

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK
(July 2025 Edition)**



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To: All New Graduate Students in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife

Welcome to the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University! This Department is widely recognized as a top-ranking program in our field. Our mission is to build local, national, and international capacities to conserve ecosystems that support fish, wildlife, and society through the work that we do. We are fortunate to have hard-working, dedicated, and talented faculty and staff who are also wonderful people, as well as an equally hard-working and exceptional group of graduate students that you are now a part of. We are thrilled to welcome you to this unique community of scholars, collaborators, and friends!

Our Graduate Student Orientation Retreat and the Graduate Student Handbook are meant to assist you in your transition into our program. Although the handbook contains a great deal of useful information, please don't hesitate to ask your fellow graduate students or any of the faculty or staff about any questions that you may have. This handbook is a document which is constantly being revised. Suggestions about how this handbook could be improved will be welcomed and appreciated.

We are so pleased that you have chosen this department for your graduate studies and look forward to working with you as you develop into an outstanding professional and colleague in this Department!

Sincerely,

Dana Infante

**Who will make a difference for the rivers, the lakes, the land?
For the fish, the wildlife, the environment?
WE WILL!**

II. IMPORTANT CHANGES IN THIS EDITION

Please note that in several locations, the handbook text refers to the “FW File Sharing Site”. Upon matriculation to the Fisheries and Wildlife (FW) Department at Michigan State University (MSU), new students are added as members of this site. This file sharing site includes instructional videos and forms relevant to many topics covered in this handbook. Note also that MSU recently changed electronic systems for things such as registering for classes, and recording completion of your graduate degree requirements, including recording completion of required ‘Responsible Conduct of Research’ (RCR) training. The site contains documents that provide ‘step by step’ instructions for some of these electronic systems.

If any of the material in this handbook seems to contradict policies or advice acquired in other settings, please bring this to the attention of FW’s Graduate Program Director (Dr. Mary Tate Bremigan) or FW’s Graduate Secretary (Jill Cruth).

III. INTRODUCTION

Historical context and future vision

As one of the first Land Grant colleges, Michigan State University is a beneficiary of Land allotted through the passing of the Morrill Act in 1862. We recognize that MSU (and the FW Department) has benefitted from the interconnected histories of land, settlers, and indigenous peoples. Therefore, we offer this [land acknowledgement](#):

We collectively acknowledge that Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. In particular, the University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s twelve federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold Michigan State University more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.

While recognizing the complex history of how Land Grant universities were formed and are administered, we remain dedicated to several principles of the Land Grant mission. That mission seeks to provide (1) citizen access to higher education regardless of wealth or social status, (2) excellent instruction in the knowledge and capabilities needed by students for the professions and careers important to society, and (3) a strengthened democratic system and citizenry through programs of education, research, and outreach/extension. One example of the influence of the Land Grant Mission in our department is the Outreach requirement, that requires all graduate students to participate in an outreach experience as part of their degree program. The Land Grant Mission is infused into our Departmental Mission and Vision, which emphasize engagement and

leadership beyond the University. As a consequence, many Departmental faculty, staff, and students are engaged in applied research, demonstration projects, and extensive collaborations with resource managers. While application of knowledge is valued, the Department also values variety among our intellectual pursuits and heterogeneity in faculty composition, ultimately supporting a continuum of disciplinary, subject matter, and problem-solving knowledge. Although the Land Grant mission at Michigan State University has historically emphasized service to the Citizens of Michigan, we value activities centered more broadly across the United States and internationally. We believe that these activities will also better enable us to address important problems and opportunities in Michigan's agriculture and natural resource sectors.

The Fisheries and Wildlife Department recently completed a strategic plan that charts our course into the future. Our department's Graduate Program was featured prominently in the



development of this plan. Our integrated strategic plan calls for us to simultaneously Evolve, Explore, Educate, Engage, and Elevate (see Figure to left). In this vein, our mission is to build local, national, and international capacities to conserve ecosystems that support fish, wildlife, and society through integrated programs in research, education, and engagement. We strive to accomplish this mission through world-class, inclusive and innovative research, education, and engagement that promotes leadership in conservation of fisheries, wildlife, water, and land resources. In this context the goals of the Graduate Program

are: (1) to provide a graduate education that fosters independent creative scholars, who are leaders in fisheries, wildlife, water and land research, management, and education in public and private sectors; and (2) to ensure that students: a) appreciate the importance of diverse aspects of fisheries and wildlife; b) possess sufficient quantitative and qualitative analytical and critical thinking skills to be effective problem solvers; and c) possess effective skills necessary to communicate scientific concepts, principles and management approaches in public, professional, and academic environments. As we engage with each other, the University, and both local and global stakeholders, we strive for our actions to be consistent with our values of community, belonging, integrity, professionalism, collaboration, leadership, adaptability, transparency, innovation, and balance.

The present: pursuing a graduate degree in FW in 2025

Currently, the Fisheries and Wildlife (FW) Department's graduate program offers Ph.D. and MS degrees, as well as several certificate, interdepartmental specializations, dual degrees and dual majors options. The Department's graduate program is a national leader in the training of fishery, wildlife water and conservation professionals for careers in research, management, teaching, extension and consulting. Our graduates are hired by a variety of local, state and federal governmental agencies, academia, private corporations, museums, zoos and nature centers, tribal organizations, and environmental consulting firms.

The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University is unusually large and diverse in comparison to similar Departments at other universities in its breadth of faculty expertise and the range of different projects in which graduate students are engaged. In part, this reflects that our faculty value diverse approaches. Our faculty number about 50, many with joint appointments in other departments and colleges. These faculty members cumulatively advise approximately 80 Fisheries and Wildlife graduate students, whose research projects encompass diverse areas including limnology, fisheries, wildlife, and the human dimensions of natural resource conservation, among other topics. Most of our graduate students are supported through a combination of research assistantships and fellowships, although some receive support through teaching assistantships, or are “non-traditional” students that work on their degrees while being employed by an outside organization. Graduate students in FW can take advantage of modern computing facilities, a world-class library, laboratory facilities, and university research stations. Whereas many FW graduate students address research questions applied to the tremendous natural resources of Michigan, numerous students are involved in projects of national and international scope. Our students generally present their research results to a wide range of regional, national, and international audiences, and often gain valuable experiences interacting with a variety of stakeholder groups.

We hope that students take the opportunity to learn about the varied approaches that FW faculty and other students are engaged in during their time here. This can be accomplished through organized activities such as attending seminars and symposia, participating in meetings of the Graduate Student Organization ([GSO](#)), and serving on a GSO or FW committee. Taking time for informal interactions with other students, faculty, and staff is highly encouraged.

Your graduate program will include course work, research, and outreach/engagement. A key distinguishing characteristic between our graduate program and most undergraduate programs is the increased emphasis on non-coursework activities. To succeed in your program you will need to complete a Ph.D. dissertation or Master's thesis (or plan B project report) describing original work and an outreach activity in which you typically interact with and communicate information to audiences outside the University. It cannot be over-emphasized that success in your graduate program will require continuous dedicated efforts to make adequate progress on your research project, to bring it to a successful conclusion in a timely fashion. You should seek regular and frequent advice and feedback from your dissertation or thesis advisor (“major professor”), other members of your graduate committee, and informal mentors to ensure this happens.

You will have both the opportunity and requirement to learn about the responsible and ethical conduct of research/scholarship (RECR) and appropriate academic conduct. The University requires RECR training for all graduate students. Additionally, we value both collaborative and individual efforts. We recognize the increasing importance of collaborative efforts to seek solutions to society's needs and problems. It is becoming the norm for student theses and dissertations to include chapters that form the basis for multi-authored peer-reviewed journal articles. This trend further emphasizes the need to understand RECR topics such as what constitutes authorship, who owns ideas, and so on.

During your graduate program you will work hard to learn new ideas and approaches and to apply them to your research. While being productive is important, the Department values a supportive work environment and recognizes that you will have commitments outside your professional life. The department values balance, and we are committed to maintaining a supportive environment that respects life challenges and personal commitments.

In addition to the faculty and students, you will need to rely on the Departmental Support Staff to assist you in logistics related to completing your education and associated research. This may include assistance in navigating the enrollment process, submission of forms to be reimbursed for travel and research expenses, and assistance with computer-related problems. You should consult with your advisor, more experienced students, and this manual, regarding procedures. When questions remain, however, our support staff can often answer your questions. Even more importantly, if they are consulted early on, this can aid in avoiding problems. With regard to your academic program, your first and primary contact should be your Major Professor (advisor). There may be cases where your advisor is unable to help you, and you may want to contact faculty administrators within the department. Key departmental contacts are listed in the next section.

This Handbook provides numerous details on policies and procedures that you are expected to follow as a graduate student in Fisheries and Wildlife. However, we note that University policies included in the following documents override all inconsistent provisions described herein:

[Academic Programs](#)

[Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities \(GSRR\)](#)

[MSU/GEU Contract](#)

[Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships](#)

[MSU Research Integrity Office Resources](#)

[Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct and Anti-Discrimination Policy \(ADP\)](#)

IV. DEPARTMENTAL KEY CONTACTS

Department Chair: Dr. Dana Infante (Room 7 NR; infanted@msu.edu)

Associate Chair of Academic Programs, Graduate Program Director, and Department Graduate Committee Chair: Dr. Mary Tate Bremigan (Room 13A NR; bremigan@msu.edu)

Associate Chair - Research: Dr. Brian Roth (Room 332B NR, rothbri@msu.edu)

Administrative Assistant to the Chair: Becca Wetzel (Room 7 NR; blundel2@msu.edu)

Financial Officer: Brian Livingston (working remotely; livin108@msu.edu)

Graduate and Undergraduate Secretary and Academic Programs Coordinator:
Jill Cruth (Room 13 NR; phone 517-353-9091, cruth@msu.edu)

Main Office : Jamie Lake (Room 13 NR; 517-355-4478; lakejami@msu.edu)

Bookkeeper: Mary Witchell (working remotely; phone 517-353-3707; witchell@msu.edu)

Graduate Student Organization Executive Board

Current list available at: <http://msufwgso.wixsite.com/fwgso/committee>

V. ADMISSIONS AND ACCEPTANCE

The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife offers Ph.D. (Doctoral) and M.S. (Masters) graduate degree programs. The M.S. degree in Fisheries and Wildlife comes in two plans. Most M.S. students are enrolled in Plan A, which in addition to course work, and an exam, requires a research thesis. At Michigan State University, a Plan B M.S. degree is obtained by exam rather than thesis. However, within Fisheries and Wildlife, a study report (instead of a thesis) is also required for a Plan B M.S. Generally a Plan B M.S. has less emphasis on conducting research, and students completing this degree typically do not subsequently pursue a Ph.D.

Information within this handbook is intended for students who are already Graduate students at Michigan State University, and primarily for those already in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife program. Prospective students who are seeking admittance into our graduate program should consult the Department's [web page](#) (click on link for graduate program), contact individual faculty member's whose research matches their interests, and contact the Department's Graduate Secretary (cruth@msu.edu) for information on how faculty typically select graduate students and on how to formally apply to our FW graduate program.

Prospective Ph.D. students who complete or are in process of completing an M.S. degree in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University must apply for admission to

the Ph.D. program by letter to the Department's Graduate Program Director. The letter of application should include a concise statement of research interests, professional goals, plans for financial support, if needed, and the name and signature of the Major Professor who will direct the Ph.D. program. This is a much abbreviated process to that required for applicants who are not already in the Department's graduate program. Students wishing to transfer from graduate programs in other departments at MSU should contact the FW Graduate Program Director for more information and to discuss their situation.

Before starting a new graduate program, be advised that the maximum time allowed for a student's completion of their degree begins once she or he is first enrolled in that degree program, regardless of whether the enrollment status is dual (completing one degree program after initiating a new one), provisional, or regular. The time limitation for an M.S. degree is five years, and for a Ph.D., the limit is eight years. Be aware that regardless of when you actually get admitted into a degree program your program clock will be back-dated to the term for the first class you include in your program of study, so make sure to take this into account, when you make changes such as changing degree programs.

You should be aware of your admission status and if you have been admitted with provisional status, what you need to do and by when. Regular or unconditional admission status is granted to a student with a Bachelor's degree from an accredited university or college and who has undergraduate course work appropriate to support their graduate program. Provisional admission status is granted to a student whose application for admission to the graduate program has deficiencies. The student may be admitted to the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife graduate program with "Provisional Status" and as such be eligible for Graduate Research Assistantships. Criteria likely resulting in provisional status include:

1. Students with undergraduate or graduate grade point averages (GPA's) of 2.75-3.00 (cumulatively or over the last two academic years of the undergraduate degree). Additionally, students with GPAs at or below the 2.75 level will be considered for provisional acceptance only if they have demonstrated scholarly achievement in two courses at the graduate level (typically measured as a GPA of 3.0 or higher in both courses). Admission status will be changed from provisional to regular if a student maintains a cumulative GPA ≥ 3.0 for 12 credit hours over two (2) academic semesters. Courses should be at the graduate level (i.e., 800- or 400-level) with a maximum of six (6) credits from 400-level courses. The curricula for the first two academic semesters for all provisional students must be approved by the Department's Graduate Committee Chair.
2. Any student accepted into a Ph.D. program contingent on completion of a M.S. degree. In this case, the student must complete all requirements for the M.S. degree within the first academic semester of residency.

Failure to comply with conditions of provisional enrollment may result in removal of graduate assistantships and dismissal from the graduate program.

Be aware that the only grounds for provisional acceptance of an international student relates to English language proficiency, given an I-20 cannot be granted to a student with academic deficiencies. If you are admitted with an English Language deficiency, you must rectify the deficiency within a maximum of two years and will not begin your degree program until you have rectified the deficiency and are issued a degree-seeking I-20.

Dual enrollment as an M.S. and Ph.D. student. In some cases, it is advantageous for a student to enroll in a Ph.D. at MSU while still enrolled in their M.S. degree at MSU. For example, this option could allow a student to complete Ph.D. research credits, while still working on their M.S. degree after they had completed all M.S. course requirements. M.S. students in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife can dual enroll in a Ph.D. program in Fisheries and Wildlife, but are required to complete the M.S. program by the end of the second semester they are dually enrolled.

Dual enrollment as an Undergraduate and Graduate student. Dual enrollment provides an opportunity for academically talented undergraduate students to enroll in graduate courses and conduct research towards a graduate degree while completing the last two years of their bachelor's degree(s) programs. Within the first semester of dual enrollment, the student's graduate degree program adviser must be identified and the appropriate graduate degree guidance committee established. The adviser and committee assist the student in developing a program of study for the graduate degree. Admission to graduate study must be approved before work to apply toward a graduate degree program is undertaken. Credits completed prior to admission to graduate study cannot be applied toward a graduate degree program. The student is classified as an undergraduate until the minimum number of credits required for a first bachelor's degree is completed. When the student is classified as a graduate student, eligibility begins for graduate assistantships, other forms of graduate student financial aid, or those services and prerogatives normally reserved for graduate students. Additional details regarding dual enrollment are [here](#).

VI. PROGRAM PLANNING AND SUPERVISION

The table below provides a summary of milestones required for successfully moving through your Ph.D. or M.S. program, with required completion dates. Details on these and other requirements are described in this section. Note that 'getting off to a timely start' on your graduate work is very important, as is evident by the requirements to form your graduate committee and obtain an approved Program of Study in your first year of working towards your degree. Also note that there are two basic M.S. plans:

Plan A - Thesis: Plan A requires a research thesis. A minimum of six (6) to a maximum of 10 credits of FW 899 (Master's Thesis Research) are required to count toward the degree. The plan will consist of prescribed course work, research, thesis and a final oral examination. The final oral exam consists of a public presentation based on the thesis followed by a closed-door oral exam.

Plan B - Study Program: Plan B is a Master's by exam without thesis option. However, within the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife the plan B option still requires a report in lieu of the thesis. A minimum of four (4) to a maximum of six (6) credits of FW 898 (Master's Research) are required to count toward the degree. The plan will consist of prescribed course work, a required research report (instead of thesis), and a final oral examination. Plan B students in Fisheries and Wildlife also present the results of their research publicly followed by their closed-door oral exam.

Summary of Graduate Program Milestones				
Milestone	Ph.D.	MS Plan A	MS Plan B	Required or Recommended
Human or Animal Subjects Approval	Before any work begins			Required if applicable
Select Guidance Committee and meet to review/approve Program of Study	Before end of third semester	Before end of second semester		Required
Submit Program of Study	Within one semester after Initial Guidance Committee meeting	By end of first year in program		Required
Evaluations and RCR reporting	Annually before end of spring semester			Required
Submit outreach plan	By end of second year	By end of first year		Required if FW895 is not on program of study
Committee meeting to review proposed research/study plan	By end of second year	By end of first year		Recommended
Comprehensive Exam	When the prescribed course work is substantially complete and within 5 years of start of program	NA	NA	Required
Application for graduation	Early in semester you expect to graduate (ideally during first week)			Required
Outreach report	Before scheduling final exam			Required if FW895 is not on program of study
Submit study report (MS Plan B) / thesis (MS Plan A) / dissertation (PhD) to committee	At least two weeks prior to final exam date			Required
Oral final exam (AKA defense)	Before thesis/dissertation is submitted online. Your committee will likely require changes before that submission based on exam. Contact Grad Secretary and make room arrangements at least three weeks prior to exam.		Contact Grad Secretary and make room arrangements at least three weeks prior to exam	Required
Submission of thesis/dissertation online for Graduate School Review	At least two weeks before deadlines for graduate school final approval for semester posted at graduate school web site.		NA	Required
Completion of your degree program (including submission of final thesis/dissertation)	Within 8 years from start of program.	Within 5 years from start of program.		Required

A. Important First Steps

Before you can do virtually anything related to the university, you will need an MSU ID card and MSU NetID. The ID card allows you access to parking lots and buildings, is used as a library card, and provides access to other facilities. Your MSU NetID and associated password allow you to use MSU email and to access online resources at MSU. Instructions on how to obtain

both an ID card and a NetID can be found at <http://idoffice.msu.edu/>. Currently the Fisheries and Wildlife contact for assistance on acquiring an MSU ID and NetID is Jamie Lake (Room 13, Natural Resources Building). You will need to work with her to ensure that your MSU ID provides you access to needed buildings, rooms, and parking lots.

Graduate Students work closely with their [Major Professor](#) (often referred to as your advisor), who provides guidance with respect to course work, research, and a wide range of professional activities. In the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the Major Professor typically plays the combined roles of academic advisor, thesis or dissertation advisor, and chair of your examination committee. The Major Professor is determined jointly by the student and potential professor, with approval by the Department Chair and Graduate Program Director, usually at the time the student is accepted into the program. Typically, you contacted a prospective Major Professor during the application process and will know who this is well ahead of arrival on campus. In rare cases a student may be admitted without a permanent Major Professor, but even in such cases a temporary advisor or co-advisor is assigned and you, the student, should know who that is. If you have any question about who your Major Professor is, you should immediately resolve this question. You can check with the Graduate Secretary to ascertain who is assigned, and if you have concerns about the assignment you should discuss these with the Graduate Program Director.

It's very important that you meet with your Major Professor near to the start of your graduate studies to discuss overall expectations that you have for each other, to develop specific written expectations for your first year, and to generate an approximate timeline for completing all of the milestones required for your degree. It's also highly advisable to establish a regular schedule for meeting with your advisor (typically every week or every other week for students early in their degree program). The MSU Graduate School provides [highly useful resources](#) and forms (a mentoring toolkit) that each student and their Major Professor can use to guide them during the expectation-setting process and to help them establish productive communication practices. Your Major Professor will formally evaluate your accomplishments and work with you to update expectations annually each spring.

New graduate students are required to attend the FW Department's New Graduate Student Orientation Retreat, which typically occurs on the Thursday in August immediately prior to the first week of classes. The orientation is a great opportunity to learn about how the Department works and policies associated with the graduate program, and to begin building your sense of community within FW. Graduate students that matriculate in Spring or Summer semester should attend the following Fall orientation program. Typically an abbreviated orientation will be scheduled in January for students matriculating in spring semester. This 'mini orientation' welcomes students, but does not provide the full content of the fall orientation.

Throughout your degree program you will be recording your milestones in the Student Information System at MSU referred to as 'Campus Solutions', 'SIS' or 'GradPlan'. It's a good idea to begin to familiarize yourself with the system during your first semester. Online training is available at <https://grad.msu.edu/gradplan>.

B. Requirements for a Master of Science Degree

All students must complete the requirements for the Master's degree within five years after initial enrollment (i.e., within five years of enrolling in the first course in their program). The official requirements for a Master of Science degree in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and additional requirements of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife are stated in the Academic Programs catalog, [Graduate Degree – Fisheries and Wildlife](#). The following list of requirements is intended to provide a summary of the official information (with some interpretation). In some cases the information in this handbook will reflect newly adopted policies that have not yet been published in the Graduate Catalog. If you are concerned about an apparent discrepancy please bring this to the attention of the Graduate Secretary or the Graduate Program Director. Students who filed a Program of Study before fall 2018 had the option of pursuing a previous set of requirements. These older requirements did not include FW894 as a required course, but instead required two credits of FW893 and courses or background in three defined exposure areas. Otherwise those requirements were identical to those described herein, including a required outreach experience. If you believe you are grandfathered into this program but need more information on the requirements contact the Graduate Program Director or the Graduate Secretary for details.

1. Form Guidance Committee and File Program of Study

A [Guidance Committee](#) must be formed and meet to review the planned “Program of Study” by the end of the student’s second semester, and an M.S. “Program of Study” must be completed and approved by the Graduate Committee by the end of the student’s first year. The student, in consultation with the Major Professor, develops a Program of Study consistent with departmental requirements. Generally this Program of Study is discussed at the student’s first committee meeting and approved by the Guidance Committee at that time. Details on the roles of the Major Professor and the Guidance Committee are in section VI, items C and D respectively. The M.S. Guidance Committee generally consists of two faculty members in addition to the Major Professor, and details on selection and required composition of the committee are in section VI, item D.

2. Overall Plan to Complete the MS Degree

An overall plan to complete the M.S. degree is directed by the Guidance Committee. The student should consult with the Major Professor regarding the content and scope of any written plan and when it is needed. Often the written plan will consist of the program of study and a written research or study proposal. To ensure good progress the FW Graduate Committee recommends that a written proposal be completed no later than the end of the first year for an MS. Some Major Professors and Guidance Committees expect this to be ready at the first committee meeting. The department is currently considering making written proposals a required element of the MS programs. The department recently developed a rubric and associated form to be used by Guidance Committee members when evaluating proposals, with a primary objective of evaluating the program. The completed rubrics, when viewed across all students, will provide

data for program evaluation. For example, we may discover common roadblocks experienced by students that we can address/alleviate, or we might recognize the need for a particular graduate course based on commonalities across rubrics. Please note that the rubrics do not become part of your individual student file. If your committee is requiring a proposal we encourage you to look at the rubric and discuss with your committee how they will use the rubric.

3. Address Provisional Status

If your acceptance into the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife's graduate program was provisional, make sure all conditions of provisional acceptance are satisfied within the time frame stated on your admission form. If a time frame was not specified, then the conditions must be satisfied within the first year of residence. You can obtain a copy of your admission form from the Graduate Secretary. Students who fail to complete this requirement may be dismissed from the graduate program.

4. Complete Course Work

The course work prescribed in the program of study must be completed. Officially this will include:

- a. Completion of 30 or more credits beyond the bachelor's degree. Note that since a maximum of 10 or 6 credits of research can count toward this for Plan A or Plan B, respectively, this means that at least 20 or 24 other course credits need to be completed, as detailed in the Program of Study. All credits must be at the 400 level or higher, and unless specifically exempted by the Dean of the College, more than half of the credits in the student's Program of Study must be in courses at the 800 or 900 levels, including approved seminar and research credits. The final 20 credits for the degree must be earned while enrolled in regular admission status.
- b. The program must include FW894 (2 cr), Principles and Practices of Fisheries and Wildlife, which should be taken during the student's first fall semester of enrollment.
- c. If an outreach experience is not undertaken (with written plan and report), FW895 (2 cr), Practice of Fisheries and Wildlife Outreach and Engagement, must be included in the program.

Note that the requirements listed here are minimum, and the Guidance Committee will use its judgment to identify specific coursework needed for your program.

The MSU policy for incomplete and deferred grades can be found here:

<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Text.aspx?Section=112#s529>

5. Required Grade Point Average

A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale must be maintained, not including research credits (FW 898 or 899). If a student's cumulative grade point average is less than 3.0, the Graduate Program Director, in consultation with the student's Guidance Committee, must determine if the student should be allowed to continue in the graduate program. A report of this decision will be submitted to the Department Chair for approval.

Students whose GPA falls below a 3.0 will be considered "at risk," and will be required to meet with their Major Professor to discuss the circumstances and factors that have led to unsatisfactory academic performance, and to develop a plan with a strategy for corrective action. Although it is not required to have this plan approved by the Graduate Program Director, the student is strongly encouraged to seek their advice. The goal of this plan will be to bring the student's cumulative GPA above a 3.0 in the next academic semester. In the event that the student does not bring their cumulative GPA above or equal to 3.0 in the following semester (with the exception that this does not apply for a semester when the student is only enrolled in research credits), the student will become ineligible for a graduate assistantship until their cumulative GPA is equal to or exceeds a 3.0. Reinstatement of the graduate assistantship following this time will be at the discretion of the Major Professor. Further, the Major Professor may recommend dismissal from the graduate program, with approval of the Graduate Committee and Department Chair.

6. High Academic and Professional Standards

Students who enter the Master's program are expected to meet the high academic and professional standards commensurate with a graduate degree. You are required to participate in formal responsible and ethical conduct of research (RECR) training each year during your program (see [RECR section](#)). Standards for research activities and professional development are individualized and generally set in cooperation with the student's major advisor. Annual evaluations with the major advisor are required to document these expectations and the student's performance (see [Annual Evaluation section](#)).

7. Outreach Experience

All Master's students will need to complete the [Outreach Experience requirement](#), if they do not include FW 895 (2 cr., Practice of Fisheries and Wildlife Outreach and Engagement) in their program. This includes development of a plan during your first year and report on the experience before graduation.

8. Thesis or Study Report and Presentation

All Master's graduate students must undertake and complete a research or study project which will be presented either as a thesis or a study project report as outlined below. Results of the thesis or study project must be presented publically at a departmental seminar (not for course

credit) by the candidate prior to graduation. This is generally immediately prior to the oral final examination.

Plan A - Thesis Requirements: The thesis, when submitted to the Guidance Committee, must be written in an appropriate scientific style and meet the appropriate degree requirements of The Graduate School specifications as stated in the [*Formatting Guide for Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations*](#). The student must revise the thesis in light of recommended change(s) and corrections suggested during the oral examination in defense of the thesis, before presenting it to the Major Professor for final review and signature of the 'etd' (electronic thesis and dissertation submissions) approval form. The student must submit the revised electronic copy of the thesis online and the approval form signed by the thesis advisor must be submitted to the Graduate School in accord with instructions at <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>. You also should participate in the Graduate Schools exit survey (links included with the online instructions for survey) at the time you are submitting your thesis.

In addition to the main body of a thesis or dissertation, the Graduate School now permits the submission of supplementary materials to ProQuest. These supplemental materials will not be reviewed by the Graduate School for formatting requirements, but they must be acceptable by ProQuest and comply with ProQuest's criteria and storage limits. All supplementary materials need the written approval of the thesis/dissertation committee chair.

Be aware that electronic submission does not mean your thesis has been accepted by the Graduate School. After electronic submission, the Graduate School may require some changes to be consistent with formatting requirements, and you may need to resubmit your thesis several times online until it is acceptable. To graduate in a given semester your thesis must obtain final approval by the Graduate School by semester-specific deadlines posted at their web site (generally at least five working days before the first day of classes for the next semester). To ensure graduating in a given semester you should submit your thesis to the Graduate School for the first time at least two weeks prior to the posted deadline for final acceptance.

You can submit and/or obtain final Graduate School approvals after the deadline or into the next semester, and graduate in that following semester, without re-enrolling for that semester. Although not recommended, it is even possible to submit and/or obtain final Graduate School approval more than a semester after your final oral examination, provided you graduate within the five year program time limit.

Plan B - Study Project Report: Upon completion of the study project, the report must be written in an appropriate scientific style. Generally part of the oral examination will focus on an evaluation of the written report, so a poor quality report could lead to failure. Graduate students are encouraged to publish their research, and should work with their Major Professor to find an appropriate outlet. In many cases, chapters of a thesis are

submitted for publication prior to the completion of the entire dissertation. Graduate students are encouraged to make draft manuscripts available to their committee members prior to submission for publication.

9. Oral Final Exam (“Defense”)

The candidate must pass an oral final examination before an examination committee, consisting of the Major Professor and the Guidance Committee. The Major Professor acts as the chairperson of the examination committee (although this topic is currently under discussion). Other faculty members may attend at the Department chairperson's discretion. The student must be registered for at least one credit during the semester of the final oral examination. This requirement may be waived if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately following a spring semester during which the student was registered and/or prior to a fall semester in which the student will be registered. Typically this examination occurs immediately after the public seminar where the thesis or study results are presented. For Plan A students the final oral examination is officially in defense of the thesis and hence the Master's oral final examination often is called a “defense”. The oral final examination must be scheduled for a date not earlier than two weeks after the final draft of the thesis or study report has been submitted to the Guidance (Examination) Committee. Generally Plan A oral examinations focus on the thesis content, but the committee can examine the candidate more broadly on their program of studies. Plan B examinations will typically cover a broader range of material than that specific to the study report, but will also cover the study report. In case of a failure, the candidate may apply for reexamination at a time to be specified by the examining committee. We strongly recommend that you consult with your committee well in advance regarding the likely scope of the exam.

The Department has recently developed a rubric and associated form to be used by examination committee members when evaluating student performance during the oral final exam. The primary purpose of collecting the data on the form is to provide the FW Department Graduate Committee and others feedback on the graduate program (i.e., common problems in specific areas might suggest the need for workshops or other training programs in that area to help future students). These forms will not become part of your official record. Your guidance committee, or members of it, can at their discretion use the rubric to assist them in their overall evaluation. We encourage you to both examine the rubric in advance of your exam and discuss with your Major Professor and/or committee members how they expect to use the rubric. Note that the rubric includes evaluation of your written thesis/report and public presentation.

You will need to make arrangements for a seminar (public presentation) room and examination room, possibly with assistance of the Graduate Secretary, and inform the Graduate Secretary of the intended date/time/location of your seminar and defense at least three weeks before it is scheduled. Prior to the defense, the Graduate Secretary sends an electronic approval form to the Major Advisor, asking them to route the form among committee members for signature, immediately after the defense. The Major Professor should then return the completed electronic form to the Graduate Secretary.

C. Requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy Degree

All students must complete the requirements for the Ph.D. degree within eight years after the start of their program, which is defined as starting the term in which the first course in the program is taken. Students who “switch” to a PhD from an MS program at MSU need to be careful about when they took courses they want to count toward their PhD, as the start date for the PhD program will be before you made the switch if you count earlier courses.

Ph.D. students must complete at least one year of residence prior to obtaining their degree. A year of residence will be made up of two consecutive semesters, involving the completion of credits at the level of full-time status of graduate work each semester.

The official requirements for a Ph.D. degree in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and additional requirements of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife are stated in the Academic Programs catalog, [Graduate Degree – Fisheries and Wildlife](#). The following list of requirements is intended to provide a summary of the official information (with some interpretation). In some cases the information in this handbook will reflect newly adopted policies that have not yet been published at in the Graduate Catalog. If you are concerned about an apparent discrepancy please bring this to the attention of the Graduate Secretary or the Graduate Program Director. Students who filed a program of studies before fall 2018 had the option of pursuing a previous set of requirements. These older requirements did not include FW894 as a required course, but instead required three credits of FW893 and courses or background in three defined exposure areas. Otherwise those requirements were identical to those herein, including a required outreach experience. If you believe you are grandfathered into this program but need more information on the requirements contact the Graduate Program Director or the Graduate Secretary for details.

1. Form Guidance Committee and file Program of Study

A [Guidance Committee](#) must be formed and meet to discuss and review the Ph.D. Program of Study by the end of the student’s third semester, and the Program must be filed by the end of the next semester. The PhD guidance committee generally consists of at least three regular MSU faculty members in addition to the Major Professor, one of whom must have an appointment outside the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Details on selection and required composition of the committee (and procedures for exceptions) are in section VI, item D. The Program of Study should be entered by the student into GradPlan, where graduate students lay out their program of study, record faculty approval, and make notes on all the degree requirements as they are completed.

The student, in consultation with the Major Professor, develops a Program of Study consistent with departmental requirements. This is essentially a list of courses that need to be completed and comprehensive examination areas for each committee member. Generally this Program of Study is discussed at the student’s first committee meeting and approved by the Guidance Committee at that time. The student then is in a position to enter the information into Campus

Solutions. To accomplish entry into GradPlan the student will need the following information: Committee members' names or MSU NetIDs, course codes for planned courses, comprehensive exam areas, tentative dissertation topic, and specific program requirements. Help on using GradPlan and a paper instruction manual can be obtained from the Graduate Secretary. Once the Program of Study is within GradPlan, it will be routed for the required approvals, starting with the Major Professor and Guidance Committee.

2. Overall Plan to Complete the Ph.D. Degree

An overall plan to complete the Ph.D. degree is directed by the Guidance Committee. The student should consult with the Major Professor regarding the content and scope of any written plan and when it is needed. Often the written plan will consist of the program of study and a written research or study proposal. To ensure good progress the Graduate Committee recommends that a written proposal be completed no later than the end of the second year of the PhD program. Some Major Professors and Guidance Committees expect this to be ready at the first committee meeting. The department is currently considering making written proposals a required element of the Ph.D. programs. The department recently developed a rubric and associated form to be used by Guidance Committee members when evaluating proposals, with a primary objective of evaluating the departmental graduate program. These forms will provide data for program evaluation and will not become part of your file. If your committee is requiring a proposal we encourage you to look at the rubric and discuss with your committee how they will use the rubric.

3. Address Provisional Status

If your acceptance into the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife's graduate program was provisional, make sure all conditions of provisional acceptance are satisfied within the time frame stated on your admission form. If a time frame was not specified, then the conditions must be satisfied within the first year of residence. You can obtain a copy of your admission form from the Graduate Secretary. Students who fail to complete this requirement may be dismissed from the graduate program.

4. Complete Course Work

The course work requirements specified in the Program of Study must be completed successfully. Officially the program needs to include the following:

- a. A minimum of 24 credits of dissertation research (FW 999).
- b. FW 894 (2 cr., Principles and Practices of Fisheries and Wildlife).
- c. FW 895 (2 cr., Practice of Fisheries and Wildlife Outreach and Engagement) or completion of an outreach experience (including written plan and report).

Additional course work included in the Program of Study is chosen to meet the individual student's needs for professional and educational goals, and to develop the comprehensive knowledge in the major and related fields on which they will be examined. This course work is determined by the Guidance Committee, in consultation with the student.

999 Credits: As noted above, 24 credits are required for graduation; students can, however, enroll for a maximum of 36. Often students enroll for FW 999 credits to make their total enrollment 9 credits each semester during the academic year if they are on an assistantship, so as to get this requirement taken care of, given that 9 credits are covered by the assistantship tuition waiver each fall and spring semester. Even if getting 24 credits is not an issue, students on assistantships often sign up for FW 999 credits to reach 6 (and 4 during summer) as these are the minimum required for an assistantship. While to some extent these approaches make sense you need to keep in mind the maximum limit of 36. The best way to avoid going over the requirement of 36 is to (a) plan out how you are going to get to 24 and do not take extra FW 999 that you don't need to take, and (b) take and pass your comprehensive exams as early in your program as is reasonable because in terms after you pass them you only need to sign up for 1 credit when you are supported by an assistantship. International students and students on specific types of support may have other requirements on the number of credit hours so make sure you review what those are before dropping down to 1 credit.

Requests for overrides to exceed the maximum of 36 credits will need approval. As a starting point to obtain this approval contact the Graduate Secretary. These are reviewed at the college and higher levels and require a plan on when you will finish and how many additional FW 999 credits are required. As noted above, generally you can avoid the need for such an override through planning. Override requests must be submitted before the deadline for completing the degree has been reached.

5. Required Grade Point Average

A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale must be maintained in all courses of a student's program of study, not including research credits (FW 999). If the student's cumulative grade point average is less than 3.0, the Graduate Committee in consultation with the Guidance Committee, must determine if the student should be allowed to continue. A report of this decision will be submitted to the Department Chair for approval.

Students whose cumulative GPA falls below a 3.0 will be considered "at risk," will be required to meet with their major professor to discuss the circumstances and factors that have led to unsatisfactory academic performance, and will be required to develop a plan with a strategy for corrective action. Although it is not required to have this plan approved by the Graduate Committee, the student is strongly encouraged to seek their advice. The goal of this plan will be to bring the student's cumulative GPA above a 3.0 in the next academic semester. In the event that the student does not bring their cumulative GPA above or equal to 3.0 in the following semester (with the exception that this does not apply for a semester when the student is only enrolled in research credits), the student will become ineligible for a graduate assistantship until

their cumulative GPA is equal to or exceeds a 3.0. Reinstatement of the graduate assistantship following this time will be at the discretion of the major advisor. Further, the major advisor may recommend dismissal from the graduate program, with approval by the Graduate Committee and Department Chair.

6. High Academic and Professional Standards

Students who enter the Ph.D. program are expected to meet the high academic and professional standards commensurate with a graduate degree. You are required to participate in formal responsible and ethical conduct of research (RECR) training each year during your program (see [RECR section](#)). Standards for research activities and professional development are individualized and generally set in cooperation with the student's major advisor. Annual evaluations with the major advisor are required to document these expectations and the student's performance (see [Annual Evaluation section](#)).

7. Outreach Experience

All Ph.D. students will need to complete the [Outreach Experience requirement](#), or alternatively include FW 895 (2 cr., Practice of Fisheries and Wildlife Outreach and Engagement) in their Program of Study. The outreach experience includes development of a one page written plan by the end of your second year and short written report on the experience before graduation, due at the time you schedule your defense.

8. Comprehensive Exams

Students should notify the Graduate Secretary that their comprehensive exams have been scheduled at least one week prior to the beginning of the written component of the exam. Near the completion of the comprehensive exam, the Graduate Secretary sends an electronic approval form to the Major Advisor, asking them to route the form among committee members for signature, immediately after the exam. The Major Professor should then return the completed electronic form to the Graduate Secretary.

Each student must demonstrate, by both written and oral portions of a comprehensive examination, comprehensive knowledge in the major and related fields. The comprehensive exam should be scheduled as soon as practical when the prescribed course work in the Program of Study is substantially complete, as defined by the Guidance Committee. In addition, the examination must be passed within five years of starting the program. Furthermore the comprehensive exam must be completed at least two semesters prior to the final oral examination in defense of the dissertation.

If the student fails, a minimum of one semester of additional work toward the degree is required before another examination can be scheduled. Students will be given two opportunities to pass the comprehensive examination. Any student failing a second attempt will be terminated as a Ph.D. student in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Students must be registered during the semester(s) in which they take a comprehensive examination (i.e., at least one credit but potentially more to meet other minimum credit requirements such as for an assistantship). This requirement may be waived if the examination is administered during the summer session immediately following a spring semester during which the student was registered and/or prior to a fall semester in which the student will be registered.

The Comprehensive exams are administered as follows:

- a. Generally, the examination committee consists of the Guidance Committee. The Examination Committee can be supplemented, at the discretion of the dean, by two appointed faculty members. Other faculty members may attend the examination at the chairperson's discretion. Members of the Guidance Committee will be responsible for specialty areas as specified on the Program of Study.
- b. The written exam is taken first and completion of the entire written exam must be accomplished within a two-week period, or less, as prescribed by the Examination Committee. The details of how the written exam is administered vary greatly, so you should consult with your Major Professor and the Examination Committee to clarify how this will occur.
- c. The oral exam will normally follow within 30 days of the written exam.
- d. Upon completion of both portions of the examination, the Examination Committee will decide during the formal session (i.e., when convened for the oral exam) whether the student passes or fails. Normally the student leaves the examination room for a period after the oral examination during which the committee discusses the student's performance, and then returns to be given the results. The student will not pass if more than one committee member dissents.
- e. The Department has recently developed a rubric and associated form to be used by examination committee members when evaluating student performance on the comprehensive exam. The primary purpose of collecting the data on the form is to provide the FW Department Graduate Committee and the Department Leadership Team with feedback on the graduate program (i.e., common problems in specific areas might suggest the need for workshops or other training programs in that area to help future students). Each year the Graduate Program Director will draft a report summarizing trends across the rubrics, in a deidentified format (i.e., retaining student privacy). Your individual rubrics will not become part of your official record. Your examination committee, or members of it, can at their discretion use the rubric to assist them in their overall evaluation. We encourage you to both examine the rubric in advance of your exam and discuss with your Major Professor and/or committee members how they expect to use the rubric.

- f. It is intended that the specific requirements for comprehensive exams listed above should apply to all doctoral students in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Considerations of exceptions shall be the responsibility of the Graduate Program Director who shall receive such requests in writing from the student's Major Professor. The Graduate Program Director will report to the Graduate Committee on a regular basis regarding the frequency and nature of such requests.

9. The Dissertation and Oral Presentation

Once you start thinking about scheduling an Oral presentation and defense and how to wrap up your dissertation you are approaching graduation! You should fill out the application for graduation as early as possible in the term you expect to graduate. It is recommended you submit this during the first week of classes of the term you expect to graduate and the first week of classes of the spring for a summer graduation to ensure you are included in the commencement program. See <https://reg.msu.edu/StuForms/GradApp/GradApp.aspx> for more information or contact the Graduate Secretary.

A written draft of the dissertation must be submitted to the Major Professor, all Guidance Committee members, and any appointed examiner at least two weeks before the scheduled date for the defense. The final oral examination (defense) cannot be conducted before the dissertation is in an acceptable form and meets approval of the Major Professor. What constitutes an acceptable dissertation is specific to each committee. In general, the dissertation will need to meet scholarly norms expected of published literature, make substantial new contributions to knowledge in the field and typically form the basis for multiple papers that will be submitted for publication to scientific journals. The dissertation, when submitted to the Guidance Committee, must be written in an appropriate scientific style and meet the appropriate [formatting requirements of the Graduate School](#).

Results of the dissertation research must be presented publically (i.e., a "seminar") by the candidate immediately prior to the oral final examination. This is a requirement for graduation and is considered a necessary lead in to the defense.

The student must revise the dissertation in light of recommended change(s) and corrections suggested during the defense, before presenting it to the Major Professor for final review and signature/submission of the approval form. The student must submit the revised electronic copy of the dissertation online and the approval form signed by the Major Professor must be submitted to the Graduate School in accord with instructions at <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>. You are encouraged to participate in the Graduate Schools exit survey (links included with the online instructions for survey) at the time you are submitting your dissertation.

In addition to the main body of a thesis or dissertation, the Graduate School now permits the submission of supplementary materials to ProQuest. These supplemental materials will not be reviewed by the Graduate School for formatting requirements, but they must be acceptable by

ProQuest and comply with ProQuest's criteria and storage limits. All supplementary materials need the written approval of the thesis/dissertation committee chair.

Be aware that electronic submission does not mean your dissertation has been accepted by the Graduate School. After electronic submission, the Graduate School may require some changes to be consistent with formatting requirements. You may need to resubmit your dissertation online several times before it is accepted. To graduate in a given semester your dissertation must be approved by the Graduate School at least five working days before the first day of classes for the next semester (see deadlines).

Frequently, it is not possible to make all needed revisions following a defense in time to submit the dissertation for graduation that semester. In fact, you could defend your dissertation after the deadline for having your dissertation approved by the Graduate School. Nonetheless, you are allowed to submit or obtain Graduate School approvals for your dissertation and graduate the next semester without enrolling as a student in the subsequent semester. Although not advised, it may be possible to obtain final Graduate School approval for your dissertation more than one semester after your defense, provided this is within the overall eight year program time limit. Graduate students are encouraged to publish their research, and should work with their Major Professor to find an appropriate outlet. In many cases, chapters of a dissertation are submitted for publication prior to the completion of the entire dissertation. Graduate students are strongly encouraged to make draft manuscripts available to their committee members for feedback prior to submission for publication.

10. The Defense

An oral final examination in defense of the dissertation must be passed. The final oral examination, primarily in defense of the dissertation, is to be preceded immediately by a formal seminar open to the public. This public presentation is a requirement for graduation. The oral examination typically is conducted by the Guidance Committee, which may be supplemented at the discretion of the Dean by two appointed faculty members. Other faculty members may attend the exam at the discretion of the Department Chairperson. The oral exam cannot be scheduled until the comprehensive examination is passed. Given the challenges of scheduling defenses, and the work needed to prepare for them, you should not plan a defense for the same semester you take your comprehensive examination. As noted previously the committee needs to receive a properly formatted and complete dissertation at least two weeks prior to the defense.

The technical details of what is required for a passing vote can get confusing. For practical purposes, however, it is simple. All but one of your examiners must vote to pass you unless the number of examiners is very large (eight or more). The more detailed definition of a passing vote on the oral final exam is that it requires that the dissertation and the student's performance on the final oral examination be approved by a positive vote of at least three-fourths of the voting examiners, and with not more than one dissenting vote from among the Michigan State University regular faculty members (MSU "regular faculty" is defined in MSU's Academic bylaws, and for the Department's faculty this is equivalent to tenure-stream faculty) of the

guidance committee. Thus for very large examination committees you could potentially pass with two negative votes, but it could depend on the status of the faculty who cast the no votes. Hopefully this is purely a theoretical case given that very large guidance committees are not advised!

You should discuss with your committee and your Major Professor their expectations for the public seminar and defense (oral final exam). The Department has recently developed a rubric and associated form to be used by examination committee members when evaluating student performance during the oral final exam. The primary purpose of collecting the data on the form is to provide the FW Department Graduate Committee and the Department Leadership Team with feedback on the graduate program (i.e., common problems in specific areas might suggest the need for workshops or other training programs in that area to help future students). Each year the Graduate Program Director will draft a report summarizing trends across the rubrics, in a deidentified format (i.e., retaining student privacy). Your individual rubrics will not become part of your official record. Your guidance committee, or members of it, can at their discretion use the rubric to assist them in their overall evaluation. We encourage you to both examine the rubric in advance of your exam and discuss with your Major Professor and/or committee members how they expect to use the rubric. Note that the rubric includes evaluation of your written dissertation and public presentation.

You must be registered for at least one credit during the semester when the defense takes place, including summer terms. Waivers for summer enrollment are not allowed for the defense. The defense should not be scheduled for a date earlier than two weeks after the complete final draft of the dissertation (in dissertation format) has been submitted to the Major Professor, all Guidance Committee members, and any appointed examiner. The final oral examinations cannot be conducted before the dissertation is in an acceptable form and meets approval of the Major Professor. You will need to make arrangements for a seminar (public presentation) room and examination room, possibly with assistance of the Graduate Secretary, and inform the Graduate Secretary of the intended date/time/location of your seminar and defense at least three weeks before it is scheduled.

Prior to the defense, the Graduate Secretary sends an electronic approval form to the Major Advisor, asking them to route the form among committee members for signature, immediately after the defense. The Major Professor should then return the completed electronic form to the Graduate Secretary.

11. Exit Surveys and Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)

At the completion of your degree, there are exit surveys to be completed for MSU ([see Last Things to Do....#11](#)). And, Ph.D. students are required to complete the SED following instructions at: <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/> following submission of their dissertations. This is required, and the graduate school monitors participation as part of certifying your completion of requirements.

D. Major Professor

The Major Professor is selected by mutual consent of the student and professor, subject to approval by the Department Chair. This occurs before the student begins graduate studies. In general, the Major Professor must be a Regular MSU Department of Fisheries and Wildlife faculty member, and for Ph.D. programs must have an earned doctorate (for further description of regular faculty and exceptions see “[Guidance Committee](#)” section). In the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife the Major Professor typically serves as academic advisor, thesis or dissertation research advisor, chair of the Guidance Committee, and Chair of examination Committees. The Major Professor’s duties include: (1) assisting the student in the planning of their complete Program of Study and selection of a Guidance Committee; (2) directing the student's research program and thesis/dissertation preparation; (3) conducting written annual evaluation of the student's progress; (4) overseeing examinations; and (5) approving final certification for the degree. We encourage students to collaborate with their Major Professor to generate individual development plans that take into account the strengths and challenges of the student as well as the students’ career goals. It’s also vital that students and their major professor discuss their expectations with each other early in the process of working together. Guidelines and resources for doing so can be found here: <https://grad.msu.edu/implementation-toolkit>.

On occasion, by mutual consent, a student may elect to change Major Professors. This should be coordinated among the Major Professor, the Graduate Program Director, and the Department Chair.

In the unforeseen case of a Major Professor leaving the University, efforts will be made by the Department Chair and the Graduate Program Director to find a replacement. If you find yourself in this situation you can seek advice and assistance from the departing Major Professor if this is feasible and initiate discussions with potential new Major Professors, but as you proceed, make sure to discuss the situation with the Graduate Program Director.

E. Guidance Committee

1. The Function and Duties of the Guidance Committee

Each student works under the guidance of a committee, which is selected by both the student and the Major Professor, and is subject to approval by the Graduate Program Director. The Guidance Committee shall be formed by the end of the second semester (MS students) or third semester (PhD students), or within two semesters beyond the Master’s degree or its equivalent for PhD students in cases of dual enrollment. The Guidance Committee works with the Major Professor to review and approve a student's Program of Study, and to see that the student completes all requirements for the degree. The Guidance Committee should meet with the student to review their proposed project, thesis, or dissertation research. The Guidance Committee usually serves as the examination committee for comprehensive examinations (Ph.D) and final oral exams, also called defenses (both M.S. and Ph.D. programs), although as described in the sections for [comprehensive exams](#) and [defenses](#), the examination committees can be supplemented with an

additional examiner. Generally M.S. Guidance Committees will meet at least two or three times. At the initial meeting the Program of Study is discussed, and ideally approved, and the final meeting is the oral final examination. If the proposed Master's research plan is not presented at the initial meeting, an additional meeting is required for this step. Ph.D. Guidance committees will ordinarily meet a minimum of four times. The first meeting is to discuss, and ultimately, approve the Program of Study. Within one semester after the committee has met, the chairperson of the guidance committee shall file a guidance committee report with the dean of the college, listing all degree requirements. At a second meeting, typically progress to date is reviewed, and if satisfactory, the proposed research program is approved. A third meeting is needed to conduct the oral comprehensive exam. A fourth meeting is needed for the defense. The numbers of meetings described here are minimum numbers. Often Ph.D. committees will meet with students annually to review progress.

2. Makeup of the Guidance Committee

Policy prior to March 2025: The Guidance Committee consists of the Major Professor, who typically serves as chairperson, and additional faculty members, at least one of whom must be from the FW Department. For the Master's degree, the guidance committee must total at least three (3) members. For the Ph.D., the Guidance Committee must total at least four (4) members, at least three of whom must have earned doctorates, preferably in related fields. One of the Guidance Committee members for Ph.D. committees must have an MSU faculty appointment outside the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Guidance Committees can be larger than the required size. The usual reason for expanding the size of committee beyond the required size is to allow participation by persons with special skills or background that can enhance the work of the committee. In general, committees with more than one extra member are quite unusual and are not encouraged.

Updated policy: Considering the 2 additional faculty members (beyond the advisor) for MS Guidance Committees, the FW faculty (in February 2025) removed the requirement that one of these 2 additional faculty have an appointment within FW. Therefore, for MS committees, only the advisor need be a faculty member in FW.

Continuing Policy: In addition to the requirements listed above, any 'non-regular' committee member (see definition below) must receive approval from the Dean of the Graduate School to serve on a student's guidance committee, and the number of 'non-regular' Guidance Committee members must not exceed the number of 'regular' MSU faculty members on the Committee. In our Department the only "regular" MSU faculty members are the tenure-stream faculty (although this is defined in the MSU Academic Bylaws slightly more broadly). Therefore, faculty members who are not tenure stream (and rather, typically have assignments referred to as 'specialists' or 'fixed term faculty') must receive approval from the Graduate School to serve on student committees. If you are uncertain if a particular faculty member has a tenure-stream appointment or not, you can simply ask that individual, or the Graduate Program Director. Some students have a member of their Guidance Committee who is a faculty member at another academic institution (with comparable qualifications to those of MSU faculty), or employed by a non-

academic institution, such as a natural resources management government agency. These individuals must also receive approval from the Dean of the Graduate School to serve on a Guidance Committee. They too are considered ‘non-regular’ committee members. (Please note that having adjunct faculty status is not sufficient to allow a person to serve on Guidance Committees.). **Finally, when planning your Guidance Committee it is very important to recognize that MSU’s Graduate School enforces a policy that the number of ‘non-regular’ guidance committee members can not exceed the number of ‘regular’ (tenure track) guidance committee members.**

To request approval of a ‘non-regular’ MSU faculty member, or of someone outside of MSU, to serve on your Graduate Committee, you’ll need to work with the Graduate Program Director (Dr. Bremigan). Note that some non-tenure stream FW faculty will receive ‘blanket approval’ to serve on student guidance committees (new policy starting in summer 2022). For these individuals, additional approval need not be requested (Note that the individual is still considered to be a ‘non-regular’ member of the committee). If you’re not certain if someone has blanket approval, you can ask them or the Graduate Program Director. For any individual who will be a non-regular committee member, and who does not already have blanket approval, you’ll need to obtain the document: ‘FW Instructions for NR Committee Members’. In addition to providing all the information requested in this document, you’ll need to provide an up to date CV of the proposed committee member (which includes evidence of success in mentoring graduate students), and a letter from the proposed committee member agreeing to serve on your committee, acknowledging the responsibilities of a committee member, and acknowledging they have completed review of materials related to mentoring and MSU’s RVSM policy and related training within the last two years. Be sure to send the completed document, the CV, and the letter to the Graduate Program Director (Dr. Bremigan) who will submit the application on your behalf. Review by the Graduate School will subsequently occur.

Generally, Emeritus faculty (retired faculty) can be approved to serve on Guidance Committees or to continue to chair a Guidance Committee with approval of the Department Chairperson. This is explicit in the University academic catalog for Ph.D. students. If you find yourself in this situation, you should bring this issue to the attention of the Graduate Secretary. The Graduate Secretary can work with the Department’s Graduate Program Chair to make sure that this role is approved at the Department and University levels.

Policy prior to March 2025: As indicated above, the Major Professor and at least one other required member of each committee needs to be a faculty member of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (sometimes called “inside” members). In addition, at least one of the required members for Ph.D. Guidance Committees needs to have an MSU appointment in another department (sometimes called an “outside” member). Although it may seem illogical and confusing, this means that a non-MSU individual approved to serve on a committee would not be considered an “outside” member unless they had an adjunct appointment in another department at MSU. To be considered an inside member, the individual must have an appointment in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, although they can also have appointments in other units. When someone you are considering for your committee holds appointments in both Fisheries and

Wildlife and other departments, they will be considered an inside member of the Guidance Committee.

If students need to make changes in the composition of their Guidance Committee after it has been established, they should do so online using GradPlan and in full communication with all individuals involved. Please see the section ‘Instructions for using GradPlan’ in the FW File Sharing Site.

Updated policy: The FW faculty (in February 2025) removed the requirement that a 2nd member of the guidance committee, beyond the advisor, be a member of the FW faculty. Therefore, even for PhD committees, technically only the advisor need be a faculty member in FW. In addition, the FW faculty modified the requirement that PhD student guidance committees have at least one member who IS a member of the MSU faculty but who is NOT a member of the FW faculty. Rather, PhD guidance committees must contain at least one individual who is: (a) a MSU faculty member without an assignment in FW, OR, (b) a faculty member at another university, OR (c) a representative of an agency or stakeholder group familiar with the student’s research topic. Note that individuals in categories (b) or (c), and non-tenure stream faculty in category (a) will need to be approved by the graduate school to serve on graduate guidance committees.

F. Exposure Areas

Exposure areas are no longer required as part of the Fisheries and Wildlife program. This information has been retained for students still in the program who are operating under the old curriculum. In general this option is only available for students who submitted their programs by the end of summer 2018.

Students following that curriculum must provide evidence of background and/or education in the following exposure areas: (a) organismal biology related to the area of research/study, (b) population/habitat dynamics and management, and (c) human dimensions/policy. Typically, this background or education will be in the form of successful completion of one or more semester-long courses in each of these areas. Course work taken prior to entering the graduate program can be used to satisfy this requirement. This requirement is satisfied by successful completion of an approved Program of Study, certified by the student’s Guidance Committee, and the Exposure Areas Requirement Form ([pdf](#) or [word](#)), approved by the Graduate Committee Chair and Department Chair. Waiver of this requirement requires review by the Graduate Committee and approval by the Department Chair, or by delegation, the Graduate Committee Chair. Typically such waivers would be used to improve a student’s overall career development program, e.g., to allow a student to take advantage of course timing and sequences when pursuing a combined M.S. and Ph.D. program within the Department.

Examples – and, these are only some examples – of courses offered at MSU that might be used to meet the exposure areas requirement follow. These examples are non-exclusive and must correspond to the student’s overall research, educational, and career goals.

EXAMPLES of Organismal Biology Area: Aquatic Entomology (ENT 422), Ichthyology (FW 471), Biology of Birds (ZOL 360), Biology of Mammals (ZOL 365), Biology of Amphibians and Reptiles (ZOL 384).

EXAMPLES of Population/Habitat Dynamics and Management Area: Upland Ecosystem Management (FW 410), Aquatic Ecosystem Management (FW 414), Marine Ecosystem Management (FW 416), Wetland Ecosystem Management (FW 417), Stream Ecology (FW 420), Population Analysis and Management (FW 424), Restoration Ecology (FW 443), Conservation Biology (FW 444), Hydrology for Watershed Management (FW 454), Limnology (FW 472), Fisheries Management (FW 479), Analysis of Wildlife Population (FW 824), Fish Population Dynamics (FW 877), Advanced Limnology (FW 879).

EXAMPLES of Human Dimensions/Policy Area: Natural Resource Economics (FOR 464), Natural Resource Policy (FOR 466), Human Dimensions of Fisheries and Wildlife Management (FW 434), Human Dimensions Research in Fisheries and Wildlife (FW 810), Adaptive Management of Natural Resource Systems (FW 854), Gender, Justice and Environmental Change: Issues and Concepts (FW 858), Leadership in Natural Resources and Environmental Management (FW 885).

G. Outreach Experience

The mission of the Department is to provide the education, research, and outreach needed by society for the conservation and rehabilitation of fish and wildlife resources and their ecosystems. Outreach is the process of passing on knowledge and skills to those outside your specialized discipline and/or the University community in a way that will allow them to benefit from the scholarship. It also often involves interacting with stakeholders to better focus research and education on society's needs. Given the importance of outreach to natural resource management, all graduate students in the Department are required to participate in an outreach experience as part of their degree program, or in lieu of this, take a course covering outreach (FW 895: Practice of Fisheries and Wildlife Outreach and Engagement).

M.S. students should submit their Outreach Experience plan to the Graduate Secretary by the end of their first year at MSU. Ph.D. students should submit their plan by the end of their second year at MSU. Plans should be in the form of an abstract, not to exceed one page, and should be reviewed by and approved by the Major Professor before being submitted. These plans will be reviewed by the Graduate Program Director, and if acceptable, will be put in each student's file. The plan should describe who will participate in the experience, the learning objectives of the experience, where the experience will occur, and when. The extent of the Outreach Experience will vary depending upon student's educational objectives. Students are encouraged to examine examples of past Outreach Experience plans (*link coming soon*), and to consult with their Major Professor and other faculty and students with outreach experience as they develop their plans.

Students should submit a one page abstract describing the outcome of their Outreach Experience to the Graduate Secretary at the time they schedule their defense or oral final exam, and at this

time they should also distribute a copy of the abstract to their Guidance Committee members. It is assumed that students will have interacted with their Major Professor during and after their outreach to insure that what was done was acceptable. The outcome report should describe what groups were interacted with, what was done, and the results. It is recognized that there may be substantial differences between what was planned and what was conducted. Following the defense or oral exam, the Major Professor will sign the Outreach Experience report (which may be a revision of what was submitted if the original version needed modifications to be acceptable) and return it to the Graduate Secretary.

H. The Annual Performance Evaluation

The Department requires an annual written performance evaluation of every graduate student, which is also a University Requirement. The evaluation is conducted by the Major Professor. New students should initiate a discussion with their Major Professor and work jointly to establish written performance expectations during the semester they are admitted. As stated in a previous section, the Graduate School has very useful resources and forms to assist with this planning (<https://grad.msu.edu/implementation-toolkit>). Annual performance is evaluated each year prior to the end of the spring semester based on the existing performance expectations. Each spring the Graduate Program Director will distribute the Annual Evaluation form, and will announce the deadline for their submission (typically about April 15). The process for completing the evaluations is for the student to initiate this by filling out an evaluation form detailing their accomplishments and proposing new expectations for the next year, with the Major Professor commenting on and evaluating the accomplishments and suggesting revisions to the new expectations. The Major Professor and student meet to discuss the evaluation and both sign the form. Ultimately the Major Professor decides on how the student has performed and expectations for the next year. The student signs the form to acknowledge that the review took place and that they were apprised of the results. If a student disagrees with the contents of their written evaluation, they may draft a letter to the Major Professor and the Graduate Program Director, stating the nature of the disagreement. This letter will be kept in the student's file.

After the evaluation form is completed and signed it should be sent electronically to the Graduate Secretary and the Graduate Program Director. The submitted evaluation will be placed in each student's file. Key aspects of any written evaluation are a description of progress based on the previous year's expectations, an overall evaluation of whether the student is making satisfactory progress, and written expectations for the next year.

The Department wishes to emphasize the importance of the yearly evaluation process as a means of establishing a written record of professional performance. This document stands primarily as a positive source of interaction between a student and their faculty supervisor. However, in situations of poor research performance or unprofessional conduct, such documentation can be critical to documenting a history of substandard performance which can be used as grounds for invoking "probationary status" or for removal of assistantships and/or dismissal. The annual evaluation is also an opportunity for student and Major Professor to evaluate the effectiveness of their communication, and to indicate if responsibilities of the advisor (being available for regular

meetings and providing feedback to written documents in a timely manner) are being met. Finally, the Graduate Program Director develops an annual summary report (starting in 2022) based on review of all the evaluations. These reports will be shared with faculty and graduate students in FW. They will be in a generalized format to respect the privacy of individual students.

I. Annual Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Training

All graduate students are required to engage in responsible and ethical conduct of research (RECR) training. In the FW File Sharing Site, you should view the 'Required RECR Training and Annual Evaluations' video in the 'Orientation Videos and Slides' module. This video summarizes (in more detail than here) what training is required, where the training is accessed, and the training is reported.

For MSU graduate students who began their programs in spring term 2017 (January 1, 2017) or later the essence of the required training is:

1. All graduate students are required to complete 4 specific online modules during their first academic year and 6 hours of discussion-based training before the end of their program (MS students) or by the end of their second academic year (PhD students).
2. All Plan A (thesis option) MS students and all PhD students are required to complete 3 additional online modules chosen from a specific list of 6 possibilities by the end of their second academic year.
3. All PhD students are required to complete 3 hours of refresher training annually starting in the third year of their program.

For students who began their programs prior to January 1, 2017 (i.e., fall term 2016 or earlier), training for each individual must include a minimum of 5 hours in the first year and a minimum of 3 additional hours of training in each subsequent year. The annual cycle for these students begins with the fall semester (August 16) and ends on August 15.

Some funding agencies such as NSF and NIH require RCR training, and the MSU system used to document the general requirements summarized above is the same one used by Fisheries and Wildlife to track our RCR requirement. Do not assume that meeting the FW requirement will meet a funding agency requirement, and you should check with the Principal Investigator of the grant that you are working on to make sure that you meet the grant requirements with regard to the amount, timing, and type of training.

As explained in the video referenced above, the CITI modules and some types of discussion-based RCR training are automatically imported into Campus Solutions (GradPlan). However, for discussion-based training conducted with your advisor, you'll need to enter information about that training into GradPlan and your advisor will need to approve it. More details are available in the 'Instructions for Using GradPlan' document also posted on our FW File Sharing site.

J. Required Training

As of Fall 2020, all students, faculty, and staff must complete MSU's online 'MSU Foundations: Our Spartan Community' training. [Visit the Training page](#) from MSU's Office of Regulatory Affairs for FAQs and the link to take the training in the Ability system, and watch for updates as this requirement evolves.

K. Graduate Specializations

A specialization is defined as an interdisciplinary program including thematically related courses, and completion of a specialization is indicated on your transcripts. There are many specializations open to graduate students in Fisheries and Wildlife. The requirements and process for pursuing the specializations vary. In addition to specific course work, requirements can include representation of program faculty members on the Guidance Committee, an appropriate thesis and dissertation topic, formal admission to the program, and participation in program events. Some specializations are only open to graduate students in particular Departments or Colleges. Some specializations are open only to students pursuing the Ph.D. or only to those pursuing a Masters' degree.

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources offers a specialization in Environmental Toxicology open to M.S. students, a specialization in Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change open to M.S. and Ph.D. students, and a specialization in Environmental and Resource Economics open to M.S. and Ph.D. students. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife offers a specialization in Fish and Wildlife Disease Ecology and Conservation Medicine open to M.S. and Ph.D. students. In addition, there are other specializations offered by other colleges and other departments, and many are potentially open to students in our Department. For example, there are specializations in Ecology, Evolution and Behavior and also in Environmental Policy open to M.S. students (see also the dual degree programs for Ph.D. students).

The specifics for all the potential specializations are not detailed in this handbook, but you are urged to explore what is required for any specialization early in your program, and discuss options with your Major Professor. A list of all specializations available at MSU with links to additional information on them can be found at:

<https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Programs.aspx?PType=SPCG>.

L. Graduate Certificates

Generally speaking, certificates provide recognition that you have completed course work or professional training, or developed specific skills or competency levels in a particular area. At Michigan State University certificate programs come in four distinct types. From the perspective of Fisheries and Wildlife graduate students, these certificates are distinguished by whether the completion of them is recorded on the transcript (types 2 and 4) or not (type 3). A more full description of certificates at MSU is at: <https://reg.msu.edu/Read/UCC/gradcert.pdf>. Participating in a certificate program is an option open to Fisheries and Wildlife graduate

students, but is not a requirement of, nor integrated into, our graduate degree programs. (Some other graduate programs at MSU include type 1 certificates as integrated parts of the degree requirements).

The Fisheries and Wildlife Department administers the Graduate Certificate in Spatial Ecology (<https://www.canr.msu.edu/spatial-ecology/>). This certificate requires 3 courses and provides interdisciplinary training necessary to develop inference about ecological phenomena using appropriate spatial theory, statistics, modeling approaches and data management tools.

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has an approved program as part of the University level Certificate in College Teaching, which is an initiative of the Graduate School. This is a type 4 certificate and appears on the transcript. Details of the CCT can be found at: <https://reg.msu.edu/Read/UCC/gradcert.pdf>.

Departmental students can also pursue a Graduate Certification in Community Engagement (Type 4), overseen by the Office of University Outreach and Engagement in partnership with the Graduate School. This certificate is intended to further understanding and practice of engaged scholarship and research, engaged teaching, and engaged service to communities. See <https://gradcert.engage.msu.edu/> for additional information.

Finally, the Environmental Science and Public Policy (ESPP) program offers a Certificate in Environmental and Social Systems Modeling, open to M.S. and Ph.D. students.

A full list of College and Departmental certificates with links to the corresponding sections of the academic catalog can be found at: <https://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Programs.aspx?PType=GCRT>

M. Dual Major Doctoral Programs

The Department participates in three interdepartmental Ph.D. programs for dual majors. These programs lead to both the disciplinary major (Fisheries and Wildlife) and the interdisciplinary major (Ecology, Evolution and Behavior (EEB), Environmental Science and Policy (ESPP), or Environmental Toxicology) being listed on the transcript. These interdisciplinary majors can only be pursued in conjunction with a disciplinary major. To complete the dual major the student needs to be formally admitted to the interdisciplinary program as well as the doctoral program in Fisheries and Wildlife, and needs to complete all the requirements for a Ph.D. in Fisheries and Wildlife and the additional requirements of the interdisciplinary major. All dual major doctoral degrees must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Generally, a request for the dual major degree must be submitted within one semester following its development and within the first two years of the student's enrollment at Michigan State University. See Academic Programs (<https://www.reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/Text.aspx?Section=111#s407>) for details.

The EEB program is administered by the College of Natural Science. To pursue this dual major your Ph.D. program should include coursework on ecology, evolutionary biology and behavior.

You can apply to the EEB program either immediately after applying to the Ph.D. program in Fisheries and Wildlife or later during your first year. To apply to this program your Major Professor must be an EEB faculty member and at least one additional member of your Guidance Committee must be an EEB faculty member. Other requirements include 800-900 level courses in ecology, evolution, and quantitative methods. More background on the EEB program and how to apply to it is at: <http://eebb.msu.edu/>.

The Environmental Science and Policy dual major PhD is administered by the Environmental Science and Policy Program and umbrella organization. The dual major promotes knowledge about the diverse disciplines brought to bear on contemporary environmental problems. It is designed to provide an understanding of how various disciplines conceptualize environmental issues and how scientific information can be utilized in environmental decision-making and in creating environmental policy. Students already enrolled in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife will need to fill out a form, submit a CV and a letter requesting admission to the ESP Dual Major and describing professional interest in environmental science and policy, and request their advisor submit a letter of support. Students applying prior to the start of their PhD program would request that Fisheries and Wildlife submit a copy of your application package to ESPP instead of requesting a letter from the advisor. Students are required to take four specific courses, demonstrate knowledge of Environmental Science and Policy during their comprehensive exam, and integrate environmental science and policy as part of their dissertation. For details see: <https://espp.msu.edu/education/dualmajor.html>.

The Environmental Toxicology program is coordinated through the Institute for Integrative Toxicology. You should apply to this program during the first year of your Ph.D. program. Students pursuing this dual major are expected to be engaged in toxicology related dissertation research. There is an extensive set of course requirements that differ depending on whether you enroll in the Toxicology or Environmental track. You are expected to participate in toxicology seminars and at least two members of your Guidance Committee need to be members of the Environmental and Integrative Toxicology Program. More background on this program and the Institute for Integrative Toxicology can be found [here](#).

If you have interest in these programs you should immediately review the material on them, as completing a dual major requires additional planning and coordination. Any plans to participate in these programs should be discussed early in your planning process with your Major Professor. The Dual Ph.D. Program in Quantitative Biology may be of interest to some FW graduate students (<https://qbi.natsci.msu.edu/>). Ultimately, it is possible, in theory, to design your own dual major doctoral program with assistance from faculty in each program involved and approval of the associated Academic Deans and Graduate Dean as described [here](#). Although this is a possibility, no such dual programs have been pursued by Fisheries and Wildlife doctoral students in recent years.

VII. GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Most Graduate Assistantships in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife are Research Assistantships (RA). The details provided here with regard to enrollment requirements, stipends, and benefits are for such RAs. The Graduate School web page has more information regarding [research assistantships](#). The details for Teaching Assistantships are similar but not identical as they are subject to a collective bargaining agreement. For details regarding teaching assistantships see the [GEU 2024 2028 Contract](#).

The primary purpose of a Graduate Assistantship is to provide financial support for the student's graduate studies while they perform specific job related duties that need to be accomplished. Assistantships pay a stipend and include a number of benefits including [health insurance](#) and a [tuition waiver](#).

Fellowships are intended to support graduate studies but do not have specific associated job duties associated with them. Be aware that the terms of fellowships are much different than assistantships, and many do not include benefits such as health insurance and tuition waivers. Also note that fellowships are viewed as taxable income by state and federal governments. For more details see the [fellowship section](#).

A. Enrollment Requirements for Research Assistantships

All graduate Research Assistants must be registered as graduate students and enroll for at least a minimum and not more than a maximum number of credits. For Ph.D. students who have not advanced to candidacy (i.e., passed the comprehensive exams) prior to the appointment period, the required minimum is 3 credits for each semester including the summer. The minimum for Ph.D. students that have advanced to candidacy prior to the appointment the minimum enrollment is 1 credit.

For M.S. students who have a $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ assistantship appointment the minimum number of credits is 6 during fall and spring terms and 3 during the summer. For M.S. students with a $\frac{3}{4}$ time appointment the minimum is 3 credits for all semesters including the summer. Assistants are allowed to enroll in just one credit the semester they have applied to graduate, but are allowed this exception to the normal minimum enrollment just one time (contact the Graduate Secretary to arrange for this).

Ph.D. students that have passed their comprehensive exams may choose an RA appointment option for summer that does not incur fringe charges and does not include a tuition charge. See <https://www.hr.msu.edu/ua/hiring/graduate-assistants/no-fringe/index.html> for details.

The maximum number of credits is 16 for a $\frac{1}{4}$ time, 12 for a $\frac{1}{2}$ time, and 8 for a $\frac{3}{4}$ time assistantship. These maximums do not include research credits (FW 898, FW 899, FW 999).

Unless registering for more than nine credits during fall or spring or more than five credits during the summer, nearly all costs associated with meeting the enrollment requirement for Assistants are covered by a [tuition waiver](#).

B. Selection of Graduate Assistants

Selection of Graduate Assistants is made by individual faculty members, with the ultimate approval of the Graduate Program Director and Department Chair. Appointments of Graduate Assistants will be made on a semester basis, with a maximum appointment of one year. Reappointments will be contingent upon continued satisfactory performance of duties, the possible need to rotate assistantships among qualified graduate students, and the continuing availability of funds. Often graduate students are recruited to work on a specific research project and are reappointed as Research Assistants on that project for multiple years.

By March 31st of each calendar year, the Department will advise each Graduate Assistant in writing on one or more of the following:

1. The assistantship will be renewed for the following academic year;
2. The assistantship will be renewed provided the student is able to meet certain specified conditions;
3. The assistantship will be renewed provided the Department is able to meet certain specified conditions; and
4. If the assistantship will not be renewed for the following academic year, the reason shall be indicated.

C. Assistantship Responsibilities and Evaluation

The normal work load for $\frac{1}{2}$ time assistantships is 20 hours (10 hours for a $\frac{1}{4}$ -time, 30 hours for a $\frac{3}{4}$ -time) per week, averaged over the length of the appointment. Note that for many Research Assistants, the distinction between the work they are paid for and the work they are doing to complete their dissertation or thesis is not obvious. In such cases students are often expected to work on their research as part of their degree requirements, beyond the assistantship workload. If you have any concerns about this issue make sure to discuss these with your advisor.

All University policies on assistantships should be followed. Additionally, policies and requirements as specified in the [GEU 2024_2028 Contract](#) should be followed for teaching assistantships.

Expectations for assistantship performance depends upon the level and type of appointment (i.e., whether a Graduate Research Assistant or Teaching Assistant).

Research Assistants are generally given duties related to research. The scope of duties can be broader than what is normally viewed as research but needs to reflect the scope of duties assigned to Research Assistantships prior to February 2, 2001 (i.e., prior to the collective bargaining agreement for teaching assistants).

Teaching Assistants are involved in instruction. Normally they directly interact with students by running discussion sections or labs, and also prepare handouts, monitor examinations, and are involved in other instructional duties as specified in the appointment letter.

Level 1: Students with less than one year of experience as a Graduate Assistant or a full support fellow.

Level 2: Must hold a Master's degree and/or possess one year of experience as a Graduate Assistant or full support fellow in the appointing Department/Unit or in a Department/Unit considered relevant by the Chairperson of the appointing Department. Advancement from Level 1 to Level 2 is routine on completion of 45 credits or one year (two semesters) of experience at Level 1.

Level 3: Successful completion of doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the department in which the student is enrolled, and six semesters of experience as a Graduate Assistant at Michigan State University, or equivalent. The definition of equivalent experience as a Graduate Assistant is left to the discretion of the Chairperson of the appointing unit, but it is expected that only experience in research-oriented assignments will count toward the six semesters of experience as a Research Assistant. Consistent with current practice, $\frac{1}{4}$ time and $\frac{3}{4}$ time appointments count the same as $\frac{1}{2}$ time appointments, and Summer Semesters count the same as Fall and Spring Semesters.

The assistantship supervisor (typically the Major Professor or in the case of teaching assistants, the class lecturer) should make assignments and/or duties clear to the assistant. If there is a question of clarity or disagreement about these assignments or duties, then it should be the responsibility of the Graduate Assistant and the assistantship supervisor to develop a written agreement on the assistant's assignments and duties and have it signed by both parties.

The University expects graduate research and teaching assistants to follow the [Code of Teaching Responsibility](#). The University provides opportunities for those teaching assistants with interest in improving their instruction skills (see [Teaching Assistant Program](#)).

Mandatory Training: All TAs and RAs must complete the on-line training about the Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy. Information on the required training can be found here: <https://orrs.msu.edu/train/programs/rvsm.html>. You should receive a notification about this training requirement at the beginning of each academic year.

Mandatory Annual Evaluation: Each Major Professor must file a written progress report (the [Annual Evaluation](#)) for each Graduate Student with the Graduate Program Director and Graduate Secretary each spring semester. The progress reports should take into account performance as a

Graduate Assistant, even when the assistantship was supervised by another faculty member. The Graduate Assistant is expected to remind their Major Professor to include a review of performance as an assistant in the annual evaluation, especially if the assistantship was supervised by another faculty member. Note that these evaluations are in addition to evaluations that are required for each Teaching Assistantship appointment (i.e, for each semester) and are conducted by the Faculty Supervisor of the course the Teaching Assistant is assigned to (per the [GEU 2024_2028 Contract](#)).

MSU Policy Affecting International Teaching Assistants: MSU candidates for TA appointments who were required to demonstrate English proficiency as a condition for regular admission to MSU must also demonstrate that they meet a minimum standard of proficiency in spoken English before they can be assigned teaching work that involves oral communication with undergraduate students. For details, see [here](#).

D. Graduate Assistantship Stipends

The exact amount of the stipend will be determined by the Major Professor and approved by the Department Chair. All stipends will be within ranges [established and published](#) by the Provost's Office.

The pay period begins on August 16 of every year and the Graduate Assistant is paid bi-weekly. If the pay date falls on a Saturday or Sunday, checks arrive the Friday before. Graduate Assistants can arrange to have paychecks direct-deposited by completing the appropriate [on-line form](#) that can be found on the University's Enterprise Business System (a login is required).

Rules governing tax status are according to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines. Stipends are subject to income taxes with few exceptions. The taxability of stipends is subject to review by the IRS. Please call the Payroll office (355-5010) for more information. Graduate Assistants are required to file a W-4 Withholding Allowance Certificate. The Graduate Student Secretary can assist you and your supervisor with the necessary forms required for your hiring.

E. Tuition Waiver

Tuition for up to nine credit hours during the fall and spring terms and five credits during the summer term is paid for by MSU as benefit for Graduate Assistants. In addition, a waiver of out-of-state tuition is granted to out-of-state students during the semester of appointment. Most fees associated with enrolling each semester are also waived. Student taxes are not waived and are the student's responsibility.

F. Graduate Assistantship Health and Dental Insurance

Michigan State University provides Graduate Assistants with health insurance, including coverage in the summer if they served as an assistant during the spring semester. You can optionally enroll a legal spouse/ and/or dependent children, which are partially covered by the

insurance plan, by contacting the MSU Benefits Office at 353-4434. To review the cost for enrolling spouse and/or children or for specific questions on the Graduate Student health plan go to MSU HR web page at <https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/graduate-assistants/index.html>. Graduate Assistants are also eligible for an optional dental insurance plan, with additional information linked from the health benefits link above.

G. Parking for Graduate Assistants

As a Graduate Assistant, you are allowed to purchase a permit that allows you to park in all Faculty/Staff lots south of the Red Cedar River. On-line vehicle registration for Graduate Assistants is available at <http://www.dpps.msu.edu>, or at the Police and Public Safety Building, 87 S. Red Cedar Road. Vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and a copy of the Graduate Assistant's signed appointment form (obtained from the Graduate Secretary) is required for in-person registration. NOTE: Gate cards require a refundable deposit. On-line registration is for one semester at a time. For in-person registration, the permit can be issued for up to a year but is limited to the term of the student's appointment.

Hourly and daily parking permits issued by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife are NOT to be used by graduate students for their personal use. These permits are only to be used for visitors to the Department on Department business. Special parking permits can be arranged in advance with Public Safety. Public Safety reviews the validity and need for special permits prior to their distribution.

H. Limits on Number of Terms of Assistantship Support

The University policy for term limits is a maximum of five years for a Master's degree and a maximum of eight years for a Doctorate degree.

The Departmental policy follows these maximum guidelines. However, most Graduate Research Assistantships depend on outside grant funding that typically has limits on the number of semesters/years the position is funded. Graduate Students should discuss the length of time funding is expected to be available for assistantship support with their Major Professor. Departmental responsibility for funding a Graduate Assistant shall not extend beyond the semester in which the appointment was made. An assistantship may be terminated in less than one semester if the assistant fails to meet the grade standards, because of poor performance as an assistant, or because the student has not satisfactorily completed the minimum credit hours required in each semester that she or he is enrolled.

I. Termination of Appointment

The assistantship will terminate upon degree completion. A student who wishes to terminate an assistantship prior to that time should notify the Major Professor (and the assistantship supervisor if different) and Graduate Secretary.

Substandard Performance: The Department may terminate a Graduate Assistantship for substandard performance or inability to perform expected duties. Substandard performance may be brought to the attention of the Department Chair, typically through the normal [annual evaluation](#) process and review of annual evaluations by the Graduate Program Director.

Academic difficulty will result in a review of the student's overall situation by the Department's Graduate Committee. If there is a conflict of interest between a graduate Teaching Assistant and their students, the Teaching Assistant's performance may be considered substandard.

Violations: The Department may also terminate an assistantship in cases of violation of the General Student Regulations contained in the [Spartan Life Handbook](#), or of the provisions concerning graduate student responsibilities contained in the "[Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)." This action may be initiated by the Department Chair or by the student's Major Professor or assistantship supervisor.

Budgetary Constraints: The Department may also terminate assistantships for budgetary reasons. Should this be necessary, continuing Graduate Assistants will be given some priority over new appointees depending on their qualifications to perform the required activities.

J. Graduate Assistant Illness/Injury/Pregnancy Leave and Vacation Policy, and Grief Absence Policy

A Graduate Assistant unable to fulfill the duties of their appointment because of illness or injury shall notify their Major Professor as soon as circumstances permit. Similarly, a Graduate Assistant unable to fulfill the duties of their appointment because of pregnancy shall notify their Major Professor as soon as circumstances permit.

During the illness, injury, or pregnancy, the Major Professor shall adjust (reduce, waive, or reschedule) the Graduate Assistant's duties as those duties and the assistant's physical circumstances reasonably dictate. If total absence from duties becomes necessary, the Major Professor shall maintain the stipend of the appointment, provided the Graduate Assistant is still enrolled, for a period of two months, or to the end of the appointment period or of the semester, whichever should occur first. The Graduate Assistant shall have the right to return to the assistantship, within the original terms of the appointment, at such time as they are able to resume their duties.

If you are called for Jury Duty, you will continue to be compensated as an assistant, although you may be required to provide proof of your jury duty service. If you serve on a jury for more than two weeks you may have your Jury duty pay deducted from your assistantship pay. For more information on the policy see the [GEU 2024_2028 Contract](#).

There is no formal program of leave for Research Assistants who are new fathers or those who have adopted children. Teaching Assistants can such leave for up to two months, the first week of which is paid, the remainder of which is not. If you are a Research Assistant and wish unpaid leave you should discuss whether this is an option with your Major Professor and assistantship supervisor.

Vacation time should be arranged in advance with the Major Professor and assistantship supervisor. Normally students are expected to work on average the appropriate number of hours over the term of their appointment (e.g., 20 hours per week for a ½ time position) so that time spent on vacation typically means more time is spent on assistantship duties during other periods. For master's (Plan A), master's (Plan B) with research responsibilities, and doctoral students, it is the responsibility of the student to: a) notify their advisor/major professor and faculty of the courses in which they are enrolled of the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation, b) provide appropriate verification of the grief absence as specified by the advisor/major professor and faculty, and c) complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the advisor/major professor and faculty. It is the responsibility of the advisor/major professor to: a) determine with the student the expected period of absence – it is expected that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances, b) receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student's return, and c) make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief absence. If employed as an RA or TE, the graduate student must also notify their employer. Both employer and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the bereavement policy in the MSU GEU CBU Article 18. Students in the graduate professional colleges (CHM, COM, CVM, LAW) with their own grief absence policies are excluded from the above and should follow their own policies. Students who believe their rights under this policy have been violated should contact the University Ombudsperson.

K. Outside Work for Pay by Graduate Assistants

The assistantship represents an obligation for the student to perform various duties of benefit to the Department in return for financial assistance. It is assumed that these duties in combination with the normal course of studies will amount to a full-time work load.

Outside work for Graduate Research Assistants is discouraged. Outside work is allowed for teaching assistantships as part of the collective bargaining agreement. Before beginning outside employment, the assistant should discuss with the Major Professor and assistantship supervisor the outside employment and how the assistantship obligations will be fulfilled. Each student employed by the Department is expected to fulfill their assigned responsibilities to the satisfaction of the Major Professor. Any non-University employment that may conflict with the responsibilities of a Graduate Assistantship must be made known to the Department Chair for approval of continuation of the assistantship.

L. Fellowships

Fellowships are not the same as assistantships. Fellowships are offered through various sources, e.g., Science to Achieve Results (STAR), NASA Graduate Student Research Program, and some can offer the same benefits as an assistantship if done properly. If the student receives a

fellowship, communication between the student, the Major Professor, and the Department's Bookkeeper and Graduate Secretary is **VITAL**. Some sources of fellowships are listed in the [Financial Aid section](#).

In general (with some exceptions) fellowships cover just the student's stipend. They **do not** generally (see below) cover health insurance, tuition fees, and incidentals. However, some fellowships allow the student to request monies in addition to the stipend to cover these expenses. If the student receives monies beyond the stipend, they must notify the Department Bookkeeper and Graduate Secretary **IMMEDIATELY**. If the student receives a fellowship, they are not ordinarily granted in-state residency (unless already a Michigan resident) and needs to be aware of out-of-state tuition rates. Coverage of health benefits requires a letter to Human Resources from the Department Chair (see Graduate Secretary to initiate). To ensure that health coverage begins at the same time as the fellowship, letters need to be sent prior to the start of the fellowship. Additionally, to ensure that enough monies are available to cover additional expenses, verification of available monies must be approved by the Department Bookkeeper.

To be eligible for a parking permit the fellowship must be over \$1,000. If the fellowship is for one semester, the student will be eligible for a permit during that semester. If the fellowship is for Fall through Spring semester, they may obtain a permit for the entire year. The student will be required to show a copy of their fellowship appointment form to receive the permit at the Department of Police & Public Safety (DPPS).

Dissertation Completion Fellowships require only a minimum enrollment of one credit and this is not viewed as full time status by the Registrar's Office. This can be critical for students who are deferring their loans. You should check with the lending agency about this so that there are no surprises.

Receipt of externally funded fellowships by students who have written their own grant applications and worth at least \$24,000 (this level applied for 2024-2025 but could be adjusted and is for direct costs) makes the students eligible to apply for the in-state tuition rate. This program was previously known as the Top up award. The in-state tuition rate applies only to the semesters during which the student is supported by the fellowship. This policy applies only to grants funded through a competitive process by a US institution/agency/foundation. Funds obtained through non-competitive processes (e.g., need-based fellowships) or from international sources do not qualify the students for in-state tuition rates. For more information see <https://grad.msu.edu/out-state-tuition-waiver-external-fellowships>.

M. Disability Accommodations for Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistants (RAs, TAs, and TEs) are both students and employees. They are thus eligible for disability accommodations in both of these roles, and these accommodations are provided through distinct documents coordinated by RCPD: Students receive an Accommodation Letter or a Temporary Adjustment Letter and employees receive SEADs (Statements of Employee

Accommodation Determination). Graduate assistants can register for both situations using [RCPD's MyProfile portal](#).

VIII. APPROVAL FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS AND ANIMALS IN RESEARCH

Students must ensure they have valid authorization to use vertebrate animals or conduct research involving humans. Use of vertebrate animals and human subjects in research requires approval prior to the beginning of the research. Surveys, focus groups and related sociological/human dimensions research is considered research involving humans. In some special cases, where there is use of invertebrates in human health applications, approvals are also needed.

The Graduate School will check whether appropriate approvals were obtained at the time the student's thesis or dissertation is submitted, and most journals also require evidence of this approval before publication. **Failure to ensure that graduate research was done with advance approvals could delay or prevent graduation. Graduate students should work closely with their advisors to ensure they have the needed approval and a clear understanding of the techniques for conducting their research as approved.**

A. Research Involving Human Subjects

According to [US Federal regulations](#), "Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) [who is] conducting research: [1] Obtains information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction with the individual, and uses, studies, or analyzes the information or biospecimens; or [2] Obtains, uses, studies, analyzes, or generates identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens." Among other research methods, human subjects research may involve physical specimen collection, surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups.

The MSU Institutional Review Boards (IRB) are responsible for review and approval of all human subjects research activities. MSU's Human Research Protection Plan (HRPP) applies to activities broadly defined by the MSU academic community as "research", including some that go beyond federal requirements. These broader definitions are critical to protecting the human subjects with whom MSU investigators interact or about whom MSU investigators obtain private information. When there is a question about whether an activity constitutes human subject research subject to IRB review, MSU requires that "a qualified person or persons other than the investigator or research team" verify that the activity qualifies for exemption from full IRB review. An application must be completed for every project involving human subjects.

Researchers must have an IRB exemption or approval letter (initial or continuing review) prior to conducting research. The full review process typically requires a minimum of one month to complete, but may be longer when revisions are necessary. Expedited and Full review projects must be renewed annually, and before each portion of research involving human subjects is performed. For information or consultation, call 517-355-2180, email ORRS.IRB@msu.edu or

visit the web site to identify the best contact point: <http://hrpp.msu.edu> . IRB staff can help to avoid delays resulting from application errors.

B. Use of Vertebrate Animals

The use of vertebrate animals in research, teaching, and outreach activities must be approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Only faculty who are Principal Investigators on a project can submit the animal use form. Graduate students and others who are active in certain activities on a project need to be listed on the form and receive training. Information and/or copies of the form may be obtained by contacting the IACUC office: e-mail iacuc@msu.edu. See also the IACUC web site: <https://animalcare.msu.edu/> The full review process typically requires 4-6 weeks. Once approved, the application is valid for three years. Each year, Principal Investigators are required to complete an brief Annual Review Letter. Failure to do this can lead to inactivation of IACUC approval to animal use. Any significant changes in animal research activities must be processed and approved through IACUC. Although the faculty Principal Investigator is responsible for filing animal use forms, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that their research is covered under an approved and active project. All Graduate students and anyone else working on the project with the animals (e.g., undergraduates, lab assistants, etc.) must EACH fill out a personnel form and take required trainings (<https://animalcare.msu.edu/training>). Personnel forms can be added to the AUF at any time during the project period.

If your research project does not involve actual live vertebrate animals but only analysis of previously collected samples, data, or modeling you may still be requested to provide an animal use form or exemption form when you submit your thesis or dissertation. This can occur even if you check that you did not use vertebrate animals but the content of the dissertation reflects research related to vertebrates. If your project involves vertebrates in such ways the safest course of action is to make sure that your Major Professor submits an exemption form and you should obtain a copy of the letter approving the exemption. This is a simple one-page form and typically is reviewed quickly. The exemption is good for three years. Obtaining the exemption in advance of conducting any of the research will avoid unpleasant surprises (such as a last minute request for an exemption not being approved). Given that the exemption only lasts for 3 years and PhD programs typically last longer than this, you should make sure that the exemption is reapplied for well in advance of when you are completing your dissertation.

IX. IMPORTANT LAST STEPS

A. Important Steps for Graduation

Some of this repeats earlier materials but is listed in short form to be a useful checklist to be consulted as you approach completion. Ideally you should review these needed steps before your last semester starts.

If you are on an assistantship and are sure that it will be your last semester, check with the Graduate Secretary before enrolling in the usual minimum number of credits. This is most relevant to Masters students who usually, with a ½ time assistantship, would need to enroll in 6 credits but may be able to enroll in just one credit if that is all that is needed to graduate. This must be discussed with and approved by the Major Professor.

An online application for graduation must be completed by the graduate student at the beginning of the semester in which graduation will take place. The application can be found in the Student Information System (SIS; <https://student.msu.edu>).

The graduate student must schedule a room for their seminar and defense (see the Graduate Secretary in Room 13 for procedures). Do this at least 3 weeks before the seminar and defense!

At least **three weeks prior** to the defense, the graduate student should bring the date, time, place and title of the thesis/dissertation to the Graduate Secretary. This long lead time is required by University regulations regarding the announcement of defense seminars.

A review of the graduate student's Program of Study will be done by the Graduate Secretary when they are informed of the defense date to assure that it is still correct, and that the graduate student has completed the required courses and credit totals. Any changes in committee members or courses require approval by the Major Professor, Graduate Program Director and the Associate Dean of the CANR. Ideally changes should not have been left to be taken care of at this point!

The student must contact the Graduate Secretary to have an announcement of their seminar distributed to the faculty, committee members, and submitted to the MSU News Bulletin. If the thesis title changes after the defense, the student must notify the Graduate Secretary. This will assure no complications in graduation proceedings.

The dissertation or thesis needs to be distributed to the Guidance Committee **at least two weeks** before the scheduled defense date. The thesis should be complete and formatted according to Graduate School guidelines as described at: <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>.

Prior to the defense, the Graduate Secretary sends an electronic approval form to the Major Advisor, asking them to route the form among committee members for signature, immediately after the defense. The Major Professor should then return the completed electronic form to the Graduate Secretary.

Following a student's successful defense, the Graduate Secretary enters the information into GradPlan to update the student's Milestones information.

There is also an [electronic approval form](#) for the completed thesis or dissertation available, which should be submitted to the Graduate School by the Major Advisor.

You may need to subsequently revise the version you submit online to obtain Graduate School approval. Depending upon the care you take in following formatting requirements, and how fast you make revisions this process could take from several days to a number of weeks. The final version you submit needs to be accepted by the Graduate School by their posted deadline (typically five working days before the first class day of the next semester) in order to graduate in the current semester.

Ph.D. students are required to complete the [survey of earned doctorates \(SED\)](#), accessible at the same online location with instructions on how to submit your dissertation.

B. Voluntary Departure Prior to Completion of the Degree

If a student decides to leave the Graduate Program and does not intend to return, they should be sure to discuss this decision with their Major Professor or other faculty such as the Graduate Program Director and/or the Department Chair. The student must write a short memo to the Graduate Program Director stating their intent. Prompt notification is requested to ensure that the student's assistantship responsibilities can be met in other ways. Usually, if the student takes this step, any financial support cannot be held should the student change their mind.

In some cases a student needs to take a leave of absence. The student should discuss this with their Major Professor, and so that they can make arrangements concerning any assistantship duties. Note that there is no formal paper work to be filed with the University if the student leaves the program or takes a leave of absence; failure to enroll initiates a leave of absence. If for any reason enrollment is interrupted for three consecutive semesters (including summers) the student will need to apply for readmission. If the student fails to enroll for the first semester for which they were admitted to the program they will need to apply for readmission (former MSU students) or request renewal of application within a year (students who have not previously attended MSU).

Should a graduate student have to leave when a degree is incomplete, prior to defending or turning in their thesis/dissertation, they should check with the Graduate Secretary on:

- A time limit to complete the graduate degree;
- A review of the Program of Study, with courses that have been taken;
- Numbers of credits or courses still required; and
- Completing "Important Steps for Graduation" above.

C. Last Things to Do Before All Departures

Before you leave Michigan State University as a graduate student you should:

1. Have an exit interview with the Department's Graduate Program Director;
2. Remove all your personal items from office/lab space;

3. Turn in your keys;
4. Leave copies of all data associated with your research with your Major Professor. This is essential for funded projects where Michigan State is responsible for curating the data.
5. Leave all samples associated with your research at Michigan State University, or if you are transporting samples, make sure this is in agreement with your Major Professor and follows all hazardous sample procedures. Again, MSU is responsible for curating samples associated with funded research and removal of such samples should only be done as part of agreed upon plans for further work on the project.
6. Turn in bound hard copies of the thesis/dissertation for your Major Professor and Guidance Committee in accord with any agreements about this.
7. Leave a forwarding address with the Graduate Secretary.
8. Fill out a [placement information form](#) and leave this with the Graduate Secretary.
9. Give the Graduate Secretary an electronic (pdf) copy of your thesis or dissertation.
10. Both MS and PhD students should complete an exit or 'destination survey' during the semester in which they are completing their degrees. In addition, graduating PhD students should also complete the 'Survey of Earned Doctorates' (SED). More information on all surveys is available on the graduate school website [here](#) and [here](#). Note that the MS and PhD exit surveys are separate entities. Graduating MS students will receive periodic emails (and possibly other messages) from a Career Services team member encouraging them to go to <https://msu.12twenty.com> to enter experiences and their initial status after graduation. Graduating PhD students will receive periodic emails to fill out a Destination Survey from an egr.msu.edu email address with the survey link to an egr.msu.edu URL after they apply for graduation until they complete the survey. They may also receive some periodic emails (and possibly other messages) from a Career Services team member encouraging them to go to <https://msu.12twenty.com> to enter experiences and their initial status after graduation.
11. Dissemination of research: In keeping with MSU's public mission, the University requires that theses, dissertations and abstracts will become public after the conferral of the degree. Instructions for electronic submission of your thesis or dissertation to ProQuest are available [here](#). Embargoes can only be pursued for a limited period. To request a hold/embargo of publication by ProQuest, contact the MSU Graduate School at msuetds.approval@grd.msu.edu to request that the appropriate form be sent to you. The form will need to be signed by you major professor and the Associate Dean of our College (CANR). Note that research results that are subject to restrictions for dissemination by funding agencies cannot be part of any document submitted as a thesis

or dissertation. For more information, work with your advisor to review the information [here](#).

X. FINANCIAL AID

A. Graduate Research and Teaching Assistantships

Research and Teaching Assistantships are available in the Department, check with the Graduate Program Director or Major Professor for availability. See Section on [Graduate Assistantships](#).

B. Other Financial Aid and Financial Resources

1. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife

The Department sometimes provides matching travel funding when students apply for travel funds from the Graduate School or the College. These applications require approval of the Department Chairperson and include space for the unit to contribute matching funds. In general, graduate students will not receive matching travel support from the Department multiple times, particularly within a single academic year.

Graduate Fellowship Awards. The Department receives University funds each academic year for Graduate Fellowship Awards. These funds can be used to supplement existing funding or used when other funding is not available. They are often used to reward significant accomplishments or service contributions by deserving graduate students. They are distributed at the discretion of the Department Chairperson.

Graduate Out-of-State Tuition Award for students who, for whatever reason, are not eligible for the tuition waiver available to Graduate Assistants and some fellowship recipients. This award reimburses the student for their tuition expenses. The student should discuss their need for fellowship funds with their Major Professor, as the Major Professor will need to support an application to the Department Chair.

GSO Travel Grants are awarded three times per year at the beginning of the fall, spring and summer semesters. Funding is awarded to GSO members for attending a meeting or other professional development activity (workshop or short course, etc.). Instructions and applications can be obtained from the [GSO website](#) at or by contacting a member of the GSO Travel Committee (list posted on website). The GSO Travel Grant Committee is responsible for reviewing applications and awarding grants.

2. College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Academic Achievement Graduate Assistantships (AAGA). The Graduate School offers a graduate assistantship program that provides financial support for students in the College of

Agriculture and Natural Resources who are accepted into a master's or a doctoral degree program and whose enrollment will enhance the student body of the program into which they are admitted. Funds are provided directly to the College to offer these assistantships as part of the overall financial aid package. The Graduate School provides the first year (two semesters) of funding and the department; College and/or advisor is obligated to provide additional years of funding, as long as the student is making satisfactory academic progress toward the degree, for the duration of the student's program. The student needs to have the support and nomination of their Major Professor when applying for this program. There are also travel monies available through the CANR. Typically, these grants are provided to match Department and Graduate School contributions. For more information see the Graduate Program Director. In addition, some Graduate School fellowships are selected at the college level (see below).

3. University

A variety of funding opportunities are identified here on the [Graduate School's web page](#). Funding opportunities include but are not limited to:

[Graduate Student Research Enhancement Award](#): Funds are available to support research activities, travel to participate in workshops, data collection, short courses and extramural laboratory rotations.

[Travel Funding Fellowship](#): Funds are available to support graduate students to travel to present their research at professional conferences.

[Professional development award](#). Up to \$500 to pay for participation in professional development opportunities. This cannot be to attend and present at a conference.

[Education Opportunity Fellowship](#): Funds are available to students who are graduating either in the summer or fall semester of the same year they receive the award. Applications are due April 15th of each year; funds are available on a first-served basis until all funds are disbursed.

[Emergency Fellowship Funding](#): Limited funds are available for graduate students for unusual or unforeseen emergency expenses provided on a one-time only basis. This fellowship does not include student health insurance or tuition/fee waivers.

[University Distinguished Fellowship](#): Funds are available to provide financial support for recruiting outstanding doctoral students. Students must be nominated by the Department and College; applications are due in January. See the nomination form and brochure for applications available from the Graduate School (<http://grad.msu.edu/universityfellowships>), but be aware that the Departmental deadline will be substantially earlier than when nominees are due to the Graduate School from the College.

[Dissertation Completion Fellowships](#): Funds are made available annually to allow students to devote full time to writing the dissertation with the goal that the dissertation will be completed

during the tenure of the fellowship. Typically the procedure and deadlines is distributed by email by the FW Graduate Program Director. There is a Departmental deadline for each semester.

[King-Chavez-Parks Future Faculty Fellowship](#): Funds are available to applicants who wish to become future faculty and broaden the inclusiveness of faculty in the social sciences, humanities, or education.

[Council of Graduate Students Disciplinary Leadership Award](#): Funds dedicated to recognizing disciplinary leadership by graduate students. Typically a deadline is late in the calendar year.

4. The Council of Graduate Students (COGS)

[COGS Loans](#): Short-term loans of \$300 are available to MSU graduate students.

[COGS Conference Grants](#): Funds are available for up to \$300 to help defray costs of traveling to and from a conference for individuals presenting at the conference. Awards are drawn by lottery, and you are eligible for just one award. There are multiple deadlines annually.

5. Other Sources of Funding

Additional funding opportunities include [Fulbright Grants](#), [Distinguished Student Awards](#), and [Michigan Intercollegiate Graduate Studies Scholarships](#).

Additional University funding resources can be found at:

[Environmental Science and Policy Program](#)

[MSU Library Grants Resources](#)

[Office of Financial Aid](#)

[Graduate School links](#)

Additional non-University funding resources can be found at:

[National Science Foundation \(NSF\) Graduate Research Fellowship Program \(GRFP\)](#)

[fastWeb](#)

[FinAID](#)

XI. DEPARTMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND FACILITIES

Many of the non-academic policies (e.g., on purchasing, reserving departmental resources, travel, and use of copier/FAX/Phone) are described more generally and in greater detail in the Departmental Standard Operating Procedures available in Teams. Much of the information presented in this section is based on material in that document.

A. Academic Policies and Student Conduct

1. Statement on Scholarly Integrity

All members of the Department are expected to conduct themselves with respect for the original works of others, by extending due credit to persons whose ideas, labor, and results were used to form the basis of their work, and by refraining from falsely claiming responsibility for the ideas, works, and findings of others. For additional information regarding scholarly integrity, see the Graduate School's [Research Integrity](#) pages. Due to the Department's commitment to scholarly integrity all graduate students are required to participate in training in responsible and ethical conduct of research ([RECR](#)) each year.

2. Writing Standards

Students should refer to appropriate published style manuals for assistance in writing papers for courses or publications. The [MSU Writing Center](#) is a good resource. Consider forming a graduate [student writing group](#).

3. The Student's Department File

There are numerous documents describing the student's progress which are kept on file. Many of these must be submitted to the Department within the time limits noted elsewhere in this handbook. Records concerning each student's program of study, grade reports, completion of the departmental comprehensive examination, annual review documents, and other important materials are kept in Graduate Secretary's office (Room 13). Faculty and staff access to these materials is restricted. Students may request to examine their own files; the only material that will be withheld are letters of recommendation if the student has waived the right to examine them.

4. Conflict Resolution

The relationships that you build in graduate school with faculty, students, staff and stakeholders can be highly rewarding and professionally valuable. As with any human relationship, those developed in graduate school can also be fragile and/or complicated by power dynamics. On occasion, a graduate student develops a concern, or desires to file an academic grievance. First and foremost, our advice to graduate students is to invest effort in the prevention of problems. For example, new students and their advisors should discuss mutual expectations of each other, desired formats for communication, and ways to communicate concerns to each other. Again, the graduate school at MSU offers many useful resources to facilitate these conversations. In addition, students should be familiar with the document titled "[Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)". This document specifically address student conduct, academic pursuits, keeping of records and publications. It describes procedures for formulating regulations governing student conduct and for providing due process in the adjudication of student disciplinary cases. It also defines channels and procedures for student complaints and grievances.

In addition, details of how graduate student grievances are addressed can be found on the University Ombudsperson's web site at (<https://ombud.msu.edu/resources-self-help/conflict-grievance-systems>).

Graduate students are encouraged to seek informal solutions to their concerns, which may include discussing their concerns with their Major Professor, or the Department Graduate Program Director or Department Chair. If an informal solution can not be reached, then these individuals can help advise the student as to further lines of appeal.

Additional resources for how to avoid and or deal with challenges within the university include:

[Student Life Handbook](#)
[Office of the Ombudsperson](#)
[Research Integrity Office](#)

Finally, the FW File Sharing Site site includes a recorded video summarizing relevant MSU policy and resources that are pertinent to 'Dealing with Difficult Situations'. This video is located in the 'Orientation Videos and Slides' module.

5. Dismissal Policy

A student that fails to meet University and Departmental academic or professional standards may be dismissed at the end of a semester based on a decision by the Major Professor, Graduate Committee, and the Department Chair. Notice of dismissal will be given to the student by the Department Chair. The Dean of the College is also notified of the dismissal.

Students admitted to the Department on a provisional basis must meet certain minimum requirements which are determined at the beginning of the student's program. Failure to meet these standards may result in dismissal. The University establishes minimum requirements for course grades required for graduate students. See the [Academic Programs](#) catalog for more information.

If the student fails to enroll for three consecutive semesters including summers, they will need to apply for readmission.

B. Purchases and Expenditures

1. Account Numbers

Business transactions within the University use accounts and account numbers. Students' use of account numbers are largely governed by individual advisors or employers. The Department requires that the student obtain permission from their Major Professor or the Bookkeeper (Mary Witchell) to use an account number. Often a sub-account and/or 'object code' will be required. Again, students should garner this information from their Major Professor or Mary Witchell.

2. Account Receipts

All receipts for materials purchased either on-campus or off-campus (i.e., packing slips, library copy receipts, proof of Stores delivery, long distance telephone call slips, anything relating to Department or research accounts), are to be turned into the Bookkeeper's mailbox; further processing and distribution will be handled by her office. Please check packages carefully both inside and outside, for any paperwork related to the purchase. Be sure that the account to be charged appears on the paperwork, indicate whether order was received, and note any discrepancies or damage on the packing slip before turning it over to bookkeeper.

3. Purchase/and Repair of Computer Hardware and Software

The College has an [Information Technology Center](#), located in Natural Resources Room 206, that is available for quoting computer hardware/software and license purchases, as well as repairing and trouble-shooting computer issues. Generally you should seek computer-related purchasing assistance through this office. It is highly suggested that you contact the CANR Service Desk before making a computer hardware/software purchase at 355-3776 or by sending an email to support@anr.msu.edu. You can order directly, or Office Assistant Brandy Braman can assist you in placing your order. You must send the e-quote, link for the item you wish to purchase, account, sub-account and sub-object code via email to bramanb4@msu.edu.

All software purchases made outside of the MSU tech store require an [IT Readiness Form](#) along with a price quote. The purchase must be made using a department purchasing card (p-card). **MSU has the right to decline any reimbursement made outside of this policy.** If you purchase a computer in other ways (e.g., through the computer store) you still may need CANR IT to set up some access settings on your computer.

4. General and Biochemistry Stores

[MSU's University Stores](#) carries office supplies, laboratory supplies, safety items, hardware, storage, office chairs and other general supplies. A University Stores catalog is available online and items can be purchased directly through the online [Spartan Marketplace](#).

Alternatively, you may send an email to [Brandy Braman](#) with the direct link for the product along with the MSU account number, subaccount, and, if applicable sub-object code. Materials may be picked up at Stores (for same-day needs) or delivered (usually the next business day). Return all receipts to the Bookkeeper (Mary Witchell) by hardcopy or [email](#).

MSU's Biochemistry Stores (Room 110 of the Biochemistry Building) specializes in laboratory glassware and supplies. Their [catalog](#) lists all the items they have in-stock. In-stock items can be ordered at the Biochemistry Store counter. Any non-stock item from participating vendors can also be placed via open order. Unlike University Stores the Biochemistry Store does not deliver packages to your office/building. In-stock items have to be ordered at the counter and you will

receive a notification via email or phone call when any non-stock items arrive and are available for pick-up. Be sure to return all receipts to the Bookkeeper (Mary Witchell) by hardcopy or [email](#).

5. Off-campus Purchases

Materials not available on campus may be ordered from the manufacturer using a P-Card (purchases under \$2500) or Purchasing Requisition (purchases over \$2500). Please email your request to [Brandy Braman](#), along with a quote, justification for purchase and a complete accounting string (account number, sub-account, sub-object code). Preferred vendors (which often offer special MSU-negotiated pricing and free, expedited shipping) can be found at MSU's [Spartan Marketplace](#).

University Services has a bidding procedure for equipment and purchases that total \$10,000 and above. Two additional quotes and a sole source letter will be required for transactions over \$10,000.00. Additional information about the MSU purchasing process and bid/sole source letters is available at the [University Services website](#).

Please remember that the length of time for delivery varies: it may be as long as a month before an order is received, particularly if it is a vendor not currently in the MSU system and/or a foreign vendor.

6. Returning Merchandise to Vendors

When an item is returned to a vendor, due to a duplicate shipment, item exchange, repair/trade-in, or return of equipment following expiration of a lease, a [Material Return Authorization Form](#) needs to be completed. It is important to notify the individual who ordered the item for you to prevent payment to the vendor until the issue is resolved. For any invoices that should not be paid, the Financial Officer (FO; [Brian Livingston](#)) will place them on hold while investigating. Upon determination that the invoice should be paid, the hold can be removed, and the FO can approve the invoice. A full description of the articles being returned should be given so that if the shipment is lost, a claim can be filed with the carrier. Particular attention should be given to completing the following blocks on the form:

- MSU P.O. No. Reference
- Account Number (including subaccount and sub-object code, if applicable)
- Dollar value of shipment
- Description of why the material is being returned.

The form requires an authorized Department signature. Please contact the Bookkeeper ([Mary Witchell](#)) for further assistance on merchandise returns.

C. Online Reservation System

Some departmental resources such as Conferences rooms in the Natural Resources Building can be reserved using various google calendars. Check with the main office on how to use these systems. Campus-wide, there is a [reservation system](#) for rooms that are not controlled by individual departments (i.e., most classrooms).

D. Work-Related Travel

It is your responsibility as the traveler to be familiar with the University's travel policies and what documents/receipts are required for you to get reimbursed for travel. The MSU Controllers Office maintains a comprehensive [travel web site](#) that has useful information and summaries of policies. The information listed below is only a guide and in no way inclusive of all the policies and regulations that may apply to you when traveling. Travel costs in general are paid by the traveler and reimbursed after travel is completed (although there are exceptions). Graduate students are eligible for travel advances.

1. General Travel Information

All business travel should be arranged in the Concur travel system as soon as possible. To begin, log into [Enterprise Business Systems \(EBS\) using these steps](#):

- Click the link for Travel and Expense – SAP Concur.
- Complete the login screen by adding your msu.edu email address and password.
- You will be taken to the Concur home page.
- If you are booking travel for another user, verify you have delegated in as them, and their name appears in the upper right.

Note: Your Concur Profile must be completely set up prior to creating Requests or booking Travel. Refer to the Profile Quick Reference Guide, or the Travel and Expense Management User Guide for instructions.

It is the traveler's responsibility to be familiar with the University's travel policies and what documents and receipts are required for you to get reimbursed following travel. A complete guide to Travel Policies and Procedures can be found on the [Office of the Controller website](#) Business Manual Section 70 along with a detailed [Travel Reimbursement Chart](#). The information listed below is only a guide and in no way inclusive of all the policies and regulations that may apply to you when traveling.

Travel costs are generally paid for by the traveler and reimbursed after travel is completed. Exceptions to this are airline/rail tickets, Michigan Flyer reservations, and conference registrations, which can be pre-paid in most cases (see below) to minimize out-of-pocket expenses before travel.

We encourage the following for all travelers:

Book directly through Concur with Conlin travel to receive the following benefits:

- Access to corporate, consortium, and MSU-negotiated discounts.
- Traveler support, including assistance with billing and cancellations.
- Electronic receipts (when available).
- Preferred boarding on Delta Airlines.

For lodging, choose reasonably priced lodging at the best available rates and make reservations that allow cancellation without penalty.

For your own protection, when canceling reservations, travelers should make note of the name of the person through whom the cancellation was made and retain documentation.

If the trip is cancelled, travelers may not be reimbursed for pre-paid hotel expenses (e.g. internet reservation, first night's deposit), cancellation, or no-show fees. Ask for conference rate when booking hotel.

2. Trip Authorizations

A [Travel Request](#) must be completed in the Concur system at least two weeks prior to travel for all University-related business. To create a Travel Request, follow these steps:

- Click Requests, Create New, New Requests.
- In the Request Header, complete all required fields (red bar). Travel dates should encompass the entire trip – including any personal days.
- Click Save. A request number is generated.
- Enter Segments (airfare, car rental, hotel). Other anticipated Expenses can be added. If exact costs are not known, enter estimated amounts.
- Click Save.
- When finished click Submit Request.
- Click Accept & Submit.

MSU reserves the right to deny reimbursement if a Travel Request is not on file before departure. Travel insurance coverage may also be denied (this is at the University's discretion).

3. Blanket Travel Authorization

A Blanket Travel Authorization is used to cover travel within Michigan for up to a 12-month period for research, outreach, or teaching. This only covers travel related to specific research, outreach or teaching activities. Travel for any other reason or out-of-state travel requires a new request in Concur

It is advantageous to create a blanket request in EBS for all employees who will be travelling in-state and/or locally on a regular basis for the same business purpose which is prescribed within the scope of their duties. To create a Blanket Request, follow these steps:

- From the Request tab in Concur, view the drop-down menu under Create New and choose New Request.
- Prepare a Request using the period during which the trips will take place. This should be no longer than one year.
- Use the traveler's main place of business as the destination (East Lansing, Grand Rapids, etc.).
- Use an estimate of the expenses to be incurred during this time for the segments and expenses on the Request.
- Submit the Request.
- You will be able to process multiple Expense Reports related to this Request.

Please see the 'Request User Guide' by going [here](#), and then clicking on 'Request' in the 'User Guide' section.

4. Reimbursements/Travel Vouchers

Within 30 days of return from your travel, an [Expense report](#) must be completed and submitted in the Concur travel system. Include all non-meal receipts (airfare, ground transportation, airport parking, lodging, rental car, fuel, etc.). Note that a copy of the conference/meeting agenda is also required for conference-related travels. Receipts can be manually uploaded to Concur or using the [SAP Concur Mobile App](#). Meals are reimbursed according Travel Itinerary; meal receipts are not necessary. Please refer to the [MSU Travel Reimbursement Chart](#) for more details.

Important Note: All travel reimbursements are submitted in Concur by the traveler

Department Travel Support: A person assigned as a Request/Expense Delegate can perform Request and/or Expense duties on your behalf based on the checkboxes selected, including approvals. Only the traveler can assign Delegate access to another user. No one can assign themselves to be someone else's Delegate. To set up the Department Secretary (Jamie Lake) as a [Delegate \(Request/Expense\)](#):

- Click the Profile link in the upper right corner.
- Click Profile Settings.
- On the left side navigation bar, locate the Request Settings heading and click the "Request Delegates" link. Note: Request and Expense delegates and functions are shared. You may also click on the "Expense Delegates" link and it will update in both places.
- Click "Add" to add additional people who can perform Request/Expense functions on your behalf.

- Start typing the person's name, select the appropriate user from the available options. Click Add.
- User should now appear with checkboxes to select, as noted in screenshot below.
- Select the appropriate checkboxes for this person to be able to perform on your behalf and click Save.

5. Travel Advances

MSU faculty, staff, and graduate students are eligible to receive travel advances under certain circumstances. All Cash Advances are requested at the time of request submission in Concur. Please refer to these [guidelines](#) in Section 70 of the Manual of Business Procedures for eligibility details. Refer to [this document](#) for Cash Advance instructions in Concur.

Students requesting a travel advance should include the following information in their request through Concur; you should attach the Cash Advance form available at [this site](#), along with a financial hardship letter, which has been signed by their Major Professor. Advances will be funded through direct deposit, in the same account you set up to receive employment income.

Cash advances must be reconciled with a Travel Expense Report within 30 days of the travel end date noted on the original Cash Advance form. Please reconcile and submit all receipts in the Concur travel system.

6. International Travel

Travel from the point of origin and return is considered part of international travel. All international travel, including Mexico and Canada, must comply with the [Fly America Act](#). For students traveling abroad:

- You must sign up using the [International Travelers Database](#) (even if you are not being reimbursed for travel). This is the best way for MSU to stay in touch with you if there is an emergency.
- Check with the [MSU Travel Clinic](#)! They will let you know of any health risks or immunizations.
- Check the [International Studies and Programs](#) website for issues related to safety around the world.
- Obtain the "[Know Before You Go](#)" card from the Travel Office.
-

If you are appointed as a TA or an RA and will be traveling outside the U.S. to conduct required thesis or dissertation research, TA duties, or to collaborate with investigators conducting research abroad, the department or a research grant supporting the work will pay for all the vaccinations and/or medications (e.g., anti-malarial) as determined by the MSU Travel Clinic as needed for the trip. Students may include those costs in applications for funds from the Research Enhancement or Travel Grant programs administered by the Graduate School.

7. Conference Registration

Conference registration fees are to be paid in advance using the MSU Purchasing Card whenever possible. If the MSU Purchasing Card cannot be used because the conference registrar cannot or will not accept it, or because the registration amount exceeds the MSU Purchasing Card transaction dollar limitation, conference fees may be paid using a Disbursement Voucher (DV) or fees can be paid personally by the attendee. In either case, supporting documentation must detail the attendee, date, and location of the conference. And, if the fees are paid personally, conference fees will not be reimbursed until travel has been completed; justification for not using the department p-card is required.

Allow ample time for processing. Please send email with conference registration link (if all your information is saved in your online registration account you can supply the login information), the account number, sub-account and sub-object code, to the department secretary (Jamie Lake). Every effort should be made to meet the early registration date and take advantage of lower costs. Membership fees are typically the responsibility of the traveler; please discuss this with your project PI.

8. Use of Department Trucks

The department currently has several trucks that have been purchased for use on specific research programs. You can request use of these vehicles from the faculty member controlling their use. One option is to mail the faculty via the list serve or contact the Main Office to identify specific faculty who might be able to provide access to a truck. You must be approved to drive a University vehicle! (See #10 below.)

9. Availability of Other University Vehicles

The University has a [Motor Pool](#) from which vehicles may be checked out by faculty and staff for conducting university-related business. An MSU account number (including subaccount and sub-object code, where applicable) must be provided to cover vehicle costs- please refer to the IPF website for current short-term and long-term rates. When submitting your request in Concur, you should select “motor vehicle” in the expense section and attach your approval from risk management. All those planning to drive the vehicle must be present when vehicle is picked up (along with a copy of driver’s license).

10. Requirement for Employees Driving University Vehicles

All individuals who plan to drive an MSU-owned vehicle (this includes Motor pool vehicles and Dept. owner trucks) must obtain prior approval from the Department and have their information submitted to the Office of Risk Management and Insurance for approval. Students and employees should complete the drivers authorization form and email to the Department secretary. Those with out-of-state licenses are required to obtain a three-month driver’s record from their home state. You must have a US driver’s license to operate a university vehicle. Please see the Department Secretary for more details.

E. Field and Laboratory Policies and Procedures

The [Field and Laboratory Policies and Procedures Manual](#) contains specific details regarding safety policies and procedures. Some highlights of the manual are repeated here:

Required Training: All students who participate in laboratory or field work are required to obtain up-to-date certification in CPR and First Aid.

Firearms: No firearms are allowed in the student's possession during any Departmental field research or within Departmental or University vehicles, office or laboratories.

Vertebrate Animal Use: Proper approvals need to be obtained prior to initiation of research as described in the [Animal Use section](#)).

Laboratory Safety: The student is expected to be familiar with laboratory safety procedures in labs where they work. Each lab should possess an Environmental Health and Safety ([EHS](#)) Safety Manual and post lists of hazardous substances and material safety sheets for materials used or stored in the lab. If the student is working in a lab with chemicals or where chemicals are stored, they are required to attend an EHS training session.

Field and Gear Safety: There are numerous procedures that apply to specific types of field activities. The student is expected to be familiar with the specific requirements and follow them. These policies include requirements to file daily itineraries when in the field, to become familiar with local emergency services and the study area, to be prepared to prevent and handle heat and cold related illnesses, boat safety, scuba and snorkeling safety, electrofishing, motorcycle safety, and snowmobile safety. Some of these activities require specialized training.

F. Mail/Phone/Fax and Copying Procedures

Details on how to use mail, phone, fax, and copying services in the Department can be found in the Standard Operating Procedures manual available in the FW File Sharing Site.

G. Clerical and Administrative Staff

The primary concern of the Clerical and Administrative Staff is to carry out the clerical business of the Department under the supervision of the Department Chair and Faculty. They will help answer questions, but they have insufficient time to assist students in ways not described in this handbook, unless it is associated with Department business. We are a large department and sometimes their time available to quickly assist a student is limited. Therefore, students (and faculty) should avoid making last minute requests whenever possible. Please think ahead, and develop a positive working relationship with clerical staff by respecting their duties and priorities, and by familiarizing yourself with other sections of this handbook. That said, enjoy getting to know them! We have wonderful individuals on our FW staff team. Questions

regarding any clerical assistance by Departmental staff should be directed to the student's Major Professor.

H. PC Support

Support of Department-owned computer devices is provided by [ANR Information Technology](#).

You can obtain support for a personally-owned computer or device via the MSU Technology Store. The MSU Technology Store offers computer repair assistance and consulting in room 110 of the Computer Center (450 Auditorium Road, Room 120, East Lansing, MI 48824).

I. Miscellaneous Procedures

1. Keys

Department keys are issued in 13 NR. Typically, you will get a key to your office space, and lab (if applicable). Please guard keys carefully. If you lose your keys, report this immediately to the Department Secretary (Jamie Lake). All keys must be returned to 13 NR prior to leaving the department.

The Natural Resources Building (after hours) and certain laboratories are secured with keyless entry. You will need to complete a [NR Access form](#) and your faculty advisor who will need to send an email to the Department Secretary (Jamie Lake) authorizing after-hour and specific lab access and key assignment.

2. Office and Laboratory Space

Office and laboratory space are assigned by a graduate student's Major Professor. Faculty control the allocation of space within their laboratory. Other cubicle space is requested from the Department by your Major Professor.

3. Research Equipment and Instruments

Each Major Professor should have within their own laboratory, or have arrangements with other laboratories, so that the necessary equipment and supplies for their students to successfully complete their research is available. The student should check with their Major Professor about the availability of needed items. It may be necessary to order supplies. Because the normal delivery time for scientific supplies is about four to six weeks, the student should assess equipment needs well in advance of the start of their research. Damaged equipment or malfunctioning instruments should be reported promptly to the student's Major Professor.

5. Bulletin Boards

Announcements may only be posted on designated bulletin boards. The Department has several bulletin boards located in the hallways near the Main Department Office (Room 13). Graduate students should watch these boards for notices concerning seminars, employment opportunities, academic positions, social activities, meetings, and other important announcements. Approval by the GSO executive board is required to post materials on the GSO bulletin board (outside of Room 13). Materials may not be posted on the bulletin boards without prior approval via GSO or via Graduate Secretary.

6. Meeting Rooms

There are four conference rooms available in the Natural Resources Building. 338NR is suitable for groups of up to 30 and can be reserved by contacting the Department Secretary in 13NR or self-booking on Outlook calendar by searching “ANR.NR338.ConfRM” then add it.

Room 216NR is suitable for no more than 20 and can be reserved by contacting the Forestry Department in 126 NR.

Our Department also has a small (8-10 capacity) meeting room located in 33NR. You can self-book this room by adding the Outlook calendar “NR 33 Meeting Room”.

7. Loaner equipment

The Department has laptop computers, computer projectors, a digital camera, and a video camera that are available for loan. Contact the main office to see and borrow these items. If you expect to use one of these frequently you should get added to the Google loaner calendar for that item. .

8. Access to Theses and Dissertations Produced by Former Fisheries and Wildlife Students

Recent theses and dissertations are available via Proquest. Some theses and dissertations not in that system might be available in pdf format and older theses and dissertations are available in hard copy, and you should contact the Graduate Secretary (Jill Cruth) for access to these. Hard copy theses and dissertations can be checked out for up to two consecutive 30-day periods (a maximum of 60 days).

9. Storage space

If you require space for storing or building field equipment, etc., work with your advisor to determine if your advisor’s space is adequate/appropriate. If not, then work with your advisor to contact the Associate Chair for Research, who works with the Department Chair to coordinate FW space use.

XII. OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

A. Fisheries and Wildlife Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

The [Fisheries and Wildlife Graduate Student Organization](#) is composed of graduate students from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. It functions as a formal link between the faculty and graduate students to further student educational objectives, promote communication, and organize social events. The GSO organizes many social events, organizes departmental seminars and a Graduate Student Research symposium, and produces a magazine highlighting graduate student research and outreach. GSO representatives serve on standing Departmental Committees, and represent Fisheries and Wildlife graduate students to a variety of audiences (e.g., the undergraduate Fisheries and Wildlife Club and the university level graduate organization, (COGS, Council of Graduate Students).

There are many opportunities to become involved in GSO. These include running for and being elected to a position as an officer or volunteering for other positions. Officers include the President, Vice-president, Treasurer, and Secretary, and the election is held near the end of the spring semester. There are numerous volunteer positions involved in seminars, magazine production, social activities, evaluating applications for GSO travel awards, and representing graduate students on a variety of committees and to a range of organizations.

B. Council of Graduates Students (COGS)

The [Council of Graduate Students](#) (COGS) is a body of representatives from about 75% of the graduate departments on campus. This senate offers a direct voice at the University level for all graduate students. Among the functions of COGS are appointing student members to University committees, issuing policy statements, apportioning student taxes to worthwhile causes such as the graduate student loan fund, and participating in the drafting and setting up of documents such as the Graduate Rights and Responsibilities Report. Our department has at least one student representative in COGS. COGS representatives have an opportunity to become involved with numerous committees, including University Committees, University/Judiciary Committees, COGS Standing Committees and COGS Ad hoc Committees. You can volunteer to serve as a COGS representative through the GSO.

C. Graduate Employees Union (GEU)

The [GEU](#) is a labor union that represents Teaching Assistants through a collective bargaining agreement. This organization has an objective of ensuring that graduate employees have the rights to fair wages, decent health care, safe working conditions and a workplace free from discrimination. Each department can elect one steward for every 15 union members in the department to serve as the department's voice in the GEU. The Stewards Council meets weekly and is the major decision-making body of the GEU. If you are interested in being a steward, please contact the GEU office at geu@msu.edu.

D. Graduate Women in Science

[GWIS](#) promotes the participation and advancement of women in science by providing a support network locally and nationally and by actively fostering the development of aspiring scientists. Membership is open to all. This organization organizes community outreach, undergraduate mentoring, professional development, and networking events. GWIS members go to public schools to mentor students, conduct science demonstrations, hold informative workshops for undergraduates interested in going to graduate school, host panels with faculty, hold social and networking events, and much more.

XIII. UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES AND RESOURCES

Michigan State University provides extensive student personnel services to assist students and enhance the educational experience. Michigan State University recognizes that the total development of the individual-personal, social, and physical, as well as intellectual is of equal importance.

A. Student Life and Academic Resources

There are numerous resources to help you get the most of your time at MSU. Some of the more frequently used are listed here:

Michigan State University Library

It is strongly suggested that the student take advantage of a library tour to more thoroughly familiarize themselves with all the available resources. There are many branch libraries on campus. Consult the library's website at www.lib.msu.edu or contact our department's library liaison, Eric Tans (tans@mail.lib.msu.edu, ph: 884-7808) Many library resources can be accessed online at <http://er.lib.msu.edu/>. MSU also offers a free service to obtain copies of non-online articles and book chapters. For more information, consult [Interlibrary Services | MSU Libraries](#).

MSU IT

See [an earlier section](#) in this handbook regarding how to purchase computers. In addition, the [MSU IT Desk](#) provides both centralized and distributed academic computing support for the University community. The Computer Laboratory also provides a variety of consulting services. Most of these services are available through 120 Computer Center (432-6200) or submit an on-line request. Computer lab facilities are available in many locations on campus, including the Natural Resources Building (Room 218). For information on schedules see <https://tech.msu.edu/teaching/computer-labs-classrooms/>.

Statistical Consulting

The [CANR Statistical Consulting Center](#) provides services free to graduate students working for faculty in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources or with AgBioResearch projects. Authorship may be requested for more involved consultations. This service is recommended because the consultants have familiarity with biological and natural resource topics, and because it is funded through the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and AgBioResearch. The Center provides consulting on research and will not assist with class related questions. The first contact is through a Graduate Consulting Assistant with strong training in statistics and biometry. The Consulting Assistant will either provide assistance or a referral to a faculty member who specializes in the area in question. Appointments and inquiries can be made through the website.

The [Center for Statistical Training and Consulting](#) (CSTAT) provides many free workshops to improve the statistical skills of students and faculty. CSTAT also supports research via one-on-one consultations. Initial consultations are free but extensive consultations may require a fee. Consulting is done by advanced graduate students in statistics under faculty supervision. CANR graduate students can make use of the CSTAT consulting services if they determine that the areas of expertise at CSTAT better serve their needs than those at SCS.

MSU Bookstore

The [Spartan Bookstore](#) is located in the International Center on Shaw Lane. There are also off-campus bookstores located in the East Lansing area.

Office for International Students and Scholars (OISS)

The [Office for International Students and Scholars](#) (OISS) serves international faculty and students. OISS is a resource center for information and consultation on matters related to the international student and faculty/scholar. The staff is prepared to help in any of the various areas of concern, including academic problems, immigration questions, social health, employment or financial matters. The office also organizes seminars and workshops on topics of interest to the broad university community. These have included immigration regulations, cross-cultural communication, pre-departure programs for graduating students and various training programs. They also publish a very informative handbook, called *Welcome to Our Community*, that answers questions that the student may have about living and going to school in the local community. A copy of this handbook can be picked up in the OISS. The OISS is located in room 105 in the International Center and can be contacted by phone at 353-1720, email: oiss@msu.edu.

Center for Community Engaged Learning

The [Center for Community Engaged Learning](#) is a volunteer program that gives students the opportunity to learn more about different work environments while providing community service. Staff are available to assist students in choosing a placement that meets their interests.

MSU Writing Center

The [Writing Center](#) offers writing consultation to graduate as well as undergraduate students. One on one consultation is best for small papers or projects like vitae, abstracts and cover letters, while peer response writing groups offer help developing drafts of larger projects like research and conference papers, and even theses and dissertations. The Center also has a library with books on resumes, vitae and cover letters, and examples of all of the above.

Career Development & Placement Services

The [Career Development and Placement Services](#) office assists students in career advising and seeking employment upon graduation. Their staff runs workshops, classes and individual advising on topics such as how to interview successfully and steps to creating a well-written resume. The student may also interview for internships or full-time employment through the Career Placement office.

Ph.D. Career Services

[Ph.D. Career Services](#) is designed to assist Michigan State University Ph.D. students with career and professional development planning for positions in academic and non-academic settings. Ph.D.C.S. is a collaboration between the Graduate School and Career Services and Placement and is designed to be a resource for Ph.D. students from all disciplines. There are numerous services offered through this office including confidential counseling, Ph.D. related library materials, mock interviews, online resources, job newsletters, workshops, etc.

Opportunities to Learn to Teach

Professional Development Opportunities in Teaching and Learning: The Graduate School and the University offer many professional development opportunities for students acting as teaching assistants or seeking academic careers. Specifically, these include the [MSU Teaching Assistant Preparation Program](#), the [International Teaching Assistant Orientation for International Students](#) (announced annually), and courses specifically designed for International students (see <https://elc.msu.edu/programs/ita/ita-course-offerings/>).

If you are planning on an academic career or are interested in exploring teaching, please check out these resources at MSU and other online synchronous and asynchronous opportunities:

Certification in College Teaching Program

The [University Graduate Certification in College Teaching](#) (CCT), an initiative of the MSU Graduate School in partnership with MSU colleges, helps graduate students and postdocs organize, develop, and document their teaching experiences. Through professional development activities - workshops or seminars, coursework in disciplinary teaching methods, a mentored teaching project - participants build and consolidate their preparation for college and university teaching. Upon completion, graduate students get a notation on their transcripts.

Teaching Communities and Fellowship Programs

The MSU Graduate School offers numerous [Teaching Communities and Fellowship Programs](#) that graduate students can apply for or join. Programs most applicable to Fisheries and Wildlife graduate students include:

[Future Academic Scholars in Teaching \(FAST\) Fellowship Program](#): The primary goals of the FAST Fellowship Program are to provide opportunities for a diverse group of students to have mentored teaching experiences and gain familiarity with materials on teaching and assessment techniques.

[Graduate School Writing Fellows in the Disciplines](#): Are you interested in developing your own awareness of conventions of writing in your discipline for proposals, articles, and dissertations? Would you like to gain experience in leading a group, facilitating others' writing development, and collaborating with your graduate program director in creating professional development support within your department? Consider making a 2-semester commitment as a Writing Fellow in your graduate program.

[Lyman Briggs Scholarship of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning \(SUTL\) Fellowship Program](#): Graduate students selected for this full-year (12 month) program will work with an LBC faculty member on a new or existing disciplinary-based education research (DBER), scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), or action research project.

[Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate](#) (AGEP): Graduate students, post-docs and faculty participate in building world-class STEM faculties.

[Center for the Integration of Research Teaching and Learning \(CIRTL\)](#): The Center seeks to enhance excellence in STEM undergraduate education through development of a national faculty committed to implementing and advancing evidence-based teaching practices for diverse learners. CIRTL was founded in 2003 as a National Science Foundation Center for Learning and Teaching in higher education. CIRTL uses graduate education as the leverage point to develop a national STEM faculty committed to implementing and advancing effective teaching practices for diverse student audiences as part of successful professional careers.

For those interested in working towards MSU's Certification in College Teaching (see above), completion of either of CIRTL's asynchronous Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), taught on the edX platform, can be used to fulfill the course requirement. These courses are free, however, participants have to register and develop a CIRTL account. Usually, one MOOC is taught each semester (including summer), however, see the schedule and course descriptions at: <https://www.stemteachingcourse.org/>

The Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities

The [Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities](#) (RCPD) leads Michigan State University in maximizing ability and opportunity for full participation by persons with disabilities. RCPD provides disability-related information and referrals; identifies populations, documents disability, and conducts needs assessments; facilitates reasonable accommodations; and provides disability-related technical assistance, auxiliary aids/services, advocacy and training.

Graduate Life and Wellness

Wellness is the integration of all dimensions of health - physical, emotional, career, spiritual, social, and intellectual - and the awareness that all of these dimensions are interconnected. Each dimension must be nurtured for your holistic growth and success. The Graduate Life & Wellness program is a collaborative effort between the Graduate School, Olin Health Center, the Counseling Center, Health4U, and Employee Assistance Program to help support graduate students in their pursuit of their advanced degree and a well-balanced life. Find out about upcoming events [here](#).

Counseling Center Main Office

Students should feel free to contact the [Counseling Center](#) (207 Student Service Building; 517-355-8270) for personal concerns and crises. Professional counseling and psychological services are offered to assist with personal, as well as career concerns. All services are confidential. Initial consultations are free of charge; all services are free to full time graduate students.

Olin Health Center

The [Student Health Service](#) (517-355-4660 to schedule an appointment; 517-884-6546 for all other concerns) is located in Olin Health Center. In the event of an emergency, no matter what time of day, go directly to UM-Sparrow Hospital, McClaren Hospital, or the nearest emergency center.

Work Life Office

The [WorkLife Office](#) (479 West Circle Drive; 517-353-1635) was founded in 2016 and provides a one-stop destination for career/professional life questions. Their central website provides comprehensive, "one-stop," information regarding policies, practices, programs, events, and resources pertaining to all aspects of WorkLife at MSU. It is designed to help individuals organize their personal and professional life so they can focus on being their most creative and productive self. The WorkLife Office sponsors many workshops on campus that are open to graduate students. The WorkLife Office also houses the [Center for Gender in Global Context](#), the [Gender and Sexuality Campus Center](#), [EPIC](#), and many related resources.

Recreational Sports and Fitness Services

Students have access to equipment and facilities in the [Intramural Facilities](#) located in the IM-West, IM-East, and IM-Circle. Students must present a current MSU student ID and a picture ID in order to be admitted to these facilities and borrow the equipment. Use of most of the facilities is free to currently enrolled students, although there are a few exceptions, such as a small charge for the use of the weight room in the IM-East. There are also many opportunities to participate in organized intramural sports.

B. University Publications and Web Pages

MSU Home Page: <http://www.msu.edu/>

MSU Course and Program Information: <http://www.reg.msu.edu/roinfo/enrollment.asp>

University Catalog: <http://reg.msu.edu/academicprograms/>

Description of Courses: <https://reg.msu.edu/Courses/Search.aspx>

Schedule of Courses: <http://student.msu.edu/search>

Graduate School: <https://grad.msu.edu>

Graduate School Professional Development: <https://grad.msu.edu/professional-development>

Graduate School Forms: <https://grad.msu.edu/forms>

Graduate School Funding Guide: <https://grad.msu.edu/funding/>

Student Resource Guide: <https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/index.html>

This guide contains useful information on networking, transportation, housing, and campus and community resources in the Information and Services section.

Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities:

<https://spartanexperiences.msu.edu/about/handbook/graduate-student-rights-responsibilities/index.html>

Graduate School Guide to the Preparation of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations:
<http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>.

Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Website: <http://www.canr.msu.edu/fw/>

FW Graduate Program: <http://www.canr.msu.edu/fw/graduate/>

FW Graduate Program Handbook (this document!):

<http://www.canr.msu.edu/fw/graduate/graduate-program-handbook/>

MSU News (weekly news geared towards university community): <https://msutoday.msu.edu/>

The State News (daily newspaper): <http://statenews.com/>