

Graduate Student Handbook
Department of Horticulture
University of Arkansas

Guidelines for Students Seeking Advanced Degrees in
Horticulture, Landscape, and Turf Sciences

Revised and updated August 2025

Foreword

Entering graduate school is a significant life event and change – whether coming directly from an undergraduate program or transitioning from an existing career. This handbook is an introduction to gaining admission into and successfully completing one of the three graduate degree programs offered by the Department of Horticulture.

Information needed to be a successful graduate student is available from multiple sources. These sources include the office of Graduate School and International Studies, the online graduate catalog, academic advisors, graduate committee members, cohorts, and peers.

This graduate handbook focuses on criteria and policies related to Department of Horticulture degree programs and is intended to answer frequently asked questions and to serve as a reference guide. **Prospective and current graduate students should always consult the official policies and procedures detailed in the Graduate School and International Education Handbook and the Catalog of Studies available online from the Graduate School.**

Mary Savin
Horticulture Department Head

Table of Contents

Forward	1
Introduction	3
Greetings!; Department Mission; Program Goals	3
Interested in advanced degrees in the Department of Horticulture?	3
Graduate School Eligibility and Requirements	3
Applying for Graduate School	4
International admission requirements	4
Assistantships and Funding	4
Assistantship Work Expectations	5
Tuition Waivers	5
Annual Progress Report	5
Course Work Deficiencies	6
Academic Standing	6
Termination from the Graduate Program	6
Degree Program Descriptions and Requirements	7
Master of Science (MS) – Thesis Option	7
Student Advisory Committee:	7
Plan of Study	8
Course Work Proposal:	8
MS Thesis Proposal	9
Thesis Submittal	9
Thesis Seminar	10
Comprehensive Exam and Final Thesis Defense	10
Time Limits to Achieve the MS degree	11
Master of Science – Non-Thesis Option	11
Non-Thesis Option Admission Requirements	12
Requirements for the Master of Science Degree (Non-thesis Option):	12
Graduate Student Committee	12
Final Exam	12
Time Limits to Achieve the MS non-thesis degree	12
Assistantships and Tuition Waivers	13
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in AFLS: Horticulture Concentration	13
Admission Requirements	13
Program Requirements	13
Advisory Committee	13
Dissertation Proposal and Plan of Study	14
Admission to PhD Candidacy	14
Dissertation Preparation and Defense	15
Dissertation Submission to the Student’s Graduate Program Committee	15
Dissertation Seminar	15
Dissertation Defense	16
Dissertation Submission	16
Timeline to Finish the PhD degree	16
Graduate School Resources and Links	17
Graduate School and International Education Forms	17

Introduction

Greetings!

The purpose of this handbook is to guide potential and current graduate students through the procedures, policies, and practices of applying for graduate studies and successfully obtaining advanced degrees in the discipline of horticulture.

Department Mission

The mission of the Department of Horticulture at The University of Arkansas is to conduct applied and basic research and support and enhance the Arkansas horticulture industries and to conduct high quality teaching and student research programs leading to B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in horticulture and turf sciences. Our department head and dedicated faculty and staff have set specific goals for executing our mission.

Program Goals

The goal of the Department of Horticulture is to serve the people of Arkansas and assist the nation and the world through education, research, and service. Through dedicated teaching, pursuit of knowledge and interaction with society, we seek to improve our contributions to general welfare. The Department of Horticulture has, as perhaps no other department, a goal to create quality of life for all citizens – economic, aesthetic, and social well-being by educating students in horticultural and turfgrass sciences, conducting research that makes a difference, and to communicate those findings to industry and the public.

Interested in advanced degrees in the Department of Horticulture?

Interested individuals should review faculty webpages for current research and extension emphases and contact the horticulture graduate coordinator before applying for admission to obtain information on programs, research foci, and graduate faculty. Those seeking graduate research or teaching assistantships should contact interested horticulture graduate faculty to secure a commitment before applying. Graduate admission is a two-step process. Students must be admitted to both the University of Arkansas Graduate School and the Department of Horticulture Graduate Program.

Graduate School Eligibility and Requirements

Eligibility and requirements are similar for both the master's degree (MS), non-thesis MS option, and for the doctoral degree (PhD). A conferred baccalaureate degree is required for admission for the master's program. If the student has not completed their baccalaureate degree at the time of application, they must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA (Grade Point Average) on the last 60 credit hours of attempted coursework. Upon admission, students will be required to submit official transcripts with degree confirmation for enrollment. Students who already have a degree at the time of application must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA on the last 60 credit hours of attempted coursework from an accredited institution of higher learning.

Graduate School admission is based on multiple factors including grade point average (GPA), and letters of recommendation, The Horticulture Department does not require the GRE for admission. However, the GRE may be required for scholarship and fellowship eligibility and may be required by specific faculty. Prospective students are encouraged to take the GRE for these reasons. International student applicants have additional admittance requirements. See International Student requirements section below.

Applying for Graduate School

Potential US citizen graduate students interested in horticulture apply to the Graduate School and International Education directly. There is a non-refundable application fee for new applicants.

This application must be submitted online. See Resources and Links page at the end of this document.

After the application has been submitted and processed by the Graduate School, the application is forwarded to the Horticulture Department to be reviewed by the Graduate Program Committee for acceptance or denial. The applicant will not be accepted until the Horticulture Department accepts the student. The Graduate Program Committee will vote on accepting the student and make its recommendation to the Graduate School which will inform the applicant of the decision of the Horticulture Graduate Program.

International admission requirements

Non-US citizens wishing to apply to the Department of Horticulture Graduate Program should contact the University of Arkansas International Student and Scholars Office for current information and admission criteria including visa requirements, English proficiency requirements, residency and student eligibility status. Applications are submitted online through the international application portal. See resources link at the end of this document. A non-refundable application fee is required for all new applicants. After acceptance from the International Student and Scholars Office, the Graduate School and Department Program approval process is identical to US citizens.

Assistantships and Funding

Horticulture Department graduate assistantships, both teaching and research, are limited and competitive. It is imperative that the applicant contact the graduate coordinator and members of the horticulture graduate faculty that have expertise in the applicant's study area of interest to enquire about the availability of graduate positions and funding.

There are two types of graduate assistantships. Graduate Research Assistantships (RAs) or Graduate Teaching Assistantships (TAs). The number of RA's available is dependent on the individual faculty member's grant or other funding resources and focused on research activities. TAs are dependent on college teaching funds and focused on teaching assistant activities.

Graduate students in a non-thesis master's program are not eligible for graduate assistantships or tuition waivers from the Department (see below section on Tuition Waivers).

The Graduate School has a website devoted to graduate student funding, qualifications, and policies. Refer to the resources link at the end of this document.

Assistantship Work Expectations

Most graduate students are on a 12-month 50% or half-time academic appointment. A fifty percent assistantship appointment requires 20 hours per week in teaching, research, or other activities related to the position. **This is in addition to any coursework taken or activities directly related to the student's thesis or dissertation research activities.**

Graduate students on assistantships do not accrue annual leave. Other than officially recognized paid university holidays, graduate assistants who need time off must consult and reach agreement with their academic advisor before planning an extended trip or any absence.

Tuition Waivers

Graduate assistants receive a tuition waiver which pays for tuition only. All other fees (health fees, lab fees, media fees, etc.) must be paid by the student. Students normally receive a statement that includes registration fees as well as tuition fees. The tuition fees will be covered, but the registration fees must be paid by the due date on the statement unless other arrangements are approved by the university treasurer's office. The horticulture program coordinator will process the tuition waiver requests on behalf of the student at the beginning of each semester.

Graduate students on assistantship must enroll in at least 6 hours in the fall and spring semesters and 3 hours in the summer. Tuition for two 3-4 credit hour courses per semester that are on the graduate assistant's approved plan of study are paid by the department assistantship. Students on external grant funding will need to discuss semester course loads with their academic advisor. PhD students in their last semester may be eligible for reduced enrollment.

Full-time University employees who have had continuous employment for at least one spring and fall semester may be eligible for a tuition waiver while pursuing a graduate degree.

Annual Progress Report

Graduate School policy mandates that all graduate students undergo a yearly academic review and a written progress report describing the student's academic and research progress during the past academic year. Each graduate student will prepare a Horticulture Department Annual Progress Report prior to the review. The review will be held by the Department Head and the Graduate Coordinator prior to June 30 of each year. Information to include in the progress report is a list of courses taken since the last report and the grade received, a synopsis of research progress, professional activities during the past year, any required exams, and an appraisal by the graduate student's academic advisor.

The Horticulture Department Coordinator will send out an annual review notification along with the required annual progress report document format towards the end of each spring semester. The deadline for the written review submittal will be communicated to the student when the student is notified, and a review time and date will be scheduled with the Department Head and the Graduate Coordinator. After the review, the graduate student and the Department Head and the Graduate Coordinator will sign the review form and forward it to the Graduate School by the established deadline for each year. The forwarded review will become part of the student's permanent personnel file. If a student receives two consecutive reviews indicating that the student is not making adequate academic progress, the horticulture program and the Graduate School have the option to dismiss the student from the program.

Course Work Deficiencies

Graduate students entering their graduate program are expected to have an appropriate background knowledge for the degree program and study area they are seeking. Students lacking knowledge in critical discipline or supporting content knowledge may be required by their advisory committee to take deficiency courses after matriculation. The Horticulture Department does not pay for course deficiencies. The academic advisor may pay for deficiency courses, but this will need to be agreed upon before the prospective student is admitted.

Academic Standing

Only letter grades of C or above in graduate courses will be accepted for graduate credit. Whenever a regularly admitted graduate student earns a cumulative grade-point average below 2.85 on graded course work taken in residence for graduate credit, the student will be warned of the possibility of academic dismissal. The student is expected to raise the grade-point average above 3.0 within the next 9 credit hours. When a graduate student has accumulated a minimum of 15 hours of graded course work taken in residence for graduate credit with a cumulative grade-point average below 2.85, and has received at least one previous warning, the student will be academically dismissed from the Graduate School. The student's degree program may request that the academic probation period be extended if the program can offer extenuating circumstances as a rationale and is willing to provide a plan of remediation for the student's success.

Termination from the Graduate Program

Students may be dropped from further study in their degree program and the Graduate School if at any time their performance is considered unsatisfactory as determined by either the student's academic advisor/advisory committee or the Dean of the Graduate School. Academic or research dishonesty and failure to maintain a specified cumulative grade-point average are considered to be unsatisfactory performance. See the Graduate Student Dismissal Policy, the Academic Probation Policy for Graduate Students, the university's Academic Integrity Policy, and the Research and Scholarly Misconduct Policies and Procedures in the Catalog of Studies. Refer to the link provided at the end of this document for specific criteria for each of the categories listed.

In general, termination may result from failure to fulfill obligations within the timeframe established by the Graduate School or the Horticulture Department. Graduate status may be terminated by not being in academic good standing with the university, academic misconduct, job-related misconduct, or lack of documented progress in the student's academic/research program. The student may also be terminated from an assistantship immediately from abandonment of duties or because of chair/major advisor, and/or department/college financial exigencies due to lack of or loss of funding resources. Students who feel they have been terminated unjustly may file a grievance following the University of Arkansas grievance and appeals process.

Degree Program Descriptions and Requirements

Master of Science (MS) – Thesis Option

This is the most common MS program. Only students seeking the thesis option will be eligible for graduate assistantships. The MS Thesis-option degree is a combination of coursework and a research project agreed upon by the student and their advisory committee.

In addition to required coursework and research activities, a written thesis covering the research is required for approval from the student's advisory committee in addition to a comprehensive exam and final thesis defense.

Student Advisory Committee: The purpose of the student advisory committee is to guide the student in developing a graduate program including coursework, research objectives, goals, and methodology. The advisory committee will be responsible for and the ultimate assessor of all completed coursework, the written thesis, program of study, and the final program and thesis defense.

During the application process and after contact with a potential graduate faculty member, the student will be assigned to a graduate faculty member in the area of the student's indicated study emphasis who will act as the academic advisor and chair of that student's advisory committee. In certain situations, a student may need to have a co-advisor/co-chair appointed if the primary advisor and committee chair is remote, and an on-campus representative is needed for administrative or other reasons.

During the first semester of the student's matriculation into the program, the student with the advice and the agreement of their academic advisor will select a minimum of three graduate faculty members (the academic advisor plus two more faculty with graduate faculty status), one of which must be external from the horticulture department faculty. The external member can act as a source of subject expertise and provide objective unbiased input. Faculty without graduate status (such as faculty members external to the University of Arkansas) may serve as a non-voting member of the advisory and thesis committee. The student is responsible for contacting

the prospective committee members and requesting their service on the committee. This is typically done in coordination with the academic advisor.

Once a committee has been identified, the student with the approval of the academic advisor will schedule an initial committee meeting to discuss general research goals and proposed coursework. This first meeting should take place within the first semester after the student matriculates for students on assistantship. Full-time University of Arkansas employees should have their first committee meeting within the first year of matriculation. At that meeting the graduate student will fill out the Master's Program Advisory Committee form with appropriate signatures and send to the Graduate School and the Horticulture Department Graduate Coordinator. If circumstances require additional expertise, the student with the consent of the academic advisor may add additional committee members if needed. It is advisable and strongly encouraged to have an initial advisory committee meeting as soon as possible after forming the committee and prior to the formal research proposal submittal stage.

Student committees may contain *ex officio* members who have graduate faculty status on the University of Arkansas campus. However, when a person does not hold graduate faculty status on the University of Arkansas campus, they may still be allowed to hold an *ex officio* position on a student's committee, in accordance with the following policy: When a committee member does not hold graduate faculty status at the University of Arkansas, they will be allowed to serve on a student's master's thesis or doctoral dissertation committee, in addition to the minimum number of members required by the Graduate School or the department/program. The *ex officio* member will be allowed to sign the thesis or dissertation, and their vote will be recorded but will not be binding for conferring the degree. This use of the term *ex officio* will indicate that the person does not hold graduate faculty status at the University of Arkansas and is serving in an honorary role.

Plan of Study

Course Work Proposal: Prior to the initial committee meeting and with input from the academic advisor, the student will develop a list of proposed coursework by semester to present to the advisory committee for consideration and approval. At this initial committee meeting the student should also present the general research objectives and goals for consideration and approval. Significant changes in the course of study must be made in consultation and approval of the advisory committee.

The MS-Thesis Option requires a minimum of 30 credit hours. Of those 30 credit hours, 24 hours are no lower than 50000 graduate level content courses and 6 hours of thesis credit hours. To maintain continuous enrollment, graduate students on assistantships must enroll for 6 credit hours in the spring and fall semesters, and 3 credit hours during the summer semester. Additional hours may be approved through a petition to the Department Head. International students may have other minimum credit hour requirements depending on their student status.

Tuition for courses that are on the graduate assistants approved plan of study is paid by the department. Students not on a departmental graduate assistantship or grant funding may proceed to take course work at their own rate but usually do not take more than four academic courses per semester.

MS Thesis Proposal

The MS student will write a formal research thesis proposal using the following format.

- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction and Literature Review
- Objectives and Hypothesis
- Experimental Approach and Methodology
- References Cited
- Proposed Timeline for research thesis work
- Proposed Coursework

The graduate student is encouraged to seek the help and advice of advisory committee members on the proposal development. Once the proposal is written and reviewed by the academic advisor, the proposal will be sent to the full advisory committee for review and approval. The academic advisor will set the deadline for the completed proposal, but it should be completed preferably within the first two semesters and at maximum within the first year after the student's initial matriculation. Failure to meet this deadline can result in loss of assistantship and/or termination from the program. Once the research proposal has been approved by the committee, major changes in the research problem and direction must be made in consultation and with the consent of the advisory committee. Changes must be documented and communicated to the committee, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Department Head. The agreed proposal by the committee and the student is to provide clarity and mutual understanding of expectations and requirements by all the parties. Refer to the Graduate School website (grad.uark.edu) for required graduate program forms and policies.

Thesis Submittal

The initial draft of the master's thesis will be distributed to the advisory committee in sufficient time for all the members to read and review the document prior to the final defense. A minimum of two weeks should be given for review prior to the scheduling of the final defense.

In consultation with the advisory committee prior to writing, the thesis may be composed and formatted in a traditional book chapter style format, or as a series of manuscripts ready for submittal to an academic journal usually in the student's area of expertise. If written in a manuscript submittal format, all manuscripts are integrated together with a common introduction and conclusion section. The academic advisor or committee members may have a preferred journal in their area of expertise. The thesis must follow the selected journal's style and format including citation conventions.

Thesis composition will include the following:

- Required format for title page
- Abstract
- Introduction/Problem Statement
- Literature Review
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusions
- Source Citations

Regardless of the format chosen, the University of Arkansas Guide to Thesis and Dissertations will be consulted for current information and guidelines on acceptable formatting and appearance. A link to the guide is given at the end of this document.

The student must apply for graduation and meet the deadline for that application. See the official university academic calendar at uark.edu for current due dates.

Thesis Seminar

Prior to the comprehensive final thesis defense date, the student will present a seminar on the research objectives, methodology used, results, and conclusions of the thesis research. The length of the seminar is normally 30 to 40 minutes with time afterwards for questions and discussion. The seminar presentation may be given immediately before the final examination/defense with the student's advisory committee approval. The research seminar should not be scheduled until the written thesis approaches completion and conclusions formulated. The advisory committee will be responsible for the format of the presentation and final approval of the research seminar date.

Comprehensive Exam and Final Thesis Defense

After the thesis has been submitted to the advisory committee for review and approval of the academic advisor, the final requirement for the MS degree is successfully passing a comprehensive oral examination and thesis research defense. The format of the oral examination and thesis defense is at the discretion of the advisory committee. While examination questions may cover any topic relevant to the student's academic career, questions usually pertain to the student's graduate program and thesis. The final defense should be scheduled at the convenience of the advisory committee but before the submittal deadlines for graduation to the Graduate School during the expected graduation semester. Typically, after the final defense the committee will provide the student with thesis edits and comments before the final approval is given.

The student must receive a passing score on the final examination/thesis defense by a simple vote of the majority of the advisory committee. Students failing the examination/thesis defense, at the discretion of the committee, may be retested one additional time. For subsequent committee meetings, the department head or graduate coordinator will be present for possible

adjudication. Students failing this second attempt may appeal the decision to the Department of Horticulture Graduate Committee. In the case of an appeal, a written summary of the exam results and the advisory committee's decision will be provided to the Graduate Coordinator or a designated graduate faculty if the Graduate Coordinator is the student's academic advisor.

A final copy of the thesis must be approved and the title page signed by all members of the advisory committee before submission to the Graduate School. No degree will be conferred until this final requirement is met.

After successful completion of the comprehensive examination and thesis defense, the academic advisor will communicate to the Horticulture Graduate Coordinator, the Department Head, and the Graduate School the results of the exam/defense. After the thesis has been approved and the committee has signed off on the final copy of the thesis, the academic advisor will again communicate to the above individuals that all requirements have been met. An electronic copy of the thesis must be provided to the Horticulture Department Coordinator so a hard copy can be printed and bound for departmental archival purposes. The department will cover the cost of this archival copy.

Time Limits to Achieve the MS degree

Graduate assistantships for the MS degree are limited to 24 months or four consecutive academic semesters and two summer semesters. If the academic advisor decides to keep a student on an assistantship beyond the normal 24 months, the academic advisor is expected to provide funding from external sources unless exceptional circumstances merit an extension to the time limit using partial or full departmental resources. If students complete all requirements for graduation after they have gone off departmental assistantships, they must apply for graduation, register for one credit hour and pay the appropriate fees during the semester they plan to receive their diploma.

The Graduate School has established a six-year time limit for the completion of the MS degree. If a student fails to complete the degree with the time limit, academic courses taken more than six years before will be lost. These courses would then have to be retaken or validated by the course instructor to be included in the degree.

Master of Science – Non-Thesis Option

The non-thesis master degree option is intended for students needing additional education in horticulture science for continued and advanced career opportunities in horticulture production or management and is considered a "terminal degree" meaning that it does not usually lead to a subsequent doctoral degree program. The degree program provides an educational and enhanced employment opportunity for students needing additional technical skills in horticulture but does not contain an in-depth research thesis component.

Non-Thesis Option Admission Requirements

Students seeking the non-thesis MS degree must meet all the admission criteria for the University of Arkansas Graduate School as described above. Applicants must have completed a BS or BA degree and had relevant coursework in biology, plant sciences, horticulture or related field, or three years of experience in a plant science related career. Applicants will also need to supply three letters of reference addressing academic and professional experience. The Graduate Record Examination is not required for admission.

Requirements for the Master of Science Degree (Non-thesis Option): The non-thesis program requires a minimum of 30 credit hours of coursework as approved by the student's academic advising committee and within the requirements prescribed below, including three credit hours completing a special problems project. The special problems requirement is a 'smaller-in-scope' topical project or study focus that is not as in-depth research as thesis research or as comprehensive as the MS thesis option degree. Examples of special problems may include an in-depth review paper, a detailed landscape design portfolio, management or production handbook, or other creative endeavor approved by the student's advisory committee.

Specific degree requirements are:

HORT 5030V	Special Problems	3 hr
HORT 54103 or CSES 50103	Horticulture Physiology/Crop Physiology	3 hr
STAT or AGST	Any Graduate Level Stats Course	3 or 4 hr
HORT Block	See List*	20 or 21 hr

*Plant and Agricultural Science Block – A minimum of 8-9 hours including: Course work in BIOL, CSES, AGST, PLPA, PTSC, ENTO, AGECE, AGME, AGED, LARC, or HORT.

Students must pass a written and oral examination to be given by their advisory committee upon completion of their course work and submission of special project.

Graduate Student Committee

The non-thesis option student will form a student advisory committee as described above for the MS thesis option degree.

Final Exam

Students must pass a written or oral examination administered by their advisory committee upon completion of their coursework and the submission of the special project. The format of the final examination will be decided by the advisory committee prior to the examination date.

Time Limits to Achieve the MS non-thesis degree

The limit to successfully completing the MS non-thesis option is six years similar to the MS thesis option described above.

Assistantships and Tuition Waivers

Non-thesis option MS students are not eligible for graduate assistantships or tuition waivers.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences: Horticulture Concentration

The doctoral degree program in Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences with a horticulture concentration is administered by the Department of Horticulture. Prospective doctoral students should have completed the requirements for a master's degree in horticulture, or a relevant plant science or relevant discipline-related field.

Admission Requirements

The introductory sections of this handbook detail general admission requirements and procedures to be accepted into the University of Arkansas and Department of Horticulture graduate program. The prospective student should also consult the Graduate School and International Education website for the most current requirements, especially for non-US citizens.

Program Requirements

The PhD program requires a combination of credit hour coursework and a doctoral dissertation on a research topic in the student's chosen field. Requirements include a minimum of 72 graduate semester credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree (which is normally 120 credit hours) or 42 credit hours beyond the master's degree. Program requirements must balance credit hours for required coursework, research, and dissertation preparation. Any student pursuing an on-campus (face-to-face) graduate degree from the University of Arkansas may take courses offered online or by distance, as long as the majority of credit hours presented for the degree are on-campus credit hours.

A minimum of 18 hours of dissertation credits (HORT 7000V) are required. The dissertation hours are to provide the student with sufficient time to make progress in writing the dissertation.

Advisory Committee

The purpose of the advisory committee is to guide the student in developing a doctoral program including coursework and will also act as the dissertation committee instead of two separate academic advising dissertation committees. The advisory committee will be responsible for and the ultimate assessor of all completed program requirements including the dissertation research and will administer all required examinations and the dissertation final defense.

During the application process and after contacting a potential graduate faculty member, the student will be assigned to an interested graduate faculty member in the area of the student's indicated study emphasis who will act as the major academic and dissertation advisor and chair

of the student's advisory committee. In certain situations, a student may need to have a co-advisor/co-chair appointed if the academic advisor/committee chair is remote and an on-campus representative is needed for administrative or other academic reasons.

By the end of the first semester of the student's matriculation into the program, the student with the advice and the agreement of the advisor/chair will select a minimum of four additional graduate faculty members (five total), one must be external from the horticulture department faculty, to serve on the committee. The external member can act as a source of subject expertise and provide objective unbiased input. The student is responsible for contacting the prospective committee members and requesting their service on the committee. Once a committee has been identified, the Doctoral Committee form is completed with the signatures of all the committee members and submitted to the Graduate School. The student with the approval of the advisor/chair will schedule an initial committee meeting to discuss general dissertation research goals and coursework. This is usually the time when the Professional Doctoral Committee form is signed since all members are usually present. It is advisable and strongly encouraged to have an initial committee meeting as soon as possible and prior to the dissertation proposal submittal stage.

Student committees may contain *ex officio* members who have graduate faculty status on the University of Arkansas campus. However, when a person does not hold graduate faculty status on the University of Arkansas campus, they may still be allowed to hold an *ex officio* position on a student's committee, in accordance with the following policy: When a committee member does not hold graduate faculty status at the University of Arkansas, they will be allowed to serve on a student's master's thesis or doctoral dissertation committee, in addition to the minimum number of members required by the Graduate School or the department/program. The *ex officio* member will be allowed to sign the thesis or dissertation, and their vote will be recorded but will not be binding for conferring the degree. This use of the term *ex officio* will indicate that the person does not hold graduate faculty status at the University of Arkansas and is serving in an honorary role.

Dissertation Proposal and Plan of Study

The advisor will set the deadline for the completed proposal, but it should be completed preferably within the first two semesters and at maximum within the first year after the student's initial matriculation. Failure to meet this deadline can result in loss of assistantship and/or termination from the program. An approved course of study and the dissertation research proposal should be completed and approved by the advisory committee. At this time, the Thesis/Dissertation Title form is completed and sent to the Graduate School and the Horticulture Department Graduate Coordinator.

Admission to PhD Candidacy

After the student has completed approximately two years of graduate study, the student must take a candidacy examination (prelims). The student's advisory committee is responsible for the

format and administration of the candidacy examination. The expectation is that the student is prepared to move to the independent stage of their degree. The exam must be taken and passed at least one calendar year (12 months) prior to the expected graduation date.

The student must receive a majority passing vote of the committee members. A “conditional pass” vote is allowed at the discretion of the committee. Students failing the examination may appeal the decision to the Horticulture Department Graduate Coordinator who will appoint an ad hoc committee to review the appeal.

Upon satisfactory completing these examinations, the student is admitted to candidacy and can proceed to work toward completion of the remaining requirements for the degree. The Candidacy Exam Notification needs to be signed and submitted to the Graduate School. At this time, the student must still enroll for at least one hour of dissertation credit each semester including summer if summer is the semester of graduation, whether or not in residence until the dissertation is completed, which is defined as all committee members signing the record of progress form and submission to the Graduate School. It should be remembered that a minimum of 18 hours of dissertation credit hours is required.

Dissertation Preparation and Defense

The student’s advisory committee and the graduate student will develop a dissertation preparation and acceptance timeline with approved deadline dates that fulfill the Graduate School requirements for the targeted graduation date. Care should be taken that dissertation documentation, examination announcements, and the required approval processes are completed by the deadlines set each academic year. The university academic calendar located on the University of Arkansas website lists important dates and deadlines for submission of thesis and dissertations.

Dissertation Submission to the Student’s Graduate Program Committee

After the dissertation has been written and is ready to be defended and sent to the committee, the student will allow sufficient time for the student’s committee to review and prepare for the final oral defense. While the final submission date to the committee is up to the discretion of the committee, two weeks after the committee has received the dissertation document is standard.

Dissertation Seminar

Prior to the comprehensive final dissertation defense date, the student will present an advertised and public final seminar presentation as required by the Graduate School on the research objectives, methodology used, results, and conclusions of the dissertation research. Consult the Graduate School website for procedures to submit the dissertation defense announcement online. After the announcement has been approved by the Graduate School, it will be added to the official University calendar and the student will be notified as such. The length of the seminar is 30 to 40 minutes with time afterwards for questions and discussion. The final seminar presentation may be given immediately prior to the final defense with advisory committee

approval. The research seminar should not be scheduled until the dissertation approaches completion and conclusions formulated. The advisory committee will be responsible for the format of the presentation and final approval of the dissertation seminar date.

Dissertation Defense

No later than two weeks prior to the projected graduation date, the student must pass an oral dissertation defense. The defense format and conductance of the examination will be decided by and administered by the advisory committee. The student must receive a majority passing score from the committee. Students failing the oral examination may be retested one additional time at the discretion of the advisory committee. Students failing this exam may appeal the decision to the Horticulture Graduate Committee chaired by the Graduate Coordinator. In the case of an appeal, a written summary of the exam results and the committee vote will be provided to the Graduate Coordinator and Department Head by the academic advisor. If the Graduate Coordinator is the same as the academic advisor, the Department Chair will delegate a non-associated graduate faculty as part of the Horticulture Graduate Committee for appeal purposes. Further action, if required, will follow current Bumpers College AFLS policy.

Dissertation Submission

Once the student successfully passes the dissertation defense and completes edits, the final copy of the dissertation is approved and the title sheet and any additional forms are signed by all the committee members and submitted to the Graduate School. No degree will be conferred until this final requirement is met. At the time of the submission to the graduate school, the dissertation must be accompanied by an Intellectual Property Disclosure Form. A digital copy of the dissertation is to be made available to the Horticulture Department for printing and binding. This bound copy will be added to the Horticulture Department archives.

Timeline to Finish the PhD degree

The time limit to successfully completing the PhD degree is seven years after initial matriculation.

Graduate School Resources and Links

Graduate Catalog - A resource for all official and current academic policies

<https://catalog.uark.edu/graduatecatalog/>

Graduate School and International Education homepage: <https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/>

Graduate Admission: <https://graduate-students.uark.edu/admissions/index.php>

Graduate Student Application Portal: <https://www.uark.edu/admissions/apply/index.php>

Graduate Cost and Funding: <https://graduate-students.uark.edu/cost-and-funding/index.php>

Graduate School Student Handbook: <https://uark.sharepoint.com/sites/GSIE-Graduate-Students/SitePages/Graduate%20Student%20Handbook/introduction.aspx>

International Students information, application, and submission website: <https://international-students.uark.edu/admissions/graduate-students.php#graduate-school-application-process>

Guide to Theses and Dissertations:

<https://uark.sharepoint.com/sites/GSIE/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FGSIE%2FShared%20Documents%2FSite%20Documents%20and%20Links%2Fthesis%2Ddissertation%2Dguide%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FGSIE%2FShared%20Documents%2FSite%20Documents%20and%20Links>

Graduate School and International Education Forms

Master's Student Forms: <https://uark.sharepoint.com/sites/GSIE-Graduate-Students/Student%20Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FGSIE%2DGraduate%2DStudents%2FStudent%20Forms%2FMaster%27s%20Student%20Forms&viewid=785fc7c2%2D4a0a%2D4177%2Dab2d%2D928555dafbd1>

Doctoral Student Forms: <https://uark.sharepoint.com/sites/GSIE-Graduate-Students/Student%20Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FGSIE%2DGraduate%2DStudents%2FStudent%20Forms%2FDoctoral%20Student%20Forms&newTargetListUrl=%2Fsites%2FGSIE%2DGraduate%2DStudents%2FStudent%20Forms&viewpath=%2Fsites%2FGSIE%2DGraduate%2DStudents%2FStudent%20Forms%2FForms%2FAllItems%2Easpx>

Graduation Forms: <https://uark.sharepoint.com/sites/GSIE-Graduate-Students/Student%20Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FGSIE%2DGraduate%2DStudents%2FStudent%20Forms%2FGraduation%20Forms&viewid=785fc7c2%2D4a0a%2D4177%2Dab2d%2D928555dafbd1>