Policies, Procedures & Guidelines for Graduate Degrees

Department of Entomology
Texas A&M University

For all students entering Graduate Programs beginning January 2021.
(Updated based on College and University Policy Revisions, 2018-2019)

Programs of Study

The Department of Entomology offers Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Entomology. Within these programs, subject matter areas include arthropod ecology, biological control, integrated pest management, molecular biology, physiology, genetics toxicology, chemical ecology, plant resistance, systematics, and urban, medical/veterinary, and forensic entomology. Students come into the field of entomology with diverse interests, science backgrounds and career goals. Students are able to tailor their education and research interests for the respective degree program with the help of their major advisor and advisory committees. Graduates from these programs have become prominent leaders in entomological research, application, education, and regulatory affairs of private and public sector arenas, as well as international agencies and foreign countries.

The Master of Science degree requires a minimum of 32 semester hours and a thesis; and the Doctor of Philosophy degree requires a dissertation and a minimum of 64 hours beyond the Master of Science or a minimum of 96 semester hours beyond the baccalaureate degree. The department does not have a formal foreign language requirement for the Ph.D. degree, but graduate advisory committees may specify requirements that they feel will broaden and enhance the students' education and training.

Laboratory Safety

Laboratory safety is a high priority for the Department of Entomology and Texas A&M University. In order to ensure the safety of all who work in our laboratories and classrooms, completion of Laboratory Safety Training as outlined by the Office of Environmental Health and Safety is mandatory. Students should complete ***Hazard Communication*** – *Train Traq Course #11020* provided through the Texas A&M University System Training. If you are receiving an Assistantship, you are considered an Employee so click on the course number under "Employee Training Resources". However, if you are receiving a Fellowship click on the course number under "Student Training Resources". At the end of this training you will be provided instructions for email receipt of your course certification. It is the responsibility of the student to provide a copy of the verification of Hazard Communication Training Completion to the major advisor and the human resources office. Graduate students are not permitted to begin work in a research or teaching laboratory without having successfully completed this training. Consult with your major advisor about completing training level II, which is

laboratory specific and completed under their instruction. Failure to adhere to university and laboratory specific guidelines has severe consequences to the PI for whom the student works. It puts the PI, the student and the department in violation of State and TAMUS Hazard Communications protocols. If this occurs, all research in the laboratory will likely be suspended until compliance is achieved.

Major Advisor

The major advisor serves as the chairperson of the student's advisory committee, and assists the student with selection of a research topic, course selection and generally guides the student throughout his/her research program, academic endeavors, and professional development. Students should meet with their major advisor early and often to sustain clear communication with respect to academic and thesis/dissertation planning, execution and degree completion.

Advisory Committee

The advisory committee is to be composed of faculty who are members of the Texas A&M University Graduate Faculty. A complete list of these faculty can be found at https://gradcom.tamu.edu/FacultySearch.aspx . The advisory committee consists of a minimum of three faculty members for the M.S. and a minimum of four faculty members for the Ph.D. It is the committee's responsibility to supervise the degree plan (a formal document listing the courses to be taken during the graduate program), approve the research proposal, administer and evaluate the preliminary (for Ph.D. students) and final examinations and approve the thesis or dissertation. Advisory committee members may be changed if the change is agreeable to the student, all committee members, the head of the department, and The Graduate and Professional School (Petition for Change of Committee - via the Document Processing System at http://ogsdpss.tamu.edu). At the initial meeting of the advisory committee, the student should supply the members with information concerning the student's academic background, educational and career goals, a proposed degree plan (Degree Plan – at http://ogsdpss.tamu.edu an updated resume/cv, and general ideas and concepts for thesis or dissertation research.

Composition of graduate advisory committee:

- Master of Science Degree - At least 3 members of the graduate faculty with at least 1 of these from outside the department. (The committee members from outside the department cannot have a joint appointment in Entomology.)

- Doctor of Philosophy Degree - At least 4 members of the graduate faculty with at least 1 of these from outside the department. (The committee members from outside the department cannot have a joint appointment in Entomology.)

- For both M.S. and Ph.D. Committees, >50% of the committee members must be members of the Entomology Graduate Faculty who are eligible to serve as the chair of the graduate student committees.

- Entomology Graduate Faculty are located statewide. Entomology Graduate Faculty that are temporarily or permanently located outside of the Brazos County may serve as Chair of the committee. In this circumstance, it is strongly advised that the committee also include at least one committee member from Entomology that is located within the Brazos County. This ensures that the student has access to departmental resources, space, and academic mentoring at all times.

- Individuals serving as a Special Appointment to the Graduate Faculty serve as an additional member of the advisory committee. The Special Appointment category provides a means for scientists or others with special knowledge or expertise to serve on the advisory committee for a specific student. They cannot serve in the capacity of Co-Chair. They are non-voting members of the committee, however their vote on student performance is solicited as advisory to assessment of student performance.

The rules for forming Advisory Committees are very specific and can be complex. Students are encouraged to seek clarification in particular cases from the Associate Department Head for Academic Programs or the Senior Academic Advisor.

Advisory Committee Planning and Report Form

The annual advisory committee meeting is intended to provide student guidance and mentorship through assessment of academic and research progress as well as career and professional development. The student is responsible for convening at least one advisory committee meeting each year to assess academic and research progress as well as plans for the coming year. The students should prepare a brief annual progress report and plan of work (written or oral), and an updated resume/cv. The annual reporting period is September 1 to August 15. Upon completion of each meeting, doctoral students should submit the Doctoral Feedback form, sent to them by the Senior Academic Advisor, and master students should complete the appropriate reporting form (Advisory Committee and Report Form - http://entomology.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Annual-Committee-Meeting-Form.pdf) and their updated resume/cv to the Senior Academic Advisor no later than August 15th.

The Associate Head for Academic Programs and the Senior Academic Advisor will monitor compliance of advisory committee meetings. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in a registration hold and a change of status to student *not in good standing*. Periodic status reports will be provided to the faculty and a summary will be provided to the Department Head.

Ombudsman:

The Department of Entomology ombudsman for graduate students is currently Dr. Craig Coates, Associate Department Head for Academic Programs. He is to serve as a mediator should conflict arise between a student and their chair or any member(s) of the advisory committee. His office is room 412E Heep Center, email is c-coates@tamu.edu and phone is 979-458-1219. The Graduate and Professional School also has an ombuds officer (https://grad.tamu.edu/About/OGAPS-Staff-Directory#Ombuds+Officer). *The Ombuds Officer advocates for the fair processes of graduate education and provides equal, open access to all parties: graduate and professional students, staff, faculty, and administrators*.

Departmental Course Work and Background Requirements

Graduate students entering the department have diverse backgrounds and academic degrees. Regardless of background, all students are expected to have training in basic sciences, including biology, chemistry through organic chemistry and mathematics through calculus. Students without this background are expected to take the appropriate undergraduate courses early in their program; but, these courses would not be part of the students Degree Plan. In addition, students earning graduate degrees in Entomology are expected to have competency in four core knowledge areas of entomology including: insect biodiversity, systematics, and insect evolution; insect ecology; insect physiology, toxicology, and insect genetics; and applied entomology. Fulfilment of Entomological competency is assessed by the Advisory Committee through a review of prior graduate course work and inclusion of complimentary core knowledge area graduate courses on the Degree Plan.

The Education Committee and head of the department are charged with insuring that adequate course work for demonstration of core knowledge areas in entomology is present on either transcripts of prior work, or the Degree Plan. Modifications to the Degree Plan may be recommended by either the Education Committee or head of the department prior to approval.

Degree Plan

The degree plan is a list of the courses the student agrees to complete for the respective degree (MS or PhD). A degree plan is required for all candidates for every graduate degree. A student's Advisory Committee is officially formed at the time the Degree Plan is approved. The number and type of courses included in an individual's program will depend upon the student's area of specialization as determined by the student and the advisory committee.

The Graduate and Professional School utilizes an online degree plan submission process, found at https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu/. The steps and process for approval of the degree plan is as follows:

- Discuss with Advisory Committee course work to comprise the degree plan.
- Complete Department of Entomology Graduate Studies Degree Plan Checklist http://entomology.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Graduate-Studies-Degree-Plan-Checklist_2020.pdf and compile other required departmental documents as detailed below.
- Submit the following documents to the Senior Academic Advisor:
    - Memo from student, through Advisory Committee Chair, to the Chair of the Education Committee regarding career goals, planned research topic, explanation of course and committee member selection (See Memo Template available online at http://entomology.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Degree-Plan-Memorandum-Sample.pdf
    - Department of Entomology Graduate Studies Degree Plan Checklist http://entomology.tamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Graduate-Studies-Degree-Plan-Checklist_2020.pdf
    - Transcripts (print unofficial TAMU transcript from Howdy)
    - Copy of current resume/C.V.
- Complete the online degree plan at https://ogsdpss.tamu.edu .
    - This Degree Plan will first be routed electronically to the Senior Academic Advisor for an initial review to ensure that all departmental requirements have been met.
    - The Degree Plan will then be routed electronically to the Major Advisor/Committee Chair. Upon approval of the Chair, it will then be sent to the remainder of the committee members.
    - Once the entire Advisory Committee has approved the Degree Plan, the Senior Academic Advisor will then prepare the document to be taken to the Education Committee for review.
- Education Committee
    - Senior Academic Advisor submits packet to Education Committee
    - Education Committee makes recommendation to the Department Head
- Head of the Department considers the Education Committee recommendations and either approves or makes further recommendations to the student and Advisory Committee
- The Graduate and Professional School.

An approved degree plan may be modified. Any changes to the degree plan must be submitted by petition (Petition for Course Change – The Grad School website via the Document Processing System at http://ogsdpss.tamu.edu), approved by the Advisory Committee, the head of the department, and The Graduate and Professional School. All items that require a department head signature must be submitted through the Senior Academic Advisor for review of document preparation.

Deadlines for filing Degree Plans are shown in Figure 1. The Graduate and Professional School enforces the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences requirement for M.S. students to file degree plans by the end of the second regular semester (not including summer sessions). Ph.D. students are required to file Degree Plans by the

end of the second regular semester, not including summer sessions (Figure 1). Failure to file degree plans on time will result in an automatic registration hold and a change of status to *student not in good standing.*

Core Knowledge Areas

Students earning graduate degrees in Entomology are expected to demonstrate competency in four Core Knowledge Areas.

The Core Knowledge Areas and approved graduate courses are:

- Insect Biodiversity, Systematics and Insect Evolution
  - Courses: ENTO 601, 602, and 612.

- Insect Ecology
  - Courses: ENTO 614, 625, ENTO 627, ENTO 689-Chemical Ecology, ENTO 689-Decomposition Ecology.

- Insect Physiology, Toxicology, and Insect Genetics
  - Courses: ENTO 615, 619, 628, 689-Invertebrate Immunology.

- Applied Entomology
  - Courses: ENTO 608, 610, 617, 618, 619, 626, 630, 631 and 635.

Composition of Selected Courses

- Master of Science students must complete one course in 3 of the 4 areas.
- Doctoral students must complete one graduate course in each of the 4 areas.
- Previous graduate level courses utilized in another graduate degree may not be counted towards degree completion for a TAMU degree, but may be incorporated into the Degree Plan Checklist for Core Knowledge Area completion
- No course can satisfy more than one Core Knowledge Area.

Minimum and Maximum Credit Hours, GPA and Grades

Master of Science

- Minimum 32 credit hours, with 12-15 fixed credit hours in ENTO preferred.
- No more than 9 hours of 300 or 400 level courses may be used for degree plans.
- No more than 12 combined hours of 691 (8 hrs max) plus 685 (8 hrs max each).
- No more than either 12 hours or 1/3 of hours listed on degree plan can be transferred into degree plan. Transfer courses must be grade B or better.
- No unresolved grades of D, F, or U can remain on the degree plan.
- To remain in good academic standing, student must maintain 3.0 or higher cumulative and degree plan GPR.

- MS students can have no more than one degree-plan ENTO course with a grade of “C” to qualify for graduation.

Doctor of Philosophy

- No more than 9 hours of 300 or 400 level courses may be used for degree plans. If entering with a baccalaureate degree only, the degree plan must contain 96 hours.
- If entering with an Office of Admission’s approved master’s degree, degree plan must contain 64 hours
- Doctoral students must complete 12 fixed credit ENTO graduate courses on the degree plan. At least 21 of the total credit hours required for the degree on the degree plan must be fixed credit hours (ENTO 681 *Seminar* and ENTO 690 *Theory of Research* are not included in this section). (Departmental Requirement)
- All doctoral students must make grades of “B” or better in all ENTO courses on their degree plan to qualify for graduation.
- No more than four (4) courses (12 credit hours maximum) can be completed through distance education formatted courses (699 or 700 sections).
- A 99-hour Doctoral Cap from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is imposed on all doctoral students
    - Once a student accumulates more than the allowable number of student credit hours, he or she will not qualify to pay only in-state tuition
    - Changes effective summer 2006 permit doctoral students to pursue their program for seven calendar years before a charge of out of state tuition is initiated. More than 99 hours can be taken during the seven years at the in-state tuition rate.
        - Full time students pursuing the doctoral degree a have seven years before being charged out of state tuition, no matter how many semester credit hours are accumulated.
        - Part time students pursuing a doctoral degree have up to 99 semester hours before they are charged out of state tuition, even if they pass the seven year mark.

Time to Completion of Degree Requirements

All work toward the Master’s degree must be completed during 7 consecutive years and in 10 consecutive years for the Ph.D. However, there are important financial consequences associated with prolonging graduate work beyond the Department of Entomology’s recommended 2 years for Master’s and approximately 4 years for Ph.D. Doctoral students must consider the 99 hr Doctoral Cap (see information in prior section). Doctoral students should discuss their programs with the Associate Department Head for Academic Programs or the Senior Academic Advisor to make sure they fall within the guidelines for in-state tuition.

Seminar Requirements

ENTO 681 – Seminar – These are special topics seminars offered each semester by various members of the faculty (1 credit-hour per offering). Contemporary Topics vary by semester depending on faculty expertise and current issues in the science of entomology. Seminars are graded as satisfactory/unsatisfactory. These seminars are designed to expand student knowledge and to provide written and oral speaking experience. All graduate students are required to participate in ENTO 681 (Seminar), prior to graduation:

- M.S. students must include 1 credit-hour of ENTO 681 on the degree plan (NOTE: TAMU Graduate Catalog Limits maximum number of 681 credits to 2)
- Ph.D. students must include 2 credit hours of ENTO 681 on the degree plan

ENTO 690 – Theory of Research – Participation in the Departmental Seminar Series is required of all graduate students.

- Ph.D. students must include a minimum of 4 credit hours on the degree plan
- M.S. students must include a minimum of 2 credit hours on the degree plan (NOTE: TAMU Graduate Catalog Limits maximum number of 681 credits to 3)
- Grading will be satisfactory/unsatisfactory, with attendance of 70% needed to make a satisfactory grade

Although it would not accrue additional coursework credit, students are strongly encouraged to present their research to the Department as part of the Departmental Seminar Series or Departmental Graduate Student Forum, in addition to their defense seminar. In some cases, graduate students may wish to present to the Department another aspect of their research, not directly associated with their thesis or dissertation. Students wishing to be part of the Departmental Seminar Series should contact the faculty member in charge of ENTO 690.

Research Proposals (M.S. and Ph.D.)

The Graduate and Professional School requires a research proposal, which must be approved by all members of the advisory committee. In brief, the proposal should include a literature review and assessment of the current state of knowledge, a statement of the research goal, hypotheses and objectives, and methodology. The advisory committee will review the proposed research and offer constructive criticism.

Ph.D. students are required to present their proposed dissertation research to the department in an open seminar and seek audience input on the proposed work. Once the dissertation proposal has been reviewed by the Advisory Committee, but prior to final approval, the student must schedule and announce a proposal seminar. The seminar must be broadly advertised to faculty, staff and students, and must be held in a location suitable for a departmental seminar. The seminar must provide information on the background for the research, specific research objectives, and proposed research methodology. The student and Advisory Committee must consider feedback from the seminar audience as the proposal is finalized and approved.

Deadlines for filing Thesis or Dissertation Proposals are shown in Figure 1. M.S. students are required by the department to file thesis proposals by the end of the third semester, including summer sessions (Figure 1). Ph.D. students are required to file dissertation proposals by the end of their fourth regular semester, including summer sessions (Figure 1).

Failure to submit proposals by these deadlines will result in a change in status to *student not in good standing* and a registration hold being placed on the student for enrollment in the subsequent semester, except in cases in which extenuating circumstances warrant additional time. Additional time may be granted by the Associate Head for Academic Programs, but only after reasonable notification and justification are reviewed as submitted by memorandum from the student through the Advisory Committee Chair.

NOTE: These are departmental deadlines that supersede The Graduate and Professional School graduation calendar. Plan accordingly to meet the deadline requirements.

Thesis or Dissertation Proposal Form

Preparation and Submission

The research proposal is a description of the research which the student intends to undertake and which will be reported in a detailed, comprehensive fashion in the completed thesis or dissertation. Note the following:

- The completed research proposal will include a properly completed Research Proposal Approval Page, which will be routed through DocuSign https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=4bb0489e-9c28-44b1-b2da-c2fa9d9d0b90&env=na2&acct=16517be3-5a0c-489f-a422-a57859ee0f60&v=2
- Filing the proposal is one of the requirements for admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree.
- Proposal length will be determined by the advisory committee.
- In addition to the narrative, the student must include a list of all references cited.
- The student is to select an accepted peer review journal for style conformity.

Objectives. The research objectives and hypotheses should be clearly stated in terms that lend themselves to observation and/or measurement, and they should be explained in the context of the relevance of the overall research problem.

Present Status of the Question. State the hypothesis(es) to be evaluated or observations to be made and connect these to the research objectives and over-arching problem/issue. Summarize pertinent previous research in this field, showing the relation of the material cited to the present problem. Document the summary with citations from the literature. This need not be a complete bibliography, but should indicate that the

state of knowledge in the proposed field has been surveyed. The references should be consistent in form with the professional journal cited for style and format.

Procedure. State the steps to be taken to achieve each research objective. This statement should indicate that the procedure(s) has/have been thoroughly considered. Give the nature of the data and the procedures to be employed in data analysis. The proposal should state clearly how the research is to be accomplished and should indicate that an attempt will be made to explain the results in terms of past research.

Proposal Checklist.

- Ph.D. students must present a proposal seminar (see above), and any concerns or suggestions for improvement considered prior to approval of dissertation proposal.
- The Proposal Approval Page for Thesis, Dissertation should be completed and routed within the DocuSign system, using the instructions provided on The Graduate and Professional Studies website.
- The document should be initiated by the student, include the Senior Academic Advisor (indicated as the Graduate Program Assistant within DocuSign), all members of the Advisory Committee, and include Dr. Craig Coates as the individual to sign on behalf of the head of the department.
- Notify the Senior Academic Advisor, Advisory Chair, and all Advisory Committee members of the submission within DocuSign.

Graduate Work Involving Vertebrates, Humans, Recombinant DNA, or Infectious Agents, or any other Biohazards

Federal policy requires any institution receiving federal funding be compliant with all laws and regulations regarding the use of humans and other vertebrate animals, recombinant DNA, infectious agents or other Biohazards for research purposes. This compliance is overseen by the Office of Research Compliance & Biosafety (http://rcb.tamu.edu/). The use of animals is defined as any activity involving vertebrate animals in which the natural lifestyle or movements of the animals is materially altered. Use of animal carcasses, tissues, and fluids obtained specifically for research, testing, or teaching purposes are subject to review according to applicable regulations and may be determined to be “use of animals.”

Personnel who work with animals or are at risk from animal exposure must be enrolled in a Biosafety Occupational Health Program and informed of the risks associated with the animal exposure.

The Office of Research Compliance's Animal Welfare Assurance Program (AWAP) supports Texas A&M's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUC), through which all faculty, staff, and students using animals, regardless of location or funding, must obtain approval before activities begin. Committee decisions and guidelines are regularly posted to the Research Compliance & Biosafety website https://rcb.tamu.edu/animals.

Graduate students contemplating research activities such as surveys of human subjects, or similar data acquisition, should review the relevant regulations and policies with their major advisors, and submit appropriate documentation for institutional review and approval before beginning any project work (http://rcb.tamu.edu/).

Research compliance includes ***any student*** of Texas A&M that plans to use vertebrates, recombinant DNA, or any infectious agents as part of his/her dissertation or thesis project, ***regardless of*** the proposed research project, the actual site of the research, animal ownership, or the species being used. Work initiated prior to obtaining an approved Animal Use Protocol (AUP) may jeopardize all animal research and federal funding at TAMU. Students that do not obtain approval and complete required training risk delaying the awarding of their degree.

> **The approval cover page for thesis and dissertation requires a listing of any and all approved protocols and permits needed to complete the proposed research.**

If a graduate student's research is to be conducted under an existing, previously approved protocol, the principal investigator of the approved AUP must:

- Update the AUP by submitting an amendment to add the student as a co-investigator, **and**
- Take responsibility for training, or direct the student to Comparative Medicine Program training courses (for training call 845-7433).

If the graduate student's research is not covered under an existing AUP that is approved and active, then prior to any work being done;

- An IRB or IACUC proposal must be completed, submitted and approved per instructions at the research compliance and biosafety (http://rcb.tamu.edu/).
- The principal investigator (major advisor) has responsibility for training or to direct the student to Comparative Medicine Program training courses https://vpr.tamu.edu/resources/research-infrastructure-support/cmp.

Preliminary Exams for Ph.D. Students

The preliminary exam allows a Ph.D. student to demonstrate mastery of entomology and entomological literature as well as that of related sciences. A preparation checklist is available on The Graduate and Professional School website *"Steps to Fulfill Doctoral Degree Requirements"* https://grad.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Getting-a-Degree/Doctoral-Degree-Requirements , but following points should be emphasized:

- Ph.D students are expected to complete their preliminary examinations:
  - 64 & 96 Hr Ph.D. - By the end of the fifth regular semester (not including summer sessions, See Figure 1).
  - At the end of the semester in which the exam is given, there should be no more than 6 hours of course work remaining on degree plan. (Does not include research credits – ENTO 691s)
- There are 2 parts to the exam. The written part must be completed satisfactorily before the oral part is to be given. Both parts should be completed within a 3 week period.
- In case of unsatisfactory preliminary exams, the student may be given a second examination after 6 months.
- Successful completion of the preliminary examination is one of the requirements for admission to candidacy for the doctoral degree.
- The preliminary examination is valid for four years.

Well before scheduling the preliminary exams the student should consult with each member of the Advisory Committee to discuss what will be expected. Prior to scheduling the preliminary exam the student should obtain the Preliminary Exam Checklist (The Graduate and Professional School website https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=c5fe35e4-6bc8-4e47-849f-8fbd8c37feec&env=na2&acct=16517be3-5a0c-489f-a422-a57859ee0f60&v=2) review and complete the form online using the DocuSign workflow, with the assistance of the Committee Chair. The form requires the signatures of the Senior Academic Advisor, Committee Chair and head of the department, students should conduct a degree evaluation in Howdy prior to submitting preliminary examination checklist to Senior Academic Advisor to insure they meet eligibility requirements for preliminary examination. All items that require a department head signature must be submitted through the Senior Academic Advisor for review of documents. Failure to follow these steps may invalidate all examinations or require re-examination.

At the conclusion of the exam, the Committee Chair forwards the Preliminary Examination Checklist form and the Report of the Preliminary Examination form (The Graduate and Professional School website https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=c5fe35e4-6bc8-4e47-849f-8fbd8c37feec&env=na2&acct=16517be3-5a0c-489f-a422-a57859ee0f60&v=2) within the DocuSign system to The Graduate and Professional

School. Copies of these forms are available within the DocuSign system, provided the student initiated the form through their @tamu.edu email address.

Admission to Candidacy

To be admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree in Entomology, a student must have:

- Completed all formal coursework on the degree plan with the exception of any remaining 681, 684, 690, and 691
- A 3.0 Graduate GPR and a Degree Plan GPR of at least 3.0 with no grade lower than C in any course on the degree plan
- Passed the preliminary examination (written and oral portions)
- Submitted an approved dissertation proposal
- Met residency requirements

The final examination will not be authorized for any doctoral student who has not been admitted to candidacy.

*Final Oral Defense and Defense Seminar**

Part of the requirement for all graduate degrees is presentation of the student's research in a seminar open to a general audience. This seminar does not fulfill the 681 Seminar degree plan requirement. It is generally scheduled just before the Final Dissertation Defense for the Ph.D. candidate and the Final Oral Examination and Thesis Defense for the M.S. student. The student should present their thesis or dissertation to their advisory committee for review several weeks prior to the scheduled date of the final oral examination and defense.

Deadlines for filing final examinations are available each semester from The Graduate and Professional School and published in their graduation calendars available at https://grad.tamu.edu/Buttons/Calendars . To schedule the Final Examination the student should initiate the Request and Announcement of the Final Examination within DocuSign (The Graduate and Professional School website https://na2.docusign.net/Member/PowerFormSigning.aspx?PowerFormId=6bc30a44-705e-428b-a517-90550cf350cc&env=na2&acct=16517be3-5a0c-489f-a422-a57859ee0f60&v=2 route online for all necessary signatures, and the fully signed document should be submitted to The Graduate and Professional School at least 10 working days prior to the scheduled exam date. It is recommended that Request and Announcement of Final Exams be initiated at least three-four (3-4) weeks in advance of the intended examination date. All items that require a department head signature must be submitted through the Senior Academic Advisor for review.

The final oral examination is not to be administered until all other requirements are completed, including the thesis/dissertation. The student must be registered in the semester in which the final exam is given. For the M.S. degree the final exam covers all

course work and research completed during the degree program; for the Ph.D., this exam consists primarily of questions concerning the dissertation and related topics. The committee can; however, examine other aspects of the student's program.

*It is departmental policy that the Final Examination will not be waived for M.S. candidates.

M.S. Thesis / Ph.D. Dissertation

The thesis or dissertation is to be the original work of the student. It must be grammatically correct, reflecting the ability of the student to express thoughts clearly. Instructions relating to specific requirements may be obtained from the Thesis Office, a section within The Graduate and Professional School https://grad.tamu.edu/New-Current-Students/Thesis-and-Dissertation-Services#
It is recommended that students utilize the available templates and arrange for a pre-submittal conference with the Thesis Office to review the development of the thesis/dissertation and gain guidance for completion of an acceptable document (see the graphic workflow chart at this website). The thesis or dissertation must be approved by the Advisory Committee, the head of the department, and Thesis Clerk, and be filed with the Thesis Office, a section within The Graduate and Professional School. All items that require a department head signature must be submitted through the Senior Academic Advisor for review. Students must submit either a hard copy or electronic version of their thesis/dissertation to the Senior Academic Advisor for their departmental file prior to receiving department head approval.

Students may delay publication of the thesis or dissertation by up to two years (or longer with special approval) for purposes of patent application or journal publication without affecting graduation. The choice to delay public release is offered in the Thesis Office questionnaire provided upon submission of the final thesis/dissertation. This decision should be made in consultation with your major advisor.

NOTE: Publication of Research in refereed journals prior to submission/publication of the thesis or dissertation requires citation of the published journal article(s) within the thesis or dissertation AND copyright permission of the use of any material from the published work.

Voucher Specimens

Voucher specimens – physical samples of the arthropod materials upon which your work is based – are required for all graduate student theses and dissertations. Preparation of voucher specimens should be discussed with the curator of the collection in which the specimens are to be housed, since different collections have different requirements for the deposition of such specimens. If materials are to be deposited in the Texas A&M University Insect Collection (TAMUIC), students should meet with TAMUIC personnel shortly after they submit their research proposals to discuss what

materials to submit and how those materials should be prepared. Making contact at this stage will help to avoid potential problems later on. Contact either the faculty Curator of the TAMUIC (currently Dr. John Oswald) or the TAMUIC Assistant Curator (collection manager) (currently Ms. Karen Wright) to discuss proper procedures for curating and submitting voucher specimens. The voucher specimens appropriate for individual research projects may involve preserved whole arthropods, cultures, slides, tissues, cells, nucleic acids, genetic sequences, or other materials needed to document your research. Reference should be made in all theses and dissertations, and in subsequent publications, to the repository or repositories in which voucher materials have been deposited.

Student in Good Standing

For students to remain in good standing with the department, the following must occur.

- Maintain a cumulative and degree plan GPR of at least a 3.0
- Make suitable progress toward degree completion as indicated in the departmental timeline chart and as follows:
    - Annual Committee Meeting Reports on File by August 15th
    - Approved Degree Plan
        - M.S. – 2nd long semester
        - PhD – 2nd long semester
    - Approved Proposals (see time line, Figure 1)
        - M.S. – 3nd semester
        - PhD – 4th semester
    - Ph.D. preliminary exams
        - 64 Hr Program – within the 5th semester
        - 96 Hr Program – within the 5th semester

If students are declared to be “NOT in good standing” (i.e., academic probation), the following will occur.

- The student and the student’s major advisor will be notified that the student is NOT in good standing and that a registration hold has been placed on the students account.
- The student will have one semester to return to a status of good standing.
- If the student remains “NOT in good standing” then they will be ineligible to be financially supported by departmental funds (i.e., research and teaching assistantships).
- Note: If a student’s GPR falls below a 3.0, they are immediately unable to be supported on Teaching Assistant funds.
- Continued status of “Not in good standing” can result in the termination of the student’s degree program.

Professional Communication

Our communication within and outside of the Aggie community should always be professional, courteous and respectful. We are expected to uphold high standards in all means of communication. University Rule 6.1.9. *Respect the forum (including Listserv, social media, public computing facilities) when communicating ideas to others via university information resources technologies, email accounts and any other university information resource (including access to the Internet). All communications should reflect high ethical standards and mutual respect and civility.*

These expectations include communication through the use of social media. There are at least two potential negative impacts for inappropriate communication on social media:

1. If student information entrusted to you, for example as a teaching assistant, is compromised, you may be in violation of FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Training and responsibilities with respect to this federal law are outlined by https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html overview from the U.S. Department of Education, and by http://registrar.tamu.edu/Registrar/media/REGI_SpecPDFDocs/WebFERPA.pdf overview from TAMU. Violations of FERPA are subject to investigation and prosecution https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintform.pdf.
2. Inappropriate communication of any type that can be accessed by prospective employers conducting background checks may negatively affect the outcome of employment consideration.

Inappropriate commentary reflects poorly on individuals who engage in this type of communication, as well as on our department, college and institution. Please focus on positive and civil discourse in all communication and maintain the highest standards at all times.

Consensual Relationships

The Texas A&M University System (system) is committed to maintaining work and educational environments that are free from conflicts of interest, favoritism, and abuse of authority. This regulation addresses amorous, romantic, and/or sexual relationships that, although consensual, may create actual or perceived ethical, discriminatory, and/or harassing situations disruptive to the member community. A consensual relationship is defined as a mutually agreeable amorous, romantic, and/or sexual relationship. An employee is defined as an individual holding a full or part-time position of TAMU system employment, including graduate assistants. Student worker positions are excluded from this definition. Students are defined as an individual who is currently enrolled at a TAMU system university.

1. The employment or supervision of spouses or close relatives is addressed in System Policy *07.05, Nepotism*. This regulation does not apply to a consensual relationship between an employee and the employee's spouse.

2. The consensual relationships covered by Sections 3 and 4 of this regulation are characterized by a difference in actual or perceived power that creates the potential for any of the following:

(a) a conflict of interest;

(b) allegations that the relationship resulted from coercion, exploitation and/or harassment; or

(c) allegations of favoritism and/or unfair treatment.

Prohibited Consensual Relationships

3. Employee/Undergraduate Relationships

A system university employee is prohibited from pursuing or having a consensual relationship with an undergraduate student at that institution. A consensual relationship in violation of this section may result in disciplinary action against the member employee, up to and including dismissal. An employee may request an exemption from the prohibition set forth in this section from the president or designee of the member for whom the employee works. Exemptions may be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Documentation of an exemption will be signed by the president or designee and placed in the employee's personnel file.

4. Individuals Under Employee's Authority or Supervision

Unless alternative arrangements are approved under Sections 4.1 and 4.2, a consensual relationship is prohibited between a member employee and another individual (graduate student, staff, faculty, or third party) who is under the employee's authority or supervision. An individual is under an employee's "authority or supervision" if the employee has one of the following: authority over any term or condition of the other individual's employment or academic status; job duties making the employee directly or indirectly responsible for the other individual's hiring, supervising, evaluating, teaching, coaching, grading, advising, mentoring, or providing benefits to or obtaining benefits from the other individual, including employment. This prohibition applies whether the other individual is an employee, student or third party.

4.1 For a consensual relationship covered by this section, the employee with the hiring, supervisory, evaluative, teaching, coaching, grading or advisory responsibilities, or the employee providing benefits to or obtaining benefits from the third party, must promptly notify their immediate supervisor of the relationship and engage in a discussion of alternative arrangements for hiring, supervising, evaluating, teaching, coaching, grading, advising, mentoring, or providing benefits to or obtaining benefits from the other individual.

An employee's failure to promptly self-report a consensual relationship under this section or a consensual relationship under this section that is not remedied through

approved alternative arrangements may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

4.2 Documentation of the alternative arrangements will be signed by each affected employee and placed in their personnel file. The individual's immediate supervisor must ensure that the issue is promptly reported in writing to the member chief executive officer. The member retains the right to determine if alternative arrangements are possible and, if so, which arrangement(s) is selected.

Aggie Honor Code

For many years Aggies have followed a Code of Honor, which is stated in the very simple verse:

An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.
The Aggie Code of Honor is an effort to unify the aims of all Texas A&M men and women toward a high code of ethics and personal dignity. For most, living under this code will be no problem, as it asks nothing of a person that is beyond reason. It only calls for honesty and integrity, characteristics that Aggies have always exemplified.
The Aggie Code of Honor functions as a symbol to all Aggies, promoting understanding and loyalty to truth and confidence in each other.
http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/

**[Entomology Policies & Procedures for Graduate Degrees.
Revisions: September 9, 2004, August 21, 2007, Revised: August 5, 2008, August 22, 2011, August 19, 2013; August 21, 2014; August 10, 2015; August 17, 2016; August 22, 2017; August 20, 2018; July 26, 2019; August 23, 2021]**