when they are granted dissertator status. This email contains essential information about the rules of being a dissertator. Review [eligibility requirements for dissertator fee status](#).

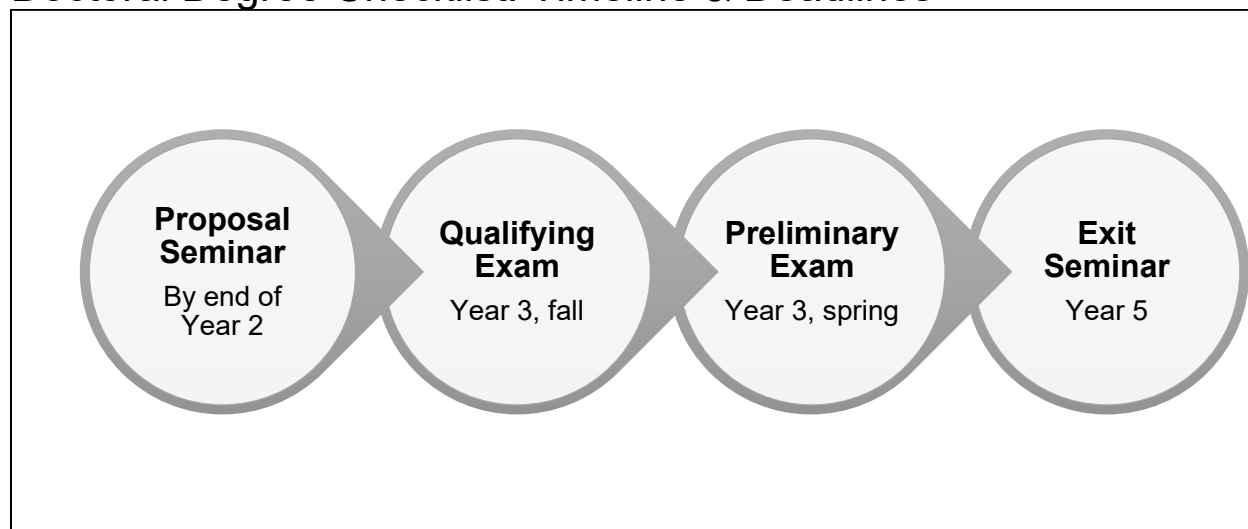
Final Oral Exam/Defense

Final Oral Examination

When a student has completed the research and written a thesis to the satisfaction of the major professor and the research committee, they schedule the Final Oral exam. The oral examination covers the thesis and the general field of the major and minor studies. When the candidate passes the examination, the committee signs the final oral defense warrant. If significant thesis revisions are requested, the committee may wait for these revisions to be completed prior to signing the warrant.

The candidate may not take the final oral examination until all other requirements for the degree have been satisfied.

Doctoral Degree Checklist: Timeline & Deadlines



Use this graphic for time to degree planning.

The Graduate School provides a doctoral degree guide with deadlines and key requirements (grad.wisc.edu/current-students/doctoral-guide). Students must also complete all program-specific requirements outlined below.

- Review [important dates and deadlines](#) early on to ensure timely graduation.
- Enroll in PL PATH 923 for final term and schedule exit seminar. Summer graduates should enroll in PL PATH 923 the preceding spring term.
- Schedule final defense date. All committee members must be present for their final defense – physical or remote.
- Request a [final warrant](#) as soon as defense date is set.
- [Apply](#) for graduation in Student Center
- Complete Doctoral Exit Surveys
 - [Survey of Earned Doctorates](#)
 - [Graduate School's Doctoral Exit Survey](#)
- Obtain all advisory committee members' e-signatures on electronic warrant by term deadline.
- Submit the final dissertation in ProQuest; pay a dissertation deposit fee

Russell Labs will cover the cost of three hard-bound copies of a student's dissertation. The student will receive one personal copy. The two remaining copies will be given to the faculty advisor and the department library. Staff will be in touch to complete this request.

Changing Degrees/Program Plan

Students may, at various points throughout their graduate degree program, have reason to change their degree (from MS to PhD or from PhD to MS) within Plant Pathology. The advisor may initiate this conversation with the student if they feel there is a reason for the student to continue for a PhD or leave the program early with an MS, or the student may discuss these options with their advisor if they are interested in changing their degree.

Change Initiated by Student

Students who decide to transition from MS to PhD or PhD to MS should discuss this change with their advisor, advisory committee, and the Graduate Program Manager. Prior department approval is needed for a master's student to pursue a PhD degree. To formally request a degree change, [apply to add/change a degree program](#).

Change Initiated by Advisor and Advisory Committee

See Not Meeting Academic Expectations on Page 24.

Students with extenuating circumstances as described in the "Academic Exception Petitions" section, or students approved for medical leave, should consult with the

Graduate Program Manager, their advisor, and/or their advisory committee to determine the best course of action.

Changing Program Plans

Students who no longer wish to pursue a graduate degree in the Department of Plant Pathology have a few options to consider. The student should discuss these options with their advisor, advisory committee, and Graduate Program Manager before action is taken.

- Withdraw before term end or complete the term in which the decision is made. Appointment ends the day a student withdraws or last day of their last term.
- Transfer to a new UW graduate degree program in a different department
 - Possible to maintain current Plant Pathology advisor if they are affiliated with the new graduate program.
 - Approval from the new program is needed. Students should work with that program's Graduate Program Manager to learn more.
- Transfer to an external institution. Appointment ends the day a student withdraws or last day of their last term.

Grievance Process

Each college or program on campus has a grievance process that students can use to address other concerns regarding their experience in the program. Below is the Plant Pathology grievance process.

- The student is encouraged to speak first with the person towards who the grievance is directed towards to see if a situation can be resolved at this level.
- Should a satisfactory resolution not be achieved, the student should contact any of the following to discuss the grievance,
 - a. Entomology Chair: Dr. Sean Schoville
 - b. Forest & Wildlife Ecology Chair: Dr. Tim Van Deelen
 - c. Plant Pathology Chair: Dr. Paul Koch
 - d. Graduate Program Manager: Emily Laabs
 - e. Department Administrator: Alyson AmendaAny 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/>.
- Other campus resources include:
 - a. The Graduate School - <http://grad.wisc.edu/>
 - b. McBurney Disability Resource Center - <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/>
 - c. Employee Assistance Office - <http://eao.wisc.edu/>

- d. Ombuds Office - <http://ombuds.wisc.edu/>
 - e. University Health Services – <http://uhs.wisc.edu/>
 - f. UW Office of Equity and Diversity - <https://oed.wisc.edu/>
 - g. Plant Pathology Graduate Council (PPGC) - <https://sites.google.com/view/ppgcuwmadison/>
 - h. Plant Science Graduate Student Council (PSGSC) - <https://psgsc.wisc.edu/>
- If the issue is not resolved to the student's satisfaction the student can submit the grievance to the Graduate Program Manager in writing, within 60 calendar days of the alleged unfair treatment.
 - 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.
 - The faculty committee will determine a decision regarding the grievance. The Graduate Program Manager will 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.
 - At this point, if either party (the student or the person toward 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.
 - 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/>.

Student Health and Wellness

UW-Madison has a holistic resource for all things wellness called "UWell". The site includes information and opportunities for wellness for your work/school, financial, environmental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and community. Go to <https://uwell.wisc.edu/>.

Students who pay segregated fees are eligible for University Health Services (<https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/>). There is no charge to students for many basic services including counseling sessions, because services are paid through tuition and fees. Personal health and wellness services are also available in addition to medical services.

Securing Health Insurance Coverage

Graduate students who hold an appointment as an assistant of 33.33% or more or who have a fellowship may be eligible for health insurance and other benefits beyond University Health Services. Students should contact CALS HR in the unit where they have been hired to select one of several health care plans within 30 days of their hire date.

Graduate students without an assistantship or fellowship who are currently enrolled can use the services of University Health Services (UHS), the campus health clinic. Many services are provided at no extra cost, including outpatient medical care during regular business hours, Monday through Friday. UHS is located in the Student Services Tower at 333 East Campus Mall, 608-265-5000. For more info, visit the UHS web site at <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/>.

Prescription medications, emergency room visits and hospitalization are not included in UHS benefits. Therefore, supplemental insurance covering these drugs and services is recommended for all students and is required for international students. The UHS Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) is an excellent option for many students. Contact the SHIP office at 608-265-5600 for more information.

Disability Information

Students with disabilities have access to disability resources through UW-Madison's McBurney Disability Resource Center. Admitted students should first go through the steps to "[Become a McBurney Client](#)".

Additional [non-academic] disability campus resources (not found through the McBurney Center) can be found at <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/> under the Other Resources tab.

Mental Health Resources on and off campus

University Health Services (UHS) is the primary mental health provider for students on campus. UHS Counseling and Consultation Services offers a wide range of services to the diverse student population of UW-Madison. They offer immediate crisis counseling, same day appointments and ongoing treatment. Go to <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/> or call 608-265-5600.

UHS service costs are covered for students through tuition and fees.

There are many mental health resources throughout the Madison community, but UHS Counseling and Consultation Services is the best resource for referrals to off-campus providers. Call 608-265-5600 for assistance in finding an off-campus provider.

Enrollment Requirements

Students 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

Academic Exception Petitions

Academic exceptions are considered on an individual case by case basis and should not be considered a precedent. Deviations from normal progress are highly discouraged, but the program recognizes that there are in some cases extenuating academic and personal circumstances. Petitions for course exceptions/substitutions or exceptions to the Satisfactory Progress Expectations (academic or conduct) shall be directed to the Director of Graduate Studies and Curriculum Committee Chair.

Students who face circumstances (similar to tenure extensions) as noted in university regulations, this includes,

childbirth, adoption, significant responsibilities with respect to elder or dependent care obligations, disability or chronic illness, or circumstances beyond one's personal control

should work in consultation with their advisory committee, the Curriculum Committee, and the Director of Graduate Studies to discuss the granting of extensions to normal progress requirements.

Where warranted, the petition should provide good evidence of plans and ability to return to conformance with the standard and to acceptably complete the program. The normal extension will be one semester; anything beyond this will be granted only in the event of highly extraordinary circumstances. Extensions will be granted formally with a note of explanation to be placed in the student's file.

The following requirements are under the purview of the UW Graduate School and cannot be modified:

- minimum composition of advisory committees set by the Graduate School
- standards defining Academic Satisfactory Progress
- minimum credit requirements

Satisfactory Academic Progress

A student's continuation as a graduate student at UW-Madison is at the discretion of their program, the Graduate School, and their 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 a student's academic standing (detailed below), financial aid (see this policy page: policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1040), or funding (consult funding sources, 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.

Graduate students are expected to maintain a cumulative 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 within the timeline outlined by the Graduate School. The same holds true if a graduate student carries two or more incomplete grades over multiple semesters.

In addition to the Graduate School's monitoring of satisfactory academic progress, this program regularly reviews the satisfactory academic progress of its students through an

Annual Progress Report. The annual progress report will be discussed and completed during committee meetings, as discussed on Page 19. These progress reports will be stored and used to review the student's progress over time.

Not Meeting Academic Expectations

Student progress will be reviewed through coursework and research progress at their Annual Progress Report meetings. If the advisor and graduate advisory committee find at the meeting or at any other time that a student has failed to achieve satisfactory progress towards the academic expectations set in this handbook, the student will be notified in writing and given an opportunity to submit a response within a set time (typically 2 weeks). The response may be written or in presentation form, as determined by the advisory committee. The advisor and advisory committee will review the response within 2 weeks and determine if further action is needed.

Students may be placed on probation for one semester. If this happens, the student, their advisor, and the advisory committee should write and agree on specific goals or milestones to reach during the probationary semester. The student's progress in achieving these goals will be reviewed by the advisory committee following the probationary semester. Students placed on probation may be allowed to continue based upon review of progress during the probationary semester, or they may be dismissed from the program.

If a student wishes to appeal any decision stemming from the probationary review process, they can do so within 2 weeks of the date of the decision letter through submitting a letter to the chair and requesting a new hearing with the Graduate Academic Affairs Committee. Previous annual progress reports will be referenced if the student pursues an appeal process.

Students may be disciplined or dismissed from the graduate program for any type of misconduct (academic, non-academic, professional, or research). Information about expectations for personal conduct and examples of misconduct can be found in the section below.

If either a student or a faculty advisor develops concerns about their mentoring relationship, they are strongly encouraged to proactively discuss this with the Graduate Academic Affairs chair, Graduate Program Manager, or a member of the student's advisory committee. If the student-advisor relationship is not successful, an ad hoc committee will be formed to help the student find another research advisor. This committee shall consist of the department chair and the Graduate Affairs chair. If the student's advisor is serving as department chair or graduate affairs chair, another faculty member will serve on the ad hoc committee. If a faculty advisor cannot be secured, the department may proceed with administrative dismissal of the student.

Funding, Employment, and Finances

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

Most students are funded year-round 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. Students should work with their advisor to discuss options.

Students admitted into Plant Pathology graduate programs are typically offered a 50%, 12-month research assistantship that is renewable annually. Reappointments are subject to the availability of funds and contingent upon a student’s satisfactory academic progress. Students are encouraged to seek out teaching assistantships, fellowships, or other external funding sources to supplement their faculty advisor’s funding support. Should a lapse in funding arise, the department will assist in finding additional funding opportunities. If funding cannot be secured, the department may proceed with administrative dismissal of the student.

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](#)

Campus-Wide and External Sources

To help students 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. Students should discuss options with their 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 \(GAPP\)](#)

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. Students 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](#)

Students who experience sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and/or stalking have many options and services available to them on and off campus, including mental health counseling, victim advocacy and access to the criminal and campus disciplinary systems. For a list a confidential support and reporting options, please visit <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/prevention/violence-prevention/resources/>.

Faculty, staff, teaching assistants, and others who work directly with students at UW-Madison are required by law to report first-hand knowledge or disclosures of sexual assault to university officials for statistical purposes. In addition, disclosures made to certain university employees, such as academic advisors or university administrators, may be forwarded to the campus Title IX coordinator for a response. For more

information, please visit <https://doso.students.wisc.edu/sexual-assault-dating-and-domestic-violence/>.

Professional Development

When students participate in professional development, they build skills needed to succeed academically and thrive in their career. The following are professional development activities that we recommend for 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 a student’s 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 students explore careers, prepare for a job search, build their network and learn from alumni, manage projects, communicate about 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 students’ 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.

Plant Pathology Doctoral Minor – Non-Plant Pathology PhD students

The Plant Pathology Doctoral Minor is designed for students who wish to receive an Option A - External Minor in Plant Pathology to augment their PhD curriculum.

This minor option is not available to students pursuing a PhD in Plant Pathology. For more information on the Graduate's School requirements for a minor go to <https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/minors/>.

- Plant Pathology Minor Course Requirements A minor in Plant Pathology must meet the following requirements:
- Nine credits of Plant Pathology courses
- At least eight credits must come from UW-Madison courses
- One course must be introductory plant pathology, such as PL PATH 300 Introduction to Plant Pathology or an equivalent course
- No more than two credits can be from independent study or PL PATH 923 Seminar
- Enrollment in PL PATH 923 requires the student to present

At least one member of the student's thesis committee at the time of the student's defense must be faculty in the Plant Pathology Department. The curriculum committee are responsible for approving student plans for a Plant Pathology doctoral minor.

Students wishing to pursue a minor in Plant Pathology must complete and return the [Plant Pathology Doctoral Minor Certification Form](#) to the Plant Pathology Graduate Program Manager.