

Department of
ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

Graduate Student
HANDBOOK
Fall 2026



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PREFACE

The Graduate Handbook for the Department of Environment and Society (henceforth referred to as the *ENVS Graduate Handbook*) can help graduate students navigate through their programs. Being a well-informed student can save time and money and reduce stress. The *ENVS Graduate Handbook* should be consulted regularly. It complements and reinforces other sources of information. Other sources include:

- The Department of Environment and Society (<http://qanr.usu.edu/envs/>)
- The S.J. & Jessie E. Quinney College of Agriculture & Natural Resources (<http://qanr.usu.edu/>)
- The graduate degree completion website (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/>)
- The USU Graduate Catalog, (<https://catalog.usu.edu/colleges/gradschool/>)
- The USU Graduate Student Handbook (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/handbooks/student-handbook>)

The School of Graduate Studies website (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/current-students/>) is another great resource, and you will want to refer to it often to find required forms, to review deadlines, and to learn more about graduate school upcoming events, available resources, and policies. Some important topics to pay close attention to are:

- Setting up the supervisory committee
- Creating the program of study
- Formatting the cover page for the graduate research proposal
- Setting up appointments for examinations
- Indicating plans for publication of graduate research
- Style guidelines for the thesis or dissertation

Graduate degrees can differ in terms of the actions and forms that are required, so “one size does not fit all.” The USU Graduate School’s [General Catalog](#) provides more general information.

Students can now track their progress in DegreeWorks!

Your major professor, the department head, and staff assistants in the ENVS main office (NR 201) can also be useful sources of information. However, please be aware that sudden changes in forms and policies can occur, so it is a good idea to double-check your sources and get updates as needed.

ENVS staff assistant and graduate program coordinator (GPC) Becky Hirst will routinely send out semester-by-semester reminders as to looming tuition deadlines and other information of special interest to graduate students. Please check those messages carefully and take personal responsibility to see that your deadlines are met.

Besides having examples of forms and summarizing aspects of various graduate degree programs, the *ENVS Graduate Handbook* also contains valuable pointers with regards to what the department expects of graduate students in terms of professional behavior. Helpful hints are provided to assist students in understanding graduate school culture and how to start a successful career. We hope you make good use of the *ENVS Graduate Handbook*. Your ideas to improve the content are welcomed. Please make your ideas known to Becky Hirst, Dr. Claudia Radel (ENVS department head), or your major professor. Becky can be contacted at Becky.Hirst@usu.edu.

ENVS MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS

*“Bringing people and science together
for healthy communities
and enduring ecosystems”*

1. *To promote scholarship and creativity in the discovery, synthesis, and transfer of knowledge relating to the human dimensions of natural resource and environmental management;*
2. *To apply social science concepts and approaches to better understand human-environment interactions at a range of spatial scales; and*
3. *To enhance the effectiveness of policies, planning, and administrative processes that affect sustainable use of the natural world.*

To this end, the department’s academic programs can provide graduate students with a balanced exposure to either (1) the social, physical, and biological sciences or (2) the environmental social sciences, both within an interdisciplinary framework. This combination has great relevance for students aspiring to careers in natural resource and environmental policy, planning, management, education, and science, as well as careers in geography. The program is designed to encourage students to build a *working knowledge* of the human aspects of ecosystems and a *speaking knowledge* of the biophysical aspects, as well as experience using “state of the art” tools and techniques for *integrating knowledge*.

INTRODUCTION

This document describes the basic requirements for obtaining a graduate degree in the Department of Environment and Society. It also provides suggestions for making your graduate program less difficult and more fulfilling. While many of these points will already be familiar to students with prior experience in graduate school, they are included to help those with less experience and to ensure a common level of understanding among ENVS students, faculty, and staff.

GRADUATE STUDIES

Graduate studies, unlike more general undergraduate programs, focuses upon a chosen area of specialization in a profession or area of study. You have expressed the desire to participate in a specialization, and you should be excited about this opportunity!

Graduate school differs from undergraduate studies in many ways, including:

- Graduate studies are much more than striving for good grades in course work. As a beginning professional, you are expected to demonstrate initiative, ambition, excitement, and creativity.
- Course work is only a part of your studies. Reading, attending seminars, and discussing ideas with your peers are also critical components of the graduate experience. You need to learn how to independently explore the research literature that is relevant to your study topic. Your major professor, peers, and library professionals can help you develop your literature review strategy.
- Professors should be viewed as colleagues who expect you to perform as a fellow member of the profession. Your fellow students should be viewed as peers who help you formulate ideas and develop your skills through constructive criticism.
- Learning to ask “important” questions and seeking answers is one aspect of professional development. Graduate studies helps you learn how to think, not how to recite dogma. Hopefully, you will have the opportunity to answer some of the pressing questions in the profession as part of your graduate experience.
- A chosen profession should be exciting and rewarding. If you are not enjoying yourself in graduate school you need to re-evaluate your goals and situation. You should be continually re-assessing your performance. Are you pleased with your progress? Are you happy and feeling challenged? Are you doing work that will help you forge a career path that makes sense? Will the skills developed during your graduate program help you be competitive in your preferred job market?

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

Below are some additional suggestions for graduate students. Some points have been taken from two publications (S. Stearns, 1987, "Some Modest Advice for Graduate Students," *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America* 68(2):145-150; and R. Huey, 1987, "Reply to Stearns: Some Acynical Advice for Graduate Students," *Bulletin of the Ecological Society of America* 68(2):150-153). Other content has been contributed by ENVS faculty.

- ***Know Why Your Work is Important.***

When you first begin your graduate program, start to immerse yourself in the topical area that you will focus on. Read, discuss, and think. The first step in the research process is identifying that central research question you want to answer. If you are a PhD student, you may come up with this central research question on your own. If you are a master's student or a PhD student involved in complex interdisciplinary work, you may need guidance from your major professor. In some cases, the funding that supports you can have a large role in determining what the research question might be. Once the question is identified, the student should seek to understand where it fits into a bigger professional picture. Then it is easier to understand why the work is important.

- ***Take Advantage of Informal Learning Opportunities.***

Alert graduate students will find that there are many opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. These opportunities include engaging with fellow students and traveling to conferences. The students who gain the most from graduate school make opportunities to engage with people from other parts of Utah, the USA, and the world. In contrast, the student who quietly keeps to him or herself and works only on their research will gain much less compared to that of more sociable, widely inquiring students. Lifelong professional and personal ties can be built among fellow students while they are in graduate school. The department and college will periodically schedule social gatherings for faculty and graduate students. These events can help create a sense of bonding and sharing. All ENVS graduate students are strongly encouraged to participate in such activities. Graduate students can also serve as role models, mentors and supporters of undergraduates in the department and college.

- ***Get Involved with Professional Societies and Meetings.***

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to join and participate in the activities of pertinent professional societies. This is how grads learn what work is going on, where they fit in, and discover career-networking opportunities. One such society that embraces the interests of many ENVS faculty and graduate students is the *International Association for Society and Natural Resources* (IASNR: iasnr.org). The IASNR publishes a peer-reviewed journal, *Society & Natural Resources*, and organizes a conference at a different location each year. There are other professional societies that embrace the human dimensions of rangelands (*Society for Range Management*), forestlands (*Society of American Foresters*), wildlife resources (*The Wildlife Society*), and ecology (*The Ecological Society of America*). Other societies include the *American Association of Geographers* and the *Society for Human Ecology*. Most of these societies have special low rates for student annual

membership dues and options to cut costs to facilitate student attendance at conferences. Graduate students should attend professional meetings whenever possible; they also benefit from the exposure with regards to networking for jobs. For presenting students, there are sources of financial assistance in the department and college, and through the Graduate School (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/costs/travel-grant>) to help attend meetings. Many of these sources require matching funds and can therefore be combined. It is best to start by contacting the major professor for guidance. A search for travel support needs to start well in advance of the meeting of interest. Students serving on various committees for professional societies, or those giving oral research presentations or posters as part of funded projects, will often be able to obtain the travel support they need.

▪ ***Take Advantage of Social Networking.***

Social networking sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, topical blogs, and Facebook groups offer many opportunities for graduate students to connect with peers on both formal and informal levels. Here are several groups that are currently set up within the department and the college that you may want to follow, subscribe to, or become a member of:

- **Environment and Society (ENVS) @ USU.** The official Facebook page for the ENVS department, this group is open to graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, staff, alumni, and anyone with like interests. In the near future, we anticipate a transition to using LinkedIn more.
- **ENVS Grad Students.** This is a closed Facebook group run by ENVS graduate students, as a “venue for ENVS graduate students to connect about academic and social events.”
- **Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism at Utah State University.** The Institute conducts a program of research, outreach, and teaching focused on outdoor recreation in the West and has an associated Facebook page.
 - IORT can also be found on Instagram with beautiful pictures and links to relevant articles and studies: IORT@USU.
- **The S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney College of Agriculture & Natural Resources USU.** This is the official Facebook page for the S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney College of Agriculture & Natural Resources. There is also a Natural Resources at USU Instagram page as well as a “QANR Utah State University” Instagram page. Keep up to date with all things happening in the college, link to pertinent articles, and see alumni profiles to see what others are doing with their degrees after graduation. Some of the prior college social media accounts were transitioned to the new college but others may become inactive or be replaced.

Blogs: Blogs are a great way to informally learn about topics and current research being done in natural resources. Hosting your own blog can also be a great way to network and get experience writing in your research area. There are several faculty and students within the department who host ENVS-related blogs. The Science Unwrapped program at USU also hosts a “blog station,” with several entries by ENVS

and QANR graduate students at <http://www.usu.edu/unwrapped/pages/blog-station>.

- ***Take Every Opportunity to Present and Discuss Your Research.***

By enrolling in graduate school, you've committed to spending much time, energy, and money over the next few years in pursuit of a degree. It is important that you make the most out of your program and that your work is as high quality as possible. Take every opportunity to present and discuss your ideas, research plans, and research results. There are many opportunities to do so, including informal lunch-time gatherings and formal seminars. Volunteer to give a seminar to the department or student club. Offer to guest lecture in a faculty member's course. The offer will generally be appreciated, especially when faculty have scheduled time away for research or to attend professional meetings. Better yet, submit abstracts to make presentations at professional meetings. Volunteering for panel discussions or moderator roles can also help hone your ideas and broaden your circle of contacts.

- ***Plan to Publish Your Results.***

A technical report, master's thesis, or doctoral dissertation is not considered a real publication. These documents are not readily accessible to the research or management communities at-large, and the content has not been vetted by anyone other than the supervisory committee members. Any student who accepts donor funding to conduct research—whether from a public agency or a private foundation—has an obligation to make the key results publicly available. Consequently, such students are expected to get at least the main elements of his or her graduate research into a widely available, publishable form, typically as a paper in a respected, peer-reviewed journal. The stature of the department and future reputation of the student is affected by the production of high value research. The ability of students to publish also matters greatly to the major professor, because the major professor then shares in the success of his or her students.

A written plan for publishing work from the thesis or dissertation is now required by the USU School of Graduate Studies. Examples of the relevant forms are shown here in appendices of the *ENVS Graduate Handbook*, and they can also be found on the graduate school's website. Within one year after completing a master's or doctoral program, former students are expected to have submitted manuscripts for publication, usually in direct collaboration with their major professor. It is common in such cases that the former student is the first author and the major professor is second author—and there may also be other co-authors. The publication process becomes more difficult the longer it is delayed, and the greater the delay the less impact the paper may have on the profession.

Accordingly, if the former student fails to meet the one-year submission deadline above, the responsibility for getting the work out may fall entirely on the shoulders of the major professor. This outcome should be avoided for several reasons; one is that the major professor can become a bit grumpy when left holding the bag! And it is good to know that publishing can be a lengthy and challenging process, regardless. It is therefore best to

share the burdens of publication between the former student and major professor in a timely fashion.

- ***Take Charge of Your Graduate Program.***

Build confidence in yourself over time. Seek out your major professor, other faculty, and your peers for advice or input as needed. Be flexible and anticipate challenges. Have alternative plans for success in case your funding starts to look shaky, or your once-cherished research idea looks less appealing the more you know about it. Your professors indeed care about you and can help when needed, but they have limited time and resources in most cases. The bottom line is to learn to rely on yourself as required; take charge! And one other thing—try to get your formal classwork out of the way ASAP! Then you can have more quality time to work on the thesis or dissertation.

- ***Don't Be Too Hard on Yourself.***

Take care that the multiple demands of grad school are not overwhelming. Accept the fact that the process of developing a thesis or dissertation project, and jumping through the other hoops, has ups and downs. Give yourself a break; plan to have a life away from school. Hopefully you have a good mentor and close friends to keep the entire graduate process in proper perspective.

And there will never be a perfect thesis or dissertation. Those who aim for perfection will become frustrated. Graduate research is only a start to a long career that will be defined by a wide variety of achievements. The scope of the graduate project will be limited by time, money, and other resources.

Remember, you were admitted into the ENVS graduate program because of your exceptional abilities. The faculty want you to succeed and will work with you to attain your goals.



Highlights for 2026-2027

- Completion of the required RCR CITI training is now tracked on the initial Supervisory Committee forms for master's/doctoral students who are required to take the training. Must be completed before the approval of the Supervisory Committee (SCAF) form
- New policy and accompanying forms require a proposal defense which is scheduled in advance with the School of Graduate Studies and is either passed or failed (no deferral or suspension of a defense). The form for reporting the outcome includes necessary feedback for re-defense or subsequent work to complete the thesis/dissertation.
- USU 7777 is no longer offered. Students who need to preserve enrolled status should use thesis/dissertation credits. Grace semester policy language clarifies that it is a time period for degree completion, independent of enrollment.
- New training courses are required for serving as a Graduate Teaching Assistant or as a Graduate Instructor – CEUS 7901, CEUS 7902 and CEUS 7903

ENVS RESEARCH GRADUATE PROGRAMS

TYPES OF RESEARCH GRADUATE DEGREES

Master of Science (M.S.)

For the M.S. candidate, this is likely to be a first experience in being involved in a scientific endeavor. Consequently, many M.S. candidates need considerable guidance on the part of their major professor and supervisory committee. The student may be following up on ideas that have been initially generated by his or her major professor or committee members. If the student is financially supported on a funded research project, it is likely that the major professor wrote the proposal to obtain the funds well before the student arrived. The student's role may therefore be largely that of an "apprentice," serving as a data gatherer and analyst. The student thus learns about research through intimate involvement in a structured example. This may be the student's only exposure to research if the M.S. is the terminal degree. Regardless of the student's ultimate career objectives, he or she should be able to understand the scientific process and be better able to critically use scientific information in the future.

Most M.S. research programs allow latitude for a student to suggest changes in design, data collection, and analysis. Most of the interpretations of the data should be the student's own. The major professor and committee provide editorial comment and suggestions. The degree of originality shown during the M.S. program is often used as an indication of the aptitude that the student has for a doctoral program.

There are two types of M.S. programs in ENVS. Both involve the enhancement of knowledge in a discipline.

The **Plan A** program is typically more rigorous and takes a longer time to complete because the student needs to collect, analyze, and interpret new information. This process culminates in the production of a thesis. The numbers of credits devoted to the research in the program of study for the Plan A is 6-15 thesis credits. A research proposal is required.

The **Plan B** program, in contrast, is focused more on a literature review or a compilation of secondary data that culminates in a professional paper or report. The number of credits devoted to the research in the program of study for the Plan B is 2-3 thesis credits. A research proposal is *not* required. Plan B outputs should follow the same format specifications as a thesis and are expected to reflect equivalent scholarship standards. Like the thesis, Plan B papers or reports are defended in response to a supervisory committee and submitted to the library, but there is no post-defense review of the paper or report by the School of Graduate Studies.

The ENVS Department—like most comparable departments across the nation—regards an M.S. Plan B program as a terminal degree for someone who does not intend to go on for a doctoral degree. The rationale is that there will be little basis to judge the student's ability to plan and conduct original research from an M.S. Plan B degree experience. There are some exceptions to this pattern, however, and questions should be directed towards the ENVS department head or other faculty members.

Sometimes a student pursues a Master's Plan B if their pursuit of a Master's Plan A—or even pursuit of a doctoral degree—fails for unforeseen reasons. Students should consult with their major professor, the ENVS department head, or other faculty if this becomes a possible course of action.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

In contrast to a master's degree, the doctoral degree is much more involved. For example, compared to master's students, there are comprehensive exams for doctoral students, and the period of doctoral study is longer, and a dissertation research proposal is always required for a doctoral student. The expectations of independent scholarly effort from a doctoral student are higher, as most doctoral candidates have prior research experience. The final product of a doctoral degree is a dissertation, and it is expected that a dissertation will provide a greater advance in knowledge for a given field than would a thesis.

The number of credits devoted to the research in the program of study for a doctoral student varies. At least 12 dissertation credits are required for a doctoral student who has already completed a master's degree. This minimum rises to 18 dissertation credits for those who lack a master's degree. Similarly, a doctoral student who already has a master's degree needs at least 30 credits to graduate, while those lacking the master's need 60.

The doctoral candidate is treated by the faculty more as a bona fide research colleague than is a master's student. Attainment of a Ph.D. brings the expectation that the individual will eventually serve as a research leader in the public or private sectors. Therefore, the doctoral student may be involved in the generation of research ideas, assist with writing grant proposals, and help prepare project budgets. The doctoral student thus has to show insight, creativity, and skill in terms of research design and data analysis. The doctoral candidate typically assumes control of his or her research with only minor supervision from the major professor or members of the supervisory committee.

ENVS RESEARCH GRADUATE DEGREES

There are several different graduate degree programs in the ENVS department, including Ecology, Environment and Society, Geography, and Recreation Resource Management. See the ENVS website for more details <https://qanr.usu.edu.edu/envs/programs/graduate/index>.

Ecology (M.S. and Ph.D.)

Ecology serves students who are interested in the interface between society and the natural world, with more of an emphasis on integrated analyses of human impacts on the biotic or abiotic features of ecosystems. Field work is often conducted in the arid and semi-arid areas of the Intermountain West. Employment opportunities include research and natural resource management in both public and private sectors. Ecology degrees are coordinated between the ENVS department and the USU Ecology Center: <https://www.usu.edu/ecology/students>.

Environment and Society (M.S. and Ph.D.)

These degrees are aimed at students who desire to be problem-solvers with an ability to integrate the human and biophysical aspects of ecosystems, and to analyze policies and decisions that encourage sustainability of human communities in an environmental context. The M.S. degree prepares students for professional practice in natural resources and environmental planning and management, policy and program analysis, public affairs, environmental education, community assessment and collaboration, conflict management, and extension/outreach. The PhD program places a greater emphasis on basic theory and research methods in one or more social science disciplines, and thus prepares students for university teaching, research, and extension; for conducting agency and private organizational research; and for positions in formal policy and program evaluation.

See https://www.usu.edu/degrees-majors/environment-and-society_ms_phd.

Geography (M.S. only)

Geography provides a discipline-based master's degree option for students interested in human-environment relationships. As a discipline, geography has several different traditions, the most prominent of which are a spatial tradition and a human-environment tradition. The spatial tradition within geography led to the discipline's extensive connection to the development and application of geographic information systems (GIS). Geography also has a strong international focus and well-established critical theory analytical perspectives (e.g. feminist, Marxist, critical race theory) that lead to a strong social justice orientation. Geography faculty in ENVS specialize in various subdisciplines of geography and have links to both the human-environment and spatial traditions.

See https://www.usu.edu/degrees-majors/geography_ms.

Recreation Resource Management (M.S. only)

Recreation Resource Management is aimed at students interested in managing outdoor recreation settings, such as public forests and rangelands, state and national parks, and wilderness areas. An understanding of both the land itself and the people who visit these areas is required. Opportunities are available to work as environmental interpreters, recreation planners, park rangers, trail crew supervisors, ski area employees, visitor center directors, wilderness rangers, and similar occupations. Graduate study provides additional opportunities for research and teaching in higher education, as well as in the private and government sectors. See: https://www.usu.edu/degrees-majors/recreation-resource-management_ms.

ENVS GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Certificate programs are coursework-based activities that can supplement traditional graduate degrees. They help to build skillsets that can improve professional marketability. Different certificates may function differently at USU depending on whether they are designated as stackable or not towards another graduate degree. Be sure to consult the program director for full information on how you might add a particular certificate to your M.S. or Ph.D. degree work.

Applied Graduate Remote Sensing & GeoAI Certificate (online)

In 2024, we began offering a new Applied Remote Sensing and Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI) Post-Baccalaureate Certificate. This online graduate certificate introduces students with a Geographic Information Science (GIS) background to the development and application of artificial intelligence to remote sensing and data-driven geospatial methods. Remote sensing via satellites and drones and advanced geospatial science tools that harness GeoAI allow for analyzing large amounts of data to understand and address a variety of complex social, economic, and environmental challenges facing society. As automation through machine learning increases efficiency, the role humans play is transforming, moving from lower-level data management tasks to higher-level tasks of problem definition, inquiry, and innovation. Humans must engage with, troubleshoot, and guide GeoAI efforts, drawing upon critical thinking, creative problem-solving, complex reasoning, the application of emotional intelligence, and other distinctively human capabilities. The program director is Elise Laugier.

See <https://qanr.usu.edu/mnr/geo-ai-certificate>

Natural Resources and Environmental Communication and Engagement (NRECE) Certificate (in person)

The NRECE Program provides an opportunity for, and certification of, knowledge and skill-building environmental communication and community engagement. Program outcomes focus on a broad range of communication strategies within the knowledge and action domains of natural resource management and the socio-ecological and environmental sciences. The program emphasizes a modern, interactional approach to collaborating and partnering with relevant communities and entities, with more critical perspective on improving how environmental science communication occurs. Curriculum draws on a suite of courses with communication and engagement content both within and beyond the Department of Environment and Society. The program director is Patrick Kelly.

See <https://qanr.usu.edu/mnr/nrece/>

Geographic Information Science (GIS) Certificate (online)

The Department's online, graduate Geographic Information Science (GIS) certificate is designed for graduate students or professionals wanting skills and experience applying industry standard GIS and remote sensing tools to natural resource issues. The program director is Shannon Belmont. See <https://qanr.usu.edu/mnr/gis-certificate>

SUMMARY OVERVIEWS AND HELPFUL HINTS FOR COMPLETING GRADUATE DEGREES

It is important that students become familiar with the various benchmarks and deadlines and update themselves with changes as they occur. It is the basic responsibility of the student and his or her major professor to keep track of the student's progress. If a student consistently fails to keep up with the required schedule, this can lead to termination of the student's graduate program. Financial aid is also often tied to a student's progress, and in some cases, such assistance can be forfeited.

The following overview captures the recommended sequence of initial actions to be taken by graduate students so they can complete their graduate programs in a timely fashion. ENVS graduate program coordinator Becky Hirst (Becky.Hirst@usu.edu) will send out periodic announcements by email to apprise students of looming deadlines.

In terms of general timeframes, a **Plan A** master's degree is typically completed within two or three years; the research can include one or more field seasons of data collection. A **Plan B** master's degree can be completed in two years given it tends to be based more on coursework or library review. The **doctoral degree** typically takes about four years to complete, although three years is possible in some cases. Doctoral research can include two or more field seasons of data collection. And, of course, some students have greatly extended the time needed to finish their graduate degrees, especially in the final writing phase. *However, this is not a good idea.*

Unless serious and unforeseen circumstances have derailed research plans and thus force a student to significantly extend their program, students must strive to finish their degrees promptly. It is in the student's best interest to complete their degrees and get on the job market. The School of Graduate Studies has a **six- or eight-year statute of limitations** for completion of a master's or doctoral degree, respectively. If a student's coursework was taken more than eight years prior to the graduation year, it must be *revalidated* or *retaken* with written approval from the major professor, supervisory committee, department head, and graduate Vice Provost.

Students can track their progress to degree completion in DegreeWorks. This is a relatively new feature for USU graduate students, and the university is still smoothing out the wrinkles to make this a helpful resource. Students can access their DegreeWorks record from the MyUSU student portal.

Students should clarify with their major professor up front as to the expected duration of their graduate program and the financial support they will (or will not) receive. It is good to have this

in writing, where possible, to clarify potential misunderstandings. Students should strive to complete their degree requirements before their financial support runs dry.

The time for degree completion in the following material is based on a semester system. There are two semesters (fall and spring) in an academic year (late August to early May) and another semester (summer) during the summer break (early May to mid-August). The semester that is most flexible in terms of graduate registration requirements is the summer semester. Students should speak to their major professor concerning research or other work expectations for the summer semester.

If a student begins his or her program in the fall, then the second semester is the following spring. If a student begins his or her program in spring, the second semester is usually the following fall—unless the student is registered for summer—in which case summer becomes the second semester. Questions regarding semester sequencing and the options for semester registration can be addressed to Becky Hirst (Becky.Hirst@usu.edu).

See <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms> for most of the forms referenced below. Some forms do *not* have online templates and must be reproduced from examples.

Appendix A contains detailed information for the following:

- Major professor
- Graduate mentoring process and Individual Development Plans (IDPs)
- Graduate student annual evaluation
- Program of Study
- Supervisory committee
- Pass/fail grading
- Credit requirements for different degree programs
- Research proposals
- Semester credit requirements
- Comprehensive examinations
- Degree candidacy
- The thesis and defense
- The dissertation and defense
- Leave of absence and off-campus research
- Failure of students to register
- Switching between different programs of study
- Research fraud and plagiarism
- Role of the Graduate Academic Review committee

MASTER'S DEGREE (PLAN A AND PLAN B) OVERVIEW AND HELPFUL HINTS

Every Year

Sexual Misconduct Online Courses

All graduate students who are registered for 6 or more credits are required to take a Sexual Misconduct course each year. There is a course for incoming students and a separate course for continuing students. The link to these courses can be found on the following website:

<https://www.usu.edu/equity/trainings/student-prevention>. The deadline to take one of these trainings is the day after the last day to withdraw from classes. Students who have not taken a training by that deadline will have a hold placed on their account which will prevent them from registering for Spring semester.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and Graduate Mentoring Agreements

We expect graduate students and their major professors to spend some time at a meeting at the start of each academic year discussing the following:

1. Individual development plans (IDPs) for the year for the student; and
2. The mentoring relationship, including mutual responsibilities and expectations.

The purpose of the IDP discussion is to mutually agree on a plan for the academic year for student progress and professional development. The mentoring relationship discussion is most important at the start of the grad student – faculty relationship (the student's first semester), but it can be important to re-visit this topic each year to help avoid misunderstandings. Starting in Fall 2026, all students in research graduate programs will be required to have a written, signed mentoring agreement with their major professor.

Please see "Graduate Student Individual Development Plans (IDPs) – Annual Start-of-Year Discussion Points," In Appendix A. This document incorporates both above two aspects into a discussion guide for your meeting. Templates are available to adapt for the mentoring agreement.

At the end of each academic year (near, at, or just after the end of the spring semester) the major professor and the graduate student will evaluate the student's degree progress. Following independent evaluation on the part of each, the student and major professor will discuss as needed and then finalize a completed evaluation form to be filed with the Graduate Program Coordinator (Becky Hirst).

Appendix A has an overview description for the graduate student mentoring and evaluation process in ENV5. This description also includes links to mentoring resources through the USU Graduate School.

During the First Semester

Seminar Attendance Policy

The College historically organizes seminar guest speakers every fall semester. In the spring semester, ENVS organizes its own seminar series, the “ENVS Spring Colloquium,” named to signify the idea of our gathering together as a departmental community for a conversation. As part of all ENVS graduate degree programs, students must register for and attend one semester of the ENVS Spring Colloquium (register for ENVS 6800), preferably the first spring semester of their programs. The intention is to bring graduate students into the shared intellectual life of the department. Attendance of the fall “NR” seminars, when offered, and of the ENVS Spring Colloquium, even when not registered, is also expected each semester. Remote or virtual attendance is offered.

Academic Program Guidelines

1. **Students need to meet soon—and as frequently as possible thereafter—with their major professor.** Students need to think about their graduate research topic, the question(s) they want to answer, and the approaches they could use to collect or analyze information; reading literature that is recommended by the major professor or peers is vital in this process. *The time on a master’s degree passes very quickly—it is important to get a jump on things.* Students should enroll in core courses that the student and the major professor expect will be on the final list of agreed coursework and research credits (i.e., the program of study—see below). It is especially important that students enroll in theory or methods courses most relevant to the research. Students should also sign up for the ENVS intro graduate course series (ENVS 6840, 6841, 6842) if in the Environment and Society, Geography, or Ecology programs, or just the orientation seminar (ENVS 6840) if in the Recreation Resource Management programs.
2. **Students should get to know the department head and the administrative staff** in the ENVS main office (NR 201) and learn how they can provide feedback and assistance.
3. In consultation with their major professor, **students can begin to think about forming a graduate supervisory committee** and drafting a **program of study** (details follow). In some cases, students can even start to **draft their thesis research proposal**, given it also must be submitted before the end of the second semester. All forms are now submitted through ServiceNow.usu.edu. The forms and instructions on how to submit each one can be found on the School of Graduate Studies website:
<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>

Before the End of the Second Semester

It is a good idea to begin the following tasks early in the second semester and not wait until the last minute.

1. **Finalize the membership of the graduate supervisory committee.** Master's students need at least two other regular faculty to serve with the major professor on this committee. At least one member must be from USU Graduate Faculty but outside the department or program area. This committee provides oversight and advice in terms of the research and the **Program of Study**. Students should consult with their major professor (and sometimes peers) as to who might be the most suitable members in terms of expertise and "best fit," given what the student is trying to accomplish. Either the student or the major professor may approach prospective committee members about serving. The committee names must be listed on the **Supervisory Committee Form (SCAF)**, and it is then submitted for electronic signatures. Completion of the required RCR CITI training is now tracked on the initial Supervisory Committee form for master's students who are required to take the training. Training must be completed before the approval of the SCAF form.
2. **Keep the graduate supervisory committee in the loop** as the draft program of study is developed and the draft research proposal is prepared. Input is gathered and revisions made in preparation for the first supervisory committee meeting. *This makes everything more efficient.*
3. **Convene the first supervisory committee meeting.** This meeting is chaired by the major professor, who should give the student guidance as to what the agenda will be and what the student needs to prepare. *Start to schedule this no later than the middle of the semester, given that people get very busy by the end of the term and their time gets booked up.* Typically, at this initial committee meeting:
 - The student **discusses his or her career goals** and how the master's program relates to those goals;
 - The **tentative program of study** is reviewed for committee approval.
 - The **tentative research proposal** is discussed at this meeting.

If the committee has been well informed prior to the meeting, they may be happy to agree to proceed to the formal proposal defense. In other cases—as with the program of study—the committee may request more changes before being ready to proceed to the proposal defense.

4. **Submit the final, committee-approved program of study.** The student should enter their planned courses in DegreeWorks. Once the plan is filled out, please email the Graduate Program Coordinator, Becky Hirst, letting her know the plan has been entered. She will go in and check the plan, and if everything looks good, will submit the Program of Study through ServiceNow. Instructions on how to enter the plan into DegreeWorks can be found on the SGS website: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>.

5. Students should **participate in the ENVS Graduate Student Symposium**, typically held during spring semester (March or April) each year. For students who started their program in the fall semester, the Graduate Student Symposium occurs in the second semester following matriculation. The Graduate Student Symposium is an excellent opportunity to see what other graduate students are doing. It is also an opportunity for students to gain experience in public speaking. Students give short presentations to peers, faculty, and other invited guests on their research plans (if they are just starting out) or their research results (if they are mid-way through their projects or almost done). The research plans need not be “set in stone,” and while perfection is a noble goal, it is usually not attained! Thus, the Graduate Student Symposium is a great opportunity for students to get their ideas out to a friendly audience and to receive constructive feedback. If it is too soon for a student to make a presentation, student participation in the audience is also crucial. Regardless of what stage a student is at in their program, they should always attend the Graduate Student Symposium when they are working on campus.
6. **Schedule and complete the proposal defense with the student’s committee and submit the final version of the student research proposal and the Master’s Proposal Approval form.** New policy and accompanying forms require a proposal defense which is scheduled in advance with SGS and is either passed or failed (no deferral or suspension of a defense is allowed). The form for reporting the outcome includes necessary feedback for re-defense or subsequent work needed to complete the thesis. No proposal defense is required for a Plan B project that does not include empirical research.

After two semesters, the program for a master’s student is about half over! Hence, the research/project proposal needs to be completed and submitted to the School of Graduate Studies.

In relation to the thesis proposal, three forms must be submitted including the Appointment for Proposal Defense form, Record of Proposal Defense form, and Thesis Proposal Approval form. Students should consult with their major professor (and in some cases, peers) for suitable examples of master’s research proposals in terms of formatting and content. The student will fill out the “**Appointment for Proposal Defense**” form at least 10 working days prior to the proposal defense. Once the student has defended, the GPC will submit the ‘**Record of Proposal Defense**’ form. By the end of the semester, the student will need to then fill out the **Thesis Proposal Approval** form to show that the student’s proposal defense was successful and that all regulatory approvals are in place. These forms can be found on the graduate school’s forms page (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/>).

Finally, it is helpful for students to know that, while it is helpful if the final research product perfectly reflects all the detail in the proposal, *this is usually the exception to the rule*. Changes to research plans should be expected given unforeseen circumstances in the real world. The student is advised to work closely with their major professor and

supervisory committee members to identify such challenges and make adjustments that satisfy all concerned.

During the Third Semester and Beyond

Upon completion of all coursework, with only thesis credits remaining, students are allowed to use the Full-Time at Three Credits form (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>) to drop down to 3 credits and still be considered a full-time student. There can be a reason students need to be listed as full-time, for instance to defer repayment of student loans. This form will be sent to the student's loan companies in order to keep the student in deferment status. The form only needs to be filled out once to maintain the student's deferment status, as long as they continue to register for the 3 credits each subsequent semester.

During a student's defense semester, they may register for only 1 credit instead of the previous requirement of 3 credits. **However, students who are being funded on an assistantship or who have student loans and/or financial aid** will still need to register for 3 credits the semester they plan to defend.

The remainder of the program is a bit less structured with respect to deadlines and benchmarks, but the short timeline of a master's program requires that the student and major professor are vigilant. The overall list is as follows:

1. **Students conduct the research and write it up**, staying in close collaboration with the major professor, other relevant faculty, and sometimes peers—to gain feedback and avoid errors along the way. A working draft of the thesis is thus eventually prepared. *Note that there are a couple of options as to how a master's student can format the thesis. One option is the "traditional monograph" and the other is the "multiple-paper format."* In today's competitive academic world, if a student has more than one publishable paper coming from the thesis for peer-reviewed journals, the multiple-paper format can be the way to go. Different journals have different style guidelines, so making the thesis formatting decision early helps the student format chapters so they can align with requirements of the targeted journals and not have to re-do things later. *Therefore, the thesis format decision should be made early on in the writing process.* Students need to consult with their major professor for advice on this matter. Examples for both monograph and multiple-paper formatted theses are available through USU's Digital Commons (<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/>).

Students should consult the USU Publication Guide when formatting their thesis, found here: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense>

The School of Graduate Studies has several workshops each year on thesis and dissertation preparation. Pre-registration is required. See the schedule here: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/events>.

The USU Writing Center and the USU Science Writing Center have resources available to help students. To see what help these centers can offer, visit their websites: <https://www.usu.edu/writing/resources/> and <https://www.usu.edu/writing/>.

Finally, students who need assistance for minor editing of their thesis and dissertations can make their own arrangements for help—usually for an hourly fee. Students can also contact the ENVS staff in NR 201 for suggestions.

2. At some point the student and major professor will agree that the **thesis draft is ready to present to the other members of the supervisory committee for critical review**. After further feedback and editing based on comments from the supervisory committee, the thesis is then deemed ready to defend and a defense date is set. At least two weeks (or 10 working days) prior to the defense date, an *Appointment for Examination* form must be submitted by the student to the School of Graduate Studies. Students must ensure that all supervisory committee members can be present at the defense; if a committee member cannot be physically present, participation by Zoom is allowed. The public and private portions of the defense can occur entirely over Zoom if necessary. Public advertisement of the defense must occur 10 working days before the defense date. The ENVS staff in NR 201 can assist with broadcasting emails and posting seminar flyers.
3. **Before the thesis defense**, go to the Graduate School's forms page and fill out the *Thesis/Dissertation Format and Style and Electronic Publishing Approval (F&S)* form (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>). The completed form indicates that you have consulted the SGS Publication Guide and will format your document according to its specifications. You must also indicate on the form whether you are going to use a monograph or multiple-paper format, as well as the style manual or journal(s) you will use. Please note, if you are following the multiple-paper format, you will need to list the journal style for each chapter, even if the same. The form will then be circulated for electronic signature by the student, advisor, and the department style reviewer. *Signing this form does not indicate approval of the thesis—it only indicates approval of the format of the thesis.*
4. **Holding the thesis defense.** The process begins by having the student give a publicly advertised post-project seminar to his or her committee, as well as other interested persons. The presentation is followed by a question-and-answer period, after which a break occurs, all non-committee members depart, and the committee deliberates on the defense protocol while the student waits in another location. Then a private defense is held. Students should consult with their major professor and peers who have been through the process for other details concerning the thesis defense. In some cases, the defense may be held within 48 hours of the post-project seminar, but this is very unusual in ENVS.
5. **Following defense**, the committee must indicate the result of the defense (successful defense, or unsuccessful defense) to Becky Hirst, Graduate Program Coordinator, so that

she can submit the *Record of Examination Completion* form and transmit it to the School of Graduate Studies through ServiceNow. If a thesis defense is unsuccessful, revisions must occur followed by a new defense. Thesis edits after a successful defense must be minor and be completed by the end of the grace semester (see below). If they are not, the student will need to register for additional credits and re-defend.

6. **An important form** that must be submitted after the defense is the *Authorship and Copyright* form. This form specifies who has rights to the generated data, whether or how copyright will be assigned to the thesis, and terms for future publication of papers, including co-authorship issues and timeline responsibilities. The student must have reviewed this form as a hard copy with their major professor and other important research collaborators prior to the defense. Clarifying such matters is very important to protect the rights of all concerned. This form is available at <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>. The form must be signed by the student, major professor, and all committee members prior to submission to the School of Graduate Studies.
7. **Students are automatically eligible to receive one “grace semester”** following the semester of the defense to complete the thesis and any other graduation requirements. USU 7777 is no longer offered. Students who need to preserve enrolled status should use thesis credits. Grace semester policy language clarifies that it is a time period for degree completion, independent of enrollment. If an international student wishes to utilize the grace semester while remaining in the United States, they will need to remain compliant with F-1 or J-1 visa criteria. Accordingly, they may need to register for additional thesis credits during the grace semester. NOTE: International students who have questions about F-1 or J-1 visa criteria, should contact the [Office of Global Engagement](https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/deadlines). <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/deadlines>. To learn more about the Grace Semester please go to: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense>

If all degree requirements are not complete within the Grace Semester, the major professor may submit a letter to the vice provost of graduate studies justifying why the student should not be required to re-defend the thesis or Plan B paper.

Any student who wishes to use University facilities other than the Library during the Grace Semester can pay the associated fees. Students should contact the Registrar’s Office for exact costs for the facilities they want access to.

8. **The final, signed version of the thesis is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies for review (Plan A theses only).** Note that this final review is intended to catch *all formatting corrections* that have eluded the student and committee thus far. One way to minimize the corrections at this point is to have previously followed an accepted style guide (USU Publication Guide: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense>)

Before submitting the final version of the thesis to the School of Graduate Studies for review, it must first be approved by the student's major professor, as well as be checked for formatting by the department reviewer, Becky Hirst. The department reviewer will return the thesis to you, without full review, if it is evident that formatting guidance has not been followed.

Here are the key steps:

- After the Graduate School has received both the signed Format and Style form and the Record of Exam form, they will create a folder on Box.com specific to the student, with access given to the student, the major professor, and the department style reviewer.
- After the major professor has approved all final edits, the student needs to send an electronic version of the thesis to Becky Hirst (Becky.Hirst@usu.edu), along with a sample article(s) from the approved journal style(s), and your *Authorship and Copyright* form. She will review the document to make sure that it adheres to Publication Guide style requirements and return an annotated version back to the student for any needed changes. After all changes have been made by the student and approved by Becky, she will upload a pdf version of the document (signifying the department reviewer's approval) to the Box.com student file for the Graduate School's review.
- If the Graduate School review of the document reveals problems that must be corrected, an annotated version of the file will be uploaded to the Box folder, with "ANNOTATED_yyyymmdd" replacing the date in the original file name. An email will also be sent to the student, the major professor, and the department reviewer to notify them of the need for corrections. After the student makes final corrections, the department reviewer will again check to make sure corrections have been made before uploading the latest revision of the document.
- After the document has received final approval by the Grad School, the student, major professor, and department reviewer will be notified via email that the thesis has been approved and signed by the Graduate Vice Provost. Once final approval has been received, the Graduate School will share the approved Box file with the Library, and the Library will then upload it to ProQuest. The student is no longer responsible for this step, with the exception of embargoed papers, which still requires the student to provide the Library with a hard copy.
- Once the thesis has been approved and submitted to the Library, the student must fill out the Graduation Application, pay the \$15 fee, and submit the **Graduation Check Request** form, found on the Graduate School's forms webpage <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>.

9. **It is the student's responsibility to meet the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies with respect to the deposition** of the final version of the thesis, as well as

preparation of a public abstract of the thesis work for a global electronic archive (ProQuest).

Plan A theses are no longer required to have a paper copy submitted to the library for binding, although personal copies may still be purchased and bound through them. Additionally, the Graduate School Vice Provost's final signature on the title page can be obtained through ServiceNow or, if a student prefers, a hard copy of the title page can be taken to the Graduate School office for an original signature. For questions regarding procedures and costs associated with thesis reproduction and submission, contact the Current Periodicals desk at the library at 435-797-2894.

10. Previous temporary grades ("T") assigned to thesis research and any incomplete grades ("I") can be changed to passing grades ("P") by the major professor or ENVS department head.
11. For issues regarding student eligibility for commencement, see the School of Graduate Studies website, <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/deadlines>. Defense deadlines must be met for students to be able to "walk" at commencement or otherwise be listed in written commencement materials.

PLAN B ADDITIONAL NOTES

Differences between the Plan A and Plan B master's program have been noted above, with the completion of a paper or project instead of a thesis. The overview and hints for students in a master's Plan B program are very similar to those described above for the master's Plan A. There are a few exceptions, however, for the final steps:

- The Plan B paper or project is not submitted for approval by the School of Graduate Studies.
- Any temporary or incomplete grades still must be removed from the student's record by the major professor or department head. **It is the student's responsibility to make sure that these final steps are taken.**
- Once you have received final committee approval for your Plan B paper, go to the Digital Commons website and follow the submission instructions:
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/grad_info/2/

DOCTORAL DEGREE OVERVIEW AND HELPFUL HINTS

A doctoral degree program is longer than a master's degree program, and while the types of benchmarks and deadlines have similarities, the timing for the doctoral degree program can be a bit less rushed. Many of the same issues pertinent to conducting a master's degree are similar to those for the doctoral degree. The doctoral degree schedule differs from the master's in

several key respects, including administration of comprehensive exams (absent for the master's degree), a longer period for research proposal preparation, and more members on the supervisory committee. All forms are now submitted electronically. The forms and instructions for how to submit each form can be found on the School of Graduate Studies website: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>.

Every Year

Sexual Misconduct Online Courses

All graduate students who are registered for 6 or more credits are required to take a Sexual Misconduct course each year. There is a course for incoming students and a separate course for continuing students. The link to these courses can be found on the following website: <https://www.usu.edu/equity/trainings/student-prevention>. The deadline to take one of these trainings is the day after the last day to withdraw from classes. Students who have not taken a training by that deadline will have a hold placed on their account which will prevent them from registering for Spring semester.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and Graduate Mentoring Agreements

We expect graduate students and their major professors to spend some time at a meeting at the start of each academic year discussing the following:

1. Individual development plans (IDPs) for the year for the student; and
2. The mentoring relationship, including mutual responsibilities and expectations.

The purpose of the IDP discussion is to mutually agree on a plan for the academic year for student progress and professional development. The mentoring relationship discussion is most important at the start of the grad student – faculty relationship (the student's first semester), but it can be important to re-visit this topic each year to help avoid misunderstandings. Starting in Fall 2026, all students in research graduate programs will be required to have a written, signed mentoring agreement with their major professor.

Please see "Graduate Student Individual Development Plans (IDPs) – Annual Start-of-Year Discussion Points," In Appendix A. This document incorporates both of the above two aspects into a discussion guide for your meeting. Templates are available to adapt for the mentoring agreement.

At the end of each academic year (near, at, or just after the end of the spring semester) the major professor and the graduate student will evaluate the student's degree progress. Following independent evaluation on the part of each, the student and major professor will discuss and finalize a completed evaluation form to be filed with the Graduate Program Coordinator (Becky Hirst).

Appendix A has an overview description for the graduate student mentoring and evaluation process in ENVS. This description also includes links to mentoring resources through the USU Graduate School.

During the First Semester

Seminar Attendance Policy

The College historically organizes seminar guest speakers every fall semester. In the spring semester, ENVS organizes its own seminar series, the “ENVS Spring Colloquium,” named to signify the idea of our gathering together as a departmental community for a conversation. As part of all ENVS graduate degree programs, students must register for and attend one semester of the ENVS Spring Colloquium (register for ENVS 7800), preferably the first spring semester of their programs. The intention is to bring graduate students into the shared intellectual life of the department. Attendance of the fall “NR” seminars, when offered, and of the ENVS Spring Colloquium, even when not registered, is also expected each semester. Remote or virtual attendance is offered.

Academic Program Guidelines

1. **Students need to meet soon—and as frequently as possible thereafter—with their major professor.** Students need to think about their graduate research topic, the question(s) they want to answer, and the approaches they may use to collect or analyze information. Reading literature recommended by the major professor or peers is vital in this process. Students should enroll in core courses that the student and the major professor expect will be on the final list of agreed upon coursework and research credits (i.e., the **program of study**—see below). It is especially important that students enroll in theory or methods courses most relevant to the research. Students should also sign up for the ENVS intro graduate course series (ENVS 7840, 7841, 7842).
2. **Students should get to know the department head and the administrative staff** in the ENVS main office (NR 201) and learn how they can provide feedback and assistance.
3. In consultation with their major professor, **students can begin to think about forming a graduate supervisory committee** and drafting a **program of study**. In some cases, students can also start to **draft their dissertation research proposal** if they feel confident about their research direction. All forms are now submitted through ServiceNow. The forms and instructions on how to submit each one can be found on the School of Graduate Studies website: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>.

Before the End of the Second Semester

1. **Finalize the membership of the graduate supervisory committee.** Doctoral students need at least four other regular faculty members to serve with the major professor on this committee, and one of these people must be from a USU department *outside* ENVS.

This committee provides oversight and advice in terms of the research and the **program of study**. Students should consult with their major professor (and sometimes peers) as to who might be the most suitable committee members in terms of expertise and “best fit,” given what the student is trying to accomplish. Either the student or the major professor may approach prospective committee members about serving. The committee names must be listed on the **Supervisory Committee Form (SCAF)**, and it is then submitted for electronic signatures. Completion of the required RCR CITI training is now tracked on the initial Supervisory Committee forms for doctoral students who are required to take the training. Training must be completed before the approval of the SCAF form

2. **Keep the graduate supervisory committee in the loop** as the draft program of study is developed and the draft research proposal is being prepared. Input is gathered and revisions made in preparation for the first supervisory committee meeting. *This makes everything more efficient.*
3. Students should **attend the ENVS Graduate Student Symposium**, typically held during March or April each year. Doctoral students usually present during their second year, unless they feel they can present sooner. The Graduate Student Symposium is an excellent opportunity to see what other graduate students are doing. It is also an opportunity for students to gain experience in public speaking. Students give short presentations to peers, faculty, and other invited guests on their research plans (if they are just starting out) or their research results (if they are mid-way through their projects or almost done). Doctoral students can especially benefit from such opportunities to speak; they can present at the start, middle, and end of their projects. Research plans need not be “set in stone” for the first presentation and, while perfection is a noble goal, it is usually not attained! Thus, the Graduate Student Symposium is a great opportunity for students to get their ideas out to a friendly audience and receive constructive feedback. If the Symposium does not coincide with an opportune time for a student to make a presentation, student participation in the audience is also crucial. This is especially important for doctoral students who can provide leadership by example for the master’s students and other peers. Regardless of what stage a student is in their program, they should always attend the Graduate Student Symposium when they are working on campus.

Before the End of the Third Semester

1. **Convene the first supervisory committee meeting.** This meeting is chaired by the major professor, who should give the student guidance as to what the agenda will be and what the student needs to prepare. *Start to schedule this no later than the middle of the semester, given that people get very busy by the end of the term and their time gets booked.* Typically, at this initial committee meeting:
 - The student **discusses his or her career goals** and how the doctoral program relates to those goals;

- The **tentative program of study** is reviewed for committee approval; and
 - The **tentative research proposal** may also be discussed at this meeting. The committee can provide advice as to how the proposal could be improved.
2. **Submit the final, committee-approved program of study.** The Program of Study is now filled out and submitted through ServiceNow. Instructions on how to submit this form can be found on the SGS website: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>. In some cases the program of study can be changed later.

Note that it is important to complete the formal coursework as soon as possible. To a significant degree, the doctoral comprehensive exams can be based on the coursework in the program of study. Given these exams are typically scheduled by the fourth semester of the doctoral program, it is in the best interests of the student to get all formal coursework done quickly. In some cases, remedial coursework may be recommended by the supervisory committee following the comprehensive exams to cover knowledge gaps. Lingering course commitments may make it difficult to complete research, write a dissertation, and wrap-up coursework in the second half of the doctoral program.

Before the End of the Fourth Semester (ideally)

1. **Students take their comprehensive exams.** Ph.D. Students should consult with the major professor and supervisory committee members regarding the nature of the comprehensive exams. Typically, each committee member has the student start with an individualized written exam to assess grounding in relevant research concepts, theory, and approaches. These exams often take the form of a written response to a question or series of questions over the course of a single day or multiple days. Alternatively, other tasks can be assigned such as preparation of a course syllabus or a draft review article manuscript. This exam often reflects the professional orientation or expertise of each committee member but also should be designed to “test” the readiness of the student to engage independently in their proposed dissertation research. The written exam products are assessed by each committee member and may provide the basis for an oral examination, to be administered by the full committee within a few weeks after the written exams. The process can take several weeks and the time needed must be budgeted in the overall semester work plan of the student. *Students need to schedule the dates for the written exams and the dates, time, and room number for the oral exam.* When the student passes the comprehensive exam and successfully defends their proposal (see below), he or she then becomes a doctoral candidate. This milestone must be passed in order to commence on the student research.
2. **Students schedule and complete the proposal defense with the student’s committee and submit the final version of the student’s research proposal and the Doctoral Application for Candidacy form.** New policy and accompanying forms require a proposal defense which is scheduled in advance with SGS and is either passed or failed (no deferral or suspension of a defense is allowed). The form for reporting the outcome includes

necessary feedback for re-defense or subsequent work needed to complete the dissertation.

In relation to the thesis proposal, three forms must be submitted, including the Appointment for Proposal Defense form, Record of Proposal Defense form, and the Application for Candidacy form. Students should consult with their major professor (and in some cases, peers) for suitable examples of doctoral research proposals in terms of formatting and content. The student will fill out the “**Appointment for Proposal Defense**” form at least 10 working days prior to the proposal defense. Once the student has defended, the GPC will submit the ‘**Record of Proposal Defense**’ form. By the end of the semester, the student will need to then fill out the **Application for Candidacy** form to show that the student’s proposal defense was successful and that all regulatory approvals are in place. These forms can be found on the graduate school’s forms page (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/>).

Finally, it is helpful for students to know that, while it is great if the final research product perfectly reflects all the detail in the proposal, *this is usually the exception to the rule*. Changes to research plans should be expected given unforeseen circumstances in the field. The student is therefore advised to work closely with their major professor and supervisory committee members to identify new challenges and make adjustments that satisfy all concerned. Work closely with your major professor and supervisory committee to ensure that the research proposal is submitted in a timely fashion.

3. Doctoral students usually **present during their second year in the ENVS Graduate Student Symposium**, typically held during March or April each year, unless they have presented sooner. See more information above (under the section on the second semester).

After the Fourth Semester and Beyond

Upon completion of all coursework, with only dissertation credits remaining, students are allowed to use the Full-Time at Three Credits form (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>) to drop down to 3 credits and still be considered a full-time student. There can be a reason students need to be listed as a full-time student, for instance to defer repayment of student loans. This form will be sent to the student’s loan companies in order to keep the student in deferment status. The form only needs to be filled out once to maintain the student’s deferment status, as long as they continue to register for the 3 credits each subsequent semester. If International Students have any questions about the Full-Time at 3 Credits (FT3) form, they should contact the [Office of Global Engagement](#).

During a student’s defense semester, they may register for 1 credit instead of the previous requirement of 3 credits. **However, students who are being funded on an assistantship or who have student loans** will still need to register for 3 credits the semester they plan to defend.

The remainder of the program is a bit less structured with respect to deadlines and benchmarks, but the student and major professor need to be vigilant. The overall list is as follows:

1. **Students conduct their research and write it up**, staying in close collaboration with the major professor, other relevant faculty, and sometimes peers—to gain feedback and avoid errors along the way. A working draft of the dissertation is thus eventually prepared. *Note that there are a couple options as to how a doctoral student can format the dissertation. One option is the “traditional monograph” and the other is the “multiple-paper format.”* In today’s competitive academic world, if a student has more than one publishable paper coming from the dissertation for peer-reviewed journals, the multiple-paper format (the expectation is three papers) is the way to go. Different journals have different style guidelines, so making the dissertation formatting decision early helps the student format chapters to align with requirements of the targeted journals and saves them from reformatting later. *The dissertation format decision should be made early in the writing process.* Students need to consult with their major professor for advice on this matter. Examples for both monograph and multiple-paper formatted dissertations are available through USU’s Digital Commons (<https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/etd/>).

Students should consult the USU Publication Guide when formatting their dissertation, found here <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense>

The School of Graduate Studies has several workshops each year on thesis and dissertation preparation. Pre-registration is required. See the schedule here: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/events>.

The USU Writing Center and the USU Science Writing Center have resources available to help students. To see what help these centers can offer, visit their websites: <https://www.usu.edu/writing/resources/> and <https://artsci.usu.edu/student-resources/swc/>.

Finally, students who need assistance for minor editing of their thesis and dissertations can make their own arrangements for help—usually for an hourly fee. Students can also contact the ENVIS staff in NR 201 for suggestions.

2. At some point, the student and major professor will agree that the **dissertation draft is ready to present to the other members of the supervisory committee for critical review**. After further feedback and editing based on comments from the supervisory committee, the dissertation is then deemed ready to defend and a defense date is set. At least two weeks (or 10 working days) prior to the defense date, an *Appointment for Examination* form must be submitted by the student to the School of Graduate Studies. Students must ensure that all supervisory committee members can be present at the defense; if a committee member cannot be physically present, participation by Zoom can occur. The public and private portions of the defense can occur entirely over Zoom if necessary.

Public advertisement of the defense must occur 10 working days before the defense date. The ENVS staff in NR 201 can assist with broadcasting emails and posting seminar flyers.

3. **Before the thesis defense**, go to the Graduate School's forms page and fill out the *Thesis/Dissertation Format and Style and Electronic Publishing Approval (F&S)* form (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>). The completed form indicates that you have consulted the SGS Publication Guide and will format your document according to its specifications. You must also indicate on the form whether you are going to use a monograph or multiple-paper format, as well as the style manual or journal(s) you will use. Please note, if you are following the multiple-paper format, you will need to list the journal style for each chapter, even if the same. The form will then be circulated for electronic signature by the student, advisor, and the department style reviewer. *Signing this form does not indicate approval of the thesis—it only indicates approval of the format of the thesis.*
4. **Holding the dissertation defense.** The process begins by having the student give a publicly advertised post-project seminar to his or her committee, as well as other interested persons. The presentation is followed by a question-and-answer period, after which a break occurs, all non-committee members depart, and the committee deliberates on the defense protocol while the student waits in another location. Then a private defense is held with the student. Students should consult with their major professor and peers who have been through the process for other details concerning the dissertation defense. In some cases, the defense may be held within 48 hours of the post-project seminar, but this is very unusual in ENVS. *The dissertation defense should be held no later than the tenth semester of the student's program.* Note that this is a recommendation and not a requirement. Work closely with your major professor and supervisory committee to ensure that the defense is held before any "statute of limitation" occurs.
5. **Following a defense**, the committee must notify the Graduate Program Coordinator, Becky Hirst, of the result of the defense (successful/unsuccessful) so that she can submit the *Record of Examination Completion* form to the School of Graduate Studies via ServiceNow. All other forms are now processed through ServiceNow. If a dissertation defense is unsuccessful, revisions must occur followed by a new defense. Dissertation edits after a successful defense must be minor and be completed by the end of the grace semester (see below). If they are not, the student will need to register for additional credits and re-defend.
6. **Another important form** that must be submitted after the defense is the *Authorship and Copyright* form. The student needs to have reviewed this form with their major professor and other important research collaborators prior to the defense. This form specifies who has rights to the data generated, whether or how copyright will be assigned to the thesis, and terms for future publication of papers, including co-authorship issues and timeline responsibilities. Clarifying such matters is very important to protect the rights of all concerned. This form is available at <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/>. The form

must be signed by the student, major professor, and all committee members prior to submission to the School of Graduate Studies.

7. **Students are automatically eligible to receive one “grace semester”** following the semester of the defense to complete the thesis and any other graduation requirements. USU 7777 is no longer offered. Students who need to preserve enrolled status should use dissertation credits. Grace semester policy language clarifies that it is a time period for degree completion, independent of enrollment. If an international student wishes to utilize the grace semester while remaining in the United States, they will need to remain compliant with F-1 or J-1 visa criteria. Accordingly, they may need to register for additional dissertation credits during the grace semester. NOTE: International students who have questions about F-1 or J-1 visa criteria, should contact the [Office of Global Engagement](https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/deadlines). <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/deadlines>. To learn more about the Grace Semester please go to: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense>.

If all degree requirements are not complete within the Grace Semester, the major professor may submit a letter to the vice provost of graduate studies justifying why the student should not be required to re-defend the dissertation.

Any student who wishes to use University facilities other than the library during the Grace Semester can pay the associated fees. Students should contact the Registrar’s Office for exact costs for the facilities they want access to.

8. The final, signed version of the thesis is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies for review (Plan A theses only). Note that this final review is intended to catch all formatting corrections that have eluded the student and committee thus far. One way to minimize the corrections at this point is to have previously followed an accepted style guide (USU Publication Guide: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense>).

Before submitting the final version of the dissertation to the School of Graduate Studies for review, it must first be approved by the student’s major professor, as well as be checked for formatting by the department reviewer, Becky Hirst. The department reviewer will return the thesis to you, without full review, if it is evident that formatting guidance has not been followed.

Here are the key steps:

- After the Graduate School has received both the signed Format and Style form and the Record of Exam form, they will create a folder on Box.com specific to the student, with access given to the student, the major professor, and the department style reviewer.
- The student needs to send an electronic version of the dissertation to Becky Hirst (becky.hirst@usu.edu), along with a sample article(s) from the approved journal

style(s) and your *Authorship and Copyright* form. She will review the document to make sure that it adheres to Publication Guide style requirements and return an annotated version back to the student for any needed changes. After all changes have been made by the student and approved by Becky, she will upload a pdf version of the document (signifying the department reviewer's approval) to the Box.com student file for the Grad School's review.

- If the SGS review of the document reveals problems that must be corrected, an annotated version of the file will be uploaded to the Box folder, with "ANNOTATED_yyyymmdd" replacing the date in the original file name. An email will also be sent to the student, the major professor, and the department reviewer to notify them of the need for corrections. After the student makes final corrections, the department reviewer will again check to make sure corrections have been made before uploading the latest revision of the document.
- After the document has received final approval by the Grad School, the student, major professor, and department reviewer will be notified via email that the dissertation has been approved and signed by the Graduate Vice Provost. Once final approval has been received, SGS will share the approved Box file with the Library, and the Library will then upload it to ProQuest. The student is no longer responsible for this step, with the exception of embargoed papers, which still requires the student to provide the Library with a hard copy.
- Once the dissertation has been approved and submitted to the Library, the student must fill out the Graduation Application, pay the \$15 fee, and submit the **Graduation Check Request** form, found on the Graduate School's forms webpage <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>.

9. **It is the student's responsibility to meet the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies with respect to the deposition** of the final version of the dissertation, as well as preparation of a public abstract of the thesis work for a global electronic archive (ProQuest).

Ph.D. dissertations are no longer required to have a paper copy submitted to the Library for binding, although personal copies may still be purchased and bound through them. Additionally, the Graduate School Vice Provost's final signature on the title page can be obtained through ServiceNow or, if a student prefers, a hard copy of the title page can be taken to the Graduate School office for an original signature. For questions regarding procedures and costs associated with dissertation reproduction and submission, contact the Current Periodicals desk at the Library at 435-797-2894.

10. Previous temporary grades ("T") assigned to thesis research and any incomplete grades ("I") can be changed to passing grades ("P") by the major professor or ENVS department head.

11. For issues regarding student eligibility for commencement, see the School of Graduate Studies website, <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/deadlines>. Defense deadlines must be met for students to be able to “walk” at commencement or otherwise be listed in written commencement materials.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Several types of financial assistance are available to graduate students in the Department of Environment and Society. These include graduate fellowships, research and teaching assistantships, non-resident tuition waivers, resident tuition awards, and student loans. Some graduate students are provided opportunities for work on university or consulting payrolls. Formal offers of financial support may be made only after a student has been fully admitted for graduate study by the School of Graduate Studies. All employment procedures will conform with Affirmative Action and Immigration and Naturalization Service policies.

GRADUATE FELLOWSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS, AND ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate Assistantships

Teaching, research, and other graduate assistantships are available in most of the departments of the University. A full-time assistantship is 20 hours per week but is considered only half of a full-time equivalent, or 0.5 FTE. In the interest of timely degree completion, graduate students are generally employed by the University for *no more than* 20 hours per week. Employment for more than 20 hours per week must be approved by the student's advisor and degree-program department head. Graduate assistants must be full-time, matriculated students. For students employed as graduate assistants, full-time student status is based on the full-time equivalent, or FTE, of their assistantship. To maintain full-time student status, a 0.25 to 0.374 FTE assistantship requires a student to enroll for 9 graduate-level credits; a 0.375 to 0.50 FTE assistantship requires a student to enroll for 6 graduate-level credits. Graduate assistants must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher for those courses included on their Program of Study. However, if a Program of Study has not been submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, a cumulative GPA is computed using all of the student's coursework at USU since the prior degree. The GPA is checked by the School of Graduate Studies at the end of each semester. The cumulative GPA on the last 60 semester credits will be used to determine eligibility as a graduate assistant if the student has not yet started the graduate program. Graduate assistants may register for a maximum of 12 credits per semester. However, a research assistant whose assistantship involves his or her thesis or dissertation research may register for additional credits.

Subsidized Graduate Student Insurance

Students must meet one of the following minimum qualifications to be eligible for subsidized graduate health insurance:

- Be employed as a .5 FTE (20 hrs/week) for the entire semester as a Graduate Instructor, Graduate Teaching Assistant, General Graduate Assistant, or Graduate Research Assistant.
- Receive direct scholarship or fellowship of \$10,000 or more for the academic year (excludes private scholarships, financial aid, tuition awards/waivers, and Dominican Republic sponsored students).
- Receive a stipend of \$10,000 or more for the academic year, or a grant that specifically pays for insurance.

Students who meet any of these criteria MUST enroll or opt out of the health insurance each semester. If they choose to opt out, they must show proof that they are covered under medical insurance with another health insurance provider. Those who choose to enroll can check with office staff on yearly premiums, etc. since these change yearly.

The QANR Graduate Student Council's Emergency Medical Fund (EMF):

Graduate students in ENVS are eligible to apply for financial assistance in the event of a medical emergency that creates a financial hardship. For more information about this program, important contacts, and the application process, contact the EMF graduate student liaison listed here: <https://qanr.usu.edu/graduate-students/student-council>

Research Assistantships

Research assistantships are traineeships available for collaborative research and study under individual faculty members who provide the funds and equipment. Graduate students are encouraged to identify those faculty whose research and study corresponds with their own area of interest. The ability of faculty to take on research assistants may be limited by several factors, including finances, equipment, and time. Therefore, it behooves the student to plan well in advance and request specifically for the availability of faculty. Research assistantships are available through individual faculty members who direct research financed by grants and contracts from various governmental agencies and private foundations and are administered through the ENVS Department. Continued flow of these monies depends on expeditious production of results. Accordingly, students associated with a project are expected to meet the same deadlines as the project leaders who initiated the proposal and accepted the awarded grant or contract. The student usually writes a thesis or dissertation from data collected within the project framework. They may or may not collect additional data for the overall attainment of the project objectives depending on how closely the thesis or dissertation encompasses overall project objectives. Research assistantships are normally awarded for no more than two years to an M.S. student or three years to a Ph.D. student.

Stipends and other conditions associated with research assistantships are negotiated between the project leader, or faculty member, and the student. An offer of financial assistance is not valid unless accepted within the stated time period and with appearance at the arrival date indicated in the letter of offer. The period of service corresponds to specified semesters, with the student assistant spending an average of 20 hours per week on the project. Stipends are taxable. A social

security number is required for payment of stipends. Foreign students may experience a delay of several weeks after arrival in obtaining this number, so they should bring enough funds to pay for their needs during this period.

Teaching Assistantships/Graduate Instructors

Graduate students may be teaching assistants or graduate instructors in departments. Teaching loads vary up to a maximum of 20 hours per week, and across campus, stipends vary depending on the department and the teaching load.

International students may be considered for teaching assistantships if they demonstrate proficiency in English communication, as determined by Utah State University's Intensive English Language Institute, and have participated in the required workshop.

All teaching assistants and graduate instructors are required to participate in an online Teaching Assistant training courses. For Teaching Assistants, CEUS 7901 and CEUS 7901 are required. Graduate Instructors must take these two trainings along with CEUS 7903. These courses are sponsored by the School of Graduate Studies for completion prior to beginning the assistantship, and the student is only required to take the courses once: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/trainings/teaching-assistant-training>. The courses are graded but have no tuition charge. They help students gain the techniques and skills to be effective instructors in the university environment.

The ENVS Department is not heavily involved in teaching large service courses for students from the University at large and therefore does not have a large budget for teaching assistants (TAs), but the Department has typically had 3-5 TA assignments available each semester. In addition, graduate PhD students are often hired as graduate instructors for undergraduate departmental courses as needed due to faculty sabbaticals, faculty parental leave, or unfilled faculty positions. In order to make teaching experience available to the maximum number of students, we typically have one-semester teaching assignments. Non-remunerated opportunities in volunteer teaching are also available. Every effort will be given for the teaching assistant to appear before the class to gain actual teaching experience, and students serving as TAs should discuss any professional development goals at the start of the semester with the faculty instructing the course.

Preference for these teaching assistantships is given first to continuing ENVS graduate students within expected completion periods for their degree (2 years for M.S. students, 4 years for Ph.D. students) who do not otherwise have fellowship or research assistantship support for the semester in question. Incoming students without other support are then offered remaining available teaching assistantships. In addition, every effort is made to provide at least one graduate instructor opportunity for all Ph.D. students who indicate an interest in teaching after receiving their degree. Information on graduate student need for a teaching assistantship is gathered by the department head from the faculty. Students should be sure to discuss with their major professor their needs and interests in teaching opportunities well in advance (the prior academic year).

Teaching stipends are taxable. A social security number is required for payment of stipends. Foreign students may experience a delay of several weeks after arrival in obtaining this number, so they should bring enough funds to pay for their needs during this period.

Tuition Awards/Waivers

Non-resident tuition waivers are available for both M.S. and Ph.D. students who are working on an assistantship (20 hours/week) for their first year. Doctoral students who are working on an assistantship are also eligible for a resident tuition award. If sufficient funds are available, some M.S. students may also be offered a resident tuition award on a semester basis (and based on a priority-system process). Students may register for a maximum of 12 credits but are generally expected to be registered for between 3 and 9 credits. Tuition awards will be capped per semester and per program of study to enable funds to be shared across as many students as possible.

Please note:

- Registration of at least 6 graduate credits, or 3 credits if all coursework is completed with only thesis/dissertation credits left on their program of study, is required for students receiving a resident tuition award or a non-resident tuition waiver. Those who qualify to take 3 credits, must fill out the [full-time at 3 credits form](#) in order to be considered a full-time student.
- To receive a tuition award, a graduate assistant must be employed for the entire semester.
- Tuition awards/waivers cover tuition only. They do not cover fees. Those who do not pay the balance on their banner account, by the late tuition deadlines, will be required to pay a \$100 late fee. It is the student's responsibility to check their billing statements and to make sure that all associated fees are paid.

1. Non-Resident Tuition Waivers

A non-resident student who holds a graduate assistantship will be awarded a waiver of non-resident tuition for courses on the student's program of study. Out-of-state, non-international graduate students who receive non-resident tuition waivers must apply for Utah residency at the end of their first year of study. Tuition waivers *cannot* be used to audit classes. Tuition waivers also *cannot* be used for coursework below the 5000 level. Resident tuition and fees must be paid by the student.

2. Resident Tuition Awards

A student who is matriculated in a graduate degree program and is a graduate assistant or graduate fellow may be awarded a resident (in-state) tuition award. The student must be registered for at least 6 graduate-level credits, or 3 credits if all coursework is complete and only thesis/dissertation credits left on their program of study. If credits other than those required for the doctoral degree are needed to meet the 6-credit requirement, registration must be for ENVS

7990 (Continuing Graduate Advisement). An in-state tuition award *cannot* be used to audit classes. Awards are not guaranteed each semester, but doctoral students are prioritized in the resident tuition award allocation process by the College and/or Department, and in the absence of unforeseen circumstances, can expect to receive a resident tuition award each semester up to defined limits associated with their program of study.

When sufficient tuition award funds are available, some M.S. students may also be offered a resident tuition award, available for one semester on a priority-system basis through the Department.

Fellowships and Scholarships

Fellowship and scholarship awardees must be full-time matriculated students enrolled in approved graduate-level coursework.

Presidential Doctoral Research Fellowships (for incoming Ph.D. students only) include a four-year, \$10,000/year scholarship for the academic year in addition to a standard departmental stipend, a waiver of the non-resident portion of tuition, and a resident tuition award. These fellowships are used to recruit exceptional doctoral students to USU.

Quinney Fellowships (for incoming Ph.D. students only) include a four-year, \$20,000/year stipend for the academic year, a waiver of the non-resident portion of tuition, and the resident tuition award. These fellowships are administered through the College and reflect the Quinney Foundation's generous support of the College. [*The future of these fellowships is currently pending.*]

The Quinney College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has a restricted number of small, competitive scholarships available, in addition to the Quinney Foundation Fellowships. These **College donor-supported scholarships are awarded through annual application** as part of the College-wide scholarship application process (mainly geared towards undergraduate students). Interested graduate students should look for announcements in late fall, with application deadlines usually early in the spring semester. Demonstrated financial need is often necessary for these smaller college scholarships, which means students should expect to have to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (or FAFSA): <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>.

Students are encouraged to apply for fellowships in national competitions as well, such as with the National Science Foundation (NSF) or others. The NSF Graduate Research Fellowship (<https://www.nsfgrfp.org/>) has been successfully applied for and received by prior ENVIS graduate students. This particular fellowship is highly prestigious and carries significant financial support but has strict eligibility criteria.

Please refer to the School of Graduate Studies' website for other external funding opportunities: <https://qanr.usu.edu/graduate-students/student-council>

Employment and Assistantship Regulations

Supervision: If you have been provided with a specific departmental work or research assignment which requires your spending certain agreed-upon hours of work (including those on a teaching assistantship or research assistantship) it is incumbent upon you to carry out your contract in a fully professional manner. Though your immediate supervisor may be a faculty member or lab director, it is also incumbent upon you to make yourself acquainted with general regulations that apply to all staff and students who work on campus. Regulations are available from USU's Human Resources department and usually require some orientation at the beginning of the year.

Reporting and Time Sheet Submissions: It is your duty to faithfully keep track of your work hours as required by your supervisor and departmental financial managers. If you are being paid in an hourly position, you must report your hours in the appropriate system and turn them in by the announced deadlines to be paid on time.

Remuneration, Benefits, Vacations, and Leave: Remuneration for those students on a work assignment or other assistance is set by the university in consultation with the direct work supervisor. The same applies to other benefits, including vacation and leave. Consult your supervisor and the agreed-upon contract as well as regular university published guidelines in this regard. Note that part-time appointments do not carry provision for fringe benefits, including vacation and sick leave.

Arrangements for long absences from campus or field sites should be worked out between the student and the major professor or supervisor. The student should indicate when they expect to return. If intended leave conflicts with needs for data collection, analysis, or preparation of reports to administrators or funding agencies, the student may expect to have requests for extended leave denied.

Insurance: The University carries fire, theft, and third-party injury and property damage liability insurance on graduate students who are on contract, but this does not cover costs for repairs from collisions of university or college vehicles, nor is it valid when accidents occur in connection with unauthorized use of equipment. It is also not in force if students are breaking the law at the time of the accident (e.g., drinking alcoholic beverages in a state vehicle). The lawbreaker is also personally responsible for all fines (e.g., traffic tickets). Ask for a *Utah Drivers Handbook* for local traffic rules. A current Utah driver's license in good standing, together with passage of a USU-administered driver's test, are required of drivers of all university vehicles. Students are advised to obtain non-owner automobile liability insurance to cover injury to themselves and others while driving university vehicles.

University employees are covered by Workman's Compensation in case of injury on the job. Any accidents should be reported to the major professor or supervisor as soon as possible.

Personal effects of employees below \$1,000 in value are not covered by any kind of university insurance. Students should check their homeowners or renters policies for more complete personal property insurance coverage.

Credit Loads for Research and Teaching Assistants

The maximum credit load for students on research assistantships is 12 credit hours. Students on research assistantships or on teaching assistantships must register for a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester, or 3 credits if thesis/dissertation credits are all that is left to take toward their program of study. Students are not required to register for summer session.

Obtaining Utah Residency

Please note: For non-resident students who are thinking about obtaining Utah residency, it is a 12-month process. The Graduate School requires all M.S. and Ph.D. students who are being funded on an assistantship to obtain Utah Residency by their second year. Non-resident students who have not obtained residency by their second year will be expected to pay their non-resident tuition on their own.

Applications are accepted within the 30 days prior to the first day of each semester. ***The application deadline is 10 calendar days after the first day of the semester.*** Applicants must be US Citizens or have Permanent Resident status. Each application for Utah resident status for tuition purposes is considered on an individual basis. Here are the requirements:

- You must be a Citizen or Permanent Resident of the United States to apply for residency and be admitted to Utah State University.
- You must obtain a Utah Driver's License, Voter Registration, and Vehicle Registration. These three items must be obtained at least 3 months before you apply for residency. For example, if you are applying for residency for the fall semester, you would need these items by May 1st. For spring semester, you must obtain these items by October 1st. If you are using a vehicle in Utah, even if it is in your parent's name, it needs to be registered in Utah.
- You must live in Utah for 12 continuous months. For this reason, it is important that non-resident students arrive prior to August 1st, and that they actively start working right away to establish the evidence of physical presence (as per the required documentation to submit the following summer) to establish UT residency through the 12-month continuous presence rule.
- You cannot be absent from the state for more than a total of 30 days during this time frame (this includes Christmas break, spring break, and summer). You must provide two different types of evidence as verification, which are*:

- Verification of Housing in Utah: This must cover the full 12-month period. This can include rental agreements, letters from your landlord, or your mortgage statement.
- Verification of Physical Presence in Utah: This must also cover the full 12-month period, and is verification of what you were doing in Utah. This can be your unofficial transcript if you were a student, pay stubs if you were working, letters from coaches or volunteer organizations, or bank statements showing transactions in Utah. If you are unable to provide any of these types of verifications, please contact our office regarding other options. You must be able to provide proof of your physical presence for the full 12-month period.

**A typical example would be a student who attended school fall and spring semesters but did not attend school in the summer and instead got a job. You would need to provide the rental contracts for the full 12 months to verify housing, unofficial transcripts to prove what activity you were involved in for fall and spring semesters, and pay stubs for each month of the summer to verify you were physically present in Utah.*

- You must be declared financially independent. This means you cannot be claimed as a dependent by anyone outside of Utah on your most recent tax return when you apply for residency. For example, if you are applying for residency for the Fall 2023 semester, you must not be claimed as a dependent by anyone outside of Utah on taxes filed by April 2023 for the 2022 tax year. To prove this, you will need to submit a copy of your 1040 Form (the first 2 pages of your federal tax return). If you did not file any taxes, we will accept your parent's 1040 Form showing you are not listed as a dependent instead.

Other requirements may apply. For further residency information, see:

<https://www.usu.edu/admissions/residency/faq> or contact the USU Admissions Office at 435.797.1079 or visit in person at the Taggart Student Center, Room 102.

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES

DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES ON OFFICE AND EQUIPMENT USE

Office and Desk Space

Full-time students who are involved with funded research are most likely to have office space assigned to them in a lab, yet they may still need to share that space with other students. Students without space in a lab, can be assigned desk space in the Janet Quinney Lawson Building (“JQL”), room 228. If assigned space is not adequate, the department head, in conjunction with the faculty, can attempt to find additional space once the semester has begun and actual needs are verified.

A system based on financial support and degree sought is used by the ENVS Department to place individuals on differing priority levels for additional (non-lab) space. These priorities are, in descending order:

- 1) Faculty
- 2) Non-student full-time, benefited research staff
- 3) Visiting scientists and scholars
- 4) Full-time research associates, technicians, or post-doctorates
- 5) Ph.D. students serving as a graduate instructor
- 6) Other Ph.D. students
- 7) M.S. students

The major professor is responsible for notifying the office staff of the impending arrival of persons requiring desk or office space. Check with the ENVS office staff immediately following your arrival just in case your major professor has not already done so. Since time of such notification is used to establish precedence within each priority level, it is to the student’s advantage to advise the staff as soon as a change in status is known. If possible, desks will be assigned when new personnel arrive on campus, or their name will be placed on the priority list.

Once assigned a desk, it is the student’s responsibility to use it to the fullest. Office space and desks are at times a scarce resource. If it is seen that desks are used only as book storage areas or as “part-time” study areas, the student will be asked to share their desk with another student. Someone in a low priority category occupying desk or office space may be displaced by someone in a higher priority category without desk or office space. The University Library has a number of carrels available with lockable book shelves. You may wish to occupy one of these until departmental office space and a desk becomes available.

Department Office Mailbox Assignments

Each graduate student will be assigned a mailbox in the ENVS Office in NR 201. If sufficient space is not available, students may need to share a mailbox with another student. One of the departmental office staff will generally make mailbox assignments. Check with them also for leaving forwarding addresses when required.

Building and Office Key Assignments

As required, authorized students will be given keys and access codes to certain labs and offices. Appropriate keys are obtained by a work order upon request of the major professor and approval by the department head. Students are required to make a \$25 deposit for their office key and a \$5 deposit for prox-cards (for building access) when they are picked up from the key office, which will be refunded when keys are returned after completion of your program. Students who fail to return their keys before leaving the university or transferring departments will have a hold placed on their transcripts, final paycheck, or registration packet. Please note that failure to return your keys results in the department having to pay a fine for each unreturned key. Like all University personnel, students obtaining keys must follow Key Office regulations (e.g., keys cannot be shared or duplicated, and replacement costs must be paid if keys are lost, etc.). Also note that it is illegal to have unauthorized university keys in your possession.

Use of Audio-Visual and Field Research Equipment

PowerPoint projectors, cameras, laptop computers, and GPS instruments are all expensive and difficult to replace. Please take care of them if you check them out or use any of this equipment as part of a research project. Any observed problems found on classroom equipment should be reported immediately to classroom services or to one of the departmental office staff. Departmental equipment is not for personal use and should always be returned to its proper storage location when not in use.

Use of Departmental Photocopier

The ENVS Department photocopier is for the exclusive use of faculty and research and teaching personnel (including GRAs and GTAs) and are not to be used for personal needs. All copies should be in black & white unless there is a clear justification for the need for color (as these are much more costly to the department). Access requires the entry of an account code. Personal copies may be purchased in the Student Copy Center located in TSC 124.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Civil Rights & Title IX Office

The Civil Rights & Title IX Office is the unit designated by the university to enforce state and federal law (including Title IX) and University policies related to sexual misconduct,

discrimination, equal opportunity, and affirmative action. You are encouraged to report incidents of sexual misconduct or prohibited discrimination and harassment through the [online reporting form, via email](#), by phone (435-797-1266), or in person in Old Main Room 405 on the Logan campus. <https://www.usu.edu/civilrights-titleix/>

Drug and Alcohol Use

Utah law prohibits consumption of alcoholic beverages in vehicles and on all state property. Unopened containers of alcoholic beverages may be carried in State vehicles. Drinking of such beverages in public is, however, illegal, and any professor in charge of a field trip or property is responsible for such conduct. Students' refusal to comply with these laws could leave those responsible with no other option but to report infractions to the proper law enforcement officials. Additional information can be found at: <https://health.usu.edu/alcohol-and-substance-abuse/>.

Confidential Reporting and Grievance Procedures

During this journey, you may find yourself in need of support, information, or other resources as you pursue your degree. Many individuals are available to discuss any concerns and direct you to resources, including your department head (Dr. Claudia Radel) and the QANR Associate Dean for Graduate Programs (Dr. Kara Thornton-Kurth).

You will find a link on the Graduate School's website (under Contact Us) to an online form for confidential reporting directly to the Associate Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies. Requests for meetings and conversations will be kept strictly confidential. <https://gradschool.usu.edu/>.

Students who feel they have been unfairly treated also may file a grievance through the proper channels. Since there are various types of grievances, and the information is quite lengthy for each situation, see overview information here: <https://www.usu.edu/student-conduct/student-code/article7>. For cases of discrimination, see <https://www.usu.edu/civilrights-titleix/>; or for academic appeals, see <https://www.usu.edu/provost/academic-appeal>.

Human Subjects

All University research involving human subjects, animal subjects, radiation materials, recombinant DNA, or biohazardous materials must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate University committee(s) **before the research is started**. Graduate students are, with the assistance of their advisors, responsible for obtaining the necessary approval for their research. Verification of approval must be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies before the student's master's *Program of Study* or doctoral *Application for Candidacy* can be approved. For further information, contact the School of Graduate Studies or the Office of the Vice President for Research.

Publication of Chapters Before Defense

If a student wishes to submit a chapter of their thesis or dissertation for publication before they have defended, they must first get permission from their supervisory committee. In addition, the School of Graduate Studies Publication Guide addresses this issue, stating: “If the paper (chapter) has been published, permission to reprint must be obtained from the journal holding the copyright. The signed permission letter is then included in an appendix.” (p. 6).

Software Use and Copying

Generally, copyright law applies to computer software the same as it does to most other forms of works. However, the copyright law permits the owner to make a copy for archival purposes so long as the copy is destroyed once the original software is transferred or sold. In limited circumstances, a copy or adaptation may be made as an essential step in using the program in a computer. For more information concerning copyright law and guidelines, please contact the Utah State University Bookstore at 797-1666.

Students are eligible to get access to Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative Cloud for free for as long as they are students. For more information on access to this and other software packages as well as other technology resources, see the IT student resources webpage: <https://www.usu.edu/academic-support/technology/>

Travel Authorizations

Official travel out of town overnight in project or private vehicles or any USU motor pool usage requires completion of a **Travel Authorization Form**. See your major professor or one of the Business Services staff (QLIB 302) for details.

University Vehicle Use

USU’s Motor Pool is located at 1400 North 900 East. The telephone number is 797-3145. The online driver training video must be viewed and an online test taken and passed before any employee or student can drive on USU business, regardless, if it’s in a USU or personal vehicle. This training must be completed every 2 years and can be found at: <https://www.usu.edu/risk/vehicles/drivers-training>.

After passing the online test, print the “Certificate of Completion” and send it to Kay Kelsey (kay.kelsey@usu.edu) or bring it to the department office, NR 201. If you are a new USU driver you will also need to complete the “Driver’s Representation” form, available here: <https://parking.usu.edu/htm/parking-information/drivers-representation-form>.

All drivers must be at least 18 years of age and have a valid driver’s license. A Commercial Driver’s License is required when hauling hazardous materials or when carrying 16 or more occupants.

For information on obtaining a Utah Commercial Driver's License, contact either the Logan Driver's License Division at 110 East 700 South or the Brigham City Office at 285 West 1100 South.

The university and department are very sensitive to taxpayer concerns about State vehicles speeding or sighted in unauthorized places (e.g., private residences, bars, restaurants, etc.). The department realizes that one has to eat, and that occasionally it may be in the public interest to drive a State vehicle home at night when leaving at 5:00 a.m., etc. However, any time a State vehicle is not returned to the USU Motor Pool or departmental parking lot at the end of the working day, the driver should be able to document that it is plainly in the interest of the taxpayers of Utah for the student or staff member to have the vehicle where it is. The convenience of the driver has no standing with the legislative auditor. When projects require a vehicle to be parked in a public place (e.g., airport, restaurant, amusement park, fishing hole, etc.), a detriment could be turned into an asset by preparing a sign or note that explains the research and how it helps Utah.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

PROFESSIONAL AND CAREER RESOURCES

Campus Libraries and Library Tours

USU libraries are open to all USU students (a valid USU card is required to check out materials). This is often the first and best place to start your research.

The **Merrill-Cazier Library** (Circulation: 797-2633; Reference: 797-2678) is the main library on campus and is open 7 days a week (see hours posted at entrances or call for current hours). The library website is <http://library.usu.edu>.

The **Quinney Library** (797-2464). The Quinney College of Natural Resources Library contains special collections and limited journals and books, as well as theses and dissertations from the college. Also, local databases, a slide maker, and most NR reserve material are available. They are open five days a week (see hours posted at entrances or call for current hours). See <http://qanr.usu.edu/quinney/> for more information.

Library services that are available to graduate students include:

- Periodic sessions for topics such as “How to Use End Note,” etc. See the library home page for details on upcoming sessions.
- Conference rooms for study sessions and group work.
- Library Media Collection & Reserve (797-2658). Frequently used by teaching assistants, this service provides audio and visual recordings for use in the classroom. Technicians are available to assist with classroom setup.
- Resource Sharing and Document Delivery (formerly known as Interlibrary Services). You may request books or articles in journals not available or listed in any of the USU libraries. Call 797-2680 for more information.
- Electronic, full-text documents. Visit the library website (listed above) or call for more information.

Career Design Center

The Career Design Center is located on the ground floor of the University Inn, Room 102. Students are encouraged to visit the Center’s website (<https://www.usu.edu/career-design-center/>) to find their “Career Coach”. Or they can call directly 797-1777. Career coaching can help you develop strategies for job searches, interviewing, and networking. The Center also assists with resume and cover letter preparation.

E-Mail Accounts

Currently registered USU students must activate the A#@usu.edu email account. All incoming students will automatically be set up with a usu.edu email account. To learn more about student email, please visit the IT website at: <https://it.usu.edu/studentemail>.

Graduate School Trainings

<https://gradschool.usu.edu/events>

- Grant Writing Workshops
- Thesis/Dissertation Workshops
- Responsible Conduct of Research Training. **Please note:** This is required for all Ph.D. and M.S. Plan A students, as well as ANY students supported on NSF, USDA-NIFA, or NIH grants.

International Students and Scholars Office

The mission of the Office of International Student and Scholars is to assist students from abroad in achieving their educational goals and maintaining their legal student status while studying at Utah State University. The goals, therefore, are to help minimize stress and apprehension and facilitate an emotional and psychological climate conducive to adjustment and achievement for the international student. For additional information, see:

<https://globalengagement.usu.edu/>.

QANR Computer Labs

The Natural Resources "Computer Labs" consist of a teaching lab and student lab that are open to Natural Resources students, faculty, and affiliates. Whether students need wireless setup on their laptops or smartphones, class specific computer programs, or just need somewhere for independent study, they have a place on the third floor of the Quinney Library. The computer lab in QLib 306 is open to students while the library is open- M-F from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., and the computer lab in LSB 225 is open for teaching during the day and for students and staff from 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. daily. Each computer lab is equipped with 24 workstations, an instructor workstation, and projections capabilities. In addition, each computer is set up to a multifunctional color / black and white printer. Guidelines for access, use, and hours of availability are available by accessing <http://qanr.usu.edu/quinney/>.

In addition to the NR computer labs, several open-access labs are available to students across campus.

Statistical Consulting Services and Graduate Coding Mentors

Statistical consulting is available to all Natural Resources graduate students at no cost through Alice Carter, the statistician for the Ecology Center and for Natural Resources. There are also peer Graduate Coding Mentors available: https://www.usu.edu/ecology/stats_and_coding_support.

Writing Centers

The Writing Center is a service of the Department of English designed to help students improve their writing skills. They will work with you individually to help you solve your writing problems and answer your questions, whether you are a freshman working on an essay or a graduate student developing a thesis. For additional information or to schedule an appointment, see: <http://writing.usu.edu/>. There is also a Science Writing Center, a branch of the main Writing Center: <https://artsci.usu.edu/student-resources/swc/>

CAMPUS WELLBEING RESOURCES

Heritage and Culture Program

The USU Heritage and Culture Program “cultivates goodwill and greater understanding both on campus and within communities the university serves, encouraging students to develop into thoughtful, well-rounded individuals prepared to succeed in a global society.” <https://www.usu.edu/community/>. There is a student lounge available in TSC room 314.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides confidential mental health services to students on the Logan campus. By offering a full range of counseling services in a friendly environment, they strive to help you achieve your personal, relational, and academic goals while at USU. You might desire to have empathic support and genuine feedback for a difficult situation, learn useful self-management skills, improve your relationships, or resolve new or long-standing problem situations. Services include consultation, workshops, groups, individual and couples counseling, as well as crisis/emergency interventions. Other services provided are psychoeducational assessments and outreach, i.e., informational presentations about student mental health issues. Services are free of charge for qualified students. They are located in TSC 306 or call 797-1012. For more information, see: <https://aggiewellness.usu.edu/>

CAPS also offers after-hours on-campus *emergency services* for trauma and life-threatening situations such as suicide and sexual assault. To activate the system, call the Campus Police at 435-797-1939.

Survivor Support, Advocacy, and Violence Intervention (SSAVI) Office

SSAVI provides safe and confidential advocacy for survivors of interpersonal violence. Advocacy is trauma-informed, survivor-centered and empowerment-based. Services are available to USU students on all campuses regardless of where the incident took place.

<https://www.usu.edu/ssavi/>

Disability Resource Center

The purpose of the Disability Resource Center is to help students with disabilities overcome physical, educational, or attitudinal barriers which may prevent them from reaching their full educational potential. Staff members coordinate university support services, aiding students in becoming integrated into the campus community. Several students in our program have been referred for or have sought out assistance with learning disabilities. For more information, see:

<http://www.usu.edu/drc/>.

Student Health and Wellness Center

This program provides students with healthcare for illness and minor injuries, as well as with health and wellness information on a variety of concerns. Just like any comprehensive medical clinic, the services of physicians, nurses, and pharmacists, as well as laboratory, physical therapy, prevention, and dietitian services, are available onsite. The Center specializes in the medical needs of students, including sports injury evaluation and rehabilitation, minor emergencies, skin conditions, gynecology concerns, and mental health conditions. Special services include physical exams for pilots, teachers, or missionaries. Pharmacy, X-ray, and laboratory services are also available. <https://health.usu.edu/>

Help and information on topics such as depression, nutrition, time and stress management, healthy relationships, and prevention of sexual assault and date rape, as well as assessment, education, and referral for substance abuse, are available from a variety of specialists serving on the staff. Peer educators, as well as office staff, are available to answer questions and provide support or information on health-related topics. Prevention programs, research surveys, and educational classes are also available through this office.

Most of the costs for services of the Student Health and Wellness Center are covered by the Student Health Fee, paid at the time students register, but some supplies, procedures, or classes may require a nominal fee. Although the Student Health and Wellness Center provides administrative oversight of the Student Health Insurance Plan, health insurance is not required to use the Student Health and Wellness Center.

Summer Semester Use of USU Facilities

After spring semester, students have 21 days of free access to use university facilities such as the library, computer labs, and exercise facilities. Any student who wishes to use University facilities

over the summer can pay the associated fees. Students should contact the Registrar's Office for exact costs for the facilities they want access to.

COLLEGE CLUBS AND STUDENT GOVERNANCE RESOURCES

Campus Clubs and Organizations

Each department within the Quinney College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has one or more clubs for its undergraduate students (i.e., Forestry Club, Wildlife Club, Range Club, and the Student Organization for Society and Natural Resources). Several of these clubs are affiliated with student chapters of professional organizations. While activities vary each year, clubs can offer graduate students opportunities to meet undergraduates in natural resources majors and become involved in professional and university activities. See: <https://qanr.usu.edu/clubs/>.

QANR Graduate Student Council (GSC)

The mission of the Quinney College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Graduate Student Council (GSC) is to improve communication within the graduate student body, between graduate students and undergraduates within the college, and between graduate students and the faculty and administration in the QANR. The GSC shall facilitate graduate student education through student-led mentoring programs, meetings, and seminars. Finally, the GSC shall advocate and lobby on behalf of the graduate students in the QANR to the faculty and administration of the college and, when appropriate, to the Utah State University administration. Learn more about the GSC here: <https://qanr.usu.edu/graduate-students/student-council>

Currently, the Ecology Center, with support from affiliate departments including ENVS, sponsors a year-long, in-house, graduate student seminar series called Ecolunch. A GSC committee runs Ecolunch. The GSC also sponsors at least one yearly fundraiser for the their medical emergency fund, as well hosting social events and community-based fundraisers. If you are interested in becoming involved in the GSC, please contact the ENVS GSC Department Representative. The representative should identify themselves through email at the beginning of the Fall semester and their photo and name should also be posted on the GSC bulletin board on the second floor of the NR building. The role of the ENVS GSC Department Representative is to convey information from the ENVS graduate students to the faculty/department head, including outreach to and feedback from the ENVS graduate student body in order to include all students on issues pertaining to graduate students. The ENVS GSC Department Representative also helps to organize departmental socials and other community-building events. Do not hesitate to contact your ENVS GSC Department Representative if you have concerns or questions about graduate student related issues.

SERVICES AND SUPPLIES

Campus Store

Located on the first floor of the TSC, the Campus Store is where you can buy textbooks for your courses, as well as any needed office supplies. They also carry personal computers, tablets, and software, usually at discounted higher-education pricing for students. For more information, see: <http://campusstore.usu.edu/>.

Chemistry Stores

Chem Stores is a quick and user-friendly source of scientific supplies for research and teaching. Chemistry Stores serves the entire campus community, providing access to laboratory supplies, laboratory glassware, and scientific chemicals. Chemistry Stores products are not for any cosmetic, drug or household application. Their acceptance of purchase number or payment is with the assumption that only qualified individuals, trained and familiar with procedures suitable to the products ordered, will handle them. The burden of safe storage, handling, application and disposal of all products purchased from Chemistry Stores lies with the purchaser. They are located in Widtsoe Hall, Room 129. For more information, see: http://www.chem.usu.edu/facilities/chem_stores.

Conference Management Services

This campus unit can plan, coordinate, and help administer conferences that are held on campus. Services include planning of schedules, use of buildings and rooms, production of agendas/schedules, and arrangement of refreshments and/or meals. A fee is charged to the department or group using these services.

Copy Centers (also Publication, Design, and Production)

The Student Copy Center in TSC 124 has several high-speed and color copiers available for students to purchase copies, banners, and small posters, as well as binding and laminating services.

Publication, Design, and Production serves as a full-service copy center, and they also offer wide-format full-color printing up to 44" wide and 105" long. They also can help with production of business cards, brochures, and documents requiring high publication quality. They are located at 880 E. 1250 N. See: <http://www.usu.edu/pdp/>.

Office of Global Engagement

The Office of Global Engagement provides services to support the welfare of international students. For more information, see: <https://www.usu.edu/global-engagement/>.

APPENDICES

A. BACKGROUND FOR KEY TERMS

B. EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC ABSTRACTS

Appendix A.

Background for Key Terms

Major Professor

Your major professor should be your principal mentor for guiding you through graduate studies. Major professors have considerable flexibility in designing your graduate training, and differ considerably in the way in which they deal with their graduate students. An atmosphere of mutual respect should be maintained since you are colleagues working together as professionals. Remember, as you selected your major professor on the basis of their expertise and reputation, your major professor also has a stake in your progress and wants to see you succeed since your future professional performance will reflect on their professional reputation. Your professional development is *the principal* role of faculty in the Graduate School.

You should feel comfortable coming to your major professor with professional concerns and should seek their advice regarding your professional progress. You should discuss advances in your profession with your major professor, the same as any professional does with colleagues. Your major professor is hopefully a friend who will do all within their power to help you during your graduate studies. However, your major professor also has an obligation as a faculty member in the School of Graduate Studies to evaluate your progress and enforce your timely progression through the graduate program.

Maintain open and frequent communication with your major professor. Most conflicts between graduate students and their major professor arise when lines of communication are not maintained and used on a frequent basis. Conflicts do arise. Try to resolve them through frank and open discussion, since you are colleagues. If this is no longer possible, remember that 1) your Graduate Student Representatives, 2) the Department Head, and 3) the Graduate Academic Review Committee can aid by arbitrating differences.

Two particular points that you should resolve early with your major professor are authorship and patent arrangements (also see “*USU Patent Policy*”) arising from research projects that you conduct together. Faculty attitudes differ on these points, and you need to be aware of your major professor’s expectations and make your expectations known to your major professor.

Graduate Mentoring and Evaluation Process

The ENVS Graduate mentoring and evaluation process is made up of several parts.

1. **Individual Development Plans (IDPs):** At the start of the Fall semester, each faculty mentor will use a list of discussion points to guide a planning discussion for the year with each grad student. ENVS does not expect any written product (e.g. a written IDP) from this discussion; however, if the faculty member and the student prefer, they can make a written record of this discussion for review later. Note: if the student starts their program in the Spring semester, the initial meeting should be held then, switching to fall the subsequent year.
2. **Mentoring Agreements:** Starting Fall 2026, the College requires written mentoring agreements. These agreements cover a variety of topics and include both student responsibilities and major professor responsibilities. The Graduate School has a sample written agreement, found under their “Mentoring Tools” (see link below).
3. **Progress Evaluation:** At a meeting near, at, or after the end of the Spring semester, the faculty mentor and the student will conduct an evaluation of the student’s progress within their program. ENVS has a form for this evaluation, and both the faculty mentor and the student will complete sections of the form – the student will be doing a self-evaluation, and the mentor, an evaluation of the student. ENVS recommends that each person complete a draft of their section of the form prior to meeting, with the form finalized after discussion at the meeting. A copy of the finalized form needs to be submitted to the GPC (Becky Hirst).
4. **Student Feedback to Department Head:** The graduate students will be provided with an opportunity at the end of each semester to provide feedback to the department head on topics including their relationship with their mentor and their own progress towards program completion. This will provide an additional opportunity for the department to address any issues in student progress.

Mentoring Resources:

USU Graduate School mentoring tools:

<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/faculty/mentoring-tools>

The Graduate School also has shared some mentoring best practice guides:

<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/faculty/mentoring-best-practices>

USU has spring mentor training sessions to help faculty improve their skills and practices

mentors: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/faculty/mentorship-training>

Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Mentoring Discussion Points

At the start of the Fall semester, faculty mentors and graduate students will use the list of discussion points below to guide a planning discussion for the year. A written product (e.g. a written IDP) is at the discretion of the student and their mentor. Note: if the student starts their program in the spring, the initial meeting should be held then, switching to fall the subsequent year.

Master's Students

YEAR 1

Planning Goals:

- Get off to a good start!
- Build a strong student-advisor relationship and establish a mentoring agreement.
- Develop an action plan to guide student through their graduate program.

Discussion Topics for IDP:

- Program requirements (e.g. coursework, supervisory committee, required forms)
- Academic/coursework, research, and professional development goals
- Funding situation (need to establish residency if not UT resident or international student)
- Assistantship
- Factors promoting success (from student and major professor vantage points)
- Factors that may negatively affect graduate program progress
- Address overall wellbeing
- Plans for following up on IDP elements

Mentoring Responsibilities and Expectations:

- Student and advisor responsibilities and expectations. **Starting Fall 2026, QANR requires a written, signed mentoring agreement between faculty-student pairs in MS/PhD programs.**

YEAR 2 (If subsequent years, repeat Year 2 with focus on steps to facilitate completion)

Planning Goals:

- Take stock of accomplishments and make goals and plans for coming year.
- Discuss most recent evaluation document.

Discussion Topics for IDP:

- Progress on thesis project
- Graduate committee established?
- Assistantship
- Any challenges in past year
- Assess skill development
- Research, academic/coursework, and professional development goals for the year
- Necessary program requirements to complete
- Discuss long term goals and steps needed
- Address overall wellbeing
- Plans for following up on IDP elements

Mentoring Responsibilities and Expectations:

- Updates to student/advisor responsibilities and expectations. **Starting Fall 2026, QANR requires a written, signed mentoring agreement between faculty-student pairs in MS/PhD programs.**

PhD Students

YEAR 1

Planning Goals:

- Get off to a good start!
- Build a strong student-advisor relationship and establish a mentoring agreement.
- Develop an action plan to guide student through their graduate program.

Discussion Topics for IDP:

- Program requirements (e.g. coursework, supervisory committee, required forms)
- Funding situation (need to establish residency if not UT resident or international student)
- Academic/coursework, research, and professional development goals
- Assistantship
- Factors promoting success (from student and major professor vantage points)
- Factors that may negatively affect graduate program progress
- Addressing overall wellbeing
- Plans for following up on IDP elements

Mentoring Responsibilities and Expectations:

- Student and advisor responsibilities and expectations. **Starting Fall 2026, QANR requires a written, signed mentoring agreement between faculty-student pairs in MS/PhD programs.**

YEARS 2 and until officially a candidate for Ph.D.

Planning Goals:

- Take stock of accomplishments and make goals and plans for coming year.
- Discuss most recent evaluation document.

Discussion Topics for IDP:

- Graduate committee established?
- Plans for comprehensive exam and general timeline
- Progress on dissertation ideas/project/proposal
- Assistantship
- Any challenges in past year
- Assess skill development
- Research, academic/coursework, and professional development goals for the year
- Necessary program requirements to complete?
- Discuss long term goals and steps needed
- Address overall wellbeing
- Plans for following up on IDP elements

Mentoring Responsibilities and Expectations:

- Updates to student/advisor responsibilities and expectations. **Starting Fall 2026, QANR requires a written, signed mentoring agreement between faculty-student pairs in MS/PhD programs.**

CANDIDACY YEARS

Planning Goals:

- Manage dissertation research and professional development.

Discussion Topics for IDP:

- Timeline for dissertation
- Assistantship?
- Research and professional development goals
- Any challenges in past year
- Address overall wellbeing

Program of Study

With the aid of your major professor, you should construct a tentative list of courses and a schedule of when they will be taken. These courses and their scheduling should “best” serve to meet your professional goals and prepare you for your immediate research needs. The course list should be formalized with and agreed to by your supervisory committee (instructions for creating and submitting a Program of Study can be found here: <https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>). Once the Program of Study has been formally approved, it can only be changed with the approval of your supervisory committee, the department head, and the Vice Provost of the Graduate School. *It is recommended that course work that is particularly applicable to your research be completed as early as possible and before any extended leave from campus for research.*

The Program of Study for the graduate degree (not including additional courses to satisfy deficiencies) must meet certain requirements:

1) Types of courses

- a) Courses listed **below 5000** are lower-division courses and are not acceptable for graduate degree programs of study.
- b) Courses listed as **5000-5990** are advanced upper division courses. A maximum of 12 credits may be used on an approved program of study.
- c) **6000-6990** are master’s-level courses. With supervisory committee approval, they may be used in a doctoral program.
- d) **7000-7990** are doctorate-level courses. With supervisory committee and instructor approval, they may be used in a master’s program.

All courses on an approved graduate program of study must be at the 6000 level or above (with the exception of up-to 12 credits at the 5000 level). Audited courses may not be used for a degree program or toward status as a full-time student. Credits in the following areas are not acceptable in a degree program: foreign languages, continuing graduate advisement, individual home study, and military science. No more than 12 workshop credits may be applied to a master’s degree.

2) Minimum Grades and Credit Acceptability

Students whose grade point average (GPA) is below 3.0 for any semester will be notified by letter that their academic performance is unsatisfactory. Students whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 will be placed on probationary status. If a student remains on probationary status for two consecutive semesters, the School of Graduate Studies will

ask the student's department to explain why the student's graduate program should not be terminated. If the department cannot provide compelling reasons to explain why the student should continue graduate study, the student's graduate program will be terminated. In the case of termination, reapplication is required to regain matriculation. Should a student holding a university appointment as a teaching or research assistant or fellow be changed to probationary status, the assistantship or fellowship will be terminated. Until a Program of Study is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, the GPA will be computed using all coursework completed at USU since the prior degree. Once a Program of Study, approved by the student's supervisory committee and department head, is filed in the School of Graduate Studies, the courses listed on it will be used to compute the student's GPA. Departments may have more restrictive scholarship policies.

- a) P-Grade Policy. *P* (Pass) will be accepted only for seminars, special problems, interdisciplinary workshops, thesis or dissertation research, and continuing graduate advisement. Credits for a course with a *P* grade cannot be transferred from another university.
- b) Incomplete grades (I) must be completed within 12 months (or a deadline set by the Instructor). If they are not removed in time, the course must be retaken if it is listed on the Program of Study. Courses cannot be removed from the Program of Study until any incomplete grades are removed. Temporary (T) grades are issued for research and thesis/dissertation credits until the thesis or dissertation is completed. Once thesis/dissertation credits are completed, any (T) grade will change to a (P) (Pass).
- c) Failure to meet the above requirements *will* lead to your being rejected for candidacy or, if you already have candidacy, the department head will refuse you the opportunity to defend your thesis or dissertation.
- d) Monitoring of Progress. The student's department and the School of Graduate Studies monitor the progress of graduate students. For continued participation in a graduate program, a student must complete requirements in a timely manner. In reviewing a student's progress, several factors will be considered, including demonstrated ability to develop a thesis/dissertation proposal, independence in the conduct of research, performance on comprehensive examinations, GPA, and special program requirements. Satisfactory progress also involves maintaining the standards of professional ethics and integrity expected in the student's discipline.

3) Degree program

- a) (M.S. students) The Program of Study must include a minimum of 30 semester hours. If you are planning to do a research project and thesis (Plan A), 24 credit hours must be in formal coursework, that is, non-research/thesis credits. If you are planning to

write a paper (Plan B), 27 credit hours must be in formal coursework and 2-3 credit hours must be in thesis research to meet Graduate School requirements.

- i) If your undergraduate preparation at the time of admission to the graduate program at USU was found to be deficient, additional courses that do not count towards your M.S. course requirements may need to be included in your Program of Study.
 - ii) Graduate credits attained elsewhere can be petitioned for transfer to your Program of Study (with a letter stating cause with your major professor's signature) through the Department Head, with final approval from the Vice Provost of the Graduate School. No more than 12 transfer credits can count toward the Program of Study. Transfer credit will only be considered for courses that 1) are pertinent to your graduate program, 2) were not used for a degree, 3) received a B (3.0) or better grade, and 4) were taken within the past 6 years.
- b) (Ph.D. students) The Program of Study must include a minimum of 60 credit hours beyond the B.S. degree, or a minimum of 30 credit hours if you already have an M.S. degree. At least one-half of the student's credits must be USU courses. The major professor and committee will determine whether or not a student needs more than 30 credits.
- i) If your undergraduate or M.S. preparation at the time of admission to the graduate program at USU was found to be deficient, additional courses that do not count towards your Ph.D. course requirements may need to be included in your Program of Study.
 - ii) If you already have an M.S. degree and took more than 30 credit hours of coursework in getting it, excess credits can be petitioned for transfer to your Program of Study. No more than 12 transfer credits can count towards the minimum 60 credit hours
 - iii) To petition to transfer credits, a letter must be sent to the Department Head that states cause, signed by your major professor. Final approval rests with the Vice Provost of the Graduate School. Transfer credit will only be considered for courses that 1) are pertinent to your graduate program, 2) were not used for a degree, 3) received a B (3.0) or better grade, and 4) were taken within the past 8 years.
- 4) Number of credits/semester
- a) If you are being paid as either a Research or Teaching Assistant (RA or TA) any semester, not including summer, you must be a full-time student and therefore be enrolled for a minimum of 6 credits until all coursework on your Program of Study form has been submitted to the Graduate School. Ph.D. students must register for a minimum of **3 credits** to qualify for a tuition award.

- b) After all of your coursework has been completed and your *Program of Study* form has been submitted to the Graduate School, you may register for 3 credits/semester. This option is open to you only after the [Full-Time at Three Credits form](#) has been approved you have only thesis/dissertation research remaining in order to complete your degree. For those who have taken out student loans, who have completed all course work, you may drop down to 3 credits without having your loans go out of deferment if you fill out a *Full Time at 3 Credits* form, which can be found on the Graduate School's website (<https://gradschool.usu.edu/resources/forms>)
- c) Students who are not on campus and who do not use Utah State University facilities or consult USU faculty can pay a Continuous Registration fee (\$100/semester). This option requires a petition from your advisor or the Department Head stating that you will not be using university facilities and faculty time. For each semester that you are allowed continuous registration, you must pay \$100, and the semester counts against the 6-8 year (6 for MS, 8 for Ph.D.) Statute of Limitation for degree completion.
- d) If you cannot register for credits for health reasons or family emergencies, etc., you may petition for a **Leave of Absence** (which is difficult to obtain—see section below).
- e) **You must enroll for 3 credits the semester in which you defend if on an assistantship, and for 1 credit if not on an assistantship.** You are then given one semester grace semester to complete all edits and have the final version of your thesis turned into the library. If you defend in the spring, summer semester counts as the grace-semester.

Supervisory Committee

Your supervisory committee consists of *at least 2* faculty in addition to your major professor for an M.S. and *at least 4* faculty in addition to your major professor for a Ph.D. This committee oversees your progress and provides detailed, constructive criticism. For all committees, one member must be from another USU department.

Guidelines for Supervisory Committee Appointments for Graduate Degrees:

- Members of supervisory committees be members of the Graduate Faculty in good standing. They also must have a record of active scholarship or special expertise related to the student's program and hold the accepted final degree in their field, *unless an exception is approved* by the Graduate Vice Provost based on other evidence of accomplishment. A committee member should hold a degree equivalent to or higher than the one the graduate student is seeking and have completed a dissertation or thesis requirement similar to that which the graduate student is completing.
- A member must have a faculty appointment at the assistant professor level or higher (including lecturer, professional practice, clinical, library, and research ranks), *except* as noted below.

- One committee member may be an adjunct faculty member *without* a full-time USU appointment upon recommendation by the department and approval by the Graduate Vice Provost. These individuals do not play the role of the “outside” committee member.
- Upon recommendation of the department head, emeriti faculty may serve on supervisory committees, but they *may not* chair new committees. When they are added as members on new committees, they are treated as adjunct to the department.
- A faculty member *should not* be appointed to a supervisory committee if, for any reason, he or she *will not be available* for committee meetings. Technology-assisted participation is acceptable when an in-person presence is not possible.
- Occasionally, due to unforeseen circumstances, changes to the supervisory committee may be needed. Please be aware that changes to this committee cannot be made within six weeks of your defense.

Because these individuals will be required to review your Program of Study, Research Proposal, and critique your research accomplishments, it is helpful to ask faculty to serve who are familiar with your area of specialization. If there are flaws in your work, it is better to have them found by friendly faculty advisors (your supervisory committee) who desire to see you succeed than by others who may not care about your progress. Take advantage of the faculty expertise that the department and USU provide.

Once you have established your committee (they are requested to serve and are listed on the *Supervisory Committee* form), meet with them frequently as a group or individually to discuss your progress and problems. They are there for you to use as a “sounding board” so that your research progresses smoothly. They will be of little use to you if you only talk to them when the necessary formal meetings take place.

Your supervisory committee must be officially approved (Supervisory Committee form) prior to any official activities such as the signing of your proposal, your pre-project seminar, etc.

Research Proposal

This is a scholarly work and may be your first attempt at such an endeavor. A well-designed research proposal seldom works out the way that it is conceived on paper, but it can do a lot to ensure your success. A poorly-designed proposal often leads to disaster. A proposal is no more than a thorough statement of the research that you are planning to do. Obviously, it comes before the research, so you are not expected to have results. Nonetheless, some students may have preliminary results from pilot studies and most will have indications of potential results from studies that have been conducted by others that were found in the literature. Failure to identify these results and discuss them is poor scholarship. If you do not have preliminary results, it is often useful to analyze hypotheticals to conceptualize what the results may look like. Writing the proposal forces you and others to evaluate your ideas and to see whether or not they withstand critical scrutiny. It is better to identify weaknesses in research plans before the work is started than during the project (or even worse, after the work is completed).

This may be your first attempt at technical writing, something that will become a common professional endeavor. The ability to communicate effectively is critical. Talk to your major professor and committee members about technical writing and look at style manuals for assistance. Give early drafts to your graduate student peers for criticism and more polished drafts to your major professor for critical review. Most of us are not comfortable writers, and writing is a struggle. Several revisions and major rewrites (usually entailing more than checking spelling and grammar) may be necessary. You should note that most faculty use the proposal as the document which illustrates your writing competency, a requirement to becoming a "candidate."

To help you in writing a proposal, ask yourself the following questions about what you have written, and be honest. Positive answers to all of the questions may indicate that you have done a good job and have progressed along the road to solving problems analytically and identifying important questions. Both Ph.D. and M.S. students may be having problems with the technical aspects of the research project if any negative answers appear in the first six questions. If you are a Ph.D. student and you have negative answers or are uncertain about the last four questions, you may be having problems with the novelty of the intellectual content of the research project.

- Would an individual who is an informed reader, but not an expert in the field, be able to understand what I am writing and the logical development of my ideas. Would they fathom my conclusions?
- Do I clearly state the question (hypothesis) that my research will address?
- Do I state why this question is important, especially given the knowledge provided by those who have preceded me in the field?
- Do I carefully develop and explain the methods that will be used to collect data?
- Do I describe how these data will be analyzed?
- Will the acquired data address the question in a clear-cut and meaningful fashion?
- Have I eliminated alternative explanations for my anticipated results?
- Does my approach to the question differ from the approaches taken by those who have preceded me in the field?
- Will my study really add to the field's knowledge?
- Is this study going to make a difference in the field and, if so, will the research design accomplish this goal?

There is no page length requirement for the proposal, but it should be long enough to address the above questions, provide the necessary literature citations to support claims, and include pilot data, if any are available. Figures and tables can also be used. A profitable way of thinking about the proposal is that it should be easily adapted to become your introduction and method sections in your thesis or dissertation. When completed, the proposal for either the M.S. or Ph.D.

degree must be defended and approved by your major professor, supervisory committee, and the department head to signify its acceptability.

Comprehensive Examination (Ph.D. only)

The Comprehensive Exam is used to assess whether a Ph.D. student is prepared to successfully conduct independent research. This assessment depends upon the student's:

- Knowledge in their area of specialization and in supporting areas,
- Understanding of philosophical perspectives on scholarship, and
- Ability to communicate this knowledge effectively.

It is recommended that the Comprehensive Exam be taken by the end of your second academic year. *The exam must be passed no later than 1 year prior to defending the dissertation, and before Candidacy will be recommended.*

The exam may be composed of two parts:

- 1) A set of questions provided by *each* member of the supervisory committee that must be answered by essays, and
- 2) An oral exam, where questions must be addressed verbally.

A typical Comprehensive Exam consists of questions (minimum of one) from each committee member (two members may collaborate on one question). The scope of knowledge to be addressed in written and oral questions can vary considerably between committees. Individual committee members may require you to answer the written portion from memory or allow you to use reference material. Both the scope and form of the exam are the purview of the supervisory committee, both collectively and individually. You should discuss this with them so that you know what to expect. A decision as to the acceptability of the essays will be determined within 2 weeks after the last exam is completed. To successfully complete this portion of the exam, two-thirds (e.g., 4 of 5) of your committee members must signify that you “passed” their portion of the exam. This can be accomplished with your original answers or through follow-up work such as a review paper, etc.

Failure to pass the written exam ends the Comprehensive Exam. However, proceeding to the oral portion does not mean that your committee found your written performance to be adequate. Rather, the committee might be uncertain about your written performance, and they may use the oral exam to address questions they might have about your written responses. Ask your major professor and supervisory committee members how they perceived your performance before the oral exam so that you are better prepared.

Many students feel uncomfortable with the oral portion of the exam. These three bits of advice may be useful:

- First, if you do not know an answer, admit it. "Bluffing" is always obvious and can generate even more critical questioning.
- Second, if you become flustered, ask for a moment to compose yourself. If necessary, ask to go to the washroom or get a drink of water, but do not allow your emotions to get out of control.
- Third, do not become antagonistic during questioning if you perceive that you are being "badgered." Careful choice of words, joking and body language can usually "desensitize" a difficult moment. Always remember that your supervisory committee wants to see you succeed, and they are trying to determine whether their faith in you is justified.

At the end of the oral exam, the committee will ask you to leave the room and wait outside while they discuss your performance and come to a consensus on an evaluation. The evaluation can take three forms, and the decision must be communicated in writing to the department head:

- **Pass:** This means that at least two-thirds (e.g., 4 of 5) of your committee members have recommended that you become a Ph.D. Candidate.
- **Conditional Pass:** This means that the committee has found deficiencies in your performance, but they believe that you have demonstrated sufficient ability to recommend candidacy after you address certain weaknesses. The deficiencies might require you to retake either the written or the oral portion of the exam, take a specific course or courses, complete a set of readings, and/or write an essay or essays on specific topics. While the actions to be taken are at the discretion of the committee, extensive requirements might indicate to the department head that a "Fail" rather than "Conditional Pass" is more appropriate. These requirements *must be fulfilled* within the following two semesters of the academic year.
- **Failure:** The committee can indicate a failing performance with two possible recommendations:
 - You must retake the written, oral, or written and oral portions of the qualifying exam. This must be done within a year, if not sooner, at the committee's discretion.
 - You must terminate your graduate program. If you believe this decision was unjustified, you can appeal in writing to the department head to be allowed to retake the comprehensive exam within a year. However, reasonable cause must be given to override the supervisory committee's decision.

Candidacy

Candidacy is an indication that your progress to date warrants consideration for a Ph.D. degree. Candidacy is granted after your supervisory committee has formally approved:

- Your Program of Study and performance in the courses to date (*Program of Study* form);

- Your research proposal and its successful defense;
- Your performance on the comprehensive exam (Ph.D. only), and;
- Your request for candidacy (*Application for Candidacy* form).

Your Program of Study and research proposal must be forwarded to the department head and the Vice Provost of the Graduate School, and they must approve them and sign the *Application for Candidacy* form. In addition, all necessary forms must be completed.

Thesis (Plan A) or Paper (Plan B) and Defense (M.S. only)

Your thesis (Plan A) or paper (Plan B) represents the culmination of your program and should reflect a degree of professionalism and scholarship indicating that you are ready to seek employment or continue for a Ph.D. in your chosen field of specialization. The thesis or paper must satisfy any format requirements established by the Graduate School (see the *Publication Guide*, downloadable from <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense> and any additional requirements made by your supervisory committee. It is your responsibility to identify these requirements and follow them. As in writing your research proposal, it is important that your thesis/paper be well written. Writing a thesis is a time consuming and difficult task and may require numerous revisions. Have your graduate student peers comment on early drafts and have your major professor comment on more polished drafts before giving a draft to other committee members. Everyone finds that they have to rewrite their thesis/paper several times, but the process is easier if you can positively answer the first six questions listed previously under *Research Proposal* before giving it to your major professor and other committee members.

It is often advantageous to write one or more chapters of your thesis in the journal format(s) where you intend to publish your results. This will teach you how to write for publication and will facilitate the timely publication of your results. Because the formats of journals and that of the Graduate School are not identical, you will want to work with your advisor to “creatively” package your thesis. Students have been successful with including an updated introduction from their original proposal before the actual manuscript, and including ANOVA tables, etc., in appendices. This approach will both satisfy the Graduate School requirements and facilitate publication. A public abstract is now also required in all Plan A theses and in dissertations, along with a technical abstract. The public abstract gives the reader a clear, plain English explanation of your research (examples of both types of abstracts can be found in Appendix B).

For the defense to be scheduled, all committee members must agree that your thesis is “defensible” and could be successfully defended, requiring only minor edits. Defenses also cannot be scheduled until the thesis or dissertation is in an “acceptable” format for the Graduate School. That is, title pages, introduction and summary sections, as well as the basic manuscript(s) must be provided to the supervisory committee. Given that these are now available online, the Graduate School has become particular about the inclusion of a complete introduction and all statistical tables.

The thesis defense (Plan A) begins with a public presentation and discussion of your research results. For a Plan B program, the project defense may begin similarly or may begin with a public presentation of your project design and outcomes. Both theses and projects need to be defended in a formal defense with your supervisory committee. Do not schedule your Defense before you know that your committee approves of your product. You should provide your supervisory committee with the thesis a minimum of **2 weeks** before you notify the Graduate School of your defense. Because the School of Graduate Studies requires a minimum 10-working day notice of your defense, this effectively means the earliest you can defend your thesis is **4 weeks** after giving it to your committee members, assuming there are no major problems. In some cases, individual committee members may require substantial changes to the thesis before they will sign on the thesis as ready to be formally defended.

At least **10 working days** before your defense, an *Appointment for Examination* form should be filed.

The actual defense includes:

- **Post-Project Seminar:** You must give a public seminar that must be advertised at least **10 working days** prior to its presentation. More than one seminar can be given, but the public seminar constitutes the formal seminar for your defense. Plan on a maximum of 45 minutes of speaking so there is adequate time for questions. *The seminar cannot take place sooner than one semester after you have given your pre-project seminar* (except by approval of a written petition stating cause and signed by your major professor to the department head). The seminar is a formal presentation (powerpoint/ overheads) that should be well prepared and, for a Plan A thesis, should include:
 - a statement of the question that your research addressed;
 - why this question is important, given earlier work by others in the field;
 - how you addressed the question and analyzed the data;
 - what weaknesses are in your data and how you might have done the research differently given the experience that you gained; and
 - what conclusions can be reached with your data and how they compare with findings by others.
- **Defense Meeting:** You *must* meet with your supervisory committee within *48 hours* after the post-project seminar to answer questions dealing with your research and/or general knowledge in the field. At this meeting, the supervisory committee comes to a consensus on your performance on the thesis, its defense, and whether you have fulfilled the requirements of your Program of Study. Only two decisions are possible:
 - **Acceptable:** This means that your committee will sign the *Record of Exam Completion form* (found in your defense packet), recommending your being granted an advanced degree. This typically entails minor revision of the thesis and/or passing of courses that you are currently taking.

- **Failure:** This can mean a re-defense after revision, or it may mean that you will leave the graduate program without receiving a degree. This is an unlikely event, since your major professor and supervisory committee should have indicated the likelihood of this occurring much earlier, and can only be justified by exceptional circumstances (e.g., your having twice failed a course listed on your Program of Study, plagiarism, research fraud, etc.). Without exception, this decision will be reviewed by the department head.

Once the defense is over, the major professor must notify the ENVIS Graduate Program Coordinator (Becky Hirst) on whether or not you passed the defense. She will then process a *Record of Exam* in ServiceNow so that the form can get circulated for electronic signatures.

Dissertation and Defense (Ph.D. only)

Your dissertation represents the culmination of your graduate program and your passport to future research opportunities; therefore, it must exhibit a degree of scholarship that will permit it to be accepted in the peer-reviewed publications of your field. The dissertation must satisfy any format requirements established by the Graduate School (see the *Publication Guide*, downloadable from <https://gradschool.usu.edu/academics/final-defense> and any additional requirements made by your supervisory committee. It is your responsibility to identify these requirements and follow them. Since this work must be publishable, however, you might select options that will minimize your need to rewrite material before submission to a journal, monograph series, etc.

As in writing your research proposal, it is important that your dissertation be well written. Have your graduate student peers comment on early drafts, and have your major professor comment on more polished drafts before giving a draft to other committee members. Everyone finds that they have to rewrite their dissertation several times, but the process is easier if you can positively answer the first 6 questions listed previously under *Research Proposal*, before giving it to your major professor and other committee members. For a Ph.D., however, a well-conducted research project and well-written dissertation are not sufficient; particular attention must be paid to the last four questions listed under *Research Proposal*.

It is advantageous to write chapters of your dissertation in the journal format(s) where you intend to publish the results. This will teach you how to write for publication and will facilitate the timely publication of your results. Because the formats of journals and that of the Graduate School are not identical, you will want to work with your advisor to “creatively” package your dissertation. Students have been successful with including an updated introduction section from their original proposal before the actual manuscript, and including tables, etc. in the appendices. This approach will both satisfy the Graduate School requirements and facilitate publication.

For the defense to be scheduled, all committee members must agree that your dissertation is “defensible” and could be successfully defended, requiring only minor edits. Defenses also cannot be scheduled until the dissertation is in an “acceptable” format for the Graduate School.

That is, title pages, introduction and summary sections, as well as the basic manuscript(s) must be provided to the supervisory committee following approval by the major professor. Given that dissertations are now available online, the graduate school has become particular about the inclusion of a complete introduction and all statistical tables. To facilitate publishing your scholarly work in a timely manner, you may want to work with your advisor to “creatively” package your thesis. Students have been successful with including an updated introduction section from their original proposal before the actual manuscript, and including tables, etc. in appendices. This approach will both satisfy the Graduate School requirements and facilitate publication.

Following the committee’s favorable review of your penultimate dissertation, a post-project seminar and defense can be scheduled. At least **10 working days** before your defense, an *Appointment for Examination* form should be filed.

- **Post-Project Seminar:** The actual defense must include a public seminar that is advertised at least **10 working days** prior to its presentation. Plan on a maximum of 45 minutes speaking time so there is adequate time for questions. The *seminar cannot take place sooner than 1 year after you have given your pre-project seminar and passed your comprehensive exam* (except by approval of a written petition stating cause and signed by your major professor to the department head). The seminar is a formal presentation (powerpoint/overheads) that should be well prepared and should include:
 - A statement of the question that your research addressed,
 - Why this question is important, given earlier work by others in the field,
 - How you addressed the question and analyzed the data,
 - What conclusions can be reached with your data and how they compare with findings by others, and
 - How your work advances the field, especially in terms of providing generalizations.

This seminar is likely to be used by you as your job seminar when you interview for your first professional position.

- **Defense Meeting:** Your supervisory committee will conduct a formal defense within *48 hours* after your post-project seminar in which you answer questions dealing with your research and/or general knowledge in the field. At this meeting, the supervisory committee comes to a consensus on the quality of your dissertation, your performance during the defense, and whether you have fulfilled the requirements of your Program of Study. Only two decisions are possible:
 - **Acceptable:** This means that your committee will sign the *Record of Exam Completion form* (found in your defense packet), recommending your being granted an advanced degree. This typically entails minor revision of the thesis and/or passing of courses that you are currently taking.

- **Failure:** This can mean a re-defense after revision, or it may mean that you will leave the graduate program without receiving a degree. This is an unlikely event, since your major professor and supervisory committee should have indicated the likelihood of this occurring much earlier, and can only be justified by exceptional circumstances (e.g., your having twice failed a course listed on your Program of Study, plagiarism, research fraud, etc.). Without exception, this decision will be reviewed by the department head.

Once the defense is over, the major professor must notify the ENVIS Graduate Program Coordinator (Becky Hirst) on whether or not you passed the defense. She will then process a *Record of Exam* in ServiceNow so that the form can get circulated for electronic signatures.

Leave of Absence and Off-Campus Research

The department head and the Graduate School can be petitioned for a leave of absence. A leave can be granted for illness, military service, pregnancy and childbirth, or other extenuating personal circumstances. Because you are expected to be enrolled while conducting research (even off-campus research), a leave of absence may not be granted for extended off-campus research. During a leave of absence, the 6-8 year limit for degree completion still applies.

Notice of Failure to Register and Reactivation Procedures

A student who does not maintain continuous registration will be notified and a copy of the notification will be sent to the department. If, after notice, the student fails to register, the department will be notified and the student's records will be put on inactive status. On the recommendation of the department, the student's file may be reactivated, if the time limit for the degree has not expired.

Those students who leave their program for an extended amount of time and return later to finish their program (without being approved for a leave of absence) must do the following:

- Students who have been gone 1-2 years will be required to pay continuous registration fees for the time they were gone (\$100/semester).
- Students who have been gone 2-5 years must complete a Readmission form, signed by both their advisor and the department head. They must also pay the continuous registration fees for the time they were gone (\$100/semester).
- Students who have been gone for 5 years or longer must reapply to the program and pay the application fee (currently \$55). They will be required to start their program over, including the submission of a new Program of Study and Supervisory Committee Form. The new Program of Study can include courses that have not expired, but courses that are older than 8 years will not be allowed.

Transferring to Another Program of Study

Departmental policy allows students to switch their current program of study for the following reasons:

- The student finishes their M.S. and continues, entering a Ph.D. program within ENVS.
- The student wishes to switch from an M.S. candidate to a Ph.D. candidate.
- The student wishes to change their plan type (Plan B to a Plan A or vice versa).

Research Fraud and Plagiarism

Maintaining the highest standards of academic honesty and research ethics is especially important at the graduate level, where students are expected to do original, scholarly work in preparation for future professional and academic roles. Academic dishonesty is defined in the *Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University* (September 1999) Article V, Section 3, Paragraphs a, b, and c to include cheating, falsification of information, and plagiarism.

Violations of the above policy will subject the offender to the university disciplinary procedures as outlined in Article VI, Section 1 of the *Student Code*, with the penalties or disciplinary measures to include one or more of the following:

- **Probation.** Continued attendance at the University is predicated upon the student satisfying certain requirements as specified by the University. Probation is for a designated period of time and includes the probability of more severe disciplinary penalties if the student does not comply with the specified requirements or is found to be violating any University regulations during the probationary period.
- **Suspension.** Temporary dismissal from the university for a specified time, after which the student is eligible to return. Conditions for readmission may be specified.
- **Expulsion.** Permanent dismissal from the University.
- **Denial or revocation of a degree.**

Research is a vital part of the education of most graduate students, and appropriate scientific and research conduct is expected. An allegation of scientific misconduct involving funded research is handled through the Office of the Vice President for Research. If the research is non-funded, the allegation is handled following the *Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University*.

Research misconduct may be determined during a student's program or after the program is completed. If a student is found guilty of research fraud, the penalty may include, in addition to any listed above, correction and reanalysis of data and/or rewriting of the thesis or dissertation, and/or loss of financial assistance.

Appendix B.

Examples of Abstracts

Public abstracts--Definition and use

A public abstract is not a “dumbed down” version of your research application or findings, but a clear, plain English explanation of your research.

Public abstracts also provide the context for the research.

Public reviewers are not expected to comment on the science--this is the role of the peer reviewers and scientific members of a research review panel. Therefore, it is vitally important that a public abstract passes the ‘so what?’ test and communicate why the research is important to people.

Tips for writing a public abstract

- Write your public abstract as if it’s for a major broadsheet newspaper or a journal.
- Set the scene carefully, and explain how your work fits into the bigger picture.
- Give the reader a reason to care about what you do - explain how your work will help people affected by asthma, even if this is a long way off.
- The first sentence is crucial - you need to engage the reader and invite them to read on. Try to explain your research in 25 words and then use this as your first sentence.
- Find a balance between accuracy and information overload - avoid using too much jargon, technical and scientific terms and acronyms; explain them clearly when you use them.
- Your primary aim is to be easily understood - avoid overly complicated English and uncommon words.
- Be wary of using complex, logical arguments - short sentences and brief arguments will make your research much easier to digest - your average sentence length should be 15-20 words.
- Think about the order and structure of information - use headings and bulleted lists to break up the text.
- Check spelling and grammar closely - any mistakes will undermine your message.
- Finally, to help you view your work from an entirely different perspective, ask at least one non-scientist (this could be a patient, friend, or member of the family) to review your abstract and point out phrases or concepts they don’t understand.

Examples of Public Abstracts

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Sustainable Ski Resorts in the State of Utah: Working Towards the Future

Andrew Call

The Extension branch of Utah State University funded a research project designed to meet an identified need and create a baseline in knowledge of the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices among Utah ski resort areas. Because of the potential impacts of climate change and unsustainable practices employed that negatively impact both the biophysical and human/cultural aspects of these environments, the ski resort industry is facing an uncertain future both environmentally and economically. However, very little is known about this issue, or how to address it. Collecting baseline information on the subject of environmental sustainability amongst Utah area ski resorts is crucial in order to ensure the sustainability of the Utah ski resort industry as a whole, and will serve to benefit in creating new strategies and plans on how to properly address this issue into the future.

This project aims to address this need and complete these project objectives:

1. Determine the current level of knowledge, awareness, and implementation of environmentally sustainable practices at Utah ski resort areas.
2. Determine Utah ski resort areas future plans for the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices, including the motivations for such implementation.
3. Work collaboratively with additional stakeholders to decide and implement the best environmentally sustainable practices for the future of the Utah ski resort industry.
4. Disseminate research project and report findings to Utah ski resort industry and other vested interest groups.

Various audiences will benefit from this research project: first and foremost Utah's ski resort industry, as well as ski resort visitors, tourism-oriented businesses, vested stakeholders, environmental organizations, and local communities and residents. Ski resorts benefit in receiving a baseline on their environmental practices and their perceived importance, which can prove to be a valuable marketing tool. The other audiences, especially stakeholders and local communities and residents, benefit in gaining knowledge of how committed Utah ski resort areas are in reducing their environmental impacts. This has a direct effect on local communities and businesses that are economically dependent on Utah ski resort areas for the visitors they attract and associated visitor spending. It is in these communities best interest to know and understand what these ski areas are doing to offset their environmental impact and footprint in order to ensure an economically viable future for Utah ski resort areas and their dependent communities. Lastly, given that this project is funded through Utah State University Extension, it would further strengthen the educational and outreach efforts of Extension in regards to sustainability, especially in the emerging area of winter sustainability. This may result in a cost savings for all parties involved due to the ability to accurately define, predict, and plan for the environmentally sustainable practices that will benefit into the future.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

William S. Spain

Managing and planning for human use at lakes and reservoirs creates challenges for land and water management agencies in Utah and the country as a whole. In spite of increased attention and research, management problems such as conflicts, accidents, and site impacts have continued to occur. These problems have been exasperated by an 800 percent increase in the number of registered boats statewide over the past 50 years. As such, developing new strategies to address the broad array of management challenges could be beneficial to the recreation management of lakes and reservoirs. This study, conducted in collaboration with Utah State Parks, considers the role of spatial scale in regards to managing these water bodies in Utah.

Considering and understanding the role of spatial scale has been beneficial to the field of ecology. However, the importance of spatial scale has rarely been considered in regards to managing outdoor recreation areas. Consistent with studies in ecology, data was collected at various spatial scales. Additionally, two distinct groups of respondents participated: (1) park managers and their staff; and (2) visitors (individuals who own boats registered in Utah).

Overall, consistent with ecology, the results suggest that considering larger spatial scales change what factors are the most important and also what management actions are the most appropriate. In short, managers need to consider the implications for their on-site actions to adjacent water bodies and to the state at large. In addition, the results suggest implementing a regional approach is more complicated and inclusive than just the provision of recreation. The organizational capacity of the managing agencies, along with their ability to cooperate with other governmental and private organizations, is also important. However, considering larger spatial scales also increases an agency's options to address various challenges. As such, recommendations on how a regional approach would be implemented in Utah are included. Finally, this dissertation provides a model for how future regional analyses should be conducted.

Examples of Abstracts

ABSTRACT

Sustainable Ski Resorts in the State of Utah:

Working Toward the Future

by

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Enacting environmentally sustainable practices among ski resorts areas within the U.S. has become an issue of mounting concern and attention. The state of Utah generates seven billion dollars a year from its tourism industry, with the majority coming from visitation to Utah's fourteen ski resort areas. The state of Utah is highly tourism dependent and deems this sector as a central factor in the state's economy. Thus, good environmental practices among these ski resort areas is not only important in their daily operations, but also to local community businesses and stakeholders who depend on a consistent influx of tourism dollars to remain economically viable.

The ski resort areas of Utah vary in their level of implementation, reporting, and marketing of their specific environmental practices, and initiatives. This has led to gaps in reporting by each ski resort area and a lack of understanding among local business owners and community members in regards to what current environmental efforts are being undertaken by these resort areas, as well as their plans for the future.

A qualitative study aimed at exploring the current level and future plans for the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices among Utah's ski resort areas should help to create a more in-depth understanding of what each resort is doing to address this issue. It also serves to create a baseline summary report of the state of Utah's ski resort area environmental practices as a whole. Fifteen key informant interviews were conducted throughout the ski resort areas of Utah with resort employees ranging from sustainability coordinators and marketing managers, to operations and budget directors. Methodologies used for the study and some of the preliminary findings will be presented. These findings will focus on the current and future implementation of environmentally sustainable practices at each Utah ski resort area. Results from this study are intended to bridge the lack of communication amongst ski resort areas and local community members and businesses. This can help in creating a more interdisciplinary approach to this issue and generate new ideas and angles in approaching environmental sustainability among ski resort areas.

(122 pages)

ABSTRACT

Planning and managing outdoor recreational resources at larger spatial scales, conceptualized as a regional approach to recreation planning and management, is studied. Considering and understanding the role of spatial scale has been beneficial to the field of ecology; however, the importance of spatial scale has rarely been considered in the recreation resource management literature. A regional approach to planning and management is differentiated from a site-specific approach as managers and planners must consider the implications of management actions or policies at a larger spatial scale than a single park, recreation area, lake, or reservoir. For this study, the provision of boating opportunities at Utah lakes and reservoirs is considered.

Multiple data collection techniques, both quantitative and qualitative, were applied in this study. Additionally, two distinct groups of respondents participated: (1) park managers and their staff; and (2) boaters (individuals who own boats registered in Utah). Data was collected at three different spatial scales: (1) lake or reservoir level (site); regional level; and (3) state level. Multiple analytical approaches were used to ascertain both groups' perspectives towards a variety of topics important to recreation management including content analysis and cluster analysis, as well as considering experience use history.

The results suggest implementing a regional approach is more complicated and inclusive than providing a wide range of recreational opportunities. The organizational capacity of the managing agencies, along with their ability to cooperate with other governmental and private organizations, is also important. Also, considering larger spatial scales increases an agency's options to address various challenges such as conflict, displacement, recreation succession, and homogenization and sub-optimization. As such, when prescriptive decisions about where

various recreational opportunities ought to be provided, management problems and issues and agency capacity should also be considered. This dissertation also provides a model for conducting regional analyses.

(242 pages)