GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK TO FCFC DEGREE PROGRAMS, POLICIES & PROCEDURES

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1. W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation Graduate Programs Overview

Welcome to the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation (FCFC). This document is intended to help prospective, incoming, and current FCFC students and faculty to understand the requirements, policies, and procedures associated with graduate education in FCFC, and to describe a set of basic expectations of all graduate students. This handbook contains detailed information about FCFC guidelines, but students should also consult the UM Graduate School’s Academic Policies page for additional and up-to-date information on degree requirements, transfer credit policies, and residency requirements. Also, please note that some specific programs within FCFC (e.g., Wildlife Biology and International Conservation and Development [ICD]) may have policies and procedures that are somewhat different from those described here. Please consult the websites of those programs for more specific information.

Wildlife Biology Graduate Degree Programs

International Conservation and Development [ICD] Option of the M.S. in Resource Conservation Graduate Degree Program

Systems Ecology Graduate Degree Programs

Prospective Graduate Students

If you are a prospective student (i.e., you have not been formally admitted to a graduate program) and you seek information about the degree programs and the application process, current FCFC degree program admission policies and requirements (including application procedures) are available on the FCFC Graduate Programs page.

Provisional Admission

Students may be admitted to one of the FCFC graduate degree programs on a provisional basis if their GRE scores and/or GPA is below the minimum required (all requirements can be found on the FCFC Graduate Programs page on the specific degree pages) pending written request by the potential faculty advisor and approval by the FCFC Graduate Committee. If admitted provisionally, a students will be required to take at least six graded credits in their first semester (i.e., not taken as credit/no credit) and earn at least a 3.0 GPA. These are minimum requirements and additional ones may be requested by the faculty advisor.

2. Graduate Student Mentoring

Responsibilities and Expectations of Faculty

As faculty, mentoring graduate students is one of the most rewarding, challenging and intellectually stimulating aspects of our jobs. A student’s acceptance letter identifies the faculty member that is willing to serve as the student’s faculty advisor, and the assigned faculty advisor works closely with the student through the entirety of the student’s degree program. Faculty advisors help students gain depth and expertise in their field of study,
understand the norms and practices of the profession, and improve communication skills through review and feedback on drafts of proposals, theses and professional papers, manuscripts, and presentations. The faculty advisor is responsible for ensuring that a student’s work is ready for committee review and must approve all proposal and thesis/dissertation materials before they are circulated to the rest of the committee. Some specific responsibilities of the faculty advisor include:

- Assisting the student with the selection and development of a suitable and manageable research topic.
- Helping the student choose committee members.
- Remaining accessible to the student on a regular basis for consultation and discussion of the student’s academic progress and professional development.
- Helping students make appropriate progress by responding in a timely manner to written work submitted by the student with constructive suggestions for improvement and continuation.
- Making arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision when the faculty advisor will be absent for extended periods (e.g., one month or longer).
- Helping the student gain access to facilities or research materials.
- Ensuring that the working environment is safe, healthy and free from harassment, discrimination, and conflict.
- Providing career and professional advice and assisting in professional networking.
- Advising the student about current graduate program requirements, deadlines, sources of funding, etc.
- Encouraging the student to make presentations of research results within the University and to outside scholarly or professional bodies as appropriate, and assisting the student obtain funding to attend conferences or professional meetings.

**Responsibilities and Expectations of Committee Members**

Graduate students benefit from having multiple mentors. While the faculty advisor serves as the student’s primary mentor, the student’s graduate committee members also serve as mentors in various capacities. All committee members, and advisors in particular, invest a significant amount of time working with graduate students outside of the classroom and in return expect the same level of commitment from their graduate students. For a discussion of committee composition, please see section 12.

**Responsibilities and Expectations of Students**

Graduate school is significantly more demanding than undergraduate studies and requires intensive work and scholarship outside of and in addition to formal classes (graduate school is at least a full-time job). In addition to the time commitment, graduate school is intellectually demanding in ways that students may not have experienced, in the sense that the primary focus of graduate studies is scholarship. As a graduate student in the College of Forestry and Conservation we expect that you will be devoted to your project and willing to commit the time and energy to research and write a thesis, dissertation or professional paper. We also expect students to fully engage in scholarship that occurs both in and outside of the classroom, and to contribute to a thriving the intellectual community within the College. As a graduate student, you also are expected to:

- Be familiar with the requirements and procedures established by the Graduate School for your particular degree, as published on the UM Graduate School’s Academic Policies page.
• Make dedicated efforts to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue your research project successfully. Such efforts include reading outside of courses, attending seminars, meeting with experts, and discussing material with other graduate students.

• In conjunction with your faculty advisor, develop a plan and timetable for completion of all stages of your thesis or dissertation project, adhere to a schedule and meet appropriate deadlines.

• Meet with your faculty advisor when requested and report fully and regularly on progress and results.

• Allow committee members adequate time (e.g., 3-4 weeks) to review documents, and contact committee well in advance to schedule meetings.

• Be prepared for and receptive to constructive criticism and academic advice from your faculty advisor and other members of your committee.

• Contribute to the intellectual life of the College as a whole, providing constructive feedback and support to peers, engaging in collaborative problem-solving, mentoring incoming students (in areas such as fundamental statistical, analytical, and computer skills; library/literature database research strategies; university norms and policies; professional networking; etc.) and working to create a thriving community of scholars.

• Attend seminars and defenses.

• Understand that plagiarism and cheating are unacceptable and are not tolerated under any circumstances (see the UM Student Conduct Code).

• Represent the College of Forestry and Conservation at professional meetings and conferences when possible. We also encourage graduate students (and faculty) to participate in the UM Graduate Conference (GradCon), held annually during the spring semester.

• Present and publish thesis, dissertation or professional paper results in appropriate venues when possible.

• Recognize that self-motivated study outside of formal classroom settings, supported by mentoring but driven by student initiative, is a primary focus of graduate studies.

• Engage in civil discourse with your student, faculty, and off-campus colleagues.

• Communicate clearly with your advisor if you have any concerns or questions. Do not be afraid to let faculty know if you need guidance or resources.

3. Description of FCFC Graduate Degree Programs

Faculty members in the FCFC strive to provide the best possible environment for graduate education, thereby creating the foundation to support a lifelong process of discovery and learning. The College endeavors to provide a strong community of scholarship and mentoring to support learning in a setting of scientific enquiry, critical thought, collaboration and interaction. The College will continually work to provide students the guidance, tools, skills and intellectual atmosphere best suited to develop them as scholars, professionals and leaders in their field, and to be adaptive to the changing needs of students and society. Students completing FCFC graduate programs should not only be well informed, but also well prepared to use their knowledge to the benefit of people and the environment.

The College of Forestry and Conservation offers two Doctoral (Ph.D.) degrees and five Master’s (M.S.) degrees. Each is designed to provide an exemplary environment of learning, discovery, and intellectual synergy, and to support excellence in research and professional development in the fields of environmental science and natural resources.
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree Programs

**Ph.D. in Fish & Wildlife Biology**
The Wildlife Biology Program (WBIO), a joint program that includes the College of Forestry and Conservation (FCFC), the Division of Biological Sciences (DBS), and the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, administers the Ph.D. Degree in Fish & Wildlife Biology. As such, it has unique admission and degree requirements outlined in a separate document. For specific information, please visit the Ph.D. in Fish & Wildlife Biology webpage.

**Ph.D. in Forest & Conservation Sciences**
This is the appropriate doctoral degree for students working within any of the focal areas in the College of Forestry and Conservation (except Wildlife Biology). The Ph.D. in Forest & Conservation Sciences degree requires distinguished scholarship in a recognized field of learning, demonstrated through a dissertation based on original and creative work.

**Ph.D. in Systems Ecology**
Systems ecology is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ecological systems that focuses on interactions and transactions within and among biological systems. Systems ecology recognizes the strongly interactive role that humans play affecting most of the earth's ecosystems. This Ph.D. program will help you develop a fundamental, interdisciplinary understanding of interactions of physical, chemical and biological factors affecting ecological systems across spatial and temporal scales and the factors affecting coupled natural and human systems. This program is jointly administered by the College of Forestry and Conservation and the College of Humanities and Sciences. For specific information, please visit the Ph.D. in Systems Ecology webpage.

**Master of Science (M.S.) Degree Programs**

**M.S. in Wildlife Biology**
The Wildlife Biology Program (WBIO), a joint program that includes the College of Forestry and Conservation (FCFC), the Division of Biological Sciences (DBS), and the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, administers the M.S. Degree in Wildlife Biology. As such, it has unique admission and degree requirements outlined in a separate document. For specific information, please visit the M.S Wildlife Biology webpage.

**M.S. in Forestry**
The M.S. in Forestry is designed for students who intend to become natural resource managers, specialists, or scientists, research team members in applied forestry, or other related positions. Individual curricula, based on the student's educational goals, can be designed from a wide variety of offerings in silviculture, mensuration, ecology, fire science, biometrics, and more. Graduates typically find positions with federal and state land management agencies, private companies, consulting firms, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or continue on into doctoral programs.

**M.S. in Recreation Management**
M.S. students in Recreation Management pursue a range of topics using social, political, and ethical perspectives and tools for the investigation of recreation and tourism issues. Students apply theories and methods from multiple disciplines, including psychology, recreation and leisure sciences, sociology, geography, political science, and ethics. In addition, students should consider how social and cultural processes and
institutions influence and are influenced by environmental conservation and natural resources, and the implications of such processes for formulating and designing an array of recreation and tourism policies and management approaches within various cultural, political, and economic contexts across the U.S. and internationally.

**M.S. in Resource Conservation**

The M.S. in Resource Conservation is designed for students interested in pursuing an advanced degree in applied conservation and natural resource science and/or management, and building expertise in the natural and/or social sciences. Through the M.S. in Resource Conservation, graduate students conduct research on a range of conservation issues, including but not limited to topics in natural resource policy, international conservation and development, watershed science, rangeland ecology, biogeochemistry, community-based conservation, environmental justice, wildland fire, natural resource economics, tribal land management, natural resource conflict resolution, and forest, grassland, landscape, and ecosystem ecology. The M.S. in Resource Conservation is very flexible in terms of scholarly and professional emphases - students work closely with their faculty advisors and committee members to craft a course of study and a thesis/paper.

*Note*: Students enrolled in the International Conservation and Development (ICD) Option must also be enrolled in the M.S. degree program in Resource Conservation. Students in this option have somewhat different academic requirements from those described here, the details of which are described on the [International Conservation and Development webpage](#).

**M.S. in Systems Ecology**

Systems ecology is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of ecological systems that focuses on interactions and transactions within and among biological systems. Systems ecology recognizes the strongly interactive role that humans play affecting most of the earth's ecosystems. This M.S program will help you develop a fundamental, interdisciplinary understanding of interactions of physical, chemical and biological factors affecting ecological systems across spatial and temporal scales and the factors affecting coupled natural and human systems. This program is jointly administered by the College of Forestry and Conservation and the College of Humanities and Sciences. For specific information, please visit the [M.S. in Systems Ecology webpage](#).

**Graduate Certificates**

Students seeking certification in Natural Resources Conflict Resolution, GIS Sciences and Technologies, or Wilderness Management should visit the following links:

- [Certificate - Natural Resources Conflict Resolution Program webpage](#)
- [Certificate - GIS Sciences and Technologies webpage](#)
- [Certificate - Wilderness Management webpage](#)
4. FCFC Graduate Student Funding

The financial costs of attending graduate school and obtaining a graduate degree can be significant. All graduate students are strongly encouraged to pursue opportunities for obtaining financial support for their studies, through teaching and research assistantships and scholarships within FCFC, or through other (external) channels. The student’s faculty advisor can provide assistance in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities. However, in many cases, neither the faculty advisor nor FCFC can guarantee that funding will be available.

Teaching Assistantships

The College of Forestry and Conservation has a number of teaching assistantships (TAs) available to graduate students enrolled in FCFC degree programs each year. Graduate students in these positions assist faculty with course instruction through leading labs or discussion sections, delivering lectures and grading assignments. Teaching assistants are selected according to their background in courses for which teaching assistants are needed on a semester or yearly basis. Full-time teaching assistants may expect to work between 15 and 18 hours per week for 15 weeks each semester of the academic year on TA-related duties. In addition to a stipend, teaching assistants receive a tuition fee waiver (in-state or out-of-state). Other fees charged by the University (e.g., student fees and health insurance) are not included in the TA fee waiver package. Both incoming and current graduate students may be eligible for teaching assistantships. Teaching assistants are required to register for a minimum of six credits and a maximum of ten credits each semester. If a student wishes to enroll in more than ten credits during a semester in which they are a TA, the student will be responsible for the additional tuition and fees.

*Note:* For graduate students needing health insurance through the University of Montana, a minimum number of seven credits must be taken per semester. Please be aware that all students enrolled at UM must have health insurance. For more information, please visit the Curry Health Center webpage.

For students interested in being considered for TA positions, the student's graduate advisor is first point of contact. Once notified of a student’s interest in a TA position, the advisor notifies the relevant department chair. The chair will evaluate the College's particular teaching needs and the skills of the applicants, and submit a list of candidates to the FCFC College Council. Final TA assignments are made by the FCFC College Council.

Research Assistantships

Research assistantships (RAs) may be made available to graduate students by faculty members who have received grants from outside sources (e.g., Forest Service, Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Science Foundation, or other public or private organizations). The number of research assistantships offered varies by year depending on available funds. Research assistants are assigned duties by the faculty member with funding, and these duties may or may not involve research related to the student's own research project. Research assistantships include similar financial benefits to those of teaching assistantships. Research assistants typically register for a minimum of six credits each semester, but the specific limits and requirements of RAs may vary by faculty. Research assistants are required to register for a minimum of six credits and a maximum of ten credits each semester. If a student wishes to enroll in more than ten credits during a semester
in which they are an RA, the student will need to get formal (written) approval from their advisor and submit documentation to the FCFC Accounting Office.

**Note:** For graduate students needing health insurance through the University of Montana, a minimum number of seven credits must be taken per semester. Please be aware that all students enrolled at UM must have health insurance. For more information, please visit the Curry Health Center webpage.

**Graduate Student Scholarships**

Through the generosity of multiple donors, a number of scholarships have been established to support graduate students pursuing degrees spanning a variety of environmental- or conservation-related fields. These scholarships provide opportunities for financial assistance to FCFC students in all programs, with awards ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars each. The application period for FCFC scholarships typically runs from late-November through mid-February each year. For more information, please visit the FCFC Scholarships webpage.

In addition to scholarships and potential funding opportunities offered by the College of Forestry and Conservation, a number of external funding opportunities exist for graduate students, and students are strongly encouraged to explore these opportunities early in their graduate careers. For example, the National Science Foundation provides funding opportunities for M.S. and Ph.D. students in their early graduate careers via the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program and to Ph.D. Candidates via NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants, among others. In addition, the US Environmental Protection Agency and the US Department of Energy also provide funding opportunities to students in the environmental and natural resource sciences. Finally, private organizations also provide opportunities for graduate student funding (e.g., the Wyss Foundation). Students are encouraged to meet with their advisors to discuss these and other potential funding sources and opportunities. The FCFC also lists many outside scholarships on the Scholarships page of their website and students are encouraged to review this page often as deadlines are updated frequently.

5. **Graduate Advisors & Committees**

**Graduate Advisor (M.S. and Ph.D. Students)**

At the time of admittance to a FCFC graduate program, each student is assigned a faculty advisor. The advisor must be a faculty member in the College of Forestry and Conservation (see section 12). The advisor and the student will work together closely throughout the student’s tenure. Among other things, the advisor is responsible for helping the student to choose appropriate courses and committee members, to select a program of study, to develop the proposed thesis or professional paper, and to help the student navigate through the final examination.

On rare occasions graduate students may need to change chairs. For example, if a student’s chair has an extended illness or will be out of the country for several years, the student might consider switching chairs. Additionally, if the student’s research interests change dramatically and the chair can no longer advise the student because the topic is beyond their expertise (e.g. a student working on a social science study who wants
to change to an ecological study or vice versa), the student might switch chairs. If there are other extenuating circumstances (e.g. a student and a chair have irreconcilable differences), the graduate student should approach the department chair to discuss options.

In these cases, the graduate student should approach their current chair to discuss the possibility of switching chairs. The graduate student then needs to approach other faculty to gauge their willingness to serve as chair. The prospective chair should discuss the situation with the current chair before accepting the student.

Further, when graduate students switch chairs and/or change topics, they need to contact their committee members. In these cases, committee members have the option to remain on the committee or step down.

Graduate students should discuss potential changes to committee members with their chair before contacting those committee members. It is not typically appropriate to change committee members because of a “no” vote on comprehensive exams.

If graduate students are not making sufficient progress (as outlined in the FCFC Graduate Handbook and determined by UM policy), they may be dropped from the program. The student’s chair should provide a six month warning (in writing) if this is a possibility, including specific guidance regarding what the student needs to do to remain in the program. If the student has questions or concerns about the warning that are not adequately addressed by their chair, they can also discuss the situation with their department chairs.

**Graduate Committees**

The role of the graduate committee is to help the student achieve his/her goals and objectives. The graduate committee provides feedback on and must approve:

- the student’s schedule of courses (course of study)
- the thesis/dissertation proposal
- the thesis/dissertation, and
- the oral defense

In addition to the duties described above, the Ph.D. committee is also required to administer the written and oral preliminary examinations (see section 9).

Committee member selection should be based on the ability of specific faculty to provide guidance on the research and dissertation, thesis or professional paper (see section 12 for specific information regarding committee composition). When considering inviting specific faculty to serve on your committee, gather as much information as possible by talking with fellow students about different faculty, reading faculty papers, attending seminars, meeting with prospective committee members, and taking classes with them whenever possible. When meeting with prospective committee members, describe your thesis or paper topic and explain how you think they could contribute. In addition, ask about their expectations for graduate students to see if they are a good fit for you.

After discussing appropriate committee members with the advisor, the student should obtain verbal commitment to serve from the prospective committee members. After verbal agreement has been received, the student will email the committee member list to the FCFC Director of Student Services, who will forward it
to the Dean’s Office and to the Graduate Dean for approval (see section 13). Once approved, the Graduate Committee assumes the general oversight and management of the student’s graduate program. The composition of the graduate committee may change as the research proposal develops, but the Associate Dean must be notified of, and approve, any such changes. In addition, notification of the change should be also forwarded to the committee members and the FCFC Director of Student Services.

**Ph.D. Committees**

The Ph.D. Dissertation Committee consists of the graduate advisor who serves as the committee chair, and must include four additional members (see section 12). For Ph.D. students, the graduate committee should be assembled no later than the third semester in residence. At the conclusion of the meeting, the student should submit a signed coursework form (see section 13).

**M.S. Committees**

In addition to the faculty advisor, M.S. students must select two additional members to serve on their committee (see section 12 for specific information regarding committee composition). For M.S. students, the graduate committee should be assembled no later than the end of the second semester in residence (earlier if possible), and should convene at that time to discuss coursework and planned research. Following the meeting, the student should submit a signed coursework form (see section 13).

### 6. Coursework and Academic Standards

Course requirements for graduate students are meant to be flexible, allowing students to work with their advisors and committees to design a course of study that meets their professional goals and prepares them for their thesis, dissertation or professional paper. Thus, different graduate students often take very different courses. Because graduate courses change, we encourage students to talk about classes with each other, with their advisors and with other faculty, obtain course syllabi, and sit in on classes to learn more about their options. Students typically take courses from faculty both within and outside of FCFC, so look carefully at course offerings across campus. For a list of courses offered by faculty in the College of Forestry and Conservation, please see the [University of Montana Catalog](https://catalog.umt.edu/).

In addition, all students should refer to the requirements and procedures established by the Graduate School for their particular degree, as described on the [UM Graduate School](https://grad.umt.edu/) website.

**General Course Requirements**

All students supported via a Research (RA) or Teaching Assistantships (TA) in the FCFC have to register for a minimum of six (6) credits each semester during the academic year – seven (7) credits if the student wishes to be eligible for insurance through the University. As per the University of Montana’s continuous enrollment policy, graduate degree candidates must register for at least three credits each fall and spring semester until graduation (see section 8). In some cases, students can petition the Dean of the Graduate School to reduce the registration requirement to one credit (e.g., students who have completed most requirements but have not submitted a final version of the thesis or dissertation). If a student wishes to submit a petition and if the petition is approved, it can only be granted once.
All graduate students pursuing graduate degrees in the FCFC must enroll in at least one graduate seminar each semester from among the following options: FCFC-wide “global” seminar; a topical graduate seminar appropriate to the student’s program; a departmental or program seminar (e.g., WILD 594); or a graduate seminar focused specifically on developing presentation skills (e.g., FORS 594).

Note: This requirement may be waived by the student’s graduate advisor in cases where the student is already carrying full nine-credit load, or the student is working away from campus. Students not enrolling because they already have a ten-credit load are still expected to attend these seminars, especially the global seminar (see section 7).

Provisional Admission Course Requirements

Students who have been admitted provisionally to one of the FCFC graduate degree programs (except Wildlife Biology and Systems Ecology degrees) must enroll in at least six graded credits (meaning not taken as credit/no credit) during their first semester and earn at least a 3.0 GPA. This is a minimum requirement of the College. Faculty advisors may require a student to meet additional standards. It is important for provisional students to speak with their faculty advisors prior to enrollment so that they are aware of what is expected of them. At the end of a student’s first semester, the faculty advisor will inform the FCFC Student Services Office if the student has met their expectations and if so, the status will be changed to full admission. If a provisionally admitted student has not fulfilled the requirements set forth by the FCFC and their faculty advisor, they can be dropped from the program.

Students enrolled provisionally in the Wildlife Biology and Systems Ecology degree programs should consult those programs regarding specific requirements.

Ph.D. Course Requirements

Required coursework is geared toward preparing the student to develop sound scientific knowledge and to facilitate the incorporation of that knowledge into practice. Hence, required coursework may include aspects of theory, application, biology and ecology, socio-political aspects of natural resource management, and statistical and other quantitative or qualitative methods. The coursework package is developed, in consultation with the Graduate Committee, to assist the student in planning, conducting, and writing the dissertation.

No later than the end of a student's third semester in residence (or earlier if possible), a coursework outline should be presented to, and approved by, the student’s committee. A brief statement followed by the signatures of the committee members will serve as tangible evidence of the committee’s approval of the coursework outline. The committee may make reasonable additions to the coursework outline if later evaluation shows that further coursework is needed. Copies of the coursework outline and approval should be placed in the major professor’s files, in the student’s own files, and submitted to the FCFC Director of Student Services.

Primary emphasis in the Ph.D. program is on professional development, stimulation of intellectual curiosity, and competency in science, rather than on a specified set of courses. However, a general set of coursework requirements must be completed successfully:
• The student must obtain a minimum of 60 credits beyond the bachelor’s degree. A dissertation committee may require more depending on the student’s background for the proposed research program.
• Of the 60 credits, a minimum of 40 must be in coursework exclusive of thesis, research, or independent study courses (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, WILD 596) and of those, at least half should be at the 500-level or above; the remaining credits must come from at least 400-level (UG) courses.
• At least 30 semester graduate credits must be taken at the University of Montana.
• On the recommendation of the graduate committee and approval of the Graduate Dean, credits may be transferred (including an entire Master’s degree and/or credits from a Master’s degree program) from other institutions after one semester in residence. Credits with grades other than A or B, thesis or correspondence credits, extension credits outside the Montana University System, or credits earned at institutions not offering graduate degrees in the discipline of the courses are not transferable.
• Enroll in at least one-credit of graduate seminar per semester (see section 7).

Master's Degree Course Requirements

Choosing the Thesis or Professional Paper Option (M.S. students only)
In the FCFC, M.S. students can select one of three options to satisfy the degree requirements (see below). Regardless of whether you pursue a thesis, a professional paper, or a non-thesis, graduate students should be competent to participate in dialogue about the current state of knowledge and literature in their field of study, capable of insightful, in-depth analysis of contemporary practice, and able to engage in constructive critique and problem solving with colleagues and the public. Theses and professional papers should be of a quality sufficient to meaningfully contribute to professional dialog on some currently relevant topic of managerial, conceptual, or methodological interest.

M.S. Thesis Option
All FCFC Master of Science degree programs offer a thesis option. The thesis option for all M.S. degrees granted through FCFC requires that the student conduct an independent, systematic, and in-depth research project. While the exact nature of the project varies by discipline, the essential requirement of a Master's Thesis is that it demonstrates mastery of a particular subject or area: the student must demonstrate understanding of the state of the art and conceptual underpinnings in a particular subfield and the methodological approaches underlying the research project. The thesis requires asking a novel question and producing an original contribution to knowledge. Thesis research typically involves data collection, analysis and interpretation. The thesis is expected to be publication-quality and suitable for submission to a peer-review journal (although publishing a thesis is not a formal requirement). Students also must demonstrate:

• Substantive and contemporary theoretical and empirical knowledge of the field.
• Detailed knowledge of the research logic and methods used in the field of research.
• High quality writing and presentation, suitable for publication.

Students typically choose the thesis option if they are interested primarily in learning how to conduct scientific research mastering particular research methods, pursuing a scientific or research-related career and/or future doctoral studies.
**M.S. Thesis Option: Coursework and Credit Requirements**

The specific courses (program of study) that a graduate student enrolls in will be tailored to each individual, based on their academic background, professional interests, and the focus of their thesis work. However, the minimum requirements for the M.S. Degree (thesis option) include:

- 30 graduate semester credits beyond the Bachelor’s degree.
- Of these, at least 20 must be in coursework. At least half of the coursework credits (minimum 10 credits) must be at the 500-level or above, and at least 20 must be taken within the major discipline.
  
  *Note:* The 20-credit minimum within the major discipline may include up to 10 credits of research or thesis credits.
- Up to 10 of the 30 credits may be taken as research (699), thesis (697), or independent study credits (596).
- Enroll in at least one-credit of graduate seminar per semester (see section 7).
- Complete a research methods course related to their field of study, and at least one course in graduate level statistics (or comparable analytical course) at the University.

In addition to these specific requirements, a list of required/suggested coursework must be approved by the committee no later than the second semester in residence or earlier if possible (see section 13). Other suitable courses (e.g., emphasizing analytical skills) can be substituted at the discretion of the student’s committee.

**M.S. Professional Paper Option**

The professional paper generally has a more applied focus than a thesis, often producing an analysis of a real world policy, management, or conservation problem. Professional papers are often pursued and prepared with a particular audience in mind (e.g., recreation managers, land trusts, or agency planners). The paper might analyze the policy, organizational, or community context of the problem, consider various strategies, and conclude with concrete recommendations or discussion of the practical implications of the analysis. Students must demonstrate:

- Substantive empirical knowledge of the field.
- Knowledge of applied research methods.
- High quality writing and presentation skills.

Students typically choose the professional paper option if they are interested primarily in more comprehensive coursework, applied learning, and graduate-level expertise for future professional endeavors.

The decision to pursue a thesis or professional paper should be made with the faculty advisor. A student may change from a thesis to a professional paper, or from a professional paper to a thesis, but the latter change may be more difficult depending on the nature of the thesis and the stage of the graduate program. Please note that some advisors allow students to pursue thesis-option degrees only.

**M.S. Professional Paper Option: Coursework and Credit Requirements**

Students selecting the professional paper option must:

- Complete a minimum of 30 graduate credits approved by the student’s committee. A combined total of up to four professional paper (FORS, NRSM, or PTRM 599) and/or research (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD 697)
credits may be part of this required load, and at least 20 credits must be taken within the major discipline (FCFC).

- The Graduate School requires that half of the 30 credits must be at the 500-level or above. If research credits are earned, half of the remaining credits must be at the 500-level or above.
- Enroll in at least one-credit of graduate seminar per semester (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD 594). See section 7 for more information.
- The remainder of the required credits must be in coursework.
- Students whose work requires any assessment of quantitative data should take at least one course (or series of courses) in graduate-level statistics (or comparable analytical course) at the University (e.g., STAT 451 and 452 together with companion computer labs).

Other suitable courses (e.g., emphasizing analytical skills) can be substituted at the discretion of the student’s committee.

**M.S. Non-Thesis Option**

Students typically choose the non-thesis option if they are interested primarily in more comprehensive coursework, applied learning, and graduate-level expertise for future professional endeavors.

The decision to pursue a non-thesis option should be made with the faculty advisor. A student may change from a non-thesis to a professional paper or thesis option, or from a professional paper or thesis option to a non-thesis, but the latter change may be more difficult depending on the nature of the thesis and the stage of the graduate program. Please note that some advisors allow students to pursue thesis-option degrees only.

**Non-Thesis Option: Coursework and Credit Requirements**

Students selecting the non-thesis option must:

- Complete a minimum of 36 graduate credits approved by the student’s committee. Up to four credits from research (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD 697) may be part of this required load, and at least 20 must be taken within the major discipline (FCFC).
- The Graduate School requires that half of the 36 credits must be at the 500-level or above. If research credits are earned, half of the remaining credits must be at the 500-level or above. *Thesis credits cannot be counted towards your 36 total required credits under this option.*
- Enroll in at least one-credit of graduate seminar per semester (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD 594). See section 7 for more information.
- The remainder of the required credits must be in coursework.
- Students whose work requires any assessment of quantitative data should take at least one course (or series of courses) in graduate-level statistics (or comparable analytical course) at the University (e.g., STAT 451 and 452 together with companion computer labs).

Other suitable courses (e.g., emphasizing analytical skills) can be substituted at the discretion of the student’s committee.
7. Graduate Seminars

Purpose and Participation
Graduate seminars in the College of Forestry and Conservation are designed to encourage the regular (weekly) exchange of scientific ideas among faculty and students, to provide opportunities to share their current research interests, to expose students to ideas and research within and outside of their discipline, and to improve communication and presentation skills. To that end, a mix of seminar models will be offered each semester in FCFC to instill both a breadth of knowledge across disciplines, and a depth of expertise within a student’s specific area of interest.

The FCFC "Global" Seminar
A 1-credit, College-wide “global” seminar (offered every fall semester) will provide graduate students with a broad exposure to a range of topics, approaches, and perspectives, and will involve presentations from across all disciplines represented in FCFC. The overall objective of this course is to provide all FCFC graduate students with a forum for exploring a range of contemporary topics, and to encourage collaboration between students and faculty from all departments and programs in FCFC.

FCFC Topical Seminars
Each spring, a series of focused (i.e., topical) seminars will be offered to allow for more focused examination of topics within a given area of study, interest group, or graduate program. The structure and objectives of these topical seminars will vary in terms of scope and by offering, but will meet one or more of the following learning outcomes:

- Expose students to academics and professionals working within a specific discipline
  - Interaction with a diversity of participants (graduate students with different advisors, affiliate faculty, etc.)
  - Presentations from ‘outside’ scientists, such as RMRS scientists or visiting faculty
- Provide students with the opportunity to present and solicit feedback on planned, ongoing or completed research
  - Proposal/thesis/conference paper presentation
  - Examine methodology, data analysis, or technical processes specific to a discipline
- Enhance critical thinking, communication and presentation skills
  - Writing and receiving feedback on grant proposals or manuscripts
  - Reading group discussions around common readings in a given discipline
  - Developing presentation skills in seminars focused on public speaking

Graduate students in the College are required to register for at least one graduate seminar each semester. However, this requirement may be waived by the student’s graduate advisor in cases where:

- the student is already carrying a full 9-credit load
- the student is working away from campus for all or part of the semester; or
- the student’s advisor deems that the seminar requirement poses an unreasonable burden on the student.

On-campus students with a full 9-credit load are still expected to attend the seminar even if they are not registered.
The seminar requirement can be met by selecting one of the following options:

- The FCFC-wide “global” seminar (typically offered in fall semester)
- A topical graduate seminar appropriate to the student’s degree program
- A departmental or program seminar (e.g., WILD 594)
- A seminar focused specifically on developing presentation skills (e.g., FORS 594)

To qualify as graduate seminars, offerings must be open to all graduate students. The College Council will provide oversight by ensuring that a sufficient number of seminars are being offered and staffed each semester. Spring semester seminar offerings will be identified each fall prior to the opening of registration for spring semester.

8. **Continuous Registration and Leaves of Absence**

The Graduate School requires that graduate students register for credits every fall and spring semester. The number of credits should be deemed commensurate with use of facilities and faculty time, but is at least three-credits per semester (six-credits for students supported via Teaching or Research Assistantships). Students must apply for a leave-of-absence if they do not plan to be continuously registered. The Graduate School will drop students that do not register for at least three-credits per semester without prior approval from the program and the Graduate School. Re-admission can only be approved through a petition process. Please refer to the Graduate School website for details on the [Request for Leave of Absence](#).

9. **Research Planning, Proposals, Exams and Defenses**

*The Thesis/Dissertation Proposal*

**Research Statement (Ph.D. students only)**

Students should prepare a one-to-two page statement describing their research topic and plan to present to the graduate committee. The student should then arrange a formal committee meeting to allow committee members to provide feedback on the research statement and offer modifications. At least one week in advance of the meeting date, the student is expected to submit the formal research plan to the committee members for discussion at the meeting. For Ph.D. students, the research statement should be completed no later than the end of the third semester (earlier if possible). In some cases, it may be recommended that its presentation should coincide with the approval of coursework by the committee, but the timing may vary by faculty, programs or departments. In addition, please recognize that different faculty may have specific rules regarding the amount of lead-time necessary to review and comment on documents and schedule meetings, so be sure to discuss these rules with each of your committee members well in advance of these stated deadlines.

**Research Proposal**

Each student (M.S. and Ph.D.) is required to complete a formal research proposal that describes the conceptual and empirical framework within which the study will be conducted. The proposal typically consists of a title, an introduction to the research problem, an explanation of how the problem fits into a broader conceptual
framework defined by existing literature, a justification of its importance, the specific objectives or research questions, methods (including details about data collection and analysis), a timetable, and a budget. Research proposals must demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of relevant literature and provide a compelling justification for research focus and methods selected. Proposals vary in length and require multiple revisions in consultation with the faculty advisor before they are ready to be distributed to the entire committee. The entire committee must approve the thesis proposal prior to the student beginning data collection.

**Research Proposal Deadlines and Approvals**

M.S. candidates should write and submit their formal research proposal to their committee by the end of their second semester in residence. This proposal should be vetted and approved by the committee prior to the end of the second semester in residence.

Doctoral students must write and submit a formal research proposal and provide a formal presentation of the proposed work no later than the end of their fourth semester in residence, and receive committee approval of their proposal no later than the end of the student’s fifth semester. After approval by the committee, a committee-signed copy of the proposal approval form (see section 13) must be placed in the student’s file in the office of the FCFC Director of Student Services. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by a student’s committee and may be considered in the case of maternal/paternal leave, serious medical conditions, family emergencies, etc.

In approving the proposal, the advisory committee agrees that successful completion of the project will provide sufficient research for a satisfactory thesis or dissertation. Any substantive changes made after committee approval must be brought back to the committee for discussion, and documented as a revised and signed proposal in the student’s file. All graduate students are encouraged to meet with all of their committee members at least annually to keep them informed of progress.

**The Preliminary Examination (Ph.D. Students Only)**

The preliminary exam is designed by the students committee to assess the student’s readiness for advancement from student to scholar and thus to candidacy to the degree of doctor of philosophy. Detailed objectives and conduct of examination can vary across areas and from student to student. The preliminary exam consists of both written and oral components and is administered by the student's Ph.D. committee. Following the completion of both the written and oral exams, a maximum of one dissenting vote will constitute successful completion of the examination. Re-taking of the exam is at the discretion of the committee. Within five weeks of passing the exam, the student must file a formal application for the doctoral candidacy (Ph.D. degree) with the Graduate School.

The preliminary exam should be completed no later than the end of the doctoral student’s fifth semester, but earlier if possible. In the case of students that convert from a M.S. to Ph.D. program before completing the M.S., the preliminary exam must be completed no later than the end of the sixth semester, or earlier if possible. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by a student’s committee and may be considered in the case of maternal/paternal leave, serious medical conditions, family emergencies, etc. In most cases, the preliminary examination should be scheduled only after approval of the formal research proposal, and in many cases, the research proposal helps form the basis of the material covered in the preliminary examinations.
The specific preliminary exam process for each student is designed and implemented by the student's graduate committee. The following procedures are considered the minimum procedural and substantive standard that each committee will follow. To enter into the preliminary exam process:

1. At least one month before the beginning of the exam, the student must:
   a. Provide a copy of these preliminary exam regulations to all examination committee members.
   b. Convene a committee meeting at which an examination committee chair is selected and examination topics are discussed. The preliminary examination committee chair is normally a member of the College of Forestry and Conservation faculty and the student’s committee, but cannot be the student’s advisor.

2. Before the beginning of the exam, the graduate committee will meet to approve the examination and to ensure consistency in the application of the examination to different students. The student will then be informed as to how the examination will be administered, and may be provided a list of materials by committee member that will be useful for preparing for the exam. The exact timing of the preparation of the exams may vary, but in most cases the exam will be approved at least two days before the exam.

3. The written portion of the preliminary examination typically will include eight hours of open and/or closed book questions from each committee member (at the discretion of each committee member) typically answered by the student over consecutive days. However, the sequence and timing of student receipt of individual questions and delivery of answers may also be determined at the discretion of the examination committee. At least one committee member will ask a question pertaining to the dissertation topic, designed to strengthen the student’s knowledge and consideration in the chosen area and to assist in further strengthening his/her research objectives and procedures. At least one committee member will ask a question on an important and controversial area of current interest in the student’s general field, but not directly related to the dissertation topic, that will include questions related to policy or the social context of their field.

   In some cases, the committee may request that written responses shall be typed, duplicated, and distributed to each committee member. However, in most cases, the committee will request electronic copies be sent to committee members via email only. This should be discussed and agreed upon by the student and the committee prior to the beginning of the exam. After reading the written responses, the committee may also require some or all of the written responses to be rewritten and may postpone for a reasonable time the oral portion of the examination.

4. Within ten working days after completion of the written examination (sooner if possible), each committee member will communicate his/her evaluations of the student’s written answer to the examination chair, and the committee will decide on course of action. Subsequently, one of the following outcomes is typically met:
   a. If the committee agrees that the written answers are sufficient, the student will be allowed proceed to orals.
   b. If the committee believes that the written answers demonstrate weakness in one or more areas, the committee may require some or all of the exam be re-written and may postpone for a reasonable time the oral examination.
   c. In some cases, extremely poor performance on the written exam may require termination of the student’s program.
5. The oral examination explores in depth the areas presented in the written questions, but is not restricted to those areas. The oral examination is restricted to three hours in length. The examination is open to all members of the faculty of the University of Montana, though all except committee members are excused before the vote.

6. Oral exams will be scheduled after the written exams have been accepted. Normally, a vote on the admission to candidacy will be taken at the conclusion of the oral exam.

7. The written questions shall constitute the point of departure for the oral portion of the examination. The oral examination shall explore in depth the areas presented in the written questions, but shall not be restricted to these questions. The examination shall be open to all members of the faculty of the University, and all such persons may question the student.

_Admission to Candidacy (Ph.D. students only)_

Normally, the vote for admission to candidacy will occur at the end of the oral examination. Upon successful completion of the preliminary examination (no more than one dissenting vote constitutes successful completion), a candidacy form should be signed by the examination committee chair. In case of failure, one repeat examination before the same committee is permitted. The student may pass the second vote with a maximum of one dissenting vote. Failure to pass the second exam will result in dismissal from the program.

_Attempting for Graduation_

Students nearing the completion of their degrees (i.e., within one year) should refer to the Graduate School Website for graduation application procedures and deadlines. However, in most cases, students should notify the Graduate School at least one semester prior to their anticipated date of graduation. In the event that the graduation date changes, please notify the FCFC Director of Student Services and the Graduate School. Please note that there is an additional fee associated with moving your graduation completion date.

[UM Graduate School Graduation Deadlines](#)

_Thesis/Dissertation Seminar and Final Oral Exam (The Defense)_

All M.S. students pursuing the thesis option and all Ph.D. students are required to conduct a public seminar presentation of their thesis or dissertation results and pass a final oral examination. Under most circumstances the final oral examination will immediately follow the public seminar. At least two weeks prior to the intended date of the seminar/exam (earlier if possible) the student must send a draft copy of the thesis/dissertation to each member of the committee for review and comment. One copy should also be sent to the Graduate School for format approval. The thesis or dissertation must show originality and demonstrate competency in independent scientific inquiry. It must constitute a real contribution to knowledge; it must exhibit a mastery of the literature on the subject; and it must be lucid, well organized, and written in correct and concise English. Previously published material will be accepted for satisfying the thesis or dissertation requirement if the committee has authorized early publication of some of the material that appears in the thesis or dissertation. After reviewing the draft all members of the committee must agree that the draft is defensible prior to formally scheduling a seminar/defense date.
**Public Seminar**

In the public seminar the student will present his/her research findings to the committee and any other interested persons. The seminar should be 30-40 minutes in duration, followed by a 10-20 minute question and answer period. The date, time, location and title of the public seminar must be advertised via e-mail announcements and postings at least one week prior (earlier if possible).

**Final Oral Examination**

The final oral examination generally occurs immediately following the public seminar and is typically attended only by the student’s committee members, but in some cases other faculty may request to participate in the oral exam (but not vote on the outcome). The student is expected to answer questions specific to the research and those of a more general or conceptual nature. Additionally, the student may be required to defend the approach, methods, analysis, and conclusions of their research. Committee members must vote in favor of passing the student for the student to proceed to graduation.

The examination will not exceed three hours in length and it is recommended that it be completed at least two weeks before commencement. However, the exact timing of the final examination is left to the discretion of the examination committee. Following its completion, the candidate must receive either a unanimous vote or a vote showing not more than one dissenting member of the total examining committee. If the student fails, or if the thesis or dissertation requires major revision, the committee may permit a repeat exam, but this repeat exam may not be given until at least one academic semester has elapsed. The same requirements hold for the re-exam as for the original.

**Submitting the Dissertation, Thesis or Professional Paper**

After successfully completing the defense, students should follow the Graduate School's procedures for submitting theses, dissertations or professional papers which can be found on the UM Graduate School’s Graduate Resources webpage.

**Professional Paper or Non-Thesis Option**

Each professional paper or non-thesis program will conclude with a written examination and/or a final oral examination, administered by the student’s committee. Examinations may be also be monitored by the Dean’s office or representatives of the College of Forestry and Conservation Graduate Committee to ensure adequate rigor. A unanimous favorable decision of the committee is considered passing. The opportunity to repeat the examination is at the discretion of the committee.
10. **Assessing Student Progress**

**Annual Review of Graduate Student Progress**

Graduate student progress will be assessed every spring to verify that students are following requirements and suggested timelines. It should be noted that these timelines are intended as deadlines, but in some cases students may benefit from completing these requirements earlier than is noted below.

The following items will be tracked annually:

- Enrollment in required FCFC graduate seminars (every semester)
- Committee assembled and appropriate forms submitted (see section 13 for M.S. and Ph.D. Committee Appointment Forms)
  - M.S. completed by end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. completed by end of 3rd semester
- Developed plan of coursework/program of study (see section 13 for Student Required Course Forms)
  - M.S. end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. end of 3rd semester
- Develop 1-2 page research statement
  - M.S. end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. end of 3rd semester
- Committee-approved research plan
  - M.S. end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. end of 4th semester
- Required courses completed (see section 13 for Student Required Course Forms)
- Research proposal approved (see section 13 for Research and Dissertation Proposal Approval Forms)
  - M.S. end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. end of 5th semester
- Preliminary exam completed (Ph.D. only; end of 5th semester)
- Draft thesis/dissertation certified as ready for defense
- M.S./Ph.D. defense completed

Student progress will be assessed every spring based on a Degree Program Progress Checklist completed by the student and advisor by end of the spring semester each year (see section 13). If any deficiencies are identified, the student will be given one semester to rectify them. Students who do not meet stated deadlines will be placed on probation the following semester and may become ineligible for TA or RA support, unless the committee approves a revised timeline. If deficiencies continue, a formal meeting of the student’s committee will then be held to determine whether additional conditions need to be set (e.g., discontinuation of field work until deficiency is corrected). If deficiencies are still not rectified by the end of the second semester after being identified, the student will be dropped from the program. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by a student’s committee and may be considered in the case of paternal leave, serious medical conditions, family emergencies, etc.
11. Complaints, Grievances & Conflict Resolution

Graduate students who have a complaint or grievance regarding another student or a faculty member are encouraged to speak with their major advisor or the chair of the department (for students whose faculty advisor is the chair of the department, the Dean of the College of Forestry and Conservation is available to discuss such issues). If the situation is not resolved at this level, students should follow the UM Student Policies and Procedures.

Graduate students should also be familiar with the University of Montana’s guidelines and expectations as outlined in the Student Conduct Code.

For additional information, students should consult the University of Montana’s Graduate School webpage.

12. FCFC Advisors and Graduate Student Committees

Definitions

A. Program or unit granting the graduate degree

Graduate degrees in the College of Forestry and Conservation (the Ph.D. in Forest & Conservation Sciences and the M.S. Programs in Forestry, Recreation Management, and Resource Conservation) are considered as offered by the College as a whole. The degrees in Wildlife Biology are housed in the College but are jointly offered with the Division of Biological Sciences (DBS); those degrees have different requirements and are not covered here. Similarly, the degrees in Systems Ecology are interdisciplinary between the FCFC and DBS but are housed in DBS and have different requirements.

B. Graduate faculty member

For the purposes of graduate degrees in the College of Forestry and Conservation, a faculty member is considered to include:

i. Tenured or tenure track faculty in the College, as well as other faculty members, whether adjunct* or research professors, that are nominated by a department as graduate faculty and approved by an affirmative vote of the full faculty of the College;

ii. The Dean of the College, Assistant or Associate Deans, Department Chairs, and Directors of established units such as the Wildlife Biology Program, the Resource Conservation Program, Applied Forest Management Program, the Boone and Crockett Conservation Program, the Wilderness Institute, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, and the Bolle Center for People and Forests;

iii. Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors approved as Adjuncts to the College and Forestry and Conservation from other units outside the College; and

iv. Retired FCFC faculty on part-time appointment and Emeritus faculty.

*An adjunct faculty member is herein defined as a non-tenure track faculty member who is a member of a department in the FCFC where he or she serves primarily in a research context. This definition excludes non-tenure track faculty with purely teaching appointments.

C. Affiliate faculty member
For the purposes of graduate degrees in the College of Forestry and Conservation, an affiliate faculty member is considered to be persons not principally employed by the University, or principally employed by the University in other than an academic capacity, but who nominally contribute to the instructional, research and creative activity, or service functions of the University, usually with no or minimal compensation, who hold courtesy appointments as Faculty Affiliates.

**Advisors and Committees**

A. **Composition**
   As specified below, each graduate student committee shall include a FCFC graduate faculty chair/advisor, additional FCFC graduate faculty members, and a qualified UM faculty member from outside the College of Forestry and Conservation. Without exception, at least half of the committee will be faculty in the College of Forestry and Conservation. Other committee members must have earned the degree for which the student is applying.
   
i. An M.S. committee is to have a minimum of three faculty members.
   
ii. A Ph.D. committee is to have a minimum of five voting members.

B. **Committee Chairs**
   The chair of a graduate student’s committee shall be a graduate faculty member in the College of Forestry and Conservation.
   
i. An M.S. committee chair is the student’s advisor.
   
ii. A Ph.D. committee chair is the student’s advisor, but the comps chair needs to be a different FCFC faculty committee member.

C. **Second thesis/dissertation committee member**
   
i. A second graduate faculty member in the College of Forestry and Conservation shall be appointed to the M.S. committee.
   
ii. Two additional FCFC graduate faculty members shall be appointed to a Ph.D. committee.

D. **Outside committee member**
   A qualified UM faculty member from outside the College of Forestry and Conservation shall also be appointed to the thesis or dissertation committee.
   
i. For an M.S. committee, the outside committee member is the 3rd member.
   
ii. For a Ph.D. committee, the outside committee member is the 4th member.

E. **Fifth Ph.D. committee member**
   A Ph.D. committee will include a fifth member who shall be a graduate faculty member in the College of Forestry and Conservation, a faculty affiliate, or faculty of another institution of higher learning who has been certified by the Graduate Dean as uniquely qualified by training, experience, and/or degree held to guide and evaluate the dissertation. Any non-UM faculty member will need to provide a CV at the time the Committee Appointment Form is submitted. *(Please see the FCFC Office of Student Services for rules and restrictions regarding committee members from an outside institution.)*
F. Additional committee members
Upon the recommendation of the College faculty, an additional voting or non-voting member who is a non-academic expert may be appointed, if he or she is uniquely qualified by training, experience, and/or degrees held to guide and evaluate the degree being sought.

G. Qualifications for committee members
Members of the committee must have attained at least the degree level sought by the candidate. Exceptions require the approval of the Dean of the College of Forestry and Conservation and of the Dean of the Graduate School.

H. Conflict of interest
In selecting people from non-University organizations, care must be exercised to ensure that no possible conflict of interest exists. Under no circumstances shall an off-campus employer or work supervisor of the candidate serve as a voting member of the candidate’s committee, although they may be appointed as an additional non-voting committee member (as specified above). The same restriction applies to the off-campus individuals who have direct responsibility for a substantial portion of the funds supporting the student’s research.

I. Committee Appointment
After discussion with the advisor about appropriate committee members, the student is responsible for obtaining verbal commitment to serve from the prospective committee members. The advisor will then e-mail a list of the committee members to the FCFC Director of Student Services, who after checking to make sure the committee meets the above criteria, shall forward the nominations to the Dean of the Graduate School for his or her approval.

13. Links to M.S. and Ph.D. Student Forms

M.S. Committee Appointment Form
M.S. Degree Program Progress Checklist
M.S. Research Proposal Approval Form
M.S. Student Required Course Form

Ph.D. Committee Appointment Form
Ph.D. Comp Exam Form
Ph.D. Degree Program Progress Checklist
Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal Approval Form
Ph.D. Student Required Course Form