

**Graduate Handbook for the**

**M.S. Program in Integrated Agricultural Sciences**

**1st Edition (Draft)**

**January 2019**

# INTRODUCTION

This handbook includes important information about the M.S. program in Integrated Agricultural Sciences, the Department of Agriculture, and the expectations for all graduate students, including those who receive funding and assistantships. Students should read this handbook carefully and **keep it available for future reference**.

Beginning graduate students are expected to familiarize themselves with the standards for this degree and be prepared to meet each requirement as they progress through the program. This handbook may be changed with the recommendation and approval of the departmental graduate faculty. No rule specified in this handbook may violate the standards set forth in The Graduate Catalog of Texas State University, but the standards of the Graduate Catalog represent minima, which may be increased at the discretion of the Department of Agriculture.

* 1. PROGRAM BACKGROUND

This is an exciting time to be at Texas State and in the Department of Agriculture. The M.S. degree in Integrated Agricultural Sciences is the first of its kind in Texas, and its development is motivated by the need for graduates with the multidisciplinary technological and professional skills capable of addressing and solving complex food system challenges. Specifically, the M.S. program integrates animal science, plant and soil science, agricultural economics, and agricultural education into one program, so that students will develop the technical and leadership skills necessary for addressing and solving complex, real-world food and agricultural challenges. This integrated approach combines research and education concerning land use strategies, crop and animal production, distribution, sales, economics, policy, and the environment. Through this M.S. program, students will be provided with new opportunities, enriched and rewarding experiences, and future personal and professional success.

Additionally, the structure of this program is well aligned with recommendations made by the 2013 National Academies of Sciences: “Herein is the challenge to colleges and departments of agriculture: to establish a place at the forefront of academe where students and scholars are prepared to learn about the complexities of agriculture and grapple with its evolution and change, and in so doing, find their opportunity to contribute as leaders and participants in the agricultural enterprise. Only this will ensure a system of agriculture and of agricultural education that is sustainable, able to adapt to and thrive in constantly changing times.”

* 1. MARKETABLE SKILLS

The marketable skills associated with the M.S. program are directly related to the needs of the agricultural and food industry, including the recommendations of the National Academies of Sciences, “academic institutions need to continually keep pace with the realities of 21st-century agriculture and agribusiness, and in particular, with the significant forces shaping agriculture today, including the integration of global markets; the growing concern for the environmental impact of agriculture; the scientific redefinition of agriculture; the effects of growing consumer influence; the push for local and organic foods; the need to respond to increasing rates of obesity; and the changing demographics of the agriculture workforce” (IMNRC 2015).

Therefore, the vision of the M.S. program in Integrated Agricultural Sciences is to produce graduates with a 21st century agricultural literacy and knowledge with a capacity of expertise to integrate agricultural sciences. This agricultural literacy will enable graduates to address and solve multidisciplinary real-world challenges, such as the need for increasing food production to feed a growing global population, the increasing demand for local and quality food, and the needs of small producers in Texas, the United States, and internationally.

Specifically, this program will provide students the following marketable skills:

1. The ability to be adaptive to the needs of farmers, consumers, policy makers, and industry partners when developing programs in the field.
2. Critical thinking and analytic abilities capable to identify and resolve real-world agricultural problems and challenges, including those identified by The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.
3. Rigorous quantitative, qualitative, and technical skills necessary to analyze the identified real-world agricultural problems and challenges.
4. Communication skills necessary to be agents of positive change.
5. Leadership skills, and knowledge of ethics to provide effective and strategic solutions to the identified problems and challenges.

# ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM

The Graduate College requires students applying for the M.S. program to have a grade point average of 3.0 in the last 60 hours of undergraduate coursework. In addition to the requirements set by The Graduate College, the Department of Agriculture requires three letters of recommendation and a statement of interest (statement of purpose). The statement of interest should convey the student’s research and teaching interests. Additionally, this statement should articulate the career goals of the applicant in addition to describing how their scholarly interests and relevant skills can be utilized in the program to pursue those goals. The letters of recommendation should be from individuals knowledgeable about the applicant’s academic ability and promise as a scholar. These items should be uploaded to the ApplyTexas App. (More info can be found at: <https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/admissions.html>.)

Equivalent courses taken on another campus may be used to satisfy these requirements with the approval of the Department of Agriculture Graduate Program Coordinator and the concurrence of The Graduate College. While it is expected that these requirements will be met before the student begins graduate work, it is possible to enter either program before completion of one or more of these courses.

# DEGREE OUTLINE AND INITIAL STEPS

At the time students enter the M.S. program in Integrated Agricultural Sciences, a degree outline will be prepared by The Graduate College. The degree outline indicates the hours of required graduate courses in agriculture and elective graduate courses. Shortly after the student is officially accepted by The Graduate College of Texas State, the graduate program coordinator in the Department of Agriculture will contact the student to further guide the student about the courses for which the student should enroll for the first semester. The graduate coordinator may also request more information from the student such as their career interests. If the student has not been recruited by a specific faculty member, the graduate coordinator will work with the Department of Agriculture faculty to identify who would most likely be the best fit as the major advisor for that student.

If the incoming student is interested in financial assistance through a graduate student assistantship, which pays a student to assist the teaching and research duties in the department, the graduate program coordinator will facilitate this process. Specifically, the graduate coordinator will ask that an assistantship application form be completed by the student (for at least the first semester of employment). In addition to the assistantship application form, the student will be required to submit a resume and one-page teaching and/or research statement, which details the student’s interests as well as previous experience with teaching and/or research.

The graduate coordinator will also initially explore if the student is interested in a thesis or non-thesis option. This determination will be more fully developed as the student’s major advisor is identified, and the student and major advisor work together over the following semesters. Students who wish to switch from thesis to non-thesis track, or vice versa, after they have made the initial determination, must consult with his/her major advisor about the process to do so.

# GRADUATE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The M.S. degree offers two options: a thesis option and a non-thesis option. The thesis option requires core course work plus the completion of a thesis, which is defined as a long essay of theory, data collection, analysis, results and discussion, and addresses a gap in the agricultural sciences literature. The non-thesis option requires a professional paper, which is based on a project of smaller scope than a thesis. The non-thesis option requires three more credits of additional course work than the thesis option. Both thesis and non-thesis students must pass a written comprehensive exam after the completion of required course work, typically after three semesters. While either the thesis or the non-thesis options will lead to a master’s degree, students who are considering doctoral work should plan to complete the thesis.

1. REQUIRED COURSES

The M.S. degree, for both thesis and non-thesis students,requires a minimum of 36 hours of required graduate coursework. The following three-credit core courses (18 credits total) are required for both thesis and non-thesis students:

AG 5300 Applied Statistic and Econometrics (or MATH 5376B Analysis of Variance)

AG 5301 Agricultural Development and Policy

AG 5310 Research Methods in Integrated Agricultural Sciences

AG 5324 Agroecology and Integrated Agriculture

AG 5350 Foundations of Ethics and Leadership in Agriculture

AG 5365 The Role of Animal Science in Society: An Integrated Approach

Thesis and non-thesis students who will be employed as a graduate instructional assistant (GIA) or graduate teaching assistant (GTA) for the upcoming semester are also required to take AG 5100 Professional Development for a total of three credits. This course is currently a one-credit (one-hour) course, therefore GIAs and GTAs must enroll in this course for three semesters.

The required courses for the thesis and non-thesis options are the same with two exceptions: thesis students must enroll in six thesis credits (AG 5399A and at least 3 thesis B credits), and non-thesis students must enroll in AG 5398 Professional Paper, which is three credits. Each student’s major advisor will guide the student when to enroll in these credits.

Regarding the thesis courses, students are strongly encouraged to enroll in AG 5399A during the semester they will be submitting their proposal for approval. After the semester in which a thesis student enrolls in AG 5399A, s/he is required to continually be enrolled in one of the following “thesis B” credit classes degree completion:

AG 5199B (1 credit)

AG 5299B (2 credits)

AG 5399B (3 credits)

AG 5599B (5 credits)

AG 5999B (9 credits)

1. PRESCRIBED ELECTIVES

Thesis-track students must complete 12 credits of prescribed electives, and non-thesis students must complete 15 credits of prescribed electives from the following list of courses. Other suitable courses may be substituted with approval of the major advisor and committee. All students may take prescribed electives from any of the following courses, or from courses within a specific research area to best suit their individual career interests. Students should work with their major advisor to determine the elective courses that best fit their interests.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Prefix and Number** | **Prescribed Elective Courses** | **Credit(s)** |
| AG 5101 | Research Experience | 1 |
| **AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS, ECONOMIC AND POLICY RESEARCH AREA:** | | |
| AG 5302 | Economics of Agricultural Production | 3 |
| AG 5303 | Agricultural Marketing and Price Analysis | 3 |
| AG 5304 | Economics of Sustainable Natural Resource Management | 3 |
| QMST 5335 | Forecasting and Simulation | 3 |
| **CROPS AND SOILS RESEARCH AREA:** | | |
| AG 5120 | Aquaponic Internship | 1 |
| AG 5320 | Integrated Agricultural Production in Aquaponic Systems | 3 |
| AG 5323 | Composting and Integrated Resource Management | 3 |
| AG 5426 | Soil Health and Development | 4 |
| BIO 5412 | Plant Anatomy | 4 |
| GEO 5415 | Geographic Applications of Remote Sensing | 4 |
| TECH 5382 | Industrial Ecology and Sustainability Engineering | 3 |
| **AGRICULTURE EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP RESEARCH AREA:** | | |
| AG 5351 | Grant Development and Management | 3 |
| AG 5352 | Program Development and Evaluation | 3 |
| AG 5354 | Instructional Design in Agricultural Education | 3 |
| AG 5355 | Methods of Technological Change | 3 |
| ADED 5382 | Foundations of Adult Education | 3 |
| SOCI 5309 | Seminar in Qualitative Research Methods | 3 |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **ANIMAL SCIENCE RESEARCH AREA:** | | |
| AG 5361 | Food Technology and Meat Science | 3 |
| AG 5362 | Advanced Animal Science: Minerals and Vitamins in Animal Nutrition | 3 |
| AG 5364 | Biology of Reproduction in Farm Animals | 3 |
| AG 5463 | Animal Molecular Genetics | 4 |
| BIO 5413 | Parasitology | 4 |

1. COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The written comprehensive exams for thesis and non-thesis students should be taken after students complete approximately 27 credits (i.e. after three semesters at a full-time course load). Comprehensive exams are comprised of essay questions that are based on statistics, theory, and research methods, and that also incorporate empirical research and coursework from a student’s area(s) of specialization.

At the end of the third semester – after the core requirements have been completed – all students must pass a comprehensive examination prepared and conducted by the committee (more on the formation of each student’s committee is found in the following section). The results of this exam will be reported on the “Master's Comprehensive Examination Report” form, which can be downloaded from The Graduate College website, and which must be filed in The Graduate College at least 10 days prior to the date of expected graduation.

*Evaluation of Comprehensive Exam Answers*

A committee of graduate faculty will evaluate exam answers for the following: content, insight, correct application of course material, empirical evidence, and citations/sources to determine whether the answers pass or fail. Additionally, the committee will examine the answers to ensure that they adhere to our University’s Honor Code (see <http://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/>). If a student appears to have violated the Honor Code, it is the up to the discretion of the student’s committee to decide on the extent of the violation and whether to report the student to the university Honor Code Council for a violation or violations.

On the first attempt at an exam, if a student fails an answer or answers, s/he will be asked to consult readings, re-write and re-submit answers to his/her major advisor within 7 days of receiving the committee’s evaluation. If a student does not pass the second attempt, s/he will be required to return for the next long semester (fall or spring) after studying for comprehensive exams and take comprehensive exams in one or more areas during that subsequent long semester. A new faculty committee will then evaluate the student’s third attempt at answering the comprehensive exam questions successfully. **At this point, the student must sign a form that indicates the student’s understanding that the third attempt is the final attempt.** If the student fails the third attempt, then s/he or she will not be able to graduate with an M.S. degree in the Department of Agriculture.

1. THESIS AND PROFESSIONAL PAPER

In addition to the above course requirements and comprehensive exam, thesis students are required to write and defend a thesis, and non-thesis students are required to write a professional paper. More information about the expectations for completing the thesis or professional paper are given in Section VI.

# TIMELINE FOR COMPLETEING THE M.S. DEGREE

Full-time enrollment is at least nine credits. For students who enroll in at least nine credits every semester (except summer), and are diligent in meeting the expectations set forth by their major advisor, the time to degree completion will likely be two years. This timeline is the target for the student’s major advisor as well. A two-year completion, however, is not guaranteed, especially when a research project (especially for thesis students) requires more time to complete (e.g. more data needs to be collected), or if The Graduate College deadlines (e.g. defense deadline) are not met.

The following chart illustrates the steps a student must take regarding his/her thesis or professional paper.

In adherence with The Graduate College requirements, students may not collect data until their proposal has been submitted and approved by The Graduate College (step 8 above). For those students who will be obtaining information from human subjects, such as through surveys, or for students whose experiments will involve animals, they may not collect data until they receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) approval. Students’ major advisors will inform and guide those students who need to seek this approval. Students should not send anything to the IRB or IACUC without approval of his/her major advisor.

For students to complete their degree, they must pass all courses with a C or better, and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better. In their defense and comprehensive exam, they must also receive passing marks from their committee chair and one of two committee members (for a three-person committee), or committee chair and majority of the remaining members.

# THE M.S. THESIS OR PROFESSIONAL PAPER: EXPECTATIONS, GUIDELINES, AND POLICIES

1. GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

Expectations for completed theses and professional papers are high. Students will receive suggestions, recommendations, and criticism about their written work and ideas. They will continue to submit revisions until those revisions meet the standards of the Department and The Graduate College. Committee chairs may require a week or more to read and make suggestions on each draft. **Drafts submitted to the chair must be proofread carefully; students should not submit rough drafts to the chair.**  It is strongly encouraged that students attend the Shop Talks (seminars) provided by The Graduate College and The Writing Center regarding graduate-level research writing, writing literature reviews and research methodologies, and thesis “boot camp”, among others. Thus, students are strongly encouraged to fully utilize campus resources for degree and thesis success, rather than solely expecting his/her major advisor and committee to provide all research and writing mentorship.

Each student should consult their major advisor (not graduate coordinator) for citation and reference format requirements. Non-thesis students may be asked their major advisor to format their professional paper according to the requirements of a specific peer reviewed journal. Thesis students are required to follow The Graduate College’s template for creating a thesis. Additionally, thesis students are expected to review the *Graduate College Guide to Preparing and Submitting a Thesis or Dissertation* and the *Thesis Requirements for a Master’s Degree* page in the Graduate Catalog for more information regarding the thesis proposal, thesis enrollment and credit, and thesis deadlines and approval process. To access the above resources, visit <https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation.html>. Students cannot defend their thesis or professional paper until it meets Department and The Graduate College requirements and standards, and the committee approves the paper/thesis.

Theses and professional papers may require that students interact with many groups to achieve their goals and objectives. Students are expected to be professional, respectful, civil, and mature in their interactions with faculty, staff, and students, and, when applicable, respondents, site supervisors, and stake holders. Successful completion of the professional paper or thesis is the student’s responsibility. Students must identify and meet all deadlines and administrative work (e.g. signatures needed) related to the project and the defense. **Deadlines for are available on The Graduate College website.**

1. SELECTION OF THE THESIS OR PROFESSIONAL PAPER COMMITTEE

To begin the thesis or professional paper research process, each student should consult with the graduate coordinator, **preferably during his/her office hours or by setting up an appointment, or via email**, before selecting a chairperson for their committee (i.e. major advisor) – unless that faculty member has specifically recruited that student. The student should have ideas about his or her topic, or at least an area of interest among the sub-disciplines of agricultural sciences, and an appropriate member of the graduate faculty to serve as committee chairperson. In general, the choice of committee chairperson for the professional paper or thesis is determined by the faculty member’s interest in the subject matter proposed by the student – or if the faculty member has specifically recruited the student.

All students (thesis and non-thesis) will have a committee with a minimum of three faculty; the chair of that committee will be the student’s major advisor. The committee will be formed by the student in consultation with his/her major advisor during the first semester. Students should plan to meet with their major advisors to discuss expectations and progress on the proposal. A student should have the approval of the major advisor before consulting other faculty members to serve on the committee.

Two of the committee members,the committee chair and another faculty member, should be from the Department of Agriculture and one faculty member from outside the department. In some instances, all three members may be from the Department of Agriculture. The chair should be someone whose area of specialization is related to the thesis topic. Students can find areas of specialization on the department homepage, faculty CVs, and ask faculty about their other areas. The chair can provide recommendations for the other committee members.

1. THESIS GUIDELINES

The thesis is a major research project about an agricultural topic. Students choose thesis topics based on their areas of interest in agriculture and by identifying a significant empirical gap in the academic literature. The thesis must reflect a graduate level understanding of the topic and of agriculture, as well as the ability to communicate that understanding on paper. The thesis is not about students’ personal beliefs, values, or opinions. It must demonstrate that students have an understanding—and can communicate that understanding in writing—of an agricultural approach to the topic in an organized, coherent way.

Students are expected to utilize the following resources and guidelines found at The Graduate College website (<https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/students/thesis-dissertation.html>):

* **required forms** *-* including Thesis Proposal Form, Thesis Submission Approval Form, Master’s Comprehensive Examination Form for thesis and non-thesis students
* **guide** – contains information for preparing and submitting a thesis
* **deadlines** – including graduate application, comprehensive examination paperwork, thesis defense, and thesis deadlines
* **templates** – including guidelines for thesis title pages (front matter), appendices, and general document formatting.

Additionally, students are expected to review the *Graduate College Guide to Preparing and Submitting a Thesis or Dissertation* and *Thesis Requirements for a Master’s Degree* in the Graduate Catalog.

If a student’s research project includes human or animal subjects, IRB or IACUC approval, students must plan for the time required to obtain IRB or IACUC application review and approval. These students must ask their major advisors to read and approve all documents required for the IRB and/or IACUC application. Students should NOT send anything to the IRB or IACUC without prior approval from the thesis committee chair. Students must complete the online CITI Program for “Social and Behavioral Students” before they can submit applications to the IRB for approval. All students should complete the CITI program during their first semester, if possible. For more information, see the Research Integrity and Compliance page on the Office of Research and Sponsored Program’s website, <https://www.txstate.edu/research/orc>.

Students must write a thesis proposal. The proposal describes the proposed thesis study in detail. Because this document is a *proposal,* the project may change as a result of the feedback of the chair and committee. The committee chair will determine whether the project is appropriate for a master’s thesis.

To aid in the development of the proposal and the subsequent thesis, students should write their proposal in the format required by The Graduate College (see The Graduate College website for more details). Students are also highly encouraged to attend The Graduate College “Shop Talks”, which address topics critical to student success such as library research methods, how to format theses, and how to find and apply for funding. **Students must also be aware of graduate school deadlines (located on The Graduate College website).**

Thesis proposals typically include the following items:

* 1. An introduction and rationale: Introduce the topic and explain why it is important to study. What is the agricultural significance? What is the rationale for conducting this research? Students should not discuss why the topic is important to *them*; instead, they shall emphasize the real-world agricultural relevance.
  2. A literature review: What do scientists already know about this topic? This section summarizes most of the relevant previous studies as they relate to the topic. It should define all central concepts and identify the gap in the literature. It should discuss how the proposed study fills that gap.
  3. Theoretical framework(s): This section should describe the theoretical background of the main question. It will discuss the main theories that are relevant to the study. (Note: This document is a proposal; the theories employed in the completed thesis might change.)
  4. A description of research questions or hypotheses and rationale.
  5. A proposed methodology: Students must apply what have learned in methods courses to their study design. This section must discuss the proposed method and why this method is appropriate for the research questions or hypotheses. It must describe the proposed sample and sampling procedure. When applicable, the proposal must indicate whether the project is under review at the IRB. Quantitative studies shall include a description of independent and dependent variables.
  6. A proposed and realistic timeline
  7. A bibliography (consult major advisor for format)
  8. Appendices (if applicable):
     1. Copy of IRB or IACUC approval or exemption should be included, when appropriate. Students should consult with their major about the IRB and/or IACUC process.
     2. Interview guide, survey instrument, etc.

After the committee chair approves the proposal, the student must:

1. Submit the proposal to the committee members for review and approval. After the committee approves the proposal, the student must complete the thesis proposal form (available on the Graduate College site under “Forms”) and collect signatures.
2. Submit the thesis proposal with the IRB/IACUC approval or exemption (if applicable) and thesis proposal form with the committee signatures to the department’s graduate coordinator. If approved, the graduate coordinator will forward the thesis and the proposal form to the department chair for his or her signature. The main office staff will forward the signed and completed form and proposal to the Dean of the Graduate College for approval.
3. PROFESSIONAL PAPER (NON-THESIS) GUIDELINES

A student who elects to take the non-thesis option must complete all course work satisfactorily and pass a written comprehensive exam at the end of the program. Students will be expected to be knowledgeable about material from substantive courses as well as core courses and be able to apply theory, statistics, and methods to substantive areas. The expectation for non-thesis students will be to prepare a professional paper that can matriculate into a peer-reviewed journal for publication. As such, the major advisor of a non-thesis student will provide guidance on the headings and formatting to be followed for specific journals in the chosen discipline.

1. THE DEFENSE AND VERBAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

If a student’s major advisor approves the thesis or professional paper, then the student may send the thesis or paper to the committee and plan for his/her defense. The committee and other department faculty and graduate students are encouraged to attend the defense. Students should not invite friends, family members, significant others, or other people from outside the department (i.e. not affiliated with Texas State or other stakeholder groups).

Typically, the student introduces her or himself and discusses the main issues in the thesis or paper for about 15-20 minutes (no longer). The PowerPoint presentation should outline the major ideas and outcomes of the project. The defense is also considered an oral exam. The committee and other faculty present will ask questions about the thesis or paper topics, specifically, and agriculture, generally.

The members of the student’s committee will constitute the final oral examination committee. They will be the only faculty members to decide whether the student passes the examination, although all members of the faculty are invited to attend the oral examination. The comprehensive examination cannot be held until after all members of the student's committee have read the thesis or research report.

# Before the defense, students must:

1. Find a time when all committee members can meet, and ask the administrative assistant(s) in the Agriculture Main Office (Room 206) to reserve a room for the defense.
2. Confirm the date, time, place of the defense via email and Outlook calendar invite.
3. Give the completed and polished thesis or professional paper to the committee at least one week before the defense date.
4. Check the graduate school deadlines and plan carefully. Note that presentations of a student’s professional paper are “in house” defenses; thus, a *professional paper defenses* may be scheduled later (up to the last week of classes) than the *thesis defense dates* listed on the Graduate College webpage.
5. E-mail the thesis or professional paper title, abstract, and names of committee members, to the graduate coordinator at least one week prior to the scheduled defense date.
6. Study previous course notes and materials (particularly from statistics, methods, and theory) to prepare for questions during the defense.

# The day of the defense, students must:

1. Arrive early, ask an office staff member to unlock the conference/class room door and assist with computer set-up if needed.
2. *(Thesis students only)* Bring two copies of the Theses Submission Approval Form to the defense. This form must be downloaded; all fields must be typed.
3. *(Thesis students only)* Confirm that the committee chair or the student will take the Theses Submission Approval Form with committee signatures to the graduate coordinator’s office after the defense for signature, and then to the department chair’s office for signature. (The committee will sign the form if the student has successfully defended.)

# After the defense, students must:

1. Complete revisions to the thesis or professional paper and send the final document to the committee chair for his or her final approval.
2. Confirm the correct format. The thesis must follow The correct Graduate College format exactly. Confirming formatting details are the student’s responsibility. Correspond with The Graduate School about any formatting questions.
3. *(Thesis students only)* Submit thesis to Vireo online submission. More information can be found in *The Graduate College Guide to Preparing and Submitting a Thesis or Dissertation*. (The professional paper *should not* be sent to the Graduate College or uploaded to Vireo).
4. Provide a bound thesis copy or printed professional paper copy for the agriculture department library and the committee chair.
5. Complete the online exit interview for the agriculture department. [NOTE this will be developed].
6. APPEALS

Should a student take issue with the committee's decision on the comprehensive exam, the following process should be employed to appeal that decision.

1. The student must notify the members of the committee in writing within seven working days of the decision that the student requests the committee to reconsider its decision. The student should identify specific points or issues to be reconsidered by the committee.
2. The committee has seven working days after receiving the request to respond to the student in writing.
3. If no satisfactory conclusion can be reached at this level, the student may appeal in writing to the Chair of Sociology Department.
4. The chair has seven working days after receiving the request to respond to the student in writing.

Students found guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to the disciplinary action specified in the Texas State Student Handbook and in the University’s Honor Code. Unintentional plagiarism has the same consequences as intentional plagiarism.

# ENROLLMENT AND COURSE CREDIT

Any graduate student receiving supervision or assistance on a professional paper or thesis must be registered for the appropriate course during that semester. Failure to register for either AG 5398 Professional Paper or thesis course credits in a semester in which assistance is received in the preparation of the professional paper or thesis may result in postponement of graduation.

In any semester in which the professional paper or thesis is not completed, the committee chair assigns a grade of "PR" (in progress) or "F" if the progress is unsatisfactory. When the research report or thesis is completed, it must be filed in the Texas State Alkek Library and the binding fee paid. A grade of "CR," or credit, is then assigned and 6 hours of graduate credit awarded. The student should consult the Graduate College website for more information.

# APPLYING FOR GRADUATION

Apply for graduation during the first week of the semester you plan to graduate. Check The Graduate College website for deadlines and plan carefully. There are no exceptions to these deadlines.

# THE CONDUCT OF INQUIRY

Both the professional paper and the thesis must demonstrate scholarship. Each should serve as a “showcase” for the student's abilities and knowledge in the academic discipline of agriculture. The organization of the paper must conform to the general format for a graduate thesis outlined in the current edition of the *Graduate Thesis Handbook*, which is available on The Graduate College website. Citation and bibliographic entries must follow the format set by the student’s major advisor. The Writing Center also offers guidance. Students are also expected to utilize online resources in applying the style guide (e.g. APA, MLA) required by the major advisor and committee.

# DEADLINES

The Graduate College sets all official deadlines. For the exact deadline dates consult The Graduate College webpage for the semester in which you plan to graduate.

# DEPARTMENT POLICY: STUDENT FITNESS AND PERFORMANCE

Students enrolled in all academic programs in the Department of Agriculture must maintain high scholastic standards and develop a mastery of the knowledge and methods of the discipline.

Students are expected to demonstrate emotional and mental fitness in their interactions with others, use skills and methods that are generally accepted by others in the profession, and conform to the Texas State University Honor Code, and the Texas State University Code of Student Conduct. A student’s acceptance in any program does not guarantee the student’s fitness to remain in that program. The faculty are responsible for insuring that only those students who continue to meet program standards can continue in the program.

# FUNDING AND ASSISTANTSHIP EXPECATIONS

# DEPARTMENTAL ASSISTANTSHIPS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

# Each semester the Department of Agriculture employs graduate students to assist in the department’s teaching, research, outreach, and institutional activities. These positions, generally called “assistantships”, are funded by department and university funds, grants, and sometimes by scholarships. To obtain an assistantship, students must be a full-time student (enrolled in nine credits for the semester of the assistantship) and maintain a GPA of at least 3.0. Assistantships are awarded based on GPA, performance, and thesis (over non-thesis) track, however, consideration will also be given to attendance at department events (such as seminars and other student’s defenses), volunteerism in the department and when needed at department and university-related events, and congeniality.

# Specific assistantship assignments and duties vary according to the skills and experience of each student, as well the needs of the agriculture faculty and department. A student’s desire to teach a particular lab or be a part of a particular research or grant project, is second to the needs of the faculty and department, but is sincerely considered when determining student assistantship assignments.

# More general information about assistantships can be found at: <https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/funding/assistantships.html>

# *Expectations of graduate assistants:*

# Students who are in assistantship positions (i.e. graduate instructional assistant (GIA), graduate research assistant (GRA), and graduate teaching assistant (GTA) positions) must commit to working 20 hours per week as assigned by his/her faculty supervisor. In certain situations, a student may be assigned to a half assistantship, for which 10 hours per week of work is expected.

# Students in an assistantship position are expected to work on their thesis or professional paper projects outside of the 20 hours they are expected to be completing assistantship duties. Students in a GIA or GTA role will be required to post office hours.

# Students in assistantship positions are expected to be engaged in the department, like all faculty members, and attend departmental seminars and events, and other student’s defense presentations.

# UNIVERSITY-LEVEL INTERNAL FUNDING

The Graduate College offers a variety of scholarships and fellowships for new, continuing, and prospective students at Texas State University. For more information visit The Graduate College website and see the “Funding” link. The weekly GradBulletin often contains information about upcoming funding opportunities.

Regarding funding for travel to a conference, The Graduate College will partially fund up to two graduate student conference travel requests per academic year. To be eligible, students must have an accepted conference paper, poster, or professional presentation. (The content and title of the presentations must differ from one another.) Award amounts are determined by location of the conference. See The Graduate College website for more information.

# EXTERNAL FUNDING

Generally, external funding for graduate students is based on merit, and is typically tied to a student’s discipline or research project. Funding also exists to support international students and students who are underrepresented in graduate school. One of the first steps students should take in identifying possible external funding opportunities is to talk to his/her major advisor. Agriculture faculty may know of organizations and programs that will fund students who are working in their specific research areas.

Additionally, the Graduate College maintains a database of funding opportunities specific to Texas State graduate students, and they announce opportunities via the GradBulletin, individual emails, and Twitter. Furthermore, The Graduate College presents information about graduate funding through Shop Talks, which are workshops that can be found on the The Graduate College website and in the weekly GradBulletin. For those students who are working on a proposal, the Graduate College also offers assistance by appointment. For more information, go to <https://www.gradcollege.txstate.edu/funding/external.html>