

# Plant Biology Graduate Student Handbook

## 2022-2023



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## Overview of the Program

The Department of Plant Biology strives to provide an open, inclusive, and supportive intellectual environment to identify and address cross-cutting fundamental challenges in plant and fungal biology. The department is embedded in Franklin College of Arts & Sciences (<https://www.franklin.uga.edu>) and takes pride in its contributions to the instruction of non-science and science undergraduates at UGA. It serves a lead role in the UGA Plant Center (<https://plantcenter.uga.edu>), a forum that brings together plant scientists across UGA schools and departments. Members of the department (staff, student, and faculty), as well as their responsibilities and research interests, can be found on the official website (<https://www.plantbio.uga.edu>).

Maintaining a vibrant graduate program is at the very core of the Department's mission.

## The Graduate Studies Committee

Administration of the graduate program in the department is the responsibility of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC). This committee is chaired by the Graduate Coordinator (GC), and contains four other faculty members appointed by the Department Head. The committee's main responsibilities are to screen M.S. applicants for graduate studies in Plant Biology and recommend admissions, to assign laboratory assistantships, to recommend students for departmental and university level awards, such as teaching awards and HHMI fellowship nominations, to recommend changes in departmental graduate policies, and to coordinate recruitment activities.

For the 2022-2023 academic year, the Graduate Studies Committee has the following members:

Dr. Shu-Mei Chang, Graduate Coordinator  
Dr. Douda Bensasson  
Dr. Chang-Hyun Khang  
Dr. Wolfgang Lukowitz  
Dr. Chris Peterson

All members of the GSC will be happy to assist you in any way they can.

Chelsea Hargroves is the Plant Biology departmental staff member responsible for graduate student matters. She can be consulted for most routine questions, such as forms and signatures required for various graduate school documents, and for scheduling and coordinating the written exams.

## Joining the Program

The Department of Plant Biology recruits incoming PhD students mainly through the Integrated Plant Sciences (IPS) and Integrated Life Sciences (ILS) umbrella programs. Both programs require students to rotate in three different laboratories in their first semester. Students only officially join a laboratory and department in early December. While in IPS or ILS, students are bound by the guidelines governing the respective programs regarding rotations, course load, class choices, as well as choosing a major professor and department. Plant Biology policies will apply to students once they have officially joined the Department of Plant Biology.

Applicants to the P BIO Master's program will need to identify a major professor before they are considered for acceptance by the GSC. Admissions will be decided on a case-to-case basis.

## Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior while enrolled in the program and to act in a manner that demonstrates integrity and respect for others and the campus environment. All members of the graduate program need to be aware of and adhere to university policies governing [student conduct](#), [ethical research and academic conduct](#), [non-discrimination and anti-harassment](#), and [workplace violence](#) as detailed in the linked documents.

In addition, each student has a responsibility to ensure that they understand and follow the program regulations set by the Graduate School and the department. This includes duties that may seem mundane, but will cause problems when neglected. It is your job to meet Graduate School deadlines, fill out forms in a timely fashion, and make sure all your necessary documents are on file with the Graduate School, as well as the department.

A note about deadlines: please be aware that the Graduate School deadlines are subject to change. Every semester, an up-to-date list of deadlines is provided on the Graduate School website: <https://grad.uga.edu/current-students/important-dates-deadlines/>

Plant Biology graduate students are expected to actively contribute to and participate in the overall graduate program of the department. Such participation includes attending departmental seminars and other departmental functions. In a quirk that may seem archaic, UGA administration and faculty rely mainly on email for business communication: thus, students will need to check their UGA email accounts frequently.

## Role of the Advisory Committee and Major Professor

It is very important that new students become acquainted with the faculty and their peers, particularly in their area of interest, as soon as possible. All Plant Biology faculty welcome the opportunity to talk with new students about their career interests and possible research topics. During the first semester, graduate students should proactively seek interactions with members of the department beyond those already known from courses and rotations, so that they can select an Advisory Committee and a Major Professor.

It is the student's responsibility to identify a graduate faculty member willing to serve as their Major Professor. PhD students will, in general, do so before joining the department at the end of their IPS or ILS rotations. Master's students will do so before being admitted. No faculty member is required to serve as the Major Professor for any student. Students who do not have a Major Professor may be dismissed from the program, as outlined below in the section on "Dismissal from the Program."

The Advisory Committee, along with the Major Professor, share responsibilities to monitor graduate student progress and guide the student toward timely completion of their degree program. The Advisory Committee is charged with framing and approving programs of study, advising students on required research skills, directing and approving the comprehensive examinations, guiding the design of thesis/dissertation research projects, reading and approving the final thesis/dissertation document and approving the final oral examination (defense). Rules on assembling an Advisory Committee, including timeline and composition, are detailed in the section on "Student Advising."

## The Plant Biology Graduate Student Association (PBGSA)

Membership in the PBGSA includes all those students working toward M.S. or PhD degrees in the Department of Plant Biology. The organization provides the opportunity for graduate students to have a true and meaningful representation in the administration of the department. The PBGSA is important both to the graduate students and to the faculty of the department. Broad support is essential for the success of the organization – your participation is needed and your enthusiasm will make a difference.

The President of the PBGSA attends all faculty meetings and has one vote on all matters considered by the faculty, except as pertains to faculty personnel. The PBGSA also sends a representative to Recruitment Committee meetings. The faculty sends a representative to the meetings of the PBGSA for the purpose of fostering communications between the graduate students and the faculty. We sincerely hope that these avenues of communication will aid in the progress of the department for the mutual benefit of both the faculty and the graduate students.

The PBGSA also seeks to improve communications within the graduate student community. With this goal in mind, the organization serves as a clearinghouse for suggestions and information on student activities in the department and promotes social functions so that the graduate students may become better acquainted. A PBGSA bulletin board is maintained in the hallway outside the main office and students are encouraged to consult it.

PBGSA Officers for 2022-2023 are:

|                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| President               | Philip Bentz          |
| Vice President          | Justine Rojas Valadez |
| Treasurer               | Michelle Henson       |
| Secretary               | Mary Washburn         |
| Outreach/Teaching Chair | Summer Blanco         |
| Social Chair            | Emma Horne            |

## Degree Requirements

Plant Biology graduate students are bound by a framework of general requirements set by the Graduate School, as well as a number of specific requirements by the Department of Plant Biology.

## Time Guideline for Degrees

The department has adopted general time guidelines meant to help students progress towards their degree objective and to assist the faculty in assessing the student's accomplishments. The normal period of time for completing M.S. degree requirements is 3 years; for a Ph.D. degree, it is 5 years. These are also the periods of time during which the student will normally be eligible to receive a departmental Teaching/Lab assistantship (TA or LA) or Graduate School Assistantship (GSA). In unusual circumstances, the GSC will consider requests for additional support for up to one year. In such cases, an appeal to the Graduate Studies Committee must be made in writing, with a letter of support from the major professor.

## Graduate School Bulletin

Students are strongly advised to consult the current Graduate School Bulletin for details on all relevant policies

(<https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current->

[students/policies-procedures/graduate-bulletin/graduate-bulletin-a-c/](#)). Of particular importance may be the “Program of Study” document, which lists the degree requirements and can be found in the section titled “Summary of Graduate Degree Requirements.” In addition, the Bulletin contains general information on enrollment policies (including rules on minimum enrollment, continuous enrollment, and the residence credit requirement), and policies on time limits, leave of absence, and extension of time. Chelsea Hargroves will be happy to help you with any questions you may have about these regulations.

## Registration

All graduate students are required to register for at least two semesters each academic year (defined as Fall, Spring, and Summer semester). Doctoral students need to be registered in both Fall and Spring.

**If you are supported on an assistantship, you are required to register BEFORE the first day of class for a minimum of 12 credit hours during Fall and Spring semesters and a minimum of 9 credit hours during Summer semester. The Department of Plant Biology asks that you register for 18 credit hours each semester, to assist with our departmental credit hour production.**

If you are supported otherwise, your minimum requirements are 3 graduate credit hours in each of the two semesters.

International students must register every semester, including Summer, in order to maintain their visa status.

Continuous registration as described must be maintained until all degree requirements are

completed. However, the following two exceptions may apply: if all requirements for graduation can be fulfilled within the first two weeks of the semester, the Graduate School allows for registration of one credit hour for thesis/dissertation writing (PBIO 7300/9300). Similarly, students who have completed all requirements except for an incomplete course don't need to register for the semester in which they complete this course. Please contact Chelsea and the Graduate School at least one month before the beginning of the semester you wish to graduate to discuss this option.

In unusual circumstances, such as illness, pregnancy, or unexpected financial hardship, you may request a leave of absence from the enrollment requirement for a maximum of three semesters total. Please note that a leave of absence does not stop the clock on time limits, including course expirations and admission to candidacy. Extending time limits is possible in some cases, but needs to be argued separately.

## Departmental Seminar

Plant Biology graduate students are required to sign up for the departmental seminar (course PBIO 8830) every Fall and Spring semester, except when they are away from campus on field research, or have a conflict with either a teaching assignment or another class.

Please email Chelsea if you have a conflict to get an official excuse for the semester. The requirements for this course consist of attending at least 2/3 of the scheduled departmental seminars, normally held Mondays at 4:00PM. Chelsea will take attendance at Monday seminars, and inform the Graduate Coordinator if registered students do not attend the required number of seminars in a semester. We periodically have special seminars on other

days of the week, and if you don't have a conflict, you are required to attend.

## Seminar Course Requirement (Ph.D. only)

Each Ph.D. student must complete three seminar courses that require participants to organize and present material other than their own dissertation research. Two of these seminars must be completed by the end of the first semester in the third year of a student's attendance (that is within two years of joining the department). The Department of Plant Biology has experts in many different areas of plant biology and students are strongly encouraged to attend courses adjacent to their immediate field of research to broaden their knowledge in related fields of plant biology and foster their overall intellectual development.

Courses offered by the department include:

- PBIO 8010: Teaching Biology
- PBIO 8200: Grant Writing
- PBIO 8820: Plant Genetics & Molecular Biology
- PBIO 8840: Plant Ecology
- PBIO 8920: Explaining Your Science

Please note that these courses are offered on a regular basis but not necessarily every year, and that faculty may offer different topical seminars under the same course number but with different section/call numbers. Each semester's listing will appear online in the Schedule of Classes, and instructors frequently advertise for their upcoming seminar offering.

Seminar courses offered by other departments may be used to fulfill the requirement if necessary and with permission from the Graduate Coordinator. Petitions submitted to the GC should explain: (1) why none of the

offered PBIO courses is suitable; (2) what field of knowledge the applicant plans to synthesize in their presentation; and (3) how the topic of their presentation is distinct from their dissertation research.

## Teaching

The Department of Plant Biology considers teaching experience a vital part of a graduate student's training and each student is responsible for making sure they meet this teaching requirement.

M.S. students are required to teach at least one semester and Ph.D. students at least two semesters during their graduate training. Positions that don't involve direct interaction with students in a teaching capacity, such as preparing teaching labs, lecturing, or grading, cannot be used to fulfill the teaching requirement.

Students supported on grants or from other sources will generally be switched to departmental support during the semester they teach, with their advisor covering supplemental funds as needed.

Students need to submit their request for TA/LA support in the summer before the start of a school year. The Graduate Coordinator is responsible for assigning student to courses in need of TA/LAs. As part of this process, students will be asked about their preferences and the best effort will be made to match preferences with openings.

By accepting a teaching assignment, students make a commitment to fulfill their obligations throughout the entire teaching schedule, including pre-class preparation, prep sessions, proctoring and other official tasks assigned by their instructors or lab coordinator(s). Requests



for last minute changes in TA/LA assignments, i.e. because an RA position has unexpectedly become available to a student, cannot be honored as a rule. While working as a TA/LA, students need to make every effort to schedule their field work, research activities, conferences, and oral exams around their teaching commitments. Please contact your instructor in advance to discuss the details of your assignment and receive a class schedule.

It is important to the university that students be well prepared and qualified for their teaching assignments and the full policy applying to Teaching Assistants/Lab Assistants can be found [here](#). Domestic students and international students with a Bachelor's degree from a U.S. institution are qualified to teach if they have attended the Teaching Assistant Orientation and have taken or are currently taking GRSC 7770. Additional qualifications may be asked of TA/Las for courses offered by the Biology division, as some of them will be considered Instructors of Record.

International students should refer to the Center for Teaching and Learning's Guide to Demonstrating English Language Proficiency to determine their required English Language proficiency action steps related to TA and Instructor of Record policy. The guide can be found [here](#).

These and more resources are also described in the section on "Training for Teaching."

All graduate students of the program, including international students, have to be eligible to teach at UGA by the Spring semester of their third year (for PhD students that implies before promotion to candidacy) in order to be considered as showing adequate progress toward their degree.

## Comprehensive Exam Policy (Ph.D. only)

Graduate School requirements for the Ph.D. degree include a written exam and an oral exam for all candidates. Implementation of these exams is left to the department. The Department of Plant Biology uses the following guidelines:

### Written Exam

Students are required to take the written exam no later than Fall Semester of their third year in graduate school, but may elect to take it during Spring or Summer Semester of their second year. The exam may be scheduled over a two-week period, Monday through Friday. Chelsea must be given the days of your exam prior to your first exam. Typically, the student answers the questions of one committee member each day. Students may use a departmental computer or personal laptop to compose answers, but we have a limited number of computers available in locations suitable for the exam so we need to coordinate exam schedules. To do so, students or major professors need to notify Chelsea Hargroves of an intention to take the exams at least a month in advance.

The written exam will be prepared by the major professor and will contain questions from each advisory committee member. The prepared exams can be sent to the major professor who can check for appropriateness or overlaps between tests – though this is not required. Exam questions need to be turned over to Chelsea one week prior to the date of the first exam, along with the order of the exams to be taken. Chelsea will administer the exam. As a general rule, each committee member will submit several questions covering the area encompassed by the student's program of study. The total time required to answer each

committee member's questions should be one working day, and the student should plan to answer one committee member's questions each day. A review paper may be substituted for written questions, at the discretion of the advisor.

The student will return the completed exams to Chelsea, who will pass them on to the appropriate faculty member for grading. Each professor must assign an overall grade of pass or fail and provide feedback in the form of letter grades (A-F), numerical scores, or oral feedback within 30 days from the time the exam is taken. If a faculty member does not return the graded exam, it is assumed that the student has passed the exam by that faculty. The student's Advisory Committee can meet, if necessary, to discuss the student's performance, decide whether the student passed or failed the exam, and discuss remedial action in case of unsatisfactory performance.

Completed exams are not made available to other students, but the questions are added to a file of previously asked questions that Chelsea keeps. Students may access these files to make copies of previous exam questions by emailing Chelsea with their request.

### Oral Exam

The final doctoral Program of Study must be on file with the Graduate School BEFORE the oral exam can be scheduled.

The oral exam is announced by the Graduate School, and Chelsea must notify the Graduate School of the time and place of the exam at least two weeks (preferably three weeks) prior to the date. Any faculty member may attend. **At least two weeks prior to the exam, the student must distribute to their committee a research proposal which covers the student's dissertation research.**

The advisor and committee members do not have the authority to grant an exception to this 2-week deadline. If there are extenuating circumstances, then the student and advisor must request a waiver and receive approval from the Graduate Studies Committee BEFORE the 2-week deadline. Without an approved waiver, the oral exam must be postponed. The purpose of the oral exam is to provide an in-depth evaluation of the student's knowledge in the areas covered by the research proposal as well as closely related areas.

The oral exam will normally be given within six months of the completion of the written exam. The oral exam may be repeated once.

### Exit Seminar (Ph.D. only)

Every finishing Ph.D. student is required to present their research to the department at a regular departmental seminar. The final dissertation defense will not be scheduled until the exit seminar has been scheduled. Exit seminars can take place before or after the defense. Since regular departmental seminars are not given during the summer, students must plan to present their seminars during the academic year (Fall or Spring semester). Those who wish to present their exit seminar in the summer will need to send a petition letter to the GC to get approval before scheduling their seminar.

## Student Advising

### New Students

The Plant Biology Department recruits new students into its Ph.D. program in general via the Integrated Plant Sciences and Integrated Life Sciences umbrella programs. Thus, all

incoming Ph.D. students will be advised by IPS and ILS Graduate Coordinators during their first semester (Fall). Students may officially join the Department of Plant Biology in December of their first year and will then need to follow the Plant Biology policy and rules. It is the joint responsibility of the advisor and the new student to notify the Graduate Coordinator and to select an Advisory Committee within the new student's first year.

All applicants to the P BIO M.S. program will need to identify their major professor before they will be considered for acceptance by the GSC. It is the advisor and the M.S. student's responsibility to identify the Advisory Committee during the student's first year.

### Advisory Committees

**M.S. Student Committees:** The major professor (who must be a member of the graduate program faculty) plus at least two additional faculty members are required for an M.S. Advisory Committee. At least half of the committee members must be graduate program faculty. The Advisory Committee is appointed officially by submitting a Graduate School form (consult Chelsea). The Advisory Committee plans and approves the program of study, reads and approves the thesis, and administers the final examination.

**Ph.D. Student Committees:** The major professor (who must be a member of the graduate program faculty) serves as chairman of the Advisory Committee with at least three additional members. Normally, two of the four members must be Plant Biology faculty, one must be from another department, and three must be members of the graduate program faculty. No more than one non-UGA committee member may be appointed as a voting member. Students with two co-advisors still need to have three additional committee members, making it

a committee of 5 members total. Faculty with a courtesy appointment in Plant Biology can serve as an advisor for any P BIO student. They can also serve on student committees as P BIO or external committee members. If you wish to nominate a non-UGA committee member, your major professor must write a letter explaining why their services are requested (nominee must have distinguished credentials in the field of study). The letter along with a copy of the nominee's CV should be given to the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Coordinator's Assistant. Every effort should be made to ensure that committee members represent as much breadth of biological knowledge as is compatible with the student's program of study. The committee must be approved by the GC and the Dean of the Graduate School who will notify the parties involved of the appointments (consult Chelsea on the correct form to submit). The Advisory Committee, in consultation with the student, is charged with planning the student's program of study, administering the comprehensive written and oral examinations, and approving a subject for the dissertation.

### Advising Requirements

**Each student is required to meet with their Advisory Committee at least once each academic year** to discuss progress toward the degree objective (please notify Chelsea of meeting date). These meetings are important! From the student's point of view, the meeting provides an opportunity for additional insights and advice on the research project. From the committee's point of view, the meeting allows them to have input at the early stages of the research project, rather than being faced with problems in the completed project. To meet these objectives, the student is required to present a summary of research accomplished and have appropriate data on hand for examination by committee members. **It is**

**departmental policy that assistantship support will be withheld from graduate students who fail to meet with their Advisory Committees at least once during each academic year.** It is important that the meeting occur during the academic year because most faculty are on 9-month appointments and may not be available during the summer.

## Review of Continuing Students

### Annual Statement of Accomplishments and Goals

Each Spring every graduate student shall submit to Chelsea a statement of activities during the previous year, including: academic activities, progress relative to departmental time guidelines, teaching experience, progress on his/her research project and goals for the coming year. An email will be sent out with specific instructions. This material, along with other information, will be used by the GSC to determine if the student is making satisfactory progress toward his/her degree objective and is therefore entitled to continued support.

### Annual Evaluation by Major Professor

This evaluation is filled out and signed at the end of each academic year (late summer) and given to the student with a copy to Chelsea for the student's file.

### Evaluation of TA/LAs

Approximately two weeks before the end of each semester, Chelsea will remind each instructor using Plant Biology Teaching/Laboratory Assistants in Plant Biology courses to have the TA/LAs evaluated by the students in their lab sections. A copy of the results will be reviewed by the GC and placed in the student's file. Additional copies will be given to the student and the instructor of the class.

An effort will be made to return this information to those involved as soon as possible after the end of the semester. If the GC notes any serious problems with TA/LA performance in these evaluations, a meeting will be arranged with the student to resolve them.

Evaluation of Plant Biology graduate students teaching in Biology courses is handled by the Biology division.

### Approval of Theses and Dissertations, Oral Defense

**Theses and dissertations must be given to reading committee members at least 2 weeks before the final oral defense** to allow time for corrections or revisions. Theses/dissertations given to committees for defense MUST have all sections required by the Graduate School completed, except for the acknowledgement page. The advisor and committee members do not have the authority to grant an exception to this 2-week deadline. If there are extenuating circumstances, then the student and advisor must request a waiver and receive approval from the Graduate Studies Committee BEFORE the 2-week deadline. Without an approval waiver, the defense must be postponed. Such documents must be complete before submission to a reading committee (i.e. must have summary, table of contents, all chapters, figures, and tables, etc.). Faculty members should refuse to consider theses and dissertations which are not complete. Faculty members will normally complete their examination of the thesis or dissertation in time to alert the student of needed changes before the final examination. The thesis or dissertation must be approved at the final defense administered by the student's advisory committee.

**M.S. students:** Two of the three advisory committee members must approve the thesis. The final defense must cover the program of study and the thesis.

**Ph.D. students:** Three of the four advisory committee members must approve the dissertation. The exam is open to any faculty member. The Graduate School must be notified by the Grad Coordinator's Assistant via GradStatus of the time and place, major professor, and title of dissertation at least two weeks prior to the oral defense so that it may be announced (see Chelsea).

Per the Graduate Bulletin, the master's thesis demonstrates independent judgment in developing a problem from primary sources, and a dissertation represents originality in research, independent thinking, scholarly ability, and technical mastery of a field of study. It is the responsibility of the advisory committee to review and evaluate the thesis or dissertation as a representation of a student's individual effort. **As such, the use of generative AI in theses and dissertations is considered unauthorized assistance per the Academic Code of Honesty and is prohibited unless specifically authorized by members of the advisory committee for use within the approved scope. If approved by the advisory committee, the extent of generative AI usage should be disclosed in a statement within the thesis or dissertation.**

## Step-by-Step: milestones to be met in the progress towards your degree

**M.S. Students:** Students should meet with their Advisory Committee to agree on a program of study. The Final Program of Study form must be submitted by the student via a

form in GradStatus (<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G138>). A short (1-3 page) summary of the student's research project should be submitted to the student's committee and to Chelsea via email at the same time that the Final Program of Study is submitted.

Your Program of Study must include:

1. A minimum of 30 semester hours consisting of at least 24 hours of course work and 6 hours of thesis and related research.
2. Of the 24 hours of course work, at least one-half of those hours must be in courses open only to graduate students.
3. A maximum of 6 semester hours of PBIO 7000 is allowed to count towards the 30-hour requirement, but PBIO 7000 or 7300 cannot be included as part of the 12 hours of courses (#2 above) open only to graduate students. Note: it is possible to make a request to the Graduate School that certain 6000 level courses in the program of study be counted toward the 12 hours of "graduate student only" courses if there were no undergraduate students enrolled in those 6000 level courses and the student did graduate level work beyond that required of students enrolled in the 4000-level course. The instructor of the course should write a letter to the Dean of the Graduate School (to be included with the Program of Study) stating the circumstances and requesting that the course be counted towards the 12 hours of "graduate student only" courses.
4. At least 3 semester hours of Master's Thesis (PBIO 7300) must be included in the 30 semester hours.

**5. PBIO 8830, GRSC 7770, LLED 7768, and LLED 7769 are departmental requirements and cannot be included in the body of the Program of Study.**

**Ph.D. Students:** A Preliminary Program of Study should be discussed in a committee meeting early in the student's study. The form and content of the Preliminary Program of Study should be agreed upon and the form is typed by the student to be signed by the Advisory Committee. The student distributes copies of the approved Preliminary Program of Study to their major professor and to Chelsea to keep in the student's file. For students who hold a master's degree, the program of study must contain at least 16 hours of 8000 or 9000 level courses. For students who do not hold a master's degree, the program of study must contain at least 20 hours (of which at least 16 hours must be 8000 or 9000 level courses, and the remaining 4 hours can be 5000, 6000 and 7000 level courses open only to graduate students). Note: dissertation research (9000) and dissertation writing (9300) do not qualify for this 16/20-hour requirement.

There is a residence requirement for Ph.D. students, which is interpreted as 30 hours of consecutive graduate course work that is included on the Program of Study. A break in residence is not incurred if a student does not register for summer courses. Courses listed under "Other Departmental Requirements" do not count as part of the residence requirement. Beware of "taking a semester off" and/or not registering because of research off campus (e.g., overseas field work), as not registering for any academic semester (Fall or Spring) constitutes a "break" in residence and requires students who have not completed the 30-hour residency requirement to start over to accumulate it.

The Final Program of Study should be submitted after the 30-hour residence requirement is completed and prior to the oral comprehensive exam and Application for Admission to Candidacy. It must include a minimum of 30 hours of course work with 16 hours of courses open only to graduate students (20 hours open only to graduate students if you do not hold a master's degree) exclusive of hours for dissertation research and dissertation writing. The student must include three hours of Doctoral Dissertation Writing (PBIO 9300) on their Final Program of Study. **PBIO 8830, GRSC 7770, LLED 7768, and LLED 7769 are departmental requirements and cannot be included in the body of the Program of Study.** When the student is ready to submit their Final Program of Study, they should email Chelsea, an Chelsea will submit the form via GradStatus for the student. The student should submit a more details (2-4 page) summary of the research project to their committee and to Chelsea at the time that they request to have their Final Program of Study submitted.

### Which form to use – and when

The title of the form is given below in bold. Forms are available online at <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/forms/>. Forms should either be submitted online or you should request that Chelsea submit them online for you. Students meeting deadlines at the Graduate School must allow ample time to obtain the necessary departmental approval and signatures (e.g., the major professor and GC).

#### **M.S. Students:**

#### **Advisory Committee for M.S. Candidates**

Submit via GradStatus within first semester of admission:

<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G130>

Instructions for this form can be found [here](#).

### **Program of Study**

Submit via GradStatus within two semesters:

<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G138>

Also submit a 1-3 page summary of the research project to the advisory committee and Chelsea within two semesters. It is not necessary to include all courses taken (especially 7000) on the program of study, although the program of study must contain at least the required minimum number of hours.

### **Application for Graduation**

Submit to the Graduate School no later than the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of classes during the semester that you plan to graduate (1<sup>st</sup> week of classes for summer graduates):

<https://athena.uga.edu/>

Instructions for this form can be found [here](#).

### **Approval Form for Master's Thesis and Final Oral Exam**

Submit via GradStatus immediately following your final oral exam:

<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G140>

### **Ph.D. Students:**

#### **Advisory Committee for Doctoral Candidates**

Submit via GradStatus within first two semesters:

<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G130>

Instructions for this form can be found [here](#).

#### **Preliminary Program of Study**

Submit the paper form, with one page summary of proposed research, to Chelsea

within two semesters. The student will be responsible for obtaining signatures of committee members and returning the form to Chelsea to keep in the student's file. Feel free to make any changes to your Preliminary Program of Study, as it is not forwarded to the Graduate School. Form can be found [here](#).

#### **Final Doctoral Program of Study**

The GC (see Chelsea) must notify the Graduate School of the comprehensive oral exam date at least two weeks before the exam. The Final Doctoral Program of Study must be submitted and approved before the comprehensive oral exam can be scheduled. To submit the Final Program of Study, the student should email Chelsea, and Chelsea will submit the form via GradStatus for the student. The student should submit a more detailed (2-4 page) summary of the research project to their committee and to Chelsea at the time that they request to have their Final Program of Study submitted.

When the Graduate School has been notified that the comprehensive oral exam has been scheduled, they will send the required paperwork to Chelsea, which will be used during the oral exam.

#### **Application for Admission to Candidacy – Doctoral Degrees**

This form is submitted by the student via GradStatus, after they have received full approval of their comprehensive oral exam: <https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G162>

The 30-semester hour residency requirement must have been completed before filing this application. It must be filed at least one full semester before graduation. After admission to candidacy, a student must register for a combined total of ten hours of dissertation or other appropriate graduate credit during the

completion of the degree program. Students planning to graduate the same semester they enter candidacy must be admitted to candidacy by the published deadline for candidacy during that semester and register for ten hours. More details can be found [here](#).

### Application for Graduation

Submit to the Graduate School no later than the end of the second week of classes (the first week of classes for summer) during the semester that you plan to graduate. The application for graduation can be found in Athena: <https://athena.uga.edu/>

### Approval Form for Doctoral Dissertation and Final Oral Examination

This form should be submitted by the student in GradStatus immediately following the final oral examination, and at least two weeks prior to graduation:

<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G164>

One completed formatted copy of the dissertation must be electronically submitted to the Graduate School for a format check no later than four weeks prior to graduation (check [Graduate School deadlines](#)):  
<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G129>

Instructions for that form can be found [here](#).

If copyright permission is needed, you must obtain permission. If permission is granted by letter, email the letter to Enrolled Student Services at the Graduate School ([gradinfo@uga.edu](mailto:gradinfo@uga.edu)).

The Department of Plant Biology requires a bound copy of your thesis/dissertation for the Palfrey Conference Room and it is highly recommended that you also bind a copy for your major professor. Print and Copy Services at the Tate Student Center will print and bind

your thesis/dissertation in the traditional black hard cover with gold lettering. You can submit a request for the Tate Center to print copies of your thesis or dissertation [here](#).

Completing degree requirements and graduation are not synonymous. **The student must be registered for a minimum of three hours during the semester in which degree requirements are completed.** The Graduate School must receive the Final Defense Approval form via GradStatus and electronic submission of the thesis/dissertation no later than two weeks before the graduation date.

Sometimes a student completes all degree requirements well before officially graduating and needs official documentation for an employer that he or she has actually finished the degree. The student may request that the Graduate School provide certification stating that degree requirements have been met and that the student will graduate officially on a certain date.

## Financial Support and Awards Available to Graduate Students

Graduate students are usually paid through some type of assistantship. Assistantships may be awarded for 12 months or for the 9-month academic year, in which case summer support must be separately obtained. The standard assistantship stipend (\$29,400 for 2021-2022 and \$29,988 starting 2022-2023) for graduate students in Plant Biology is considered to be 4/9<sup>th</sup> time for 12 months and the Department makes every effort to assure that students are supported at this level, assuming satisfactory progress.

Continuing students should request assistantship support on the financial support questionnaire which they receive from the



Graduate Coordinator in early Spring semester. The following types of assistantships are available:

### Teaching/Laboratory Assistantships (TA/LA)

These assistantships are given to students who serve as teaching/laboratory assistants in courses taught by Plant Biology or Biology faculty. **Nineteen hours** of service is generally required per week, usually involving nine contact hours. The department currently has 17 of these assistantships, seven of which are assigned by the Division of Biology to help with the Biology core courses.

TA/LA appointments are made for the academic year (Fall and Spring semesters); summer support is arranged separately. Highest priority for awarding departmental TA/LA support is given to students enrolled in Plant Biology (PBIO) regardless of whether their advisor is a regular or adjunct faculty in Plant Biology; secondary priority goes to non-Plant Biology students working with regular PBIO faculty; lowest priority goes to non-Plant Biology students working with adjunct PBIO faculty.

### Graduate School Dissertation Completion Awards

Doctoral students in their final year of graduate work are eligible for this competitive award from the Graduate School. Students can be nominated by the Plant Biology Department in February (<https://grad.uga.edu/funding/funding-from-the-graduate-school/>). The Graduate Coordinator will send out a call for applications in the Spring semester, and students interested in a nomination should provide the requested documents. Since our program is only allotted a small number of nominations, students who have been enrolled

full-time for six years or less will receive priority.

The Graduate School requires that GSA recipients do 16-18 hours of service per week, but leaves the specific duties up to the department. Typically, the Plant Biology Department considers progress in the thesis/dissertation program to meet this requirement.

### Research Assistantship (RA)

Graduate students may receive support on a research assistantship, which is paid from a faculty member's research grant. Duties for an RA are arranged between the student and the faculty member, but will often involve research toward the student's thesis or dissertation.

### Summer Support

A limited number of TA/LA positions are available from the Biology Division during the summer semester, and these will be awarded to as many graduate students as possible who have received departmental or GSA support during the previous academic year, are making satisfactory progress, and who request such support on their financial support questionnaire.

Please note that because of the intensive nature of the summer labs associated with Biology courses, generally only students with prior experiences serving as a TA/LA in Biology are eligible for these summer TA/LA positions.

Requests from students who are beyond the time guidelines will receive lower priority. Requests for summer support from students who have been supported on grant funds will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Because there are a limited number of TA/LA positions available during the summer, faculty

are encouraged to support as many students as possible on grants during this semester.

## Research Support

Graduate student research funds in most cases will come from research grants to the major professor or the student. Other sources for graduate student research funds include:

### Palfrey Research Grants

The Plant Biology Department funds small grants from research overhead funds to support certain aspects of Plant Biology graduate student research. The following general guidelines are in effect:

- a. Funds may be requested to support travel for research, supplies and expenses, participation in special courses, special items of equipment, and users' fees for special equipment or analyses. Requests for salaries will NOT be considered through this program.
- b. Grant awards will normally be for a maximum of \$1250 and you may only receive one per year, two total. Awards are made from the current fiscal year budget and must be spent before the end of 18 months from the award date. If additional funds are needed for a subsequent year, a new proposal must be submitted.
- c. The usual application deadlines are early November and early April. Application guidelines are provided prior to each deadline.
- d. Grant proposals will be judged on a competitive basis by the Plant Biology Graduate Studies Committee. Preference will be given to students who have attempted to obtain funding elsewhere and/or do not have access to other funds. Proposals should conform to guidelines that will be distributed with the request for proposals.
- e. Within 22 months of receiving funding or before submitting another proposal for a Palfrey grant, students are required to submit a report that is no more than one page, on the outcome of the funded work. Failure to submit a report will prevent students from receiving other funding from the department.

### Palfrey Fund Special Requests

The Palfrey fund is a departmental endowment from the estate of Mr. Frank Palfrey. Proceeds from the endowment are used for the enrichment of departmental programs, and students may request funds through their major professor. The Palfrey Fund does not normally fund routine research expenses, but special training or a special piece of equipment might be funded.

### Travel Funds

The Graduate School has limited funds to assist graduate student travel to present papers at professional conferences within the continental United States. Students seeking travel assistance must be properly registered during the semester in which the request is submitted and for the semester for which the trip is scheduled. Some general guidelines for Graduate School funds:

- a. First preference will be given to doctoral students.
- b. Applicants should be reporting results of their dissertation or thesis research and should be primary author of the publication or presentation.
- c. The meeting or conference to be attended must be regional or national in character.
- d. Approval of travel requests for individual students will be limited to one trip per student during a fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).
- e. Students submitting a request must possess a minimum cumulative graduate grade point average of 3.50

based on at least two years of full-time graduate study (5 semesters) at the University of Georgia with no grades of "Incomplete," "Unsatisfactory," or "No Grade."

- f. Funding will not be provided to students employed as instructors or classified employees.
- g. The applicant must be in one of the following categories:
  - a. Registered for full-time graduate study during the semester of his/her travel
  - b. Doctoral students admitted to candidacy (minimum 3 credit hours), or,
  - c. A thesis-writing Master's student who has satisfactorily completed all required courses (exclusive of 7000 and 7300).

If a student is traveling between semesters, he/she must also be in one of these three categories during the semester following travel.

- h. The student must submit: abstract, acceptance, and breakdown of estimated expenses of their travel to their department. The department will review each student to verify they meet the criteria, then submit all applications to the Graduate School via GradStatus.

**Requests must be submitted to Chelsea according to the following schedule:**

| <b>Travel Dates</b> | <b>Requested Deadline</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 9/1-12/31           | 8/4                       |
| 1/1-3/31            | 12/4                      |
| 4/1-6/30            | 3/6                       |
| 7/1-9/30            | 6/5                       |

### Alan Jaworski Student Travel Award

This departmental fund was established by colleagues and family of our late department head. It is intended to provide graduate (and undergraduate) students with travel expenses

for field research, scientific conferences, and other educational purposes. First or second year graduate students are eligible.

Applications due around April 1. Maximum of one award per person during degree.

Application details will be announced via email prior to proposal due date pending availability of funds.

### Haines Family Field Botany Award

This departmental fund was established by our late colleague, Dr. Bruce Haines. It is intended to provide graduate (and undergraduate) students with travel costs and subsistence costs of field-based investigations of plants and plant ecology. Research location must be more than 60 miles from UGA Athens campus and research must be primarily out-of-doors. Applications are generally due April 1 and November 1. Maximum of one award per person during degree. Application details will be announced via email in March and October.

## Graduate Student Awards

### Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award (OTA)

This award carries recognition, but no cash award, and is given to approximately 35 graduate teaching/laboratory assistants in the University each year. Our department may nominate two graduate students each year at the beginning of Spring semester. Nominees must have taught during the previous calendar year. The GSC selects nominees on the basis of recommendations by instructors and student evaluations.

### Excellence in Teaching Award (ETA)

This award carries recognition, a cash award of \$1000, and is given to five graduate teaching/laboratory assistants (University-wide) each year. We may nominate one of our outstanding TA/LAs for this award if they

previously received or are currently nominated for the Outstanding TA Award. The nomination dossier, prepared by the Graduate Coordinator and the nominee, includes a nomination letter from the department (a letter of support from a “faculty member qualified to assess the TA’s teaching effectiveness”), a one-page synopsis of teaching evaluations, and a one-page CV “including descriptions of any creative teaching materials developed or innovative instructional techniques used.” Potential nominees for this award are urged to ask faculty to evaluate their teaching effectiveness in person and to request that students include written comments on the teaching evaluation forms.

### Regents’ Research Out-of-State Tuition Waivers

The Graduate School awards a limited number of out-of-state tuition waivers to degree-seeking domestic students who are classified as non-residents for the state of Georgia through the Board of Regents’ Research and Comprehensive University tuition waiver program. The Regents’ Research Out-Of-State Tuition (ROOST) awards are based on applicants’ academic performance and the recommendations from their graduate coordinators. The waiver lasts for one academic year and is renewed each term of that academic year, contingent upon recipients earning at least a 3.00 graduate grade point average based on twelve hours of graduate course work in the fall and spring semesters and nine hours of graduate level coursework during the summer. These awards waive only the non-resident portion of the student’s tuition. Students interested in being nominated for this award should contact the graduate coordinator of their major department. Being nominated does not guarantee receipt of a waiver. Students must have a 3.5 GPA to be nominated the following year.

### Graduate School Awards

Numerous awards are offered through the

Graduate School each year and many of them are announced in the summer.

Announcements of these awards will be forwarded to students by the Graduate Coordinator. If you wish to be considered for nomination of a Graduate School Award, please email the Graduate Coordinator AND Graduate Coordinator’s Assistant by the deadline given.

Note that many of these awards require a nomination letter which is generally composed by the student’s advisor. Students should provide information and enough time for their advisors to put together the letter.

### Financial Support and Awards Guidelines

Financial support is awarded on an annual basis. Students should generally expect continued financial support as long as satisfactory progress towards the degree objective is maintained. “Satisfactory progress” will be assessed in consultation with the major professor through the Annual Statement of Accomplishments and Goals. In general, “satisfactory progress” means meeting the time guidelines, maintenance of a GPA of at least 3.0, holding at least one advisory committee meeting each academic year, steady progress on the research project, and satisfactory performance as a teaching/laboratory assistant.

### Training for Teaching

#### Graduate School Programs

The UGA Center for Teaching and Learning has compiled a list of resources for Graduate Teaching Assistants, covering subjects from first day of class to office hours and classroom management: <https://wwwctl.uga.edu/grad-student/resources/>

It is University policy, supported and enforced by the Department of Plant Biology, that graduate teaching/laboratory assistants

(TA/LAs) receive training before they are given responsibility for a course. **All new TA/LAs must attend the university-wide Teaching Assistant Orientation held before the beginning of fall semester classes.** More information about TA Orientation can be found here: <https://ctl.uga.edu/grad-student/ta-orientation/>

TA/LAs who have no prior teaching experience at the college level must enroll in GRSC 7770 during their first year in our program (Note: international students are allowed to take LLED 7769, instead). GRSC 7770 is a two-credit course, but students are allowed to register for one credit hour if necessary to stay within the 18-hour maximum (however, students registering for one credit are expected to participate fully). During spring semester, GRSC 7770 will be taught in the Department of Plant Biology by a P BIO faculty member (currently, Dr. Kathrin Stanger- Hall) and a graduate student co-instructor. All Plant Biology students are encouraged to take this section of the GRSC 7770 course.

New TA/LAs whose native language is not English should refer to the Center for Teaching and Learning's Guide to Demonstrating English Proficiency to see what requirements they must meet to be eligible to act as a TA/LA. The guide can be found here: [https://ctl.uga.edu/\\_resources/documents/guide-to-demonstrating-english-language-proficiency-feb-2022.pdf](https://ctl.uga.edu/_resources/documents/guide-to-demonstrating-english-language-proficiency-feb-2022.pdf)

### Plant Biology Department Teaching Internship

This program provides opportunities for senior Plant Biology graduate students to obtain supervised, documented experience in preparing and delivering lectures and/or leading discussions; few such opportunities exist in most graduate teaching or lab assistant assignments. Under the mentorship of a faculty member, you may enroll in P BIO 7360 for 1-2 credit hours and give up to 10% of the lectures

in one of that faculty member's classes.

### Mentoring Undergraduates

Graduate students can receive credit for mentoring undergraduates (P BIO 7500), i.e. instructing undergrads in lab or field techniques, helping them evaluate and interpret data, and helping them prepare results for publication or public presentation.

## Dismissal from Graduate Status

### Dismissal Policy

Students may be dismissed from the program at the end of any semester or term if they have not made sufficient academic progress to warrant continuation of study, have not met their responsibilities, have not met their admittance stipulations, or have not maintained accepted standards of conduct. They may be dismissed immediately, without waiting for the end of a semester or term, if circumstances are sufficient to warrant it.

These conditions include students who:

- Fail to be accepted as a student by a major professor/advisor within the specified time period (see the Graduate School "No clear path to degree completion" status and associated policy). Note: Students with the "No clear path to degree completion" will be given one semester after being placed on this status by their unit/program to identify a major professor or form a committee. Graduate coordinator will work closely with the student to try to rectify the problem. If the situation is not resolved during this semester, the student will be dismissed from the program.
- Fail to gain approval of their thesis or dissertation.
- Were admitted provisionally and then fail to meet the specified admission

conditions within the specified time frame.

- End two consecutive semesters with a cumulative GPA below 3.0.
- Fail to pass the written or oral comprehensive examination or the final oral examination, after consideration of whatever examination repeats or remedial work the student's advisory committee has recommended.
- Fail to make acceptable progress in their thesis or dissertation project; this may be determined, in part, by information from the annual written evaluation of the student by the major professor, or by recommendations from the annual advisory committee meeting.
- Commit ethical violations.

Ethical violations considered by the faculty to be sufficiently serious to warrant dismissal from the program include but are not limited to the following:

- Violation of ethical principles concerning faculty-student relationships.
- Falsification of data or records, or tampering with any other person's data or research.
- Plagiarism.
- Academic dishonesty – including incorporation of materials into papers, theses, dissertations, etc. without appropriate attribution

### Dismissal Procedure

The major professor, the student's advisory committee, the Department Head, or any other faculty member who has relevant information may initiate the process by bringing the facts to the attention of the Graduate Coordinator. The graduate student involved will be notified in writing by the Graduate Coordinator within 7 days that dismissal is being considered.

The Graduate Studies Committee will meet to decide if a student should be dismissed from the Plant Biology graduate program. The

Department Head can temporarily replace a faculty member on this committee if in the Department Head's judgment this would lead to a fairer process. The Graduate Studies Committee may recommend dismissal or other disciplinary measure, such as a warning, as it deems appropriate, after it reviews the facts and circumstances.

The student involved is notified in writing when a determination of dismissal has been made. The Graduate School will be notified of the dismissal and the reason for it.

### Reconsideration Procedure

The Department of Plant Biology has adopted the following procedure for reconsidering a dismissal (September 15, 2004): A student who is dismissed may request reconsideration of dismissal by writing a letter to the Graduate Coordinator within 30 days of notification of dismissal. The Graduate Coordinator and the Department Head will then appoint an appropriate appeals committee to reconsider the dismissal. In addition, a student can appeal the dismissal to the Graduate School.

### Additional Information

#### Pre-registration

Graduate students supported by an assistantship MUST be registered before their Fall/Spring/Summer hiring approvals can be processed. Failure to register in a timely manner could result in back-pay of your monthly paycheck. Chelsea will send out notices when registration opens each semester. You are urged to register as soon as possible.

Registration dates can be found on the Registrar's website: <https://reg.uga.edu/>. Check with Chelsea to make sure your assistantship hiring proposal has been processed so you will receive the tuition waiver and reduction when you register. Students who fail to register during Phase I or Phase II will not be supported on assistantships and will not be eligible for a tuition waiver.

### Student Access to their Departmental File

If a student wishes to examine their departmental file, an appointment should be made with Chelsea Hargroves. Before the appointment, Chelsea will remove privileged letters of reference and other privileged documents and will allow the student to examine the remainder of the file in the office.

### Student Access to Previous Written Exams

Previous written comprehensive exam questions are kept in the office for graduate student use. Email Chelsea to request access to these exam questions.