

**The Department of
Wildland
Resources
Graduate Handbook**

*Requirements, Policies, and
Advice to Aid Your Graduate
Career*

Updated for 2025-2026

Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	5
Keys to Success in Graduate School for all Students	5
PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS.....	6
Master of Science (MS) Program	6
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program.....	7
Program Timelines	7
ADVISOR, COMMITTEE DESCRIPTIONS	8
Major Professor	8
Supervisory Committee	8
Committee role and makeup	8
Selecting Committee Members	9
COURSE WORK	10
Program of Study	10
Overview of Process.....	10
Credit and Course Requirements.....	10
Number of Credits Required per Semester	10
Coursework Requirements	11
RESEARCH	12
Overview	12
Master’s Thesis/Project Approval (MS Students Only)	12
Comprehensive Exam (PhD Students Only)	13
Application for Candidacy (PhD Students Only).....	14
WILD Graduate Research Symposium.....	14
THESIS/DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND SUBMITTAL.....	15
Overview	15
Preparation of Thesis/Dissertation for Defense	15
Required Actions prior to Defense	16
Day of Defense.....	17
Public Seminar	17
Defense Meeting.....	17

Record of Exam	17
POST DEFENSE, SUBMITTING THESIS/DISSERTATION	18
Grace Semester	18
Required Forms.....	18
Thesis/Dissertation Review Process	18
Departmental Review	19
SGS Review.....	19
Library Submission Final Step of Thesis/Dissertation Submission.....	19
DEGREE AWARDING.....	19
Defending and Receiving Degree in the Same Semester	20
STUDENT STATUS AND RESIDENCY.....	20
Continuous Registration	20
If You Need Time Away	20
Applying for Utah Residency	20
FINANCES	21
Graduate Research Assistantships	21
Graduate Teaching Assistantships.....	22
TA positions for students hired as GRAs.....	22
Scholarships	22
USU Student Health insurance	22
Tuition and Fees.....	23
Tuition/Fee Payment for students hired as GRAs	23
Tuition/Fee Payment for students hired as 20 hours per week GTAs.....	23
Conference Travel Funding from the Department	23
Conference Travel Funding from Other Sources	24
STUDENT SUPPORT	24
Where To Find Resources	24
Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities and SGS links	24
Emergency Medical Fund	25
OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION	25
Graduation Ceremony and Walking Early.....	25
Student Trainings	26
Responsible Conduct of Research Training	26

Common Graduate Student Trainings	26
Notice of Non-Discrimination	27
SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDE TO THESIS/DISSERTATION PUBLICATION	28
Difference between the Format and Style	28
Monograph	28
Multiple Paper	28
Overview of thesis/dissertation contents.....	28
Front Matter	28
Back Matter or Body of Text.....	29
Chapter Titles	29
Table of Contents.....	29
Tables and Figures	29
Examples of Monograph and Multiple Paper Format Outlines.....	29
Monograph Outline	30
Multiple Paper Outline.....	30
Blended Format- NOT ACCEPTED BY SGS	30
Publishing a Manuscript Prior to Defense.....	31
CHECKLIST FOR COMPLETING A MASTER’S DEGREE.....	32
CHECKLIST FOR COMPLETING A DOCTORAL DEGREE	34

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have been accepted into a graduate program in the Department of Wildland Resources (WILD) at Utah State University (USU). This handbook outlines the basic requirements for obtaining a graduate degree within the WILD Department and provides some suggestions for making your graduate program more fulfilling.

The WILD handbook summarizes the major components of earning a graduate degree — coursework, research, and the defense and submission of a thesis or dissertation— and provides checklists to help you track your progress.

Although this handbook includes many important procedures, it does not cover every expectation, process, or policy established by USU. The USU School of Graduate Studies (SGS) has policies and procedures that all graduate students, regardless of college, must follow. Many of the procedures are outlined here, but you should also consult the [School of Graduate Studies website](#) for additional information.

The WILD department is part of the S.J. & Jessie E. Quinney College of Agriculture & Natural Resources (QANR). The QANR website provides information about upcoming student activities, college events and additional graduate student resources.

If you have any questions about the contents of this handbook- or anything else related to your graduate experience- please do not hesitate to ask.

Keys to Success in Graduate School for all Students

The process of obtaining a graduate degree varies somewhat by student and program type. However, for all students, pursuing a graduate degree is an opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. To successfully navigate this experience, you will need to take charge of your degree program while maintaining your health and well-being. The overall process is outlined in later sections by degree type, but here are a few guidelines to help you get started.

- **Understand the process of earning your degree.** Become familiar with the major components of your degree: course work, research, comprehensive exams (PhDs only), and the defense and submission of a thesis or dissertation. Each of these components has one or more forms that you will be required to submit to the department or the SGS directly. You can find all forms on the [SGS Academics & Forms](#) webpage.
- **Know your responsibilities as a graduate student.** You are responsible for ensuring that your thesis or dissertation reflects your original work. You must track your degree progress and complete the necessary steps to earn your degree. You are also required to maintain a 3.0 grade point average, submit all graduate school forms in a timely manner and meet any additional requirements from the SGS.

- **Know your rights as a USU graduate student.** The SGS has provides information about your rights as a graduate student on the [Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) webpage.
- **Know what to expect from your program and what's expected of you.** Talk with your major advisor and clarify details about funding, your degree timeline, and project deliverables early on. If you are hired on a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA) discuss those expectations as well. Use the [Graduate Student & Faculty Advising Agreement](#) as a guideline for when to check in and what to discuss with your major advisor and supervisory committee.
- **Ask for help, advice, and resources when you need them.** Graduate school can sometimes feel overwhelming. Life circumstances such as financial hardship, family-related issues, or illness may disrupt your progress or affect your well-being. Many USU resources are available to assist you when needed. Your major advisor(s), USU faculty, the department head and staff can all help guide you to USU resources. Please see the student resources section for more information.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The WILD Department offers MS and PhD degrees in Ecology, Forestry, Range Science, and Wildlife Biology. For information specific to earning a degree in Ecology—including course requirements and opportunities available through the Ecology Center—please refer to the [Ecology website](#).

Master of Science (MS) Program

Your MS program includes required course work, research, and the defense and submission of an original thesis (plan A) or project (plan B). **Plan A** programs include a significant research component that leads to the production of a thesis, which is submitted to the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) for approval and then archived by the Merrill-Cazier Library. Thesis chapters frequently form the basis of papers prepared and submitted for publication in peer-reviewed journals by the student. Almost all WILD MS students pursue Plan A. The **Plan B** option requires the production of a paper, which is usually a review of literature. Plan B papers are defended but are not subject to SGS approval before submission to the library. Regardless of plan type, you will work closely with your major advisor and your supervisory committee to determine the trajectory of your research and the course work that will be most beneficial to you.

The target duration for an MS degree is between two and three years; however, your timeline may vary. Please discuss expectations regarding timeline, funding, and project requirements with your major advisor.

If you are a Plan A student, you may be building upon ideas initially generated by your major professor or committee members. As such, the research questions may be partially predetermined. However, most MS research programs allow students the flexibility to propose changes in design, data collection, and analysis. Most interpretations of the data should be your own. You are responsible for ensuring that your thesis is your original work. Your major advisor and committee will provide editorial comments and suggestions.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Program

The PhD program includes required coursework, research, and the defense and submission of an original dissertation. In addition, you must seek candidacy by successfully completing a comprehensive exam (comps), which assesses your ability to conduct independent research, and by submitting your research proposal. The PhD program may be pursued either post-master's or post-baccalaureate. The post-Baccalaureate PhD requires additional credit hours, coursework, and increased guidance from your major advisor and committee.

The typical duration for a PhD degree is between four and five years, though individual timelines may vary. Please consult with your major advisor about your expected timeline, funding, and project requirements.

To develop your dissertation research, you will work closely with your major advisor and supervisory committee in generating original ideas, writing grant proposals, and project funding negotiations (if applicable). As you approach candidacy, you should demonstrate a strong command of the literature, creativity in hypothesis development, and skill in research design and data analysis. Earning a PhD reflects your readiness to eventually serve as a project leader. You are responsible for ensuring that your dissertation is your original work. Your major advisor and committee will provide editorial comments and suggestions.

Program Timelines

Your individual program timeline will differ from that of other students based on factors such as the number and timing of field seasons, course availability, and the expectations of your major advisor. However, the general expectation is that you will complete your program within the target durations described above, unless otherwise agreed upon with your advisor.

Utah State University policy requires that an MS degree be completed within six years and a PhD degree within eight years. If you exceed these limits, your major advisor must request an extension from the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies, including a letter explaining the delay and confirming full committee support for timely completion.

Similarly, coursework is valid for only eight years. Any coursework older than eight years must be revalidated to count toward your degree. Your supervisory committee may submit a revalidation plan to the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.

Failure to make adequate progress toward your degree may lead to reduced opportunities and financial assistance (if applicable) and may ultimately result in the termination of your graduate program.

ADVISOR, COMMITTEE DESCRIPTIONS

Major Professor

Your major advisor is your principal mentor throughout your graduate program, and your professional development is a primary part of their role. The mentor-mentee relationship should be characterized by mutual respect, clearly defined goals and expectations, and constructive communication. As a new student you will be asked to review, discuss and sign an ["Advising Agreement between WILD Graduate Students and Faculty" form](#) (hereafter referred to as the *Advising Agreement*). This form is designed to initiate a dialogue about both your major professor's expectations and your own. You should feel comfortable approaching your major professor with professional concerns and should actively seek their advice regarding your academic and professional progress.

Major advisors secure external funding to support their research programs and have considerable flexibility in guiding your graduate training in alignment with their research focus. Your advisor has a vested interest in the quality of your work and your future success as a professional and will support you throughout your graduate experience. However, your major advisor is also responsible for evaluating your progress and ensuring timely advancement through your program. Strive to maintain frequent, open communication with your major professor. If conflicts arise, attempt to resolve them through honest, respectful dialogue. If resolution is not possible, the Department Head can assist in mediating the issue.

Supervisory Committee

Committee role and makeup

Your supervisory committee will oversee your entire graduate program: creating your Program of Study, providing guidance on your research, directing your comprehensive exam (for PhD students), evaluating your thesis or dissertation, and conducting your defense. Although one of their roles is to evaluate your performance throughout your graduate studies, you should view committee members as valuable resources and collaborators.

Students are expected to update their supervisory committee on their progress in accordance with the timeline agreed upon in the *Advising Agreement*.

Both MS and PhD committees are made up of a major advisor, additional committee members and an outside committee member. The outside member serves on the committee but has the

additional role of ensuring a fair process for the student. All outside committee members need to be outside your area of specialization and employed by USU. Most adjunct and graduate faculty are not employed by USU and therefore cannot serve as outside members. All committees must also be majority WILD, meaning that most members of your committee must be affiliated with WILD as faculty, adjunct faculty, or graduate faculty.

- An MS supervisory committee consists of at least three faculty members (including your major advisor), one of whom serves as the outside member. The outside member of an MS supervisory committee can be from WILD or another USU department. At least two members must be from within the WILD Department (as faculty, adjunct faculty, or graduate faculty).
- A PhD supervisory committee consists of at least five faculty members with a doctoral degree (including your major advisor). The outside member of a PhD supervisory committee must be from another USU department. At least three committee members must be from within the WILD Department (as faculty, adjunct faculty, or graduate faculty).

Selecting Committee Members

You and your major advisor will develop a list of potential supervisory committee members, typically chosen for their ability to contribute to your academic and research development. You will need to contact prospective members to confirm their willingness and availability to serve on your committee.

Faculty from outside the college or university may serve on your committee if they are approved graduate faculty and your committee maintains majority WILD representation. The SGS maintains a list of Graduate Faculty approved to serve on supervisory committees in WILD. If you are unsure whether a prospective member is on this list—or would like to request a nomination—please consult your graduate program coordinator.

Once you have selected your supervisory committee members, submit a [Supervisory Committee Approval Form](#), found on the [SGS Academics & Forms](#) webpage. For MS students this form should be approved by the end of your second semester; for PhD students the end of your third semester. All committee members must confirm their participation before the form is submitted.

Note: University regulations prohibit any changes to your supervisory committee within six weeks of your scheduled defense.

COURSE WORK

Program of Study

Overview of Process

In consultation with your major professor and supervisory committee, create a list of the courses you plan to take to fulfill the credit requirements for your degree. You will enter your proposed Program of Study into [Degree Works](#). Instructions for entering your plan into Degree works can be found in the [Program of Study](#) link on the [SGS Academics & Forms](#) page . Let your graduate program coordinator (GPC) know when you have entered your plan. Your GPC will annotate your plan in Degree Works as needed, to indicate course requirements. In addition, your GPC will also access and update Degree Works to track form completion as you progress through your degree.

Programs of study cannot be submitted to the SGS by your GPC until your supervisory form has been completed. However, you will want to plan out your Program of Study early, ideally during your first or second semester. If you deviate from your initial Program of Study, work with your GPC and ask them to submit a Program of Study Revision Form.

Once you have completed your Program of Study, you can register for three credits of WILD 6990 (MS) or 7990 (PhD) (Continuing Graduate Advising) until your defense semester.

Credit and Course Requirements

Number of Credits Required per Semester

All matriculated graduate students using university facilities or faculty time must be registered for a minimum of three graduate credits every semester until completion of all degree requirements. However, the number of credits (above three) required per semester will vary with your specific financing situation.

If you are hired as a graduate research assistant (GRA) or teaching assistant (GTA) for at least 20 hours per week (half-time) you need to be registered for six credits. If you are not hired as a half-time GRA or GTA, you need to be registered for 9 credits to be considered full-time. Please work with your major advisor, and any applicable parties (e.g., Veterans Affairs, Office of Global Engagement, Student Loan Servicer, AmeriCorps) as needed to determine the minimum number of credit hours needed per semester.

Once you complete all course work requirements on your Program of Study (excluding thesis or dissertation credits), you are eligible to be considered a full-time student at three credits. You will need to fill out the [Full Time at 3 Credits](#) form to maintain full-time status. Please note that if you have student loans, dropping to three credits may trigger student loan repayment unless

this form is submitted.

Most students will need to be registered for three credits the semester they defend; however, in some cases only one credit is required. Please work with your GPC as you near the completion of your Program of Study to determine the most expedient path to degree completion and the number of credits required. See the section on *Student Status* for information about maintaining continuous registration if you are unable to register for classes.

Coursework Requirements

MS Students

- MS Plan A (thesis track) students are required to take 30 credits of coursework, with 6-15 of these credits being WILD 6970 (Thesis Research).
- MS Plan B (non-thesis track) students must complete at least 30 credits of coursework, with 2-3 of these credits being WILD 6970 (Thesis Research).
- MS students may transfer six semester credits into a graduate program at Utah State University; an additional six semester credits may be transferred with approval from the student's committee and the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies.
- MS students are required to take at least 18 semester credits at the 6000 level or above.
- Courses listed as 7000-7990 are doctoral level courses. With supervisory committee approval, they may be used in a master's Program of Study.

PhD Students

- PhD students (post master's) are required to take 30 credits of coursework, with at least 12 of these credits being WILD 7970 (Dissertation Research). Your program of study must include at least 18 credits of coursework at the level of 6000 or above.
- PhD students (post baccalaureate) are required to take 60 credits of coursework, with at least 18 of these credits being WILD 7970 (Dissertation Research). Your Program of Study must include at least 38 credits of coursework at the level of 6000 or above.
- PhD students may transfer up to 12 semester credits into a graduate program at Utah State University.
- Courses listed as 6000-6990 are master's level courses. With supervisory committee approval, they may be used in a Doctoral Program of Study.

Ecology Students (MS and PhD)

- Students with an emphasis in Ecology are expected to adhere to the additional course requirements outlined by the [Utah State University Ecology Center](#).

All Students

- The only course that all WILD graduate students are required to take is one credit of WILD 6870 (WILD seminar). The rest of your Program of Study is between you, your major advisor, and your supervisory committee.
- Audited courses cannot be used on your Program of Study or toward your status as a full-time student.
- Coursework below the 5000 level will not count towards your degree.
- Coursework more than eight years old must be revalidated by the School of Graduate Studies. Please see section on Program Timelines for more information.

RESEARCH

Overview

The research component of your degree will vary from that of other students due to differing field seasons, existing grant obligations, and program type. However, all WILD MS Plan A and PhD students will need to prepare a proposal, take all necessary training (including Responsible Conduct of Research see Trainings), procure all regulatory permits and approvals, and participate in the WILD symposium. In addition, PhD students are required to take a comprehensive exam and apply for candidacy.

Master's Thesis/Project Approval (MS Students Only)

Your thesis research proposal is a thorough statement of the research you plan to conduct. Your proposal may include a review of pertinent literature, your scientific question(s) and hypotheses, methods, proposed data analysis, and possibly results from a pilot study. You should discuss the expected proposal format, length, and contents with your major advisor early in your first semester.

Your proposal provides an important opportunity for you and others to evaluate your research ideas and methodology. You are encouraged to prepare a research proposal for submission to your advisor and committee before the end of your second semester and prior to any major data collection.

After your supervisory committee has approved your master's thesis proposal, complete and submit a [Master's Thesis/Project Approval Form](#), available on the [SGS Academics & Forms](#) page. This form is required for all MS Plan A (thesis track) students. It confirms that you have successfully presented your research proposal and procured the necessary regulatory approvals and taken all required training to conduct the proposed research.

Comprehensive Exam (PhD Students Only)

The comprehensive exam is a university requirement for students seeking PhD candidacy and consists of three parts: approval of dissertation proposal, a written exam, and an oral exam. Your dissertation proposal should contain a comprehensive description of your anticipated research and demonstrate that you are prepared to carry out an independent, doctoral-level project. The written and oral exams will consist of answering questions from your supervisory committee that explore your knowledge of key components in your area of expertise and proposed research. In all portions, you are expected to demonstrate that you understand the standards and methods of research scholarship and can communicate knowledge effectively. You can take an active role in defining the depth and breadth of your preparation by talking with each of your supervisory committee members about expectations.

Please discuss the structure and timing of your written and oral exams with your major advisor and supervisory committee. The written exam will be conducted first. Failure to pass the written exam ends the comprehensive exam. However, proceeding to the oral exam does not necessarily mean that the committee found your written performance to be entirely satisfactory. They may use the oral exam to address questions they have regarding your written exam and/or research proposal. You should discuss the evaluation of your written exam with your major advisor and supervisory committee before the oral exam, so you can be better prepared.

There are three possible outcomes to the Comprehensive Exam.

1. *Pass*: Four out of five of your committee members recommend that you become a PhD Candidate. These results are then communicated to the SGS through the *Application for Candidacy Form* (see below).
2. *Conditional Pass*: The committee has found deficiencies in your performance, but they believe you have demonstrated sufficient ability to recommend Candidacy after you address the specific deficiencies. The deficiencies might require you to retake all or part of 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. These actions are at the discretion of the committee. You must complete these additional requirements within the following semester of the academic year. Any requirements that are not completed within the following semester require approval from your major professor and the department head.

3. *Fail*: The committee can indicate a failing performance with two possible recommendations:
 - a) You may retake the written, oral, or both portions of the comprehensive exam. This can be done only once and must be retaken within one year of the first oral exam.
 - b) You must terminate your doctoral program. Based on the recommendation of the supervisory committee and major advisor, they may propose that you pursue an MS degree. If you believe this decision is unjustified, you can appeal in writing to the Department Head to retake the Comprehensive Exam within a year. However, reasonable cause must be given to override the supervisory committee's decision.

The University [Honor Pledge](#) applies to all aspects of the Comprehensive Exam.

Application for Candidacy (PhD Students Only)

After passing the Comprehensive Exam, you must complete and submit an [Application for Candidacy Form](#) found on the [SGS Academics & Forms](#) webpage. Note that the University requires you submit the Application for Candidacy Form at least three months before your scheduled defense.

This form attests that you are ready to conduct independent research by having successfully presented/defended your research proposal, procured the necessary regulatory approvals, and successfully passed the written and oral portions of the Comprehensive Exam.

WILD Graduate Research Symposium

The WILD Graduate Research Symposium is an opportunity for you to present your research plans to the WILD faculty, graduate students, and other interested parties (supervisory committee members, funding agency personnel, etc.). The symposium is an all-day event that usually takes place in late March.

The symposium comes at the beginning of your program and is an opportunity to present the objectives and strategy of your research, and to get feedback and suggestions from the audience regarding your plans. Work closely with your major professor and supervisory committee to determine the appropriate content of your presentation.

- *MS Students*: All MS students who begin their program during summer or fall semester must participate in the WILD Graduate Research Symposium the following Spring semester. Students who begin their program during Spring semester have the option of participating in that same semester's symposium or waiting until the following year to present.
- *PhD Students*: PhD students who begin their program during summer or fall are

expected to present at the spring symposium of their first year, unless their major professor approves a different timeline with the Department Head. PhD students who begin their program during spring semester have the option of participating in the first WILD Graduate Research Symposium that occurs during their tenure or waiting until the second symposium. All PhD students are also expected to give an update on their research at the symposium at least every other year after their initial presentation.

THESIS/DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND SUBMITTAL

Overview

The process of preparing and defending your thesis or dissertation is distinct from submitting your fully approved thesis or dissertation to the SGS and earning your degree.

Prior to your defense, you will prepare and submit your thesis or dissertation to your major advisor and committee members for approval. They will determine if you are prepared to defend your work. For MS Plan A (thesis-track) and PhD students, your thesis/dissertation defense is comprised of a public seminar portion (1 hr.) and a defense meeting with your supervisory committee (~ 2 hrs.). For MS Plan B (non-thesis track) students, a public seminar is held; however, instead of a defense meeting the supervisory committee members will either accept or reject the paper after they read it.

Following a successful defense, you will complete all edits requested by your committee, and format your thesis or dissertation as precisely indicated by the SGS publication guide. Your thesis or dissertation will go through the final review process which can take 4-5 weeks. It is only after your thesis or dissertation has successfully been approved by the SGS and cleared by the library that you will earn your degree. As such most students do not typically defend and graduate within the same semester unless they defend in the first half of that semester.

Preparation of Thesis/Dissertation for Defense

It is easiest to prepare your thesis or dissertation following the USU SGS publication guidelines before your defense. You will want to discuss the format (monograph vs. multiple paper) and the style guide or journal you will use for headings, table and figure captions, and citations early on with your major advisor and committee. Please note, theses and dissertations in multiple-paper format must contain at least two independent papers in addition to introduction and conclusion chapters (see the monograph and multiple paper sample outlines pg. 30). Other helpful formatting information can be found in the Supplemental Guide for Thesis/Dissertation Publication section.

Publication requirements, the current SGS publication guide, and a helpful guide to the defense process can be found on the Thesis & Dissertation Information page on the SGS website. The SGS also offers information sessions for thesis and dissertation preparation. You are strongly encouraged, but not required, to publish prior to your defense. Please see the section on

publishing for more information. You can also ask your GPC for additional information.

Plan to submit a copy of your thesis or dissertation to your supervisory committee at least four weeks prior to your defense. Your major advisor will very likely request your draft 4-6 weeks before that to ensure the readiness of your thesis or dissertation for distribution to your committee. To stay on track, it is crucial to openly communicate with your advisor about the direction and expectations of your work throughout the writing process.

Your supervisory committee will determine if your thesis or dissertation is in an acceptable format, and you are ready to defend. It is to your benefit to let committee members know when to expect a copy of your thesis or dissertation. In some cases, committee members may require substantial changes before approving a defense. You will want to build flexibility into your personal timeline for completing your thesis or dissertation to allow for scheduling conflicts and additional edits.

Required Actions prior to Defense

You will need to ensure that the members of your Supervisory Committee will not change within six weeks of your defense date.

- *Choose a Defense Date and Reserve a Venue:* You are encouraged to tentatively schedule your defense early (more than six weeks in advance) IF your major advisor and committee are amenable to you defending. Discuss with your GPC any dates that are not available for a defense due to pre-scheduled events. Then work with your committee to find a date/time that works for everyone. Inform your GPC of your chosen date and schedule the room. You can book an NR conference room through your GPC or a classroom for the public seminar portion through central scheduling. Defenses during summer semester are discouraged.
- *Fill out the [Appointment For Examination Form \(AFE\)](#):* The AFE *must* be submitted to SGS at least 10 business days prior to your defense. This form will be forwarded for committee approval and indicates to the SGS that you are ready to defend. It is recommended that you submit this form 3 weeks prior to your defense date to ensure this timeline is met.
- *Advertise Your Defense:* You will need to create a flyer to advertise the public seminar portion of your defense 2-3 weeks prior to the event. The QANR communications team provides a template for creating flyers that can be shown on the QCNR atrium TVs and /or printed. Please submit your flyer to the QANR communications team and send your GPC a pdf copy. Your GPC will print and post the flyer two weeks prior to your defense and include it within your defense announcement (sent one week and again one day prior to your defense). Use your USU zoom account to set up a zoom link for your defense to avoid having the meeting end prematurely.

Day of Defense

Public Seminar

The public seminar is a one-hour event where you will formally present your research and conclusions to all interested faculty and graduate students. Your presentation should last a maximum of 45 minutes to allow for questions. Friends and family are welcome to attend in person or remotely. Whenever possible, practice your presentation in the room where your defense will take place so you can become familiar with the AV system ahead of time.

Defense Meeting

You must then hold a defense meeting with your supervisory committee within 48 hours after your public seminar to answer questions about your research and/or general knowledge in the field. The supervisory committee will then come to a consensus on your thesis/dissertation, its defense, and whether you have fulfilled the requirements of your program of study.

One of three decisions will result from the Defense Meeting:

- *Satisfactory*: your committee recommends that you are granted an advanced degree, upon passing the courses for which you are currently enrolled and completing the thesis/dissertation review process.
- *Conditional Acceptance*: your committee agrees to submit a “Satisfactory” decision (as defined above) at some future date, once you satisfy the outstanding conditions/deficiencies they identify. These conditions can include a major revision of your thesis/dissertation, completing additional readings, or remedying a deficient grade.
- *Unsatisfactory*: your committee recommends that you leave your graduate program without receiving an advanced degree. This is an unlikely event, given that your supervisory committee should have raised concerns much earlier. An unsatisfactory result is only justified under exceptional circumstances (e.g., twice failing a course, research fraud, plagiarism). All “Unsatisfactory” decisions will be reviewed by the department head.

Record of Exam

After your defense, a member of your committee must inform the GPC, preferably in writing, whether your defense was “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory.” Your GPC will then submit a Record of Examination (ROE) form to the SGS to indicate defense result. After your Record of Examination has been approved you will receive a letter from the SGS outlining the steps to submit your thesis/dissertation and remaining forms to fill out prior to graduation.

POST DEFENSE, SUBMITTING THESIS/DISSERTATION

Grace Semester

The semester after you defend is called your grace semester. You are encouraged to enroll in USU 7777, a no cost, no credit course that allows you to maintain access to the library and your box files throughout your grace semester. If you are an international student, you will be required to enroll in USU 7777 to maintain non-immigrant status. A \$100 late completion fee is charged for every additional semester beyond the grace semester needed to finalize your degree. Please note, if you have not deposited your thesis/dissertation and closed out your degree within one year of your defense, USU and the WILD Department may require you to redefend.

Required Forms

You will need to submit three forms to the SGS prior to submitting your thesis or dissertation for review.

- [Title Page Form](#) This form indicates your committee's final approval of your thesis or dissertation. This form will also serve as the signature page for your committee and the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies at the end of the review process.
- [Authorship and Copyright Form](#) This form specifies your plans for publication and clarifies expectations about co-authorship and other acknowledgements with your major advisor and committee.

Note: It is assumed that you are the sole author of all thesis/dissertation chapters unless otherwise indicated. If you have a thesis/dissertation chapter that has been published or prepared for publication it is expected that you are the primary author and that you will include a full citation including co-authors as a footnote.

- [Thesis/Dissertation Format and Style Form](#) This form indicates the format (monograph or multiple paper) used and the conventional style manual (APA, MLA) or journal(s) followed for citations, table and figure captions, reference list, headings etc.

Thesis/Dissertation Review Process

Once you have made all final edits as required by your committee and formatted your thesis or dissertation in line with the USU Publication guide, you can submit your thesis or dissertation for review. The format review process is comprised of two parts: the department review and the SGS review. Following the format review your thesis/dissertation be sent to the library for final checks and publication. Please allow five weeks for the overall review process.

Departmental Review

The first review is at the department level. You will submit a word doc of your thesis or dissertation to your GPC along with electronic samples from any journals used for headings, figure and tables captions, and citation formatting. The GPC's role is solely to check and refine the format. All changes to content need to be made before you submit for the first review. The GPC may make minor formatting corrections and/or send you a list of corrections that need to be made before the next step in the review process.

SGS Review

Once your thesis or dissertation has been successfully reviewed at the department level, your GPC will submit it to the SGS reviewer. The SGS reviewer will check for plagiarism (including AI) and verify that your thesis/dissertation meets USU's publication guidelines and your elected journal citation style. The SGS reviewer will request corrections as needed. Once the SGS review is complete, your thesis/dissertation will be sent to the library for publication.

Library Submission Final Step of Thesis/Dissertation Submission

The library will check that you have met their manuscript deposit requirements and prepare your thesis/dissertation for electronic publication in the Digital Commons. Once the library has cleared your thesis/dissertation for publication, the Vice Provost of Graduate Studies will review and sign the title page. Your thesis/dissertation is now complete! Please see [USU Library Services](#) for details on having a bound copy printed.

DEGREE AWARDING

Your degree will be awarded within a few weeks following the semester in which your thesis/dissertation submission was completed. **You will need to fill out a graduation application, pay the graduation application fee, and make sure all degree requirements from the department and the SGS are met.** Please work with your GPC to ensure that all the necessary steps have been completed. See below for a list of minimum requirements:

- Previous degrees verified through official transcripts.
- All coursework requirements have been met and coursework is up to date (within 8 years) or revalidated.
- All credit requirements have been met.
- Correct credit amounts and letter grades (no "incompletes") are posted to ALL courses on your USU transcript.
- All SGS forms have been completed.
- Thesis/dissertation successfully defended.
- Final Thesis/dissertation title page signed by Vice Provost and published in Digital Commons

In addition to the above, please turn in all computers, any field equipment and keys/prox cards. Work with your major advisor to determine best long-term storage of data and related files.

Defending and Receiving Degree in the Same Semester

It is possible to defend and receive your degree in the same semester, however, it requires considerable attention to timing. You will need to defend at least seven weeks before the end of the semester. This will allow you to have two weeks to make any committee edits requested at the Defense Meeting and the five weeks necessary for your thesis/dissertation to go through the entire review process.

STUDENT STATUS AND RESIDENCY

Continuous Registration

All matriculated graduate students are required to maintain Continuous Graduate Registration status which simply means that you are currently enrolled. To meet this requirement, you need to register for at least 3 credits or more if you need to have full time status (see pg. 10). This requirement applies to fall and spring semesters only.

If you are unable to register for a fall or spring semester and are not using University facilities or faculty time you can submit an [Application for Leave of Absence/Continuous Registration](#) to maintain continuous graduate registration status. There is a Continuous Registration Fee of \$100 per semester (fall and spring).

International students usually do not qualify to pay the Continuous Registration Fee because of immigration regulations but must be registered as a full-time student through their final semester.

If You Need Time Away

If extenuating circumstances begin to change your degree timeline, please notify your major advisor as soon as possible. This allows them to provide adequate support and adjust deliverables if you require an extended break. You will also need to tell the SGS that you are taking a break. You can do that by submitting the [Application for Leave of Absence/Continuous Registration](#). See also Student Resources.

Applying for Utah Residency

Please contact the [USU Residency office](#) for all questions related to applying for residency. In brief, domestic, non-resident graduate students qualify for Utah Residency after 12 months in Utah. However, you need to have a valid Utah driver's license or state issued ID card for at least

three months before you can apply for residency. Therefore, you will need to apply for a Utah issued license or ID at or before 9 months of residence.

If you need to leave Utah for field work during your first year, you will need to submit an [Absence From Utah Form](#) prior to leaving Utah. Field work is considered a requirement of your institutional program and this time spent away will count towards your 12 months of Utah residency.

If you are working as a 0.5 FTE GRA or GTA the SGS will waive the non-resident tuition portion for your first two semesters (not including summer). You are expected to gain Utah Residency before your third semester begins.

FINANCES

Graduate Research Assistantships

Many graduate students in the WILD Department are funded through a Graduate Research Assistantship. These assistantships provide a twice monthly salary and qualify the recipients for a non-resident tuition waiver (for first year only) and subsidized health insurance.

The salary is modest and is not intended as a living wage. It is intended to provide some financial support for you as you work toward your degree and as compensation for working an average of 20 hours/week on projects in your major advisor's lab. This may or may not include working on your specific research. You will likely spend an additional 20 hours on course work and independent study.

Funding for GRAs often comes from external grants that have been awarded to your major advisor. These grants typically require specific research deliverables. Discuss the broader research project, expected deliverables, timeframe for which research assistantship funding is guaranteed, and your specific role in the project with your major advisor.

The WILD department established a minimum compensation guideline in January 2023 for students hired as GRAs. The minimum is determined in part by the current cost of attendance, as estimated by the SGS, and the cost of tuition and fees and therefore increases over time. Students that were hired as GRAs using grants or funding established prior to the current minimum compensation guideline may be paid less. Please ask your GPC and/or major advisor if you have any questions about your compensation amount or the current minimum.

Required tax withholdings for students hired as GRAs may change over summer months when courses are not being taken. Please contact the [USU Payroll office](#) with any questions and to learn how your paycheck might be affected.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Teaching Assistantships are designed to provide graduate students with teaching experience and offer instructional support for courses. Graduate TA compensation is on a preset scale, by degree type, for the average number of hours worked per week. You will want to clarify responsibilities, expectations and pay with the course instructor and your major advisor. You can request a list of instructors looking for TAs from the department office. All graduate TAs are required to successfully complete the TA training course USU 7920. This no cost, no credit course can be taken at the beginning or prior to the semester you will work as a TA.

TA positions for students hired as GRAs

Graduate TAs can be compensated through one of two models: the overload model or the substitution model. As a GTA your workload may either replace (substitution) or supplement (overload) your GRA responsibilities. If you and your major advisor determine that the GTA hours will be in substitution of your GRA hours, then your hours worked and pay will remain the same. If you and your major advisor determine that the GTA hours will be in addition to your GRA hours, then the overload model will be used and you will see an increase in pay and hours worked per week (up to 29). Your major advisor ultimately decides which model will be used so please work with them directly. If you decide that the model selected is not in your best interest, then you can decline the TA position.

Scholarships

You can submit a USU General Scholarship application through the Scholarship Portal (also known as Scholarship Universe) link on the [Student Financial Support](#) webpage. This application will allow you to see and apply for all USU, QANR specific, and private scholarships you are eligible for.

USU Student Health insurance

All graduate students who receive a fellowship of \$10,000 or more per year through USU, or are employed as a Graduate Instructor, GTA, or GRA for a combined total of 20 hours per week (0.5 FTE), are required to have some form of health insurance and are eligible for subsidized health insurance through USU. This subsidy requires the fellowship or grant account to pay 80% of the premium, with the student responsible for the remaining 20%. Participation in USU's student health insurance plan may be waived if you have comparable health insurance with another provider.

Graduate students that are not employed by USU (GRA, GTA, GI) or not receiving a \$10,000 per year fellowship can voluntarily opt into USU's student health plan.

Insurance premiums for health insurance are due at the beginning of fall (fall semester coverage) and spring (spring and summer semester coverage) semesters. For information about

health insurance rates and coverage for all students please see the [SGS Health Insurance](#) page.

Dental and vision insurance is also available to all USU students. Enrollment for vision and dental insurance is only available in the fall unless you are a spring semester start student. For information about dental and vision insurance rates and coverage please see the [SGS Health Insurance](#) page.

Tuition and Fees

Your initial offer letter from the WILD department outlines what you can expect from your major advisor regarding tuition support, if any. If you are responsible for paying tuition and/or fees, you can find information on payment deadlines on the [Registrar's website](#). There is also an option to make payments. If your major advisor is responsible for paying tuition and/or fees through a grant, your advisor will work directly with your GPC to set up payment.

Tuition/Fee Payment for students hired as GRAs

All GRAs, regardless of any tuition support expected, need to be registered for full time status (6 credits) unless a Full Time at 3 Credits form is on file. In addition, the non-resident portion of tuition, if applicable, will be waived by the SGS for your first year (please see Applying for Utah residency section).

Some GRAs may qualify for a tuition waiver from the college. Tuition waivers are awarded by semester and provide a waiver for the resident portion of tuition. The tuition waiver does not cover fees or differential tuition, which is an additional charge on some courses. Tuition waiver availability is limited and variable, and priority is given to PhD students without tuition coverage through a grant and students that are compensated below the current department minimum for GRAs.

Tuition/Fee Payment for students hired as 20 hours per week GTAs

Students hired as a 0.5 FTE GTA through a single or combined TA assistantship within the same semester automatically qualify for a tuition waiver. You will also need to be registered for full time status (6 credits) unless a Full Time at 3 Credits form is on file.

Conference Travel Funding from the Department

Supplemental funds for conference travel may be requested from the WILD Department. These funds are intended to be in addition to funding provided by your major advisor and the Ecology Center, if you are pursuing an Ecology degree. Therefore, you need to request funds from your advisor and the Ecology Center before applying for department support. Not receiving funds from other sources does **not** preclude you from department funding.

Please email your GPC if you would like to request department funds. You will need to submit

details regarding the conference, your presentation, proposed travel budget and plan to meet with the department head. Over the course of your degree, department travel funds are available for one conference if you are an MS student and two conferences if you are a PhD student. Department funding is limited, and preference is given to students with speaking engagements.

Travel funding from the WILD department varies by conference location. These funding amounts follow SGS Graduate Travel Award guide:

Virtual conference: \$150

Regional conference*: \$200

National conference: \$300

International conference: \$400

*Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada

Conference Travel Funding from Other Sources

Conference travel funding is also available from SGS. This funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis and must be matched dollar-for-dollar by another university source (major advisor, department, Ecology Center, etc.). Please submit a [Graduate Student Travel Award](#) to apply for funds. Submit these requests as early as possible. You can receive one award per fiscal year (July 1st through June 30th the following year). You can be awarded up to two times as an MS student and three times as a PhD student.

Additional sources of funding through the Quinney College of Agriculture and Natural Resources are still being determined. This space will be updated as that information becomes available.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Where To Find Resources

The SGS offers a comprehensive list of [student support resources](#) available through USU. You can find resources specific to academic, health and wellness, finances, and international student support among others. Additionally, the [USU Student Support page](#) provides links to additional campus and community-based resources. Check the [USU Student Association page](#) for both student-led and departmental clubs. If you would like information about community-based resources or other student-led support systems, please reach out to the Graduate Student Council or your GPC.

Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities and SGS links

Your rights and responsibilities under USU and SGS policies are outlined in the [SGS Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) handbook. Please review your rights and responsibilities and talk with

your major advisor and/or GPC if you have any questions or need additional information. The handbook also details actions you can take if you feel your rights have been violated. The SGS has also created a new [Student handbook](#) with a wide range of helpful topic-based links.

A [confidential contact form](#) is available for students to contact the associate vice provost of graduate studies directly. This form allows you to request a confidential meeting or conversation.

Emergency Medical Fund

Graduate students in QANR are eligible to apply for financial aid in the event of a medical emergency that creates financial hardship. For more information, contact the Emergency Medical fund Liaison on the [Graduate Student Council](#) webpage. A direct link to application will be provided once available.

OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

Graduation Ceremony and Walking Early

You are strongly encouraged to attend USU's Spring Commencement and the Quinney College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Convocation, whether you are graduating or walking "early." You are welcome to walk early and fully participate in the hooding ceremony and commencement events, even if your degree is not officially awarded in the spring or summer semesters. Walking early is a great option for students who plan to defend in the spring or summer semesters. In some cases, students may walk early when planning to defend at the beginning of the fall semester. If this is of interest to you, talk with your advisor and GPC.

Details about participating in commencement and the appropriate academic regalia are available on the USU Commencement website. The WILD department has a limited number of master's and doctorate hoods available for students to borrow. In addition, QANR has some caps and gowns available to lend on a first-come, first-served basis. Tassels and Tams (an option for PhD students instead of the mortarboard cap) are available for purchase from the USU Bookstore.

You will receive several notifications regarding commencement participation and preparation from the SGS and WILD Department and QANR at the beginning of the spring semester. You are responsible for completing all steps required to participate in commencement.

Note: To have your name included in the USU Spring Commencement Booklet, you must submit your graduation application by the date listed on the USU Commencement website (typically mid-February).

Please work with your GPC if you have any questions about participating in the spring commencement ceremony.

Student Trainings

Responsible Conduct of Research Training

The SGS requires all graduate students to complete the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training. The RCR introduces key topics related to proper research conduct and the regulations that ensure you perform your research in scientifically safe, sound, and ethical ways.

Instructions for enrolling in RCR training are available on the [RCR Training](#) website. MS students will be required to note the date of training completion on their *Thesis/Project Approval* form and doctoral students will include the date on their *Application for Candidacy* form. The SGS maintains a record of all student participation in RCR training. If you have forgotten the date your training was completed please contact your GPC for help retrieving it.

Common Graduate Student Trainings

There are several required and optional trainings for graduate students, as well as other opportunities to advance your academic and professional skills and network with professors and peers outside of classes. The following table is not exhaustive and should be used as a resource only. Please see also [SGS student resources](#).

Training	Who?	Frequency	Website
Student Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training	All incoming graduate students during their first semester.	Once	https://www.usu.edu/equity/trainings/student-prevention
Employee Sexual Misconduct (Title IX) Training	All graduate students hired as GRAs or GTAs	Annual	https://www.usu.edu/equity/trainings/employee-prevention
Driver's Training	Anyone operating a USU vehicle.	Every 2 yrs.	https://www.usu.edu/risk/vehicles/drivers-training
P-Card Training	Cardholders and delegated users.	Every 3 yrs.	https://www.usu.edu/pcard/training
Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training	* PhD students * MS Plan A students * NIH, NSF, USDA-NIFA funded students	Once	https://research.usu.edu/compliance/responsible-conduct-of-research
Teaching Assistant Workshop, including FERPA	Anyone helping in a classroom capacity.	Once	https://gradschool.usu.edu/trainings/teaching-assistant-training
Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder	Ask your major professor.	Once	Register through the QCNR Grad. Safety Liaison (announcement & registration email is sent to all QCNR grad. students)

Lab Safety	Complete the online questionnaire to determine appropriate trainings.	Annually	https://research.usu.edu/ehs/training/index#training
Other Lab Safety Protocols	Ask your major professor.	Variable	Variable

Notice of Non-Discrimination

In its programs and activities, Utah State University does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, genetic information, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression, disability, status as a protected veteran, or any other status protected by University policy or local, state, or federal law. The following individuals have been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies:

Matt Pinner

Executive Director of Civil Rights & Title IX Office

matthew.pinner@usu.edu

435-797-1266

Distance Education, Rm 401 5100

Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-5100

Cody Carmichael

Assistant Director and Title IX Coordinator

cody.carmichael@usu.edu

435-797-1266

Distance Education, Rm 404 5100

Old Main Hill, Logan, UT 84322-5100

For further information on notice of non-discrimination:

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil

Rights 303-844-5695

OCR.Denver@ed.gov

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDE TO THESIS/DISSERTATION PUBLICATION

Formatting your thesis/dissertation in preparation for submission to the SGS for review requires great attention to detail and is the primary reason for a departmental review prior to submission. This supplement is intended to clarify publication requirements (not replace them) and answer common formatting questions. Please reach out to your GPC (departmental reviewer) if you have any questions.

Difference between the Format and Style

The **format** of your thesis or dissertation refers to how your manuscript is divided into chapters. You can choose a monograph or multiple paper format.

Monograph

Each section of your manuscript is formatted into its own chapter. This is the traditional format of a manuscript. If multiple research aspects/experiments/projects are conducted they are blended within each section (intro, methods, etc.) to create one cohesive document.

Multiple Paper

This format includes an introductory chapter and a conclusion chapter. The multiple research aspects/experiments/projects are contained within individual chapters and are formatted for publication.

The **style** of your thesis or dissertation refers to the appearance of your manuscript (e.g., font spacing, order of references). For your *styling* you can use a major style guide (APA, MLA) or the peer reviewed journal(s) of your choice.

Overview of thesis/dissertation contents

Every thesis/dissertation has 2 parts the **front matter** and the **back matter** or body of text.

Front Matter

All style on these pages is dictated by the [USU SGS Publication Guide](#) and your text needs to match in letter case, spacing, and content and order of pages.

- Title page
- Copyright Notice
- Abstract
- Public Abstract
- Dedication (optional)
- Frontispiece (optional)
- Acknowledgments
- Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures

Back Matter or Body of Text

This is everything (chapters, appendices) not listed under front matter. Your thesis/dissertation can be a monograph or a multiple paper **format** - see below for example outlines. Your **style** guide (major style guide or the peer reviewed journal) will determine the appearance of ALL the following items:

- Headers (except Chapter Titles)
- Sub headers
- Paragraph indentation (if any) following headers
- Tables captions and styling (the APA style guide is very particular about this!)
- Figure captions
- In text citations
- Reference list

Chapter Titles

Regardless of manuscript style we will default to traditional chapter title format (unless a publication is already under review). Your chapter titles will all look like this:

CHAPTER 2 (Centered, All caps, No bold)

HOW PLANTS AND ANIMALS INTERACT (Title name, Centered, All caps, No bold)

Please note- If you are using APA formatting the chapter title will act as your Level 1 Heading even though it doesn't match APA exactly.

Table of Contents

Please include second level headings as subsections in your table of contents. You are not required to include third level headings, but you can as needed for clarity. If you include third level headings in the table of contents please do so consistently throughout all chapters.

Tables and Figures

Tables and figures can appear within the chapter text, at the end of the chapter or at the end of the manuscript in an appendix. Please be consistent throughout the manuscript and follow the general convention of table captions placed above the table and figure captions placed below the figure.

Examples of Monograph and Multiple Paper Format Outlines

All thesis/dissertations submitted for review must contain at least 4 chapters regardless of monograph or multi-paper format. A very common formatting mistake is to blend the two format types together (see example below). This is usually easiest to remedy by reformatting into a monograph. Please see your GPC if you have questions about format type or if you are trying to fix a blended format.

Monograph Outline

Chapter 1 Introduction/literature review
 Chapter 2 Methods
 Second level heading (e.g. Study Area)
 Third level heading (Study Area A)
 Third level heading (Study Area B)
 Second level heading (e.g. Sampling Procedures)
 Chapter 3 Results
 Chapter 4 Discussion
 Chapter 5 Conclusion
 References
 Appendices

Please note- the only abstracts included in a monograph are those in the ‘front matter’. Individual chapters do not contain abstracts.

Multiple Paper Outline

Abstract in front matter *and* within the individual chapters formatted for publication*

Chapter 1 Introduction/Literature Review
 Chapter 2 Title of Paper 1
 Second level heading (Abstract)*
 Second level heading (Introduction)
 Second level heading (Methods)
 Third level heading (Study Area)
 Second level heading (Results)
 Second level heading (Discussion)
 Second level heading (References)
 Chapter 3 Title of Paper 2
 Second level heading (Abstract)*
 Second level heading (Introduction)
 Second level heading (Methods)
 Third level heading (Study Area)
 Second level heading (Results)
 Second level heading (Discussion)
 Chapter 4 Conclusion
 Second level heading (References)

Blended Format- NOT ACCEPTED BY SGS

Chapter 1 Introduction/Literature Review
 Chapter 2 Title of Paper 1
 Second level heading (Abstract)
 Second level heading (Introduction)
 Second level heading (Methods)
 Third level heading (Study Area)
 Second level heading (Results)
 Second level heading (Discussion)

Second level heading (References)
Chapter 3 Conclusion

Publishing a Manuscript Prior to Defense

If you prepare a portion of your thesis or dissertation for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, before you defend, you must circulate for committee review prior to submission. If a committee member has not reviewed the manuscript within 14 calendar days, then you can proceed with submission to the journal without their feedback.

You are encouraged to include published, and/or accepted papers as chapters within your thesis/dissertation even if the formatting is not consistent with the USU publication guidelines.

CHECKLIST FOR COMPLETING A MASTER'S DEGREE

By the End of Your 1st Semester

- Complete all requisite trainings, including the Responsible Conduct of Research Training
- Meet with your major advisor to read over and discuss the *Advising Agreement*

By the End of Your 2nd Semester

- Form your supervisory committee and submit your *Supervisory Committee Approval Form*
- Meet with your supervisory committee to discuss research plans and to create a Program of Study. Plan to update your committee on your progress in accordance with the *Advising Agreement*
- Enter your *Program of Study* into Degree Works and notify your graduate program coordinator.
- Participate in the WILD Graduate Research Symposium
- Prepare and present your thesis proposal to your committee
- Submit your *Master's Thesis/Project Approval* form

6 + Weeks Prior to Your Defense

- Ensure that your supervisory committee will not change between now and your defense
- Submit a copy of your thesis to each member of your supervisory committee for review
- Schedule a date, time, and location for your defense with your supervisory committee
- Notify your GPC of your intent to defend
- Ensure the courses you took match what you originally submitted on your POS by updating your plan in degree works and notifying your GPC
- Revalidate any coursework older than eight years

3 Weeks Prior to Defense

- Submit an *Appointment for Examination Form*
- Advertise the public seminar portion of your defense, set up zoom meeting

Defense Day/Post-Defense

- Present your public seminar and hold a Defense Meeting with your Supervisory Committee within 48 hours. Remind your committee to inform departmental staff, preferably in writing, whether your defense was “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”

Grace Semester

- Enroll in USU 7777 If you need continued access to IT services (including Box) and/or the USU Merrill-Cazier Library
- Submit the *Title Page Form* to the SGS
- Submit your *Thesis Format and Style and Electronic Publication Approval Form*
- Submit the *Authorship and Copyright Form*
- Submit an electronic copy of your manuscript and electronic samples from each journal you used for citation style to the WILD Department Format/Style Reviewer
- Make any corrections requested by the WILD Department Format/Style Reviewer and SGS, and then submit a fresh electronic copy to the WILD GPC

Degree Awarding and Finishing Up

- Check that all degree requirements have been met
- *Apply for Graduation* and pay fee
- Turn in computers, field equipment, and keys/prox as applicable

[SGS Academics & Forms](#)

CHECKLIST FOR COMPLETING A DOCTORAL DEGREE

By the End of Your 1st Semester

- Complete all requisite trainings, including the Responsible Conduct of Research Training
- Meet with your major advisor to read over and discuss the *Advising Agreement*.

By the End of Your 2nd Semester

- Participate in the WILD Graduate Research Symposium

By the End of your 3rd Semester

- Form your supervisory committee and submit your *Supervisory Committee Approval Form*
- Meet with your supervisory committee to discuss research plans and to create a Program of Study. Plan to update your committee on your progress in accordance with the *Advising Agreement*.
- Enter your *Program of Study* into Degree Works and notify your GPC graduate program coordinator.

By the End of your 4th Semester

- Take and pass your comprehensive exams (can also be completed during 3rd year)
- Receive supervisory committee approval on dissertation research proposal
- Obtain necessary regulatory approvals to conduct proposed research
- Submit your *Application for Candidacy* (completed following comps)

Spring of 3rd year

- Participate in the WILD Graduate Research Symposium for a second time (if comps in spring of 3rd year, schedule for 4th year)

6 + Weeks Prior to Your Defense

- Ensure that your supervisory committee will not change between now and your defense

- Submit a copy of your dissertation to each member of your supervisory committee for review
- Schedule a date, time, and location for your defense with your supervisory committee
- Notify your GPC of your intent to defend
- Ensure the courses you took match what you originally submitted on your POS by updating your plan in degree works and notifying your GPC
- Revalidate any coursework older than eight years

3 Weeks Prior to Defense

- Submit an *Appointment for Examination Form*
- Advertise the public seminar portion of your defense, set up zoom meeting

Defense Day/Post-Defense

- Present your public seminar and hold a Defense Meeting with your Supervisory Committee within 48 hours. Remind your committee to inform departmental staff, preferably in writing, whether your defense was “Satisfactory” or “Unsatisfactory”

Grace Semester

- Enroll in USU 7777 If you need continued access to IT services (including Box) and/or the USU Merrill-Cazier Library
- Submit the *Title Page Form* to the SGS
- Submit your *Thesis Format and Style and Electronic Publication Approval Form*
- Submit the *Authorship and Copyright Form*
- Submit an electronic copy of your manuscript and electronic samples from each journal you used for citation style to the WILD Department Format/Style Reviewer
- Make any corrections requested by the WILD Department Format/Style Reviewer and SGS, and then submit a fresh electronic copy to the WILD GPC

Degree Awarding and Finishing Up

- Check that all degree requirements have been met
- Apply for Graduation and pay fee
- Turn in computers, field equipment, and keys/prox as applicable

[SGS Academics & Forms](#)