

# WEC Graduate Student Handbook

Research MS and PhD Degrees

*October 2023 Edition*



**Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation**

**College of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences  
University of Florida**



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# The Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation

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## General Information

### Welcome!

Our students will find outstanding educational opportunities at the University of Florida. This Graduate Handbook is intended to assist you with successfully planning and completing your graduate program in the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (WEC).

**Dept. Mission** The mission of WEC is to foster education, expand knowledge, and reward scholarship, using multi-disciplinary approaches for understanding, managing, and conserving biological resources. The primary goal of our teaching, research, and extension programs is to develop and communicate the knowledge necessary for enhancing the conservation and management of wildlife and their habitats for the greatest ecological, economic, aesthetic, and recreational values.

**Facilities** Our main Departmental offices are in Newins-Ziegler Hall (NZH) near the center of the main campus of the University of Florida. NZH contains classrooms, teaching and research laboratories, graduate carrels, and administrative and faculty offices. The department also supports faculty, graduate students, and labs in several buildings around campus. The [Florida Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit](#) (Coop Unit) is closely associated with WEC. The Coop is a United States Geological Survey unit whose principal mission is graduate training in wetlands ecology and restoration.

The nearby 10,000-acre [Ordway-Swisher Biological Station](#), characterized by longleaf pine/turkey oak sandhills and freshwater lakes and marshes, provides both an outdoor laboratory for teaching and a study site for long-term field research. Several units complement the teaching and research programs of the department. These include the [Florida Museum of Natural History](#), [McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity](#), [Natural Area Teaching Laboratory](#), The Nature Conservancy, and the Centers for African Studies, Latin American Studies, Wetlands, Biological Conservation, and Natural Resources.

### Organization of Academic Units

The UF Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (WEC) is part of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs), which is in the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS). IFAS also includes the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Agricultural Experiment Station, the Cooperative Extension Service, the School of Forest, Fisheries, and Geomatic Sciences (SFFGS), and the School of Natural Resources and the Environment (SNRE).

IFAS consists of 14 academic departments and one school with faculty members and staff located on the main UF campus in Gainesville, FL, and in Research and Education Centers (RECs) throughout the state. IFAS is administered by the UF Senior Vice-President for Agriculture and Natural Resources and three Deans (Extension, Academic Programs, and Research). IFAS is part of UF, along with 14 other colleges and numerous academic units.

The UF Graduate School is responsible for 1) enforcing minimum standards of graduate work and 2) coordinating graduate programs at the University. As an umbrella organization, the UF Graduate School cuts across academic units (such as colleges, schools, and departments) and is managed by an Associate Vice President and Dean, three Associate Deans, the Graduate Council, and UF graduate faculty from all academic units.

**NOTE:** WEC graduate students must satisfy the UF Graduate School and WEC departmental requirements to obtain a University of Florida graduate degree. Whereas the UF Graduate School sets minimum requirements and provides overall coordination, the responsibilities for setting detailed degree requirements and managing operations of WEC graduate programs are vested with the WEC departmental faculty.

### Sources of Information and Assistance

Your first source is your Graduate Advisor. Secondly, see the Graduate Programs section of the WEC [website](#). Additionally, you can discuss any facet of the WEC graduate program with the WEC Graduate Coordinator or the Department Chair. The WEC Student Services Office (102 NZH) is also a valuable source of information, and students are encouraged to contact this office with questions regarding the academic regulations of the UF Graduate School, CALS, and WEC.

Essential information about UF Graduate School policies is found in their [policy library](#). You will find links to their Graduate Student Handbook and the Graduate Information Management System (GIMS), where WEC students may view their UF Graduate School records and other useful links.

At the [ONE.UF](#) webpage will enable you to view course schedules, register for classes, check payment dates, update your address with the University, and much more. Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with this helpful tool!

**Free Counseling and Health Services:** Counseling and health services are available to all University of Florida students. The [UF Counseling & Wellness Center](#) provides mental health services, peer counseling, substance abuse, suicide prevention, and other programs. The [Student Health Care Center](#) offers all UF students other medical and emergency services.

### WEC Faculty Expertise

Please see the WEC website to explore faculty expertise, and do not hesitate to make an appointment to talk to anyone on the faculty! The [WEC Faculty listing](#) includes a statement for each person indicating major research areas and links to each faculty member's lab websites. WEC research programs are currently categorized into five broad and overlapping research areas: conservation biology, spatial ecology, wildlife conservation and management, wetland ecology and management, and human dimensions in wildlife conservation. In addition to research, WEC faculty and their graduate students typically have responsibilities in teaching or extension.

## Responsibilities of Students and Faculty

### Graduate Student Programmatic Responsibilities

The UF Graduate School, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and WEC determine the research degree requirements (MS or PhD). It is the student's responsibility to make sure that all degree requirements are met.

In general, graduate degree requirements are intentionally flexible (especially for doctoral students), allowing you and your Supervisory Committee to design a program that best meets your educational goals. However, in some exceptional circumstances, deviations from the stated policy on degree requirements may be warranted. ***Any deviation from stated degree requirements must be formulated as a formal petition initiated by your Graduate Advisor to the WEC Graduate Coordinator and approved by the WEC Department Chair at least one semester before graduation.*** Our goal is to provide our students with a quality graduate education that will meet their academic objectives while providing the foundation to understand and address the various issues, challenges, and opportunities they will face later as professionals.

*Unsatisfactory scholarship* You may be denied further enrollment if your progress toward completing your degree program becomes unsatisfactory in the eyes of WEC, CALS, or the Graduate School.

Unsatisfactory scholarship is defined as failure to maintain at least a 3.00 grade point average and to meet curricular requirements or research and teaching assistantship goals set by your committee. Further, if your grade point average falls below 3.00, you may not hold an assistantship or fellowship.

*Academic Honesty and Other UF Policies* When a student registers for courses at the University of Florida, it is assumed that they have read, understood, and agreed to comply with the following statement on academic honesty:

*"I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the University."*

The Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation expects its students to conduct themselves professionally and abide by all University policies regarding academic honesty, student conduct, and ethics. Questions concerning academic honesty, student privacy, software copyrights, safety, drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, discrimination, affirmative action, or health-related concerns should be directed to the UF Human Resources Office, the University Registrar, the UF Dean of Students Office, the WEC Student Services Office, their Graduate Advisor, the WEC Graduate Coordinator or the Department Chair, or Student Health Services.



## Faculty Responsibilities

### Mentoring and Aligning Expectations

A vital role of the faculty is to serve as mentors for graduate students. In general, this mentorship involves facilitating the education and development of the students so that they optimize their experience in graduate school and maximize their personal and professional development. Successful mentoring involves significant effort and responsibility of *both* the faculty member *and* the student and relies heavily on excellent two-way communication between student and faculty. Both parties must be able to discuss each other's concerns, goals, expectations, and other matters of substance. Mentors can give students a critical understanding of scientific ethics, professionalism, leadership, the scientific process, successful publication strategies, grantsmanship, oral and written communication, networking, employment opportunities, and more. Students and their advisors should seek opportunities to build a solid mentoring relationship, but faculty-student mentorship should not be limited to the faculty advisor. Faculty have different strengths and skills to bring to the table, and students should seek out mentorship from whatever faculty member has the most to offer them. Much of this mentorship will often come from student committee members, but students should also look for other opportunities. *All* faculty in WEC are responsible for mentoring our graduate students... students should take advantage of this.

A large part of any faculty's job is to write grants and initiate research/extension/educational projects that make tangible contributions to society. A primary role of students in research programs is to play an essential role in that objective. Faculty and students must align their goals and expectations early in their graduate careers. This can be achieved through open, honest dialog or using a compact. A compact is an agreement between mentor and mentee about the expectations and ground rules followed by each lab member. We recommend that faculty utilize mentor-mentee compacts to align expectations. Examples that can be used or adopted can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

### Committee Chair

The UF Graduate School's Graduate Student Handbook and the UF Graduate Catalog provide basic guidelines for Supervisory Committee faculty responsibilities. The Committee Chair (Graduate Advisor) must supervise the student's research. The committee should meet with the student once a year (minimally) to discuss the project plans and program progress.

Additional duties of the Committee Chair include:

1. To be able to inform the student of all regulations governing the degree sought.
  - a This does not absolve the student from the responsibility of informing themselves concerning these regulations.
  - b The student must be familiar with the UF Graduate Catalog's general regulations and requirements, specific degree program requirements, and offerings and requirements of the major academic unit.
  - c Rules are not waived for ignorance.
2. Meet in short order following the appointment to discuss and approve an initial program of study and suggest advisory committee members.

3. Meet regularly during a student's program to aid in the conception, design, and completion of thesis and dissertation research.
4. To award S/U grades for the research courses WIS 6971, WIS 7979 and WIS 7980.
5. Advisors also should help with the professional development of their graduate students by discussing and acknowledging a student's short and long-term goals.
6. For doctoral students, advisors are required to discuss the student's Individual Development Plan with the student in a substantive way and submit the required signature page.
7. Coordinate and oversee the Qualifying Examination. This includes coordinating the distribution and timing of written questions, consolidating responses for the written portion, and chairing the oral examination (in some instances, the external member may be requested to chair the exam).
8. Meet on campus when the thesis/dissertation is completed and conduct the final oral examination.
9. Evaluate the student's spring and fall terms (minimally).

#### Student evaluations

Each term, students meet with their principal advisor and discuss their term accomplishments related to the project and their employment responsibilities. In WEC, students self-describe their accomplishments, how their TA or RA responsibilities were met, and their objectives for the upcoming term. Students then provide their self-assessment to the advisor, who will meet one-on-one with the student to discuss. The evaluation aims to assess the performance of assigned duties, compliance with job requirements (such as holding office hours and following leave policy), academic progress, and observance of the requirements of the Supervisory Committee, Department, College, and UF Graduate School.

Sometimes, a student's employment supervisor is not their committee chair during a term. For example, when a TAing for a class taught by another faculty, the immediate supervisor overseeing the student that term should be expected to be involved in the evaluation.

Once complete, these evaluations are submitted to the WEC office.

## Program Planning and Degree Requirements

### Graduate Committees

Each WEC graduate student has a Graduate Advisor who serves as the Chair of the student's Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee is recommended by the Graduate Advisor in consultation with the student and is approved by the WEC Graduate Coordinator and the UF Graduate School.

The role of your committee is to oversee and mentor you throughout your degree program, setting criteria and goals to ensure the integrity of your coursework and research. This process involves 1) evaluating past education, 2) determining academic needs, 3) selecting coursework designed to

alleviate such needs, 4) conducting appropriate examinations, and 5) developing and conducting the dissertation, thesis, or technical paper research. You should work closely with all Committee members through all aspects of your graduate program.

The graduate committee should be appointed by the end of your second semester. This includes meeting with the committee, filling out the appointment of [supervisory committee form](#), and having the committee membership entered into GIMS (Graduate Student Management System) by student services in the WEC main office. You should also aim to have your proposed schedule of courses approved at this initial meeting.

A WEC **MS-thesis Supervisory Committee** consists of at least three (3) members. A minimum of two must hold graduate faculty status at UF. The committee Chair must be WEC "Core or COOP" faculty holding graduate faculty status. The other two members can be from any department. A Special Member may be appointed in place of only one of these remaining two additional UF graduate faculty members with a petition to the Graduate Program Committee.

A WEC **PhD Supervisory Committee** consists of a minimum of **four** (4) UF graduate faculty members. At least two members must be WEC graduate faculty. One faculty member from another UF department must serve as an External Member on the Committee (a UF Graduate School requirement). Faculty members holding joint, affiliate, courtesy, special, or adjunct appointments with WEC may **not** serve as External Members. Special members included in PhD committees are allowed but do not count as the required four UF members. The WEC Student Services Office can access the official list of affiliations and status for all UF Graduate Faculty.

The External Committee Member primarily plays a critical role as a Graduate School representative. Duties include verifying that milestones have been achieved and examinations conducted according to the Graduate School and programmatic requirements. The external member must deal with any conflicts between the committee's activities and the Graduate School's policies. As such, the external member should not be formally involved with the WEC or the project.

**Minor degrees** - Students pursuing one or more minors must have a graduate faculty member from each minor's home unit on their Committee.

**Appointment of Special Members to Advisory Committees** - People without a UF Graduate Faculty appointment may be appointed to a supervisory committee as a Special Member.

#### [Area of Emphasis \(AOE\) Requirement](#)

Three **Areas of Emphasis - Ecology, Quantitative Analysis, and Human Dimensions** - are defined by the department to aid both MS and PhD students in developing a focus within the flexible WEC graduate program and, additionally, to expand knowledge in wildlife conservation. In consultation with the Graduate Advisor and Advisory Committee, the student selects the Area of Emphasis that best matches research and professional goals and the courses best suited to the student's training needs.

Ultimately, a student's Advisory Committee approves the selection of courses to fit under each area (E, Q, or H), but each designation should follow this guide. Questions can be directed to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

- **Ecology** courses should emphasize major concepts, topics, and approaches used in the science of ecology.
- **Quantitative** courses should develop quantitative skills in analyses of data (e.g., statistical analysis, systems modeling/simulation, machine learning algorithms, etc.) in activity/problem-solving assignments.
- **Human dimensions** courses should address conceptual and skills-based approaches in the political, social, psychological, economic, and ethical disciplines required for conservation, management, and understanding of natural resources.

UF offers many graduate-level courses, and students must search for courses at other departments to obtain the best, most appropriate coursework available! **We do not keep a list of approved courses** – new classes are always offered, and old courses drop off. Departments that traditionally offer good course options for WEC Graduate Students include Forestry, Statistics, Geography, Biology (Zoology, Botany), Soil and Water Science, Anthropology, Psychology, Education, Engineering, Mathematics, Agricultural Education, Family Youth and Community, Agronomy, Horticulture, -- the list is endless! **Explore to know more!**

Fulfilling the AOE Requirement

**If your Area of Emphasis is *Ecology***, select:

**3** courses in Ecology, **2** courses in Quantitative Analysis, and **1** class in Human Dimensions.

**If your Area of Emphasis is *Quantitative Analysis***, select:

**2** courses in Ecology, **3** courses in Quantitative Analysis,

**1** class in Human Dimensions.

**If your Area of Emphasis is *Human Dimensions***, select:

**2** courses in Ecology, **1** course in Quantitative Analysis (minimally the statistics requirement), **3** courses in Human Dimensions.

Use summary tables, checklists, and information herein to help organize your graduate degree program and coursework schedule, especially when preparing your Form 2-Proposed Schedule of Courses. Do this before your first meeting with your Supervisory Committee.

### Coursework Requirements

Coursework is required for all WEC graduate degrees. Refer below to the definitions of the necessary courses for a WEC graduate degree.

The Form-2 Proposed Schedule of Courses (Form-2) should be submitted to the WEC Student Services Office after i) by the end of your first semester (MS students), or ii) by the end of your second semester (PhD students), after consultation with your major advisor and committee. You are expected to keep your committee and the WEC Student Services Office informed of changes to your proposed schedule of courses.

Major coursework ("courses in the major") are the courses taken in the home department and designated with a WIS prefix (additional non-WIS courses may be allowed as courses in the major.

Currently, ALS 6500 and ALS 6501 are permitted; see list of WIS courses on the [Graduate Course Catalog page](#)). No undergraduate courses may be applied toward the major (or supporting) coursework, even though your Supervisory Committee may require you to take some to make up deficiencies. See Coursework “deficiencies” (below).

[Supporting coursework](#) includes courses outside the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (non-WIS) that are applied toward your graduate degree. For MS and PhD students, up to 6 credit hours of undergraduate level (3000 and 4000) coursework from departments other than WEC can be used as supporting coursework and applied toward graduate degree credit requirements (min. B grade required). Only graduate courses (5000-level or higher) can be used to fulfill your [Area of Emphasis](#) requirement.

[Statistics requirement](#) - WEC requires that graduate students take at least one statistics course at the 5000 or 6000 level (approved by their committee) as part of their graded coursework requirement. Courses offered in other departments must be readily recognizable as emphasizing statistical data analysis or statistical theory (obtain the course syllabus to discuss with the committee). Statistics courses will satisfy the Quantitative selections for the "Area of Emphasis" requirement. Functionally, this means that if a student takes only one Quantitative course, it must be a statistics course. If a student takes both MS and PhD degrees from WEC, the statistics requirement must be satisfied independently (i.e., one statistics course will not fulfill this requirement for both degrees).

[WIS 6933 WEC Seminar](#) - Seminar is a 1 credit course required of all WEC graduate students before completing their degree requirements. The course is meant to emphasize the importance of critical assessment of public presentations in the profession and to expose graduate students to the breadth of work and opportunity in the field of WEC.

[Graded coursework](#) includes courses that *receive A, A-, B+, B, etc.*, distinguished from Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) courses. Studies in which students receive C- or lower graduate courses do not count toward graduate degree credit requirements. Overall, a 3.0 average is expected to be maintained to be eligible for assistantships.

[S/U coursework](#) includes courses that receive Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grades (i.e., pass/fail). These include the various options for research credits (see Appendix 2).

[Coursework deficiencies](#) include undergraduate courses that your Supervisory Committee may require you to take to prepare you for graduate-level work in your chosen field, i.e., to make up for deficiencies in students' previous academic preparation. Undergraduate courses taken to *make up deficiencies do not count toward the graduate degree* and should not be included on your Form 2-Proposed Schedule of Courses.

[Minor coursework](#) includes courses taken to fulfill an *officially declared minor* offered by another UF department other than WEC. Be sure to speak to staff in the minor department before committing to a minor. **Note that only one course from another department may be used as Supporting Coursework if you wish to earn a minor in that department.**

**MS:** at least six (6) credit hours of coursework must be completed with a minimum 3.00 GPA in that field. Course requirements for the minor program must be approved by your Supervisory Committee by the end of the second semester of your graduate program and identified on your

Form 2-Proposed Schedule of Courses. Also, one member of your Supervisory Committee must be from the minor department.

**PhD:** A minimum of twelve (12) credits should be taken in the minor field, with an earned minimum 3.00 GPA. If two minors are chosen, at least 8 credits must be taken in each study area. Course requirements for your minor program must be approved by your Supervisory Committee by the end of the second semester and identified on your Form 2-Proposed Schedule of Courses. Also, one member of your Supervisory Committee must be from the minor department. If two minors are chosen, you must include faculty from each minor on your Supervisory Committee.

Consult the UF Graduate Catalog and the WEC Student Service Office for information regarding the procedure to declare a minor.

**Teaching requirement** - The ability to communicate knowledge to others is a critical skill for science professionals. Many WEC graduate students go on to positions that involve formal teaching activities (in and out of academia), and this requirement reflects the need for students to be exposed to some of the techniques and rigors of teaching. Every doctoral student has the following 3 choices to fulfill this requirement:

1. Take 1-5 credits of WIS 6940 (S/U) while volunteering as a teaching assistant for a WIS course (undergraduate or graduate) taught by a faculty member in WEC; specific duties are to be defined by the faculty member in consultation with the student. **OR**
2. Students can take a course in pedagogy, which includes any approved, graded course in either the College of Education or the Department of Ag Education and Communication. **OR**
3. Provide evidence to the Graduate Program Committee of substantive, paid teaching experience before enrolling in the doctoral program in WEC or obtained during tenure in the WEC graduate program (e.g., teaching assistant).

### Summary of MS Thesis Degree Credit Requirements

**The minimum credit hours required for a master's degree with a thesis is 30, including no fewer than 18 credits of graded coursework and up to 6 credits in thesis research.**

- A minimum of 11 graduate credit hours of graded coursework must be in the major field (WIS courses).
- All 18 credits may consist of WIS 5000/6000 coursework; however, this can be supplemented with up to 7 credit hours of graded coursework in other departments.
- 3 of the 18 credit hours must be from an approved statistics course at the 5000 level or higher (see statistics requirement below).
- WIS 6933 Seminar (S/U) 1 credit hour is required, max. of 2 toward degree.
- Minimum registration in the final semester is 3 credit hours of WIS 6971 in the fall and spring semesters or 2 credit hours of WIS 6971 in the summer semester.

- Undergraduate coursework (3000-4000 level) is not to exceed 6 credit hours for supporting coursework outside the major when taken as part of an approved graduate program, and the earned grade is B or better.
- All coursework, including thesis research coursework, must be completed during the seven (7) years immediately preceding the date the degree is to be awarded. This includes transfer coursework.

<b>Summary: MS thesis course requirements</b>	<b>Credits</b>
A. Graded WIS 5000 & 6000 level courses	A minimum of 11
<b>Can include:</b> WIS 6905	Can include up to 6
WIS 6934	Can include up to 10
B. Additional graded courses	
<b>Can include:</b> 5000 & 6000 level courses from other depts.	Minimum 3 (Stats), up to 7
<b>Must have:</b> 3 credit hrs. approved statistics courses (5000 level or greater)	3 min.
<b>Can include:</b> up to 6 additional credit hrs. of undergraduate upper-division courses from other depts if approved by committee.	Can include up to 6
<b><i>A. + B. must equal at least 18 and no more than 27 credit hours*</i></b>	
C. Non-graded credits	
WIS 6933 WEC Seminar (S/U)	1 required, 2 max
WIS 6910 Supervised Research (S/U)	Up to 5
WIS 6971 Master's Research (S/U). For graduation term, 2 (summer), 3 (fall/spring) credits are required.	Min. 2 (in summer) or 3 (in fall/spring) in graduation term; up to 6 total for the degree
WIS 6940 Supervised Teaching (S/U)	Up to 3 (2 additional may be taken but do not count toward degree)
<b>TOTAL CREDIT HRS. REQUIRED</b>	<b>30</b>

\*Assumes student defends in fall or spring or takes 3 credits during summer completion.

Checklist of Graduate Coursework Requirements for MS-thesis Form-2

- 1. At least 11 credit hours of graded WIS graduate-level courses?
- 2. No more than 7 credit hours of non-WIS graded courses?
- 3. WIS 6933 WEC Seminar requirement satisfied (1 credit)?
- 4. At least 3 credit hours of a graduate-level Statistics course?
- 5. Area of Emphasis requirement satisfied and approved by the committee?
- 6. At least 3 (spring or fall) or 2 (summer) credit hours of WIS 6971 taken in the final semester?
- 7. No more than 6 credit hours of WIS 6971 recorded on Form 2?
- 8. No more than 6 credit hours of UF undergraduate courses from non-WIS classes recorded on Form 2?
- 9. No more than 6 credit hours of WIS 6905, 5 of WIS 6910, and 3 of 6940 recorded on Form 2?
- 10. Major Coursework plus Foundation and Supporting must equal at least 30 credit hours?



## Summary of PhD Degree Credit Requirements

Summary: PhD course requirements	Credits
A. Master's credits transferred (classes with B or higher, approval of UF admissions)	Can include up to 30
B. Graded WIS 5000 & 6000 level courses	A minimum of 12 (~30 recommended)
Can include: WIS 6934 (Special topics)	Can include up to 10
WIS 6905 (Research problems)	Can include up to 10
C. Additional graded courses	
Statistics: required (graded; 5000 level or greater)	A minimum of 3
<b>Can include:</b> 5000 & 6000 level courses from other depts.	As required
<b>Can include:</b> up to 6 additional credit hrs. of undergraduate upper-division courses from other depts if approved by committee.	Can include up to 6
D. Non-graded credits	
WIS 6910 Supervised Research (S/U)	Up to 5
WIS 6933 WEC Seminar Requirement (S/U)	1 required, 2 max
WIS 6940 Supervised Teaching (S/U) or an approved course in pedagogy (S/U or graded) or equivalent paid teaching experience (See Teaching Requirement below)	Up to 5
WIS 7979 Advanced Research (S/U; pre-qualifying)	A minimum of 1 (during the qualifying semester)
WIS 7980 Dissertation Research (S/U; Candidacy). For graduation term, 2 (summer) 3 (fall/spring) credits are required.	A minimum of 2 or 3
<b>TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED FOR DEGREE</b>	<b>90</b>

### Checklist of Graduate Coursework Requirements for PhD Form-2

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1.  $\leq 30$  credits of graded coursework from master's degree transferred successfully?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. At least 12 credits of WIS-graded courses (5000 and above)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. WIS 6933 WEC Seminar requirement satisfied (1 credit)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. At least 1 statistical analysis course (5000 and above) or approved by the committee?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Is the area of Emphasis requirement satisfied and approved by the committee?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Is the teaching requirement satisfied?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. WIS 7979: at least 1 credit?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. At least 3 (spring or fall) or 2 (summer) credits of WIS 7980 taken in the final semester?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. No more than 6 credit hours of UF undergraduate courses from non-WIS classes recorded on Form 2?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. No more than 10 credits of WIS 6905 recorded on the Form 2?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Total credits (including those transferred from MS) =90?

## Thesis or Dissertation Defense

### MS defense

A formal proposal defense is not required for MS students; however, their committee still must approve a proposal.

A final oral or written defense is required. This exam is usually an oral thesis defense, but the format is the prerogative of the student's advisory committee. This exam evaluates the student's proficiency and general knowledge in the major field of study, particularly the thesis and the student's comprehension thereof. The Committee Members must review the thesis at least two weeks before the exam.

An announcement of the final examination must be submitted to the WEC Student Services Office two weeks before the scheduled date of the exam. Also, certification of satisfactory completion of the final exam must be sent to the UF Graduate School immediately following the exam. Forms required for MS thesis defenses are found at <https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/graduate-students/graduate-forms/>.

Final Exam results are not officially recognized until the student's GIMS record reflects successful completion.

In addition to the defense, all MS students must present their work at the WEC Master's symposium, typically held at the end of each semester.

### Dissertation defense

The dissertation defense is given in the last semester of the program (it must be given within six (6) months of the anticipated date of graduation), is required and primarily a defense of the dissertation and the student's comprehension thereof; however, any topics related to any portions of the major or minor fields may be explored by the student's Committee. Committee members must have an opportunity to review the dissertation before the exam. The committee will determine the amount of time required to review the dissertation. The exam includes a seminar presented by the student to the Committee and other interested faculty. An examination announcement must be made at least two (2) weeks before the examination.

Also, certification of satisfactory completion of the final exam must be sent to the UF Graduate School immediately following the exam. Forms required for dissertation defenses are found at <https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/graduate-students/graduate-forms/>.

All PhD students are required to present their research at the WEC seminar series. This will typically be during the student's final semester.

In addition to a final defense, all PhD students must go through a qualification exam before the end of their second year in the PhD program.

## The WEC PhD Qualifying Exam

To reach candidacy, Ph.D. students must finish two milestones: i) a Research Proposal Defense (RPD) and ii) a General Knowledge Exam (GKE). These two tasks are completed with input from your

Advisor and Supervisory Committee. Once both are completed, the student submits the signed qualifying exam form, which is then submitted by WEC student services to the Graduate School. You are then no longer a Ph.D. student but a Ph.D. candidate!

### Timing

Ph.D. students should attempt to complete the steps to candidacy by the end of their second year. During this period, you should be able to complete most, if not all, of your required coursework, perform required teaching or research assistant duties, develop your proposal, collect preliminary data, and prepare for the GKE. Completing by the end of year two allows you to focus on your Ph.D. research without the burden of preparing for a major examination.

- Progress to candidacy completed by the end of a student's 3<sup>rd</sup> semester (not counting summer sessions) is considered **excellent**.
- Progress to candidacy completed by the end of a student's 4<sup>th</sup> semester (not counting summer sessions) is considered **average**.
- After two years, progress is considered **slow**.

The RPD and GKE can be completed in any order. However, it is most common to complete the RPD first. Again, in WEC, both must be completed before being considered a Ph.D. candidate.

### Research Proposal Defense

Our policy is that WEC Ph.D. students can successfully develop, write, and justify research questions and the methods to answer such in a research proposal. This skill is a task that professional scientists must be able to do with efficiency repeatedly for the duration of their professional careers.

The RPD typically consists of a scheduled committee meeting where you will give a presentation to your committee on your proposed research project, followed by questions and a general discussion with your committee about the merits of your proposal.

The committee may request some changes to the proposal before signing off on the RPD cover form. In rare instances, a second meeting to discuss a revised submission will be requested by your committee.

- Note: The RPD should not be your first committee meeting. Previous meetings would have been used to approve your study plan (Form 2), discuss project ideas, or evaluate preliminary data, among other topics.
- Ph.D. students in other programs at UF may not have a requirement to defend a research proposal. Regardless, those in other Ph.D. programs do need to meet with their committee *"to discuss and approve the proposed dissertation project and plans to carry it out."* (<https://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/graduate/degrees/>) The significant difference for WEC is that you must document this step before advancing to candidacy.
- Recommendations on preparing your research proposal are found in Appendix 3.
- Turn in the Ph.D. proposal cover page, signed by all committee members, and a copy of your defended proposal to the WEC student services office.

## General Knowledge Exam

The Graduate School requires completing a General Knowledge exam before a student can move to candidacy. The GKE consists of both a written and oral component. Written and oral portions of the exam are emphasized to test the student's abilities to express ideas in spoken and written form.

- The GKE aims to test the student on the general knowledge and *communication of that knowledge* in their chosen field of study as outlined in the research proposal. Topics include minor and major areas of expertise (<https://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/graduate/degrees/>).
- The GKE should not take the form of an RPD. The focus of the GKE should be on conceptual comprehension and attainment of intellectual competency in disciplinary areas related to the research (e.g., fundamental theoretical and empirical background, all relevant methodological and analytical approaches required for the dissertation).
- Both parts should be completed within a month of initiation of the written exam. (For example, 1 week for the written exam, followed by a 1–2 week break for written exam evaluation, then a scheduled 2–3 hour oral examination.)

### Committee evaluation of the GKE

At the end of the qualifying exam (RPD and GKE), the committee will determine whether the student has successfully or unsuccessfully met the minimum requirement to reach candidacy.

- 1) Following the written portion of the exam, the committee will receive the collated version of instructions and responses to committee members' questions from the chair. As this is a comprehensive examination, each committee member should evaluate the written responses (not just responses to their questions). They will then communicate to the committee chair whether the answers are satisfactory or unsatisfactory\*.
  - If needed, the committee may meet as a group (without the student) for a more comprehensive discussion of the written responses or reply individually to the chairperson. However, this must be completed promptly to avoid delaying the progression to the oral portion of the exam.
  - In instances with some satisfactory and some unsatisfactory evaluations of the written answers, a majority consensus among the committee will determine whether to proceed with the oral portion of the exam. The chair will act as the final arbiter when committees are split.
  - Regarding an unsatisfactory performance on the written portion – In that case, the committee can allow the student to address significant deficiencies via additional study in one or more areas. The second attempt at the GKE should be at least one semester after the initial effort (e.g., an unsatisfactory written portion in the spring term can be rescheduled for fall but not summer).
  - After completing the written component successfully, the oral exam should be held within 3 weeks of completion.

- 2) An unsatisfactory grade following the completion of the GKE (written and oral portions):

If the student had already once delayed completion of the GKE due to concerns over their initial written responses, an unsatisfactory GKE at this stage would mean a failure to move

on to candidacy. The student will be released from their enrollment at the end of the current term.

- 3) If this was the student's first attempt to complete the GKE, and an unsatisfactory grade was given after the orals are completed:
  - The committee may agree to allow the student to retake the exam once (written and oral) after a minimum of 4 months.
  - The student may change into the MS program (thesis or non-thesis option) and earn an MS degree upon completion of the requirements for the degree (unless the student already has this degree).
  - The student may apply to different departments/programs (and advisors) and begin another graduate program at UF.

## Completing your degree

### Application for Degree

Students must apply for their degree on [ONE.UF](#) the term they expect to graduate. Deadline dates are specified each semester and published by the UF Graduate School on [Critical Dates and Deadlines](#).

### Time Limitations

All work for an **MS thesis degree** must be completed within seven years of admittance to the program. All work for a **PhD** must be completed within five calendar years of conducting the Qualifying Examination. If not, the Qualifying Examination must be retaken. A student must wait two semesters after the Qualifying Examination before taking the Final Examination. If the Qualifying Examination is taken before the mid-point of the term, that semester may be counted as one of the two required semesters.

### Final Term Registration and Clear Prior

During the term in which your final examination is given and your degree is received, the Graduate School sets minimum research registration requirements for all UF graduate students:

- *An MS thesis student must register in the final term for WIS 6971 – three (3) credit hours if the final term is Fall or Spring and two (2) credit hours if the final term is Summer.*
- *A PhD student must register in the final term for WIS 7980 – three (3) credit hours if the final term is Fall or Spring, and two (2) credit hours if the final term is Summer.*

WEC students on a fellowship, traineeship, or assistantship must meet these minimum research registration requirements and will have additional registration requirements due to their funding. See WEC Student Services for clarification.

Clear Prior is an option **ONLY** for MS thesis and PhD students who have met all published deadlines for the current term except Final Clearance from the UF Graduate School Editorial Office. Clear Prior permits eligible students to be exempt from registration requirements for the term in which the degree will be awarded.

**ALL** the following requirements must be met:

- The student has successfully submitted a degree application for the current term within the published deadline (ONEUF).
- The student has appropriately satisfied the current term registration.
- The student has successfully met the current term first submission deadlines for the thesis or dissertation, as confirmed by the Editorial Office via email to the student.
- The student has successfully met all other degree and administrative requirements within published deadlines for the current term.
- The student is finalizing the thesis or dissertation with the Graduate School Editorial Office. No other students are eligible.
- The student has filed a Graduation Date Change Form at the Registrar's Office by the last day of classes.

**Note: There are no exceptions to this Clear Prior policy of the UF Graduate School.**

## Assistantships, Fellowships, and Other Financial Aid

Selection of a student for an assistantship is principally a matter of the student securing admission to WEC by contacting a prospective faculty advisor and securing a commitment from that faculty to serve as the student's Graduate Advisor and provide a stipend. Students are rarely admitted without having secured a stipend commitment. However, in some instances, students will be interested in exploring options for extending financial aid or other circumstances. Some specifics about student finances are provided below.

### Graduate Assistants as Employees and Students

UF regards graduate assistants first and foremost as students, taking courses to increase their knowledge, learning the research process in an apprenticeship mode, and developing their professional skills and behaviors.

Assistantships are generally at the 0.5 FTE rate. Assistantships are meant to i) provide part-time employment, ii) advance progress in the program or to provide professional experience, and iii) enhance WEC's human resources to meet our educational mission.

Note that your graduate assistant employment *may or may not* be directly related to your own thesis/dissertation project. In general, half of your time (~20 hrs/week) is sponsored (i.e., by the 0.5 FTE assistantship), and half of the time is not sponsored (i.e., time spent on their academic program – thesis/dissertation research, writing, reading literature, taking classes, preparing presentations, etc.). Faculty employers (see evaluations below) can more strictly enforce the 20 hours of work required for the graduate student's assistantship than they can the 20 hours spent on their academics. Students must be aware that their academic hours may vary from week to week, meaning sometimes the unsponsored hours will be based solely on course requirements and the student's needs or academic abilities. Messaging and communication about this to faculty and graduate students must be clear.

The UF Graduate School's policy brief on student employment is in Appendix 4.

### Assistantships

A limited number of assistantships are available for graduate study in WEC. Assistantships may become available at any time during an academic year, depending upon the source and status of the funding (contract, grant, or state allocation) and faculty needs.

The duration of an appointment is unique to each assistantship and specified in the student's **Letter of Appointment**. A **Letter of Appointment** is a legal contract between the student and the Graduate Advisor. Details on position, rate of pay, required credit hour enrollment, and specific duties are also included in the **Letter of Appointment**. Information on assistantships is available through your Graduate Advisor or the WEC Student Services Office.

In most cases, tuition fees for students on assistantship are paid either by IFAS, CALS, or directly from the sponsoring contract/grant utilizing "**tuition fee waivers.**" Qualifications for tuition fee waivers vary. Graduate students who have a minimum UF GPA of 3.00, are enrolled for the required minimum number of credit hours, and hold a minimum 0.5 FTE (1/2 time) appointment in the following categories will be eligible for tuition fee waivers: graduate

teaching assistants (TA), graduate research assistants (RA), and pre-doctoral fellows. The WEC Human Resources Office keeps up-to-date policy information on tuition fee waivers.

International students are not guaranteed assistantship support when admitted to a graduate program. Suppose **personal** funding declared to obtain an F-1 visa does not include fellowship money or other financial support for the student's expenses and research. In that case, assistantship support from the University is **not guaranteed**. International students needing financial assistance must work with their Graduate Advisor before admission to identify and secure resources to support the student's graduate program. Some assistantships and fellowships may be available for international students through the [UF International Center](#).

Contact the WEC Personnel Office immediately upon notification of an assistantship or fellowship to begin your payroll appointment to ensure your paycheck will not be delayed! Students must also confirm payroll reappointment with this office.

Payroll appointments and reappointments are made by the WEC Personnel Office upon request of the student's Graduate Advisor or Principal Investigator. The student must complete all payroll sign-up paperwork six (6) weeks before receipt of the first paycheck.

**Note:** Assistantships will be terminated if a student's GPA drops below 3.00.

#### [UF tuition and fees](#)

For information, students should visit the University Bursar and use their Fee Calculation tool, whether funded or not. The University Bursar maintains current and historical tuition and fee rates for all UF graduate students.

#### [Student fees](#)

Assistantship tuition fee waivers do not cover student fees. Student fees include Building, Capital Improvement Trust Fund, Student Financial Aid, Technology, Activity and Service, Athletic, Health, and Transportation Access fees. Without funding within WEC to cover these Student Fees, students are personally liable for their payment.

#### [Tuition fee waivers](#)

Tuition fee waivers for students on assistantship are usually processed the night before fees are due for the semester. You may determine the balance of your Student Fees on [ONE.UF](#) or by contacting the University Financial Services Office (S113 Criser Hall). Students holding graduate assistantships do not accrue vacation time. Arrangements must be made with your Graduate Advisor before leaving campus for an extended period. Each graduate assistant may take up to five (5) days of paid personal time each semester.

#### [Fellowships](#)

Several competitive fellowships (on and off campus) are available to graduate students. These include Presidential Fellowships, CALS Dean's Awards, Grinter Fellowships, Graduate Minority Research Fellowships, McKnight Foundation Fellowships, Fulbright-Hays Graduate, National Science Foundation, and Tropical Conservation and Development Fellowships. Details of these and other fellowships are available on various University and external websites.



### Other financial aid

In addition to the assistantships and fellowships described above, other funding sources may be available to WEC graduate students. Students may find employment on Other Personnel Services (OPS) funds allocated to support teaching, research, or extension programs in WEC and other academic units for up to 20 hours a week while enrolled at UF. Individual faculty members or other graduate students with grants, who should be contacted directly, administer such positions. **Also**, the University has short-term loans, and long-term loans are available through the federal government. To learn more about these financial options, visit [UF Student Financial Aid and Scholarships](#). Finally, the University of Florida Foundation, the UF Graduate School, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and WEC have scholarships and awards that may be available to WEC graduate students. It is well worth your time to visit their websites to learn about scholarship opportunities.

### Student health insurance

GatorGradCare is the University's injury and sickness insurance plan explicitly offered for graduate students on appointment as Graduate Assistants and Pre-Doctoral Fellows and their dependents. For information about GatorGradCare, contact [UF Human Resources](#).

**Note:** *Students must choose to enroll in GatorGradCare each semester through UF Human Resources. Enrollment is not automatic.*

### Students not on assistantship or fellowship (self-funded)

Students who do not receive a stipend and tuition fee waiver are not considered on appointment as Graduate Assistants or Pre-Doctoral Fellows and do not receive a Letter of Appointment. Nor are they assigned work duties, appointment terms, pay rates, FTE, etc. They are not required to meet additional registration requirements each semester beyond those set by the Department and the UF Graduate School. They are responsible for paying their tuition and fees by the established fee payment deadline early each semester.

You may determine the balance of your Student Fees through ONE.UF or by contacting the University Financial Services Office (S113 Criser Hall). For detailed information on UF tuition and fees, please visit the [University Bursar](#) and use their Fee Calculation tool to calculate your tuition and fee balances due.

**Note:** *WEC policy states students are not admitted to the MS or PhD research tracks without a minimum stipend and tuition funding plan. The prior scenario would apply to students who have exceeded their initial funding period and have not worked out extended funding, or to non-thesis MS students.*

Appendices: additional helpful information  
Appendix 1 Examples of mentor-mentee compacts

TBA



## Appendix 2 Research Credits

The following describes different types of WIS research credits - some are useful (or required) for both MS and PhD programs, and others are specific for various degrees and stages of program completion. Only WIS 6971 or WIS 7979/7980 is required.

WIS 6905 Research Problems (1-6; max:10; Letter Graded) - Often used when a student is working closely with a faculty member on a specific project or independent study course or for taking an advanced version of an undergraduate course (with instructor's permission) and is required for MS non-thesis students when developing their technical paper. WIS 6905 can be taken by any MS or PhD student. WIS 6905 credits can be used readily for the graded primary coursework requirement. However, if they are to fulfill the "Area of Emphasis" requirement, a petition to the WEC GPC is necessary.

WIS 6910 Supervised Research (1-5; max:5; S/U Graded) - Not required for any graduate student, but can be used when, for example, a student and advisor are conducting fieldwork internationally, and the student needs to maintain registration status. WIS 6910 can be taken by any MS or PhD student.

WIS 6971 Research for Master's Thesis (1-15; S/U Graded) - A minimum of 3 credits (2 during summer) are required during the last semester, and up to 6 credits of WIS 6971 Masters Research can be applied toward the MS thesis degree. **MS non-thesis students may not take this course.** An unlimited number of credits (up to 15 per semester) can be taken to maintain registration compliance for funding purposes.

WIS 7979 Advanced Research - **Before** completing the Qualifying Examination (see below), a PhD student will register for WIS 7979 Advanced Research. Minimally, students should be enrolled in 1 credit during the term they perform their qualifying exam.

WIS 7980 Doctoral Research - After Admission to Candidacy (i.e., after completing the Qualifying Examination), the student will register for WIS 7980. Minimally, a student must register for WIS 7980 during their final semester (3 credits, Fall or Spring; 2 credits, Summer) per UF Graduate School policy. No upper limit of 7980 (or 7979) credits can be applied to the degree.

## Appendix 3 Tips for Proposal Development

Because of the short duration of an **MS thesis program**, MS students must begin their research as soon as possible. A research proposal must be developed and filed with the WEC Student Services office by the end of the student's second semester. A cohesive, formal research proposal must be developed and defended by the end of the student's third semester of the **PhD program**.

This plan should, at a minimum, consist of:

- a concise statement of the research area of interest (**Introduction**),
- a brief review of pertinent and current literature (**Background**),
- overall objectives, hypotheses, and specific aims (**Research Objectives**),
- an overview of the research design or approach to be taken (**Study Design**),
- an outline of research procedures and sampling design (**Methods**),
- and a discussion of possible inferences should the work go as planned (**Synthesis**).
- A **Budget** and **Chronology** of work to be done is also essential.

**All members of your Supervisory Committee must approve and sign your MS research proposal, which will be filed in your WEC student record.** Developing a research proposal is facilitated by various courses designed for this purpose. Some examples include:

- FNR 5608 Research Planning (ideal for MS students in WEC)
- FYC 6800 Scientific Reasoning and Research Design (for students emphasizing human dimensions)
- WIS 5496 Research Design in WEC (perfect for PhD students in WEC)

A student's proposal should be in the format required for an appropriate funding source in the student's field, such that the proposal could be used (submitted) to help garner funding for the student's program. Below, we include a detailed outline patterned after the National Science Foundation style proposal. This can be adapted for other formats as needed.

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**Give your proposal a title! Use the standardized proposal signature form that includes spaces for committee signatures found at <https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/graduate-students/graduate-forms/>**

- 1) Project Summary** (PhD and MS 300 word maximum): This section is an abstract.
- 2) Introduction** (PhD and MS 1 – 2 paragraphs) - In this section, you will need to set the stage for the content of your proposal with a **broad/brief** overview of the topic area, its significance, and what your work will contribute. You should focus on the overall context that makes your research important. It is common to present your research objectives in a general fashion at the end of this **brief** section.
- 3) Background and Significance** (PhD. 3-4 pages, MS 2-3 pages) - In this section, you will provide the theoretical background of your research, including an in-depth literature review.

What priorities and gaps exist in your field of study? How will your project move the field forward? You should move from general to specific, providing a detailed conceptual background underlying the questions and hypotheses you will address.

**4) Research Design** (PhD 2-4 pages, MS 2 pages) - In this section, you will present your work's overall objectives and specific aims (your research strategy). What type of study (e.g., experiment, comparative, modeling) will each aim require? What hypotheses will you test? What are your predicted outcomes, assumptions, and significant confounding factors?

**5) Preliminary Data** (PhD 2-4 pages, MS 1-2 pages) - This section will present any available preliminary data. This section will help to explain what you expect to find and why. This section proves that your design and methods will achieve what you need.

**6) Proposed Methods** (PhD 2-4 pages, MS 2 pages) – This section contains your sampling design approach (the logistics of your study). What is your sample unit? What will you compare, how, and what will be replicated and randomized? How will you maintain sample independence and achieve adequate sample size for statistical precision? If you are modeling, then how will models be parameterized? Lay out your data analysis plan and how you will know if your predicted outcomes will be achieved. What constitutes a significant result? Include a timeline of planned activities.

**7) Synthesis and Significance** (1 paragraph) - A final, brief closing section can be used to drive home the merits and feasibility of your proposed work.

**8) References Cited** - We do not require a specific reference format, but you must include enough references to demonstrate your familiarity with the field (minimum 30 MSc, 50 for PhD).

**Images and tables** -- Anything you can illustrate in a graphical format (tables or figures) is encouraged if it makes your presentation easier to understand. The section titles presented here are not required but rather guidelines for content. Create section headers that make sense for your project and allow the reader to locate information quickly.

## Appendix 4 Principles for Employing Graduate Students

### Principles for Employing Graduate Students at the University of Florida (UF Graduate School)

Graduate students form a key, impactful part of the University of Florida’s workforce. When their employment contributes directly to their degree program or professional development, a **graduate assistantship** is preferred. Appointment as a **graduate assistant** is meant to:

- Provide financial support for the student in the form of paid employment.
- Advance the student’s progress in the degree program and/or provide professional experience that will strengthen the student’s career development via two paths:
  - As a teaching assistant, gaining valuable university-level teaching experience.
  - As a research assistant, gaining valuable experience in scholarly methodology that may contribute to the student’s dissertation, thesis, or final project.
- Enhance the employing academic unit’s human resources in exercise of its educational mission.

#### Eligibility

To qualify for a graduate assistantship, graduate students must be in good academic standing and properly enrolled for the required minimum of credit hours during their appointment period, as detailed online under “Registration Requirements” on this Graduate Catalog webpage: [Graduate Academic Regulations](#).

#### Length of Appointments

Graduate assistants may be appointed for a semester, an academic year, or a calendar year. Those appointed for an academic year may or may not be offered appointments as a graduate assistants during the summer semester.

#### Compensation

Graduate assistants are contracted **exempt** (paid a salary) employees — unlike student assistants, who are **non-exempt** (paid an hourly wage) employees, and thus may work and be paid on an “as needed” basis.

#### FTE and Tuition Waivers

To be eligible for a **tuition waiver**, a graduate assistant appointment must be at least **.25 FTE** (quarter-time, 10 hours a week). Appointing academic units assume responsibility for covering tuition, either by tuition waiver authority or a transaction within UF’s fiscal management systems. Appointments with lower FTE do not come with tuition waivers.

**Please note:** In 2018, the UF Provost’s Initiative required all state-funded graduate teaching assistants to be appointed at **.50 FTE**. Effective Fall 2023, all recruited Ph.D. admittees promised state or non-state financial support must be appointed at **.50 FTE** (half-time, 20 hours a week).

Appointments of more than .50 FTE are unusual since its required work hours tend to get in the way of students focusing attention on making progress in their degree programs. Doctoral graduate assistant appointments below .50 FTE are exceptions to normal practice for which academic units must obtain, on a case-by-case basis, the Graduate School’s approval through its [petition process](#).

## Terms of Employment and Hiring Process

In addition to University of Florida policies and regulations, graduate assistant appointments are subject to a [collective bargaining agreement](#) between the **University of Florida Board of Trustees** and **Graduate Assistants United (GAU)**, the certified collective bargaining agent of graduate assistants. The process for appointing graduate assistants is detailed at this UF Human Resources webpage link: [Graduate Assistants](#).

## Late Appointment

Graduate assistantships must be appointed by the start date for each semester posted in the “Academic Year Appointment Calendar” memoranda emailed in January of each year to deans, department chairs, and directors and posted online here: [UF Administrative Memo](#). Approval for late appointments after those dates requires a petition to the Graduate School through the week after drop/add or, beyond that deadline, to the Provost’s Office. Late appointment petitions must include an effective date for the appointment.

## Other Forms of Graduate Student Employment

The fundamental preference for graduate student employment is work that supports the student’s graduate education monetarily and experientially — typically in the form of a **graduate assistantship**. However, in some circumstances, graduate students may be hired as **student assistants** — a form of employment **different and distinct** from graduate assistantships in the tasks assigned to them. They also may be employed on campus in **OPS (Other Personnel Services)** at-will, temporary jobs. The process for hiring student assistants is detailed at this UF Human Resources webpage link: [Student Assistants](#).

## Examples of Graduate Student Employment

This table provides examples (not an exhaustive list) of what tasks might be part of different forms of graduate student employment:

<b>Teaching Assistants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture</li> <li>• Lead discussion groups</li> <li>• Prepare a syllabus</li> <li>• Identify reading assignments</li> <li>• Distribute assignments</li> <li>• Grade papers or assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold office hours with students</li> <li>• Proctor examinations</li> <li>• Prepare class materials and visual aids</li> <li>• Take attendance</li> <li>• Record questions and answers in class</li> <li>• Record lectures</li> </ul>
<b>Research Assistants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct laboratory procedures</li> <li>• Observe/interview research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write reports and draft articles</li> <li>• Prepare poster presentations</li> <li>• Review</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect/record/review/confirm data</li> <li>• Manage existing data</li> <li>• Analyze/summarize data/statistics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scientific/scholarly literature Design experiments</li> <li>• Co-author or edit research papers</li> </ul>
<b>Student Assistants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office tasks or clerical chores Run business-related errands</li> <li>• Telephone coverage Scheduling/calendar maintenance Unit website support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine support of lab activities</li> <li>• Records and database management</li> <li>• Event coordination</li> <li>• Residence hall supervision</li> <li>• Food service support</li> </ul>

## Appendix 5. Registration for UF Courses

**MS** students are classified initially as **7AG** (graduate students seeking a first master's degree) and **8AG** after 36 credit hours are completed; **PhD** students before Admission to Candidacy are classified as **8AG**, and PhD students after Admission to Candidacy are classified as **9AG**. Students must confirm that their student records reflect this classification. ***Each semester, your registration should reflect your progress as specified on your Form 2-Proposed Schedule of Courses and be approved verbally by your Graduate Advisor.***

Registration for UF graduate courses may be completed using [UF Student Self-Service](#), provided you have created a [GatorLink](#) username and password. Students must meet UF registration deadlines or pay late registration penalties. The Registrar's [Schedule of Courses](#) offers comprehensive information about UF graduate courses, departmental contact information, registration deadlines, etc. Students can self-register on [UF Student Self-Service](#) for most graduate courses; some courses are department-controlled and first require instructor permission. Complete graduate course descriptions are found in the UF Graduate Catalog.

***Note: Students must register for minimum credit hours in WIS 6910 Supervised Research, WIS 6971 Master's Research, WIS 7979 Advanced Research, or WIS 7980 Doctoral Research if they will be in the field or otherwise are not on assistantship.*** University of Florida policy is that individuals who use UF property or resources in any capacity, including advisement by UF graduate faculty, be 1) registered for courses, 2) employed by the University, or 3) on official volunteer status with the University.

### Registration Requirements

Minimum registration requirements apply to all UF graduate students, depending upon their status. For students on assistantship or fellowship, tuition fee waiver payments will be made provided the minimum credit hour requirements listed in the General Regulations section of the [UF Graduate Catalog](#) are met. In most cases, graduate assistants/fellows must register for the entire Summer (either Summer C or both Summer A and B) semester to retain their assistantships/fellowship funding.

Full-time graduate students not on Assistantship or Fellowship must be registered for nine to twelve (9-12) credit hours in each of the Fall and Spring semesters and eight (8) credit hours in the Summer C (or four (4) credit hours each in Summer A and B) semester. The **minimum registration requirement** when not on Assistantship or Fellowship to remain enrolled is three (3) credit hours in the Fall and Spring semesters and two (2) credit hours during the Summer C (or 2 each in Summer A and B) semester. The minimum registration requirement is the same for PhD students during the semester they take their Qualifying Examination. During their final semester in which their degree is awarded, MS and PhD students must also meet the minimum registration requirements stated above.

### Dropping and Adding Courses

To Drop or add a course (whether it is on your Form 2-Proposed Schedule of Courses or not) ***after the official UF Drop/Add period at the beginning of each semester*** requires a Graduate Schedule Change Form, which WEC Student Services must approve. No particular restrictions

apply when dropping or adding a class during the official UF Drop/Add period; students use [UF Student Self-Service](#) and follow the instructions given. The Graduate Schedule Change Form is located on the [WEC website](#).

**Note: All UF students are now liable for tuition and student fees if a course is dropped AFTER the official UF Drop/Add period and will pay a late registration penalty (\$100) to add a course AFTER the official UF Drop/Add period.** This policy does not apply to PhD students who convert WIS 7979 to WIS 7980 upon Admission to Candidacy.

#### Transfer of Credits

**Only graduate-level coursework with a B or better grade is eligible for credit transfer.**

**MS:** No more than nine (9) credit hours of graduate work (5000 level and above), taken from approved institutions outside of UF, will be approved by the UF Graduate School. Transfer of credit from one master's degree to a second master's degree is limited to six (6) semester hours. UF undergraduates may transfer up to six (6) credits of 5000-6000 level courses taken as undergraduates, provided that the courses were taken over their undergraduate degree requirements. Transfer coursework must be taken within the seven (7) years immediately preceding the date the master's degree is to be awarded.

**PhD:** Up to thirty (30) credit hours for graded courses may be transferred from a Master's degree in the same or a related field of study from an accredited institution of higher learning. UF graduates may transfer up to 6 credits of 5000 or 6000 level courses taken as an undergraduate, provided that the courses were taken in excess of the undergraduate requirements.

**MS and PhD: *Requests must be made during the semester in which the student's Committee is formed, no later than the third term of PhD study.*** Your Graduate Advisor initiates transfer of credit requests and requires the approval of the CALS Dean and must be formally requested and approved by the Graduate School. Consult WEC Student Services for further details. Any non-resident, extension, or international coursework questions should be referred to the WEC Student Services Office.

## **WEC Physical Presence Policy for committee meetings, research proposal defenses, and PhD and MSc oral exams**

Approved by WEC Faculty December 2022

### **Regular Committee Meetings:**

The default recommendation of the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (WEC) is that the student and all Committee members should attend committee meetings in person.

However, the faculty of WEC has previously voted to maintain ultimate physical presence flexibility regarding regular committee meetings where all members and the student may choose to be remotely or physically present for any combination.

### **MSc and PhD Proposal Defense\* Exam:**

The default recommendation of the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (WEC) is that the student and all Committee members should attend a proposal defense meeting in person.

However, the faculty of WEC has previously voted to maintain ultimate physical presence flexibility regarding the proposal defense, where all members and the student may choose to be remotely or physically present in any combination. In addition, owing to the benefits to students of handling one or more rounds of proposal draft review and editing by all committee members, WEC faculty have voted to allow both MSc and PhD proposal defenses to be conducted in a meeting or via email circulation of the draft proposal.

### **Physical Presence at the PhD General Knowledge Oral Exam\* and MSc and PhD Oral Defense Exams:**

**Note:** WEC faculty voted to require a minimum of 4 committee members for PHD and three committee members for MS students.

(1) The default recommendation of the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation (WEC) is that the student and all four Committee members attend PhD oral qualifying exam (the general knowledge portion) and PhD dissertation defense oral exams and that all three committee members attend MS thesis defense oral exams in person.

(2) Exception 1: One member other than the committee Chair (or co-chair) may be remotely present.

(a) PhD: If any member of a dissertation committee other than the Chair cannot be in person, WEC requires the physical presence of the student and at least three members of the advisory committee at PhD oral qualifying exam (general knowledge portion) and the PhD final oral exam. Regarding this exception to the physical presence policy, WEC does not distinguish between the external and regular members; any of them can be absent if the others and the Chair are present.

(b) MSc: For the MSc thesis defense, at least two faculty members, including the Chair, must be present.

The department has incorporated spaces to indicate committee members' physical presence status on the defense exam forms, the PhD qualifying form, and the student outcomes form.

In cases where the committee cannot meet these requirements, the committee chair can petition the department chair with a documented justification to administer the exam with fewer than the required in-person number. In the case of faculty members unable to attend, stand-in faculty members can be used to attain the necessary number of in-person committee members and can be another graduate faculty member (WEC or External), WEC Chair, or GPC Chair, depending

on the situation. In other extraneous circumstances, the committee can discuss/decide on the level of participation of stand-ins.

\* **Note:** The Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation revised and clarified the policy regarding the oral Qualifying Exam several years ago to recognize two distinct portions of the oral exam.

- The Proposal Defense Exam addresses only the student's research plan for their dissertation or thesis.
- The General Knowledge Exam addresses the student's grasp of the larger conceptual and methodological area of their chosen discipline(s). In the above policy, the physical presence requirement only applies to the General Knowledge Exam.

Revised Oct. 23, 2023

## Appendix 7 Logistics of Being a WEC Graduate Student

### Gator 1 Card

The [Gator 1 Card](#) is your official University of Florida picture ID card required of all UF students, faculty, and staff. A valid Gator 1 Card must be presented to transact business at University Financial Services, to pick up tickets for athletic events, to use Gator dining accounts, to use the CIRCA computer labs, to use the University Libraries, to ride the city/campus (RTS) for free, to use all university recreational facilities, etc. Your Gator 1 Card can be obtained at the [ID Card Services](#) Office. An official photo ID (passport or driver's license) and \$15 are required. A student's spouse may obtain a Gator 1 Card from the ID Card Services Office with a photo ID (e.g., driver's license, military ID, or passport), the *student's* Gator One Card, a copy of the marriage certificate, and \$15.

### Florida Residency and Change of Residency

Residency is a classification that determines your tuition rate (in-state or at the University of Florida). When applying to UF, the UF Office of Admissions determines your initial residency classification (Florida resident or non-resident). Reclassification of your residency status after you are admitted to the University is determined by the UF Office of the Registrar and will only be considered before the end of your first semester at UF. It is University policy that graduate assistants and fellows who are not Florida residents should establish [Florida Residency](#) as soon as they are eligible. Further information is available from the [UF Office of the Registrar](#) (222 Criser Hall).

### Carrel Assignments

A limited amount of graduate student carrel space exists within Newins-Ziegler Hall and elsewhere. Some WEC students are assigned space within their Graduate Advisor's lab. All WEC graduate assistants and fellows are eligible for assignment to a carrel; if enough space is available, other WEC graduate students will also be accommodated. New students should check with their Graduate Advisor and then contact the WGSA if a carrel is needed before the start of their first semester.

### Keys, Vehicles, and Equipment

Your Graduate Advisor will disburse keys for Newins-Ziegler Hall and outlying WEC properties. Graduate students who have a valid Florida driver's license, are employees of the University (i.e., are either graduate assistants or OPS employees), and have permission to charge vehicle-use costs to a faculty member's account may check out general-use vehicles through the WEC Operations Manager (<https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/resources/vehicles/>). Grant-funded projects may have full-time use of specific vehicles but must abide by all University regulations and state laws. Vehicles are to be used only for research, extension, and teaching; they are **not** for personal use. Essential equipment can be obtained through the WEC Operations Manager.

### Graduate Mailroom

All active (registered or employed) WEC graduate students are provided with a mail folder in the Newins-Ziegler Mailroom (110A NZH). Messages, mail, and announcements can be received here. Students should check folder names carefully at the beginning of each semester, as folders are constantly rearranged to allow the influx of new graduate students.

After-hours access requires a key from the Main Office (110 NZH). To receive your graduate folder, contact the WEC Senior Secretary in the Main Office before the start of your first semester.

#### Graduate Student Associations

In addition to the formal [Graduate Assistants United](#), there is a Wildlife Graduate Student Association ([WGSA](#)). The WGSA allocates travel grants, hosts a variety of speakers and workshops, organizes social events, facilitates student appointment to various faculty committees, and is often solicited for advice on graduate programs within WEC. Graduate students are encouraged to participate in WGSA student governance actively and have input into Departmental policies. The WGSA maintains a mailbox in the Newins-Ziegler mailroom (110A NZH) and a bulletin board on the third floor. All UF graduate students may attend the [UF Graduate Student Council](#) meetings (324 Reitz Union).

WEC Graduate students are also encouraged to participate in the [UF Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#) and any other WEC or UF student organization they are interested in. See [Student Organizations](#).

#### Use of Phones and Fax

WEC graduate students may use Departmental telephones for local calls. There are telephones located in the Main Office (110A NZH), the NZH Breezeway, and in most other offices. Students working on research projects may have to make long-distance calls on WEC phones; this should be done with a student's Graduate Advisor, logged in, and charged to that specific research account. Graduate students may use the WEC fax machine in the Main Office (110A NZH) for official business purposes only; this includes local and long-distance faxes.

#### Use of Stationery and Office Equipment

Graduate students may use the WEC fax machine, letterhead stationery, and office equipment in the WEC Main Office (110A NZH) for official business purposes only. Students must arrange with their Graduate Advisor to use the copy machine in the Main Office, as it requires a code, and copies must be charged to faculty accounts.

WEC Student Services also maintains an informal WEC Graduate List-serv; contact Kelley Graff, [kellygraff@ufl.edu](mailto:kellygraff@ufl.edu), if you wish to be added to the WEC Graduate List-serv.

#### Computer Facilities

Computer labs for all CALS graduate students are in 2103 McCarty Hall and 1302 Fifield Hall. Access to your email host, the internet, and various software is available in each lab. In addition, each graduate student receives approximately 250 pages of free printing each semester. Students must provide their storage drives at these public computer locations or use available cloud storage. (OneDrive and DropBox space are available for students) and may not save any work on the hard drives.

#### Travel Awards

Travel awards are available for travel to conferences and professional meetings. The amount awarded depends upon the type of conference, talk, or post and individual participation in departmental activities. A limited number of travel awards are available and distributed among **all** graduate students; a graduate student should not assume they are guaranteed a

travel awardThe WGSA administers other travel awards; for eligibility information, application forms, and regulations, visit the [WGSA](#) website. IFAS offers matching travel grants that should be applied for in conjunction with WGSA travel awards; more information can be found on the [CALs Graduate Student](#) website. Graduate students are encouraged to apply for additional travel money through the [Graduate Student Council](#).

#### Flagging of Graduate Student Registration

Some degree requirements must be met within specified time limits (e.g., forming a Supervisory Committee and developing the Form 2-Proposed Schedule of Courses). Suppose you anticipate that these requirements will not be completed on time. In that case, you should ask your Graduate Advisor to petition the WEC Graduate Coordinator detailing the extenuating circumstances and asking for a one-semester extension. Each semester, student records are automatically audited by the UF Graduate School, and if these requirements have not been met, the student's record will be designated deficient.

#### Interruption of Graduate Study and Leaves of Absence

Students who plan to take a leave of absence for two or more consecutive semesters should obtain written approval from their Graduate Advisor before they leave. Students must also inform the WEC Student Services Office of their plans by completing an Interruption of Study form available from the WEC office.

**Readmission:** A student not registering for two consecutive semesters must formally re-apply for admission to UF. All readmission applicants must meet the current admission requirements of the college or school they expect to enter. Readmission is for a specific term. If you cannot enroll for the semester you have been admitted to, you must re-apply for admission for a different term.

A student who plans not to register for one semester must seek written permission from their Graduate Advisor for this limited leave of absence. A registration appointment will automatically be issued the following term; no further action needs to be taken by the student. No readmission application is required when a student takes leave for one semester (such as the Summer semester).

***Note. Students on assistantships and fellowships should check with their Graduate Advisor to review the possible implications of any leave of absence on their status. Each case will be decided separately.***

Suppose leave is contemplated to pursue graduate research in support of a thesis or dissertation. In that case, serious consideration must be given to enrolling for a minimum number of credits to maintain University connections (liability, medical assistance, use of University property, etc.). It is University policy that graduate students who wish to be considered "active" be registered every semester, even if they are in the field conducting research.

#### Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

If a UF graduate student believes they have been sexually harassed or discriminated against, they should immediately contact their Graduate Advisor, Department Chair, or Graduate Coordinator. The incidences may be on or off campus (such as when seeking housing). Sexual



harassment and any form of discrimination **are not the student's fault**, and complaints of any form can be made to any University personnel in a supervisory capacity. For University policy on sexual harassment, see The UF Title IX office site (<https://titleix.ufl.edu/>).

#### Interaction with Other Disciplines

Interdisciplinary interaction, training, and research are encouraged at UF through the variety of courses, seminars, certificate programs identified in the UF Graduate Catalog, and other activities on campus. Because WEC students may interact closely with graduate students and professors in many units, such as Latin American Studies, African Studies, Zoology, Botany, Forestry, Microbiology, Statistics, Education, Economics, Environmental Engineering, Entomology, Resource Economics, etc., WEC students often take courses in other departments as part of their graduate program.

WEC graduate students can anticipate interaction with graduate students and professors from many of these disciplines and from visiting students and professors worldwide. Thus, WEC graduate students are given the rare opportunity to network and correspond with professionals in various fields. They are encouraged to attend seminars given through other departments at UF.

#### Funding Opportunities

The Division of Sponsored Programs (DSP; <https://research.ufl.edu/dsp.html>) distributes information on funding opportunities through its publications and newsletters, such as Explore Research Magazine. Information on proposal development, research at UF, entrepreneurial programs, and graduate education are also available through DSP.

Announcements for funding opportunities within WEC are mailed to the WEC Graduate Listserv.

**Note:** Funding obtained through UF must be administrated through the WEC Budget and Development Office. Graduate students are encouraged to submit proposals but **cannot** serve as Principal Investigator (PI) on a grant administrated through WEC. Usually, students assign their Graduate Advisor as their PI. The student, Advisor, and PI (if different than Advisor) must be clear about their expectations. The submission and awarding process is a lengthy procedure. The student should seek the advice of their Graduate Advisor or the Administrative Assistant in the WEC Budget and Development Office well in advance of work requiring the submission of grants.

#### Personnel Information

The WEC Personnel Office (109 NZH) will assist when the student is either an employee or the manager of an account. All UF graduate student employees must participate in the Direct Deposit program as a condition of employment.

Students who manage projects may need to hire employees in the following classifications: non-student OPS, student OPS, or College Work Study. Sign-up paperwork is initiated in the WEC Personnel Office and must be completed before an employee's first day.

Students who utilize volunteers must have the proper paperwork submitted to the WEC Personnel Office before the first day of work. Further assistance is available through the WEC

Personnel Office (846-0578). **All students must complete an Exit checklist before termination of employment.**

#### Workers' Compensation

Students who receive a UF paycheck for any purpose are considered a **UF employee**. If an employee is injured while conducting duties for their UF employment, they must receive medical care from an authorized medical provider in all cases except an emergency. Contact the UF Worker's Compensation Office at (352) 392-4940 for guidelines. If the employee receives care from an unauthorized medical provider, the employee will be responsible for all costs incurred. Medical expenses for emergency life or death situations may be exempt from this policy.

#### **If the employee is injured:**

- 1) Notify the employee's supervisor. (This is the supervisor who is providing funding).
- 2) The employee and the supervisor must immediately contact the UF Workers' Compensation Office, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., at (352) 392-4940 or Suncom 622-4940 **before** going for medical treatment. If the supervisor is unavailable, the employee may contact the UF Workers' Compensation Office alone.
- 3) Employees in the Gainesville area may go to the UF Student Health Care Center (392-1161) or First Care for treatment. Notify the center staff that the injury is work-related.
- 4) In the case of a life-threatening injury, the employee may call 911 for help and go to the nearest emergency care center. After securing emergency medical care, contact UF Workers' Compensation at (352) 392-4940 to report the incident.
- 5) The employee must not go to their physician for any work-related injury. Workers' Compensation will not cover the claim.
- 6) If the employee is in the field, find out where the nearest emergency care provider is by calling Humana (800) 424-6689. A crisis is not the proper time to research where to go in an emergency.

Accident Report Follow-up. An *Occupational Injury Investigation Report* must be completed within 48 hours of the accident. The supervisor and employee sign the report and return it to the WEC Personnel Office for forwarding to the UF Environmental Health and Safety Division.

The Worker's Comp office will forward the *First Notice of Injury Report* to the department for the signatures of the supervisor and employee. The completed report must be returned to the WEC Personnel Office immediately.

#### International Travel

All UF students traveling outside the United States who participate in any UF-sanctioned or sponsored event, including conducting research or study projects under the direction of a UF faculty advisor, must have adequate personal health and accident insurance. Medical insurance also may be required. It is the student's responsibility to understand the living

conditions in their host country and be aware of the risks that may occur when traveling or studying abroad. Contact the [UF International Center](#) for health insurance information. Information on required immunizations may be obtained through the Center for Disease Control (404) 332-4565/fax or Alachua County Public Health medical services at (352) 336-2364.

#### Library Resources

The [Marston Science Library](#) is the primary resource for wildlife literature at the University of Florida. The library holdings include books, journals, reference materials, bibliographies, and governmental documents in printed and electronic formats. CD-ROM titles include Fish and Wildlife Review, Biological Abstracts, BA/RRM (conference proceedings, reviews, technical reports), Zoological Record, and Cambridge Database. There are also extensive Fish & Wildlife Reference Service microfiche holdings. See the Reference Librarian at the Marston Science Library for more information.

#### Integrity in Graduate Study

Students in ethically confusing situations will want to consult the UF Graduate School's Graduate Handbook for guidelines regarding fraud, plagiarism, cheating, abuse of confidentiality, and conflicts of interest.