

Graduate Student Handbook^{1,2}

Odum School of Ecology
University of Georgia

¹ Last revised 15 July 2025. The most current version of the Handbook is linked from the OSE Graduate Program webpage. All versions (old and current) of the Handbook are maintained on TEAMS/OneDrive under OSE_Collaboration/Graduate Program.

² This Handbook will be updated periodically to add information, revise policy, or to clarify issues. This will be done as necessary by the Graduate Coordinator or Graduator Program Advisor. Please submit any corrections or suggested changes directly to them. Any *policy change* reflected in this Handbook must be approved by a recommendation by the GPC and a vote by the governing faculty. Most policy changes will be clarified with a footnote, which will include the date that change was made. If changes are made by the Odum School of Ecology, students usually have the choice to adopt the new policy or to retain the requirements in place when they matriculated into their degree program (unless this would violate UGA policy).

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Welcome

If you are a new student in one of our graduate programs, we want to welcome you to our community. If you are a more senior student, we appreciate your ongoing contributions to our community and to your program. Whether new or old, you were admitted to the Odum School of Ecology and the Graduate School of the University of Georgia because we value you, because your intellectual interests and curiosity align with our program, and because we think you will add greatly to the academic, professional, and social environment that we value in the Odum School. We want you to succeed as you continue your training in ecology and embark on a career that builds on this experience. Graduate school is many things – it should be fun and it will be challenging. It can also be stressful. We (faculty, staff and your fellow students) are all here to help you navigate your graduate program and help you succeed. This Handbook was written to help acquaint you with our programs, their requirements and milestones, and to offer a bit of advice as you move through the program. Welcome, good luck, and enjoy your time at the Odum School – you will forever be part of our community.

Of course, this Handbook is for anyone engaged in our graduate programs -- the faculty, staff and graduate students of the Odum School. However, we have chosen to write much of this handbook from the perspective of a graduate student -- as if we are speaking to the graduate student ("you").

Mission Vision & Values

(from the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan)

Mission

We study the fundamental ecological processes that shape the world, inspire and train future generations, and create science-based solutions to environmental problems. Building on our legacy of innovation, we create change by harnessing diverse tools and perspectives in a collaborative community.

Vision

To lead the world in ecological science

Core Values

- **Integrity.** We are honest and open in our interactions, professionally respectful, and pursue the truth in our scientific endeavors.
- **Inclusivity.** Diverse backgrounds and opinions lead to a vibrant exchange of ideas and advancement of science. We strive to foster a community in which all individuals are welcome and all feel valued and respected.
- **Intellectual curiosity.** We are motivated by a desire to understand the natural world.
- **Interdisciplinarity.** Because not all questions can be answered within disciplinary bounds, we seek collaborations with other fields of inquiry and respect pluralistic paths to discovery.
- **Innovation.** We seek creative, novel, and effective approaches that advance ecological science, education, and application.

Inclusive Excellence

The Odum School facilitates a number of initiatives aimed to build awareness, offer active engagement, and pursue strategic actions to foster a respectful, inclusive, equitable, and just environment within the Odum community. The school's Inclusive Excellence Committee organizes and promotes these initiatives and welcomes input at any time by emailing the committee at ecodiversity@listserv.uga.edu.

A Brief History

Professor Eugene P. Odum founded the Institute of Ecology in 1967, which became the Eugene P. Odum School of Ecology in 2007 (the School functions at the level of a college within the University of Georgia). The Institute was one of the first ecology research centers in the world, and the School was unique in being the first college to focus on ecology. In its early days, the Institute focused on ecosystem ecology. In more recent years, that focus of the School has expanded to include organismal, population, community, behavioral, evolutionary, conservation, and disease ecology.

The Ecology building (first built in 1974) is situated on the south side of the University's campus. Two additions were added to the building in 1995, and there have been minor updates since then. At the center of the building is a landscaped courtyard used for receptions and social gatherings.

The community of the Odum School of Ecology (OSE) is comprised by a cross section of faculty, senior scientists, technicians, administrative and building staff, graduate students and undergraduates. Most of our personnel are located on campus, but some members are located off campus, including ecologists stationed at the [Savannah River Ecology Laboratory](#) (Aiken, South Carolina), the [Marine Institute](#) (Sapelo Island, Georgia), the [Coweeta Hydrologic Laboratory](#) (Franklin, North Carolina), the [Skidaway Institute of Oceanography](#) (Savannah, Georgia), and the [Jones Center at Ichauway](#) (Newton, Georgia). In addition to persons directly associated with the University, our members also include scientists working in state and federal agencies (e.g., the US Forest Service).

Two centers are housed within OSE: [The River Basin Center](#) and the [Center for the Ecology of Infectious Diseases](#), both of which play a major role in our graduate program. The School also has strong ties to the [Georgia Museum of Natural History](#), and oversees several other [facilities](#) used in education and research, including the HorseShoe Bend (HSB) Ecology Experimental Research Site.

Personnel, Committees, and Organizations

Faculty and Staff

During your graduate studies, you will interact with a wide range of students, staff and faculty. Below is a list of faculty and staff in the Odum School you are most likely to have contact with in matters related to your graduate program, including your employment and duties as a TA/RA. Below this list are the duties of the positions most central to the graduate program ([other staff](#), including those associated with our two centers, CEID and RBC, and faculty labs can be found on the OSE webpage).

<u>Position</u>	<u>Person currently holding that position</u>
Dean	Mark Hunter ^f
Associate Dean, Academic Affairs	Pej Rohani ^f
Associate Dean, Research and Operations	Scott Carver ^f
Director of Public Service & Outreach	Seth Wenger ^f
Assistant to the Deans	Sarah Cranston Fisher ^s
Director of Graduate Studies	John Wares ^f
Graduate Program Administrator	Julie Gunby ^s
Undergraduate Coordinator	Amanda Rugenski ^f
Undergraduate Advisor	Misha Boyd ^s
Academic Coordinator	Kait Farrell ^f
Academic Program Assistant	Christy Tweedy ^s
Laboratory Coordinator	Brittney Ferrari ^f
Director, Interdisciplinary Sustainability Certificate	Tyra Byers ^f
Administrative Financial Director and CBO	Brook Salter ^s
HR Operations Manager	Hanna Crawford ^s
Fiscal Operations Manager	Kathryn Juras ^s
Business Operations Coordinator	Erin Steele ^s
Grants Professional	Jenna Jones ^s
Administrative Specialist	Joanne Greenway ^s
Communications Director	Allyson Mann ^s
Communications Coordinator	Allison Floyd ^s
Graphic and Web Designer	Dan Humphrey ^s
Development and Alumni Relations Coordinator	Melissa Lee ^s
Alumni and Corporate Engagement	Nano Serwich ^s
IT Director	Tyler Ingram ^s
IT Paraprofessional	Josh Fonseca ^s

The Graduate Coordinator

The Graduate Coordinator is member of the Ecology faculty who is responsible for the overall administration of the graduate program by empowering the faculty, students, and staff in the Odum School to welcome new

^f faculty

^s staff

graduate students, support them through their academic program, implement curriculum and policy, and coordinate funding for their education. The Graduate Coordinator is elected by a faculty vote to a three-year term that can be renewed. As the official liaison between the Odum School and the Graduate School, the Graduate Coordinator is responsible for approving all documents and forms as students meet their degree requirements. The Graduate Coordinator chairs the Graduate Program Committee.

The Graduate Program Advisor³

The Graduate Program Advisor is the staff member who helps administer and oversee the graduate program (and is a member of the Graduate Program Committee). The Graduate Program Advisor is the primary point of contact between students and the UGA administrative offices (e.g., Graduate School and Registrar). The Graduate Program Advisor is responsible for ensuring that all paperwork is completed so that students can progress through their programs with minimal administrative challenges. The Graduate Program Advisor administers the annual assessments and the exit interviews (upon completion of a student's degree or withdrawal from the program), and is available to help students if they encounter problems for which they need confidential advice (e.g., about lab dynamics or advisor-student conflicts).

Graduate Program Committee (GPC)

The GPC is charged with overseeing the review of applications, the admission of students to the program, the funding of students, program-specific degree requirements, and other policies affecting the graduate program (including making recommendations for policy changes to the faculty). The GPC also facilitates the annual recruitment event, which is often coordinated with the Graduate Student Symposium, and makes decisions regarding Odum School awards as well as nominations of students to the Graduate School and UGA. The GPC addresses and attempts to resolve concerns and requests that come from the graduate students. Membership on the GPC is defined by our by-laws to include the Graduate Coordinator (who chairs the committee), the Graduate Program Advisor, two graduate students, and five Ecology faculty. The faculty and graduate student representatives are elected by the faculty and GSO, respectively.

Graduate-Faculty Advisory Committee (GFAC)

The GFAC is an ad hoc committee that was formed in 2024 and is intended to provide an open dialogue for addressing concerns of the Graduate Program in a forum distinct from the GPC. The GFAC does not implement policy, but instead raises and investigates issues that can subsequently be addressed by other groups (e.g., the GPC). The GFAC consists of the Dean for Academic Affairs, the Graduate Coordinator, the Graduate Program Advisor, the two student reps from the GPC, and the two co-Presidents of the Graduate Student Organization.

Graduate Program Faculty (GPF)

Not all faculty can supervise graduate students. OSE by-laws and Graduate School rules require that the students' advisor(s) be a member of the Graduate Program Faculty within the Odum School⁴ or have a

³ The Graduate Program Advisor is often referred to as the "Graduate Advisor" (which can create confusion with the student's faculty mentor/advisor) and the "Graduate Coordinator Assistant" (by the Graduate School). Throughout this handbook we use "Graduate Program Advisor", which we prefer since this person assists with the administration of the entire graduate program and functions as another type of advisor to our students.

⁴ Prior to March 2019, Graduate Faculty status was awarded by the Graduate School and applied throughout the institution. This changed in March 2019, so that Graduate Faculty status was awarded by the Program and applied only to that program (with the term "Graduate Program Faculty"). The Odum School faculty adopted the policy that a vote for GPF status would apply to all graduate programs within the School. As a result, we distinguish

Courtesy Faculty appointment in OSE. GPF are elected by a vote of the existing GPF in OSE. Based on OSE by-laws, some GPF can function as sole advisors or co-advisors, while others can only co-advise. For co-advised students, at least one co-advisor must have sole advising privileges in the School. In general, tenure-track faculty in OSE, Courtesy Faculty in OSE (with GPF in OSE), and Research Scientists on hard-money⁵ (with GPF in OSE), can be sole advisors, while other faculty (e.g., adjuncts, lecturers, research scientists on soft-money can be co-advisors if they hold GPF in OSE). Courtesy Faculty in OSE can be co-advisors if they hold GPF in another unit. Exceptions to these OSE rules can be requested by a faculty member. Please refer to our by-laws for more detail.

Faculty Advisor and Co-advisor⁶

Each student in our program has a faculty advisor (or pair of faculty co-advisors⁷) who is the primary person (other than the student) responsible for guiding the student's professional development as they choose coursework, apply for funding, design and execute their research, and write their thesis/dissertation. The faculty advisor(s) will also oversee and advise the student as they progress through various milestones: comprehensive exams, the prospectus defense, and the final defense of their research. The faculty advisor(s) serves as the chair of the student's committee. The committee offers the student a more diverse set of expertise and perspectives that is intended to complement that provided by the advisor. The student may be paid from an advisor's grant, and therefore, the advisor may also be the student's supervisor for work associated with the grant. In most cases, the advisor(s) also serves as a professional mentor, guiding the student's professional development through the degree program and into its subsequent phases. The relationship between student and advisor(s) is multifaceted, professional, personal, and potentially long-lasting.

Graduate Student Organization (GSO)

The GSO serves as a representative and decision-making body for the Odum School of Ecology graduate student community and provides a unified voice to faculty and staff within the department and to the greater campus community. The GSO is an official student organization of the [UGA Involvement Network](#). The GSO serves a diversity of specific functions – they maintain helpful resources for graduate students about funding opportunities, mental health issues, and mentoring; they organize and run the annual Graduate Student Symposium (see next item); they select the grad-invited seminar speaker each semester; they run a non-academic career panel; and they elect graduate student representatives to OSE committees. Almost all OSE committees (e.g., the GPC, faculty search committees, DEI Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee) have a representative selected by the GSO to provide a perspective from the graduate students. Details about the GSO, including the current officers, can be found at their [webpage](#).

between faculty with GPF status in Ecology vs. GPF in non-OSE programs at UGA. UGA does not track which program has awarded GPF – that is the responsibility of the program. The Assistant to the Deans is responsible for maintaining the list of Ecology GPF.

⁵ Hard-money refers to salary that comes from a dedicated line in the state budget, with an expectation of continuation, while soft-money refers to salary that is derived from grants (and thus has a fixed end date).

⁶ Sometimes referred to as the “major advisor” or simply “advisor”. Because a student's faculty advisor is the lead on most grants that support their lab, this person is sometimes also referred to as the PI (Principal Investigator).

⁷ If there are two co-advisors, they each function as voting members. This was not always the case – prior to 2019, co-advisors shared a single vote.

Graduate Student Symposium (GSS)

Each year (usually in January or February), the GSO organizes the Graduate Student Symposium. The GSS is usually held in conjunction with our annual recruitment event in which we invite prospective graduate students to visit our School. The GSS is usually a two-day event that features talks from our graduate students (from first year students to those finishing their PhDs), posters from our undergraduates, and an invited keynote address from an OSE alumnus. It's an incredibly energetic event that celebrates our students and the innovative, interdisciplinary, and insightful research that they are planning or have completed.

EcoReach

[EcoReach](#) is an outreach organization led by graduate students in the Odum School that connects graduate, undergraduate, and professional ecologists at UGA with school-age (K-12) children to heighten awareness of the science of ecology and environmental issues. By interacting with young people, EcoReach aims to raise awareness and enthusiasm for science, while supplementing the schools' curriculum to meet objectives in the state curriculum guidelines. EcoReach interacts with K-12 teachers and also serves our community through informal educational opportunities, such as presenting programs to local scout groups, providing judges for science fairs, and presenting programs at local science days. Many of our graduate student also participate in [STEMzone](#). If you want to get involved in EcoReach or STEMzone, please refer to their webpages for instructions.

Basic information

Graduate Student Database

OSE developed a Graduate Student Database (GSD) that allowed faculty to project and finalize the appointments of their students (as TAs, RAs, or Fellows), students to view this information, and the business office to make appointments based on this information. In 2025, the GSD was being rebuilt and will transition from a web-based platform (decommissioned in June 2025 after making Fall 2025 appointments) to a SmartSheet system (to be available in Fall semester and to be implemented for appointments starting January 1, 2026). The newest version of the GSD will include basic information about each graduate student (matriculation term, advisor, dates of milestones) as well as appointment information (e.g., source and amount of funding). The GSD allows students to view their salary information so that they know if they are being paid, the source of those funds, and the duration of the appointment. The exact functioning of the revised GSD is still to be determined, but we anticipate that three times a year, the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Advisor will update appointments for TAs, Fellows, and GradSchool appointments, and then ask faculty to update RA appointments and confirm/finalize appointments for the upcoming semester. In between these 'open' periods, the GSD will be closed to editing, but will still be viewable for student and faculty (and can be updated by administrators). Students should check the GSD to ensure it is accurate and that they understand their pay situation – this is especially important in the summer when pay is not guaranteed, due to the limited number of TAs. Deadlines for submission of finalized data to the OSE Business Office (via the GSD) are given in the GSDS and in the section of this handbook: *"Timeline for TA funding"*.

Office Space and Keys

Prior to your arrival in Athens, you will be assigned an office space and keys (to your office and your lab; exterior doors can be accessed with your UGA OneCard). Each key you receive requires a \$10 deposit, refundable when you turn in your keys. You'll also need to fill out a form to get your keys – the form is

accessible from the OSE Business Office ([Front Office section](#)) webpage. Your office may be in space assigned to your advisor (e.g., in their lab or an adjacent office), another faculty member, CEID, RBC or OSE⁸. Most of those spaces will be used jointly by 2 or more students. It's therefore important that you be respectful of your shared work environment. This is especially true if you are a TA, in which case we encourage you to hold your office hours in an alternate space (e.g., in the courtyard or one of the lobby areas in the Ecology Building).

GradUP

The Graduate School has developed an important [website](#) that organizes information for graduate students into a single site. GradUP provides valuable resources on: 1) career navigation; 2) communion; 3) leadership and collaboration; 4) research and scholarship; 5) teaching and mentoring; and 6) well-being.

eLC

Many courses host materials in the online eLearning Commons, [eLC](#). You may need to use eLC if you are taking a course, and you may also need to manage an eLC site if you are a TA. Documentation and help with eLC is available after you've logged into the system.

GradStatus and Required Forms

[GradStatus](#) is an interactive platform maintained by the Graduate School that facilitates communication among the Graduate School, academic departments/schools, students, and advisory committees. GradStatus contains forms that you will need to complete and have approved to move through your program. You will also submit your thesis or dissertation through GradStatus.

Slate

You likely used [Slate](#) when you applied for admission. Faculty use this site to review applications to their lab. The Graduate School has long-term plans to replace many of the functions in GradStatus with comparable functions in Slate. They have already moved several committee forms from GradStatus to Slate (e.g., committee formation). Your [Enrolled Student Progress Portal](#) is your access point to Slate.

Georgia Residency

UGA assigns your residency status based upon your application to graduate school. For most of you, it will not matter if you are or are not a Georgia resident. For example, as a graduate student on an assistantship, you will receive a tuition waiver each semester you are appointed as an RA or TA. There are a few situations, however, in which being a Georgia resident may be beneficial. For example, if you are not on an assistantship and therefore have to pay tuition, in-state tuition is much cheaper. Fortunately, out-of-state doctoral students who have reached candidacy, can apply for an out-of-state tuition waiver when needed. This form is on GradStatus (G132; Application for Waiver of Graduate Out-of-State Tuition). There also are a few Graduate School awards and scholarships that require the nominee to be a Georgia resident. The definition and requirements for Georgia residency are set by the Office of the Registrar. This is outlined on a section called [Residency Classification for Tuition Purposes](#).

To change your residency status from out-of-state to in-state, you need to file a [petition](#), along with supporting paperwork, to the Office of the Registrar. This is not a simple or quick process.

⁸ The OSE office space is in Rooms 22A&B, which were renovated in summer 2021.

Motor Vehicles

If you drive a vehicle on official University business, you must adhere to UGA's [motor vehicle policy](#). Each year, travelers using state vehicles should submit a [Driver Acknowledgment Form](#) and complete the "UGA Motor Vehicle Use Policy Training" in the [Professional Education Portal](#) (PEP). Those who use state vehicles at least 3 times per week should also complete an updated [Motor Vehicle Record Request form](#) each year.

TA Training and Requirements

UGA's Center for Teaching and Learning ([CTL](#)) is a valuable resource for TAs and faculty. If you will be a TA, or aspire to teach in your career, we encourage you to use CTL to enhance your instruction. CTL's [TA Handbook and Resources](#) is a great place to start.

If you will be a Teaching Assistant, there are some **requirements** that you need to fulfill prior to, or during, the first semester you TA. These requirements are explained at the CTL website on TA policy:

- You must complete CTL's TA Orientation prior to your first semester teaching.
- You must take the course GRSC 7770 (Intro to College Teaching; or a department equivalent) prior to, or concurrent with, the first semester you teach at UGA. If you have prior teaching experience (e.g., during your MS at another institution), we can petition for an exemption to this rule.
- If you teach the Intro Biology lab, then you also need to take WIPP 7001 (Pedagogy of Writing in the Disciplines), a 1 credit course. This can be taken prior to, or concurrent with your BIO TA assignment. If you take WIPP, you do not have to take GRSC 7770.
- International students must demonstrate proficiency in English.
- Ecology TAs must be certified in CPR/1st-aid. The OSE Lab Coordinator arranges a CPR/1st-aid course prior to each Fall semester (at no cost to you). We encourage you to sign up for that if you are teaching in Fall, or anticipate teaching in Spring or Summer. You can also arrange to take a CPR/1st-aid class on your own, but you may have to pay for that out of pocket. CPR/1st-aid needs to be renewed every 2 years.
- If you are teaching a class that requires the use of a vehicle (even if it is not a university vehicle), you must adhere to UGA's [motor vehicle policy](#). In addition, if you must drive a 15-passenger van as part of your TA assignment, you will be contacted by the UGA Insurance Office and asked to complete a module on van safety (the Ecology Laboratory Coordinator is responsible for providing names of TAs to the UGA Insurance Office).

OneSource and Business Office

The OSE business office handles all financial matters in the School. They are the ones you will interact with to purchase research supplies, and to submit travel and food reimbursement for authorized expenses. Many of these activities require that you go through the OneSource [financial portal](#). It's confusing—the Business Office is best equipped to help you with your questions! You might also find useful information at the [OSE information page](#).

PEP, IRB, IACUC, Chematix

UGA maintains a "Professional Education Portal" ([PEP](#)) for basic online training in a wide range of areas (e.g., lab safety, IACUC, cybersecurity, motor vehicles, etc.). You will likely have to complete several modules during your graduate program. If you conduct research using humans or vertebrates, you are required to get approvals from the Institutional Review Board (IRB; for human research; under the umbrella of the [Human Research Protection Program](#)) or the [Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee](#) (IACUC, for research using vertebrates). IACUC approval is required even for observational studies. IACUC protocols are typically submitted through the [Artemis portal](#) and IRB via the [IRB portal](#); in all cases, you should work with your

advisor to coordinate submission. If you work with chemicals, then you need to catalogue those chemicals in the [Chematix system](#).

Athena

[Athena](#) is a UGA interface for a range of functions that you'll use to access your Student Account, register for classes, view transcripts, and clear registration holds. There are several sections that are especially helpful:

Personal information section

You'll use this section to update your personal and emergency contact information

Student section

This section has lots of useful functions:

- Registration: check your registration status, see the class schedule, and add or drop classes.
- Student Records: view your grades, transcripts, and holds on your account.
- Student Account: view your student account, add optional fees and enroll in payment plans.
- Apply to Graduate/View Graduation Application: submit your application to graduate or you're your application after you've submitted it.
- Mandatory Fee Facts Sheets: view detailed information about mandatory student fees.
- Double Dawgs Pathways: view, add, or make changes to your Double Dawgs Pathway programs

Financial aid section

In this section, you can review your financial aid information, view your financial aid awards, and access all other information about financial aid.

Mail

Mail is delivered to the room next to the main office. Students are assigned shared mail slots, so please take care in retrieving your mail. If you receive a package that won't fit in your box, you will receive an email from the main office. If you need to send USPS mail that is professional, stamped mail can go in the outgoing mail basket under the mail slots. If postage is needed, you should contact your advisor and the Ecology front office to determine the best account to use for billing. If you need to send packages for business purposes (e.g., FedEx, UPS), there are forms and packing materials in the mailroom. There also is a paper shredder in the mail room for disposing of confidential/personnel files. Please contact the Ecology front office if you have questions.

Xerox

There is a copier in the mailroom that will generate hardcopies as well as pdfs that can be emailed to you. If you don't have access to the pdf option, you'll need to have a person in the front office enter your name and email address into the copier to enable pdf scanning. To make hardcopies, you'll need an access code (see the front office).

IT Issues

MyID

Your UGA MyID is your login credentials to utilize most UGA services. It is usually in the form of your initials plus a random 5 digit number. An example is rjt56789. MyIDs older than 10 years may not conform to the example given. When someone asks for your MyID, please only send your username, as in the example

above. Do not send your password to anyone. Also, your student ID is different than your MyID. Your student ID (aka “810” number) is all numbers and begins with 81.

WiFi

Students should use the PAWS-Secure wireless network logging in with their UGA MyID/password. If your general workspace does not have good wifi coverage, please contact OSE IT Staff. OSE IT will submit a request to EITS to improve the coverage.

Poster printing.

OSE has a wide format printer available. OSE IT staff are the only ones who can or should access the printer. Please contact OSE IT staff for the cost of printing. There are two sizes of paper – 36” and 42”. The paper is on a roll, so just one of your dimensions has to be within 36” or 42”. The other dimension can be anything. Please email OSE IT staff a PDF and Powerpoint file of your poster. Please submit your poster to OSE IT staff 48 hours in advance of needing it printed. This gives staff time to print it and also allows the student time to find an alternative place to print if the printer gives problems – which large format printers tend to do quite a bit.

Listservs

There are multiple listservs that you can use as a graduate student, most notably:

Ecology graduate students	ecograds-l@listserv.uga.edu
OdumAll (faculty, postdocs, grads, staff) ⁹	ODUMALL@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

Other listservs are maintained for faculty, graduate program faculty, emeritus faculty, post-docs, staff, undergraduates, etc., but in general, graduate students cannot send mail to those lists. If you need to send emails to those lists, we suggest you send the email to someone with authorization (e.g., your supervisor for the faculty listserv or the Undergraduate Program Advisor for the undergrad listserv). Please also bear in mind that the UGA email system often suppresses all other recipients (e.g., if an email is sent to Ecofac and Ecograd listservs), a graduate student will receive an email that appears to have only been sent to Ecograd (and faculty will not see that it was sent to Ecograd). This can generate confusion, so we encourage everyone to indicate the recipients at the top of the body of the email.

Slack

OSE graduate students maintain a slack account to provide a communication to chat informally about OSE related events, other social events, or to discuss concerns. The Slack account is only for graduate students (past and present) and is not affiliated with UGA. To be added to the [Odum School of Ecology Slack account](#), you should contact the GSO Webmaster (officers are listed on the [GSO website](#)). The Slack account includes channels on various topics, including **#rhelp** (help with coding in R) and **#general** (for communicating about a variety of topics related to student life). Once you’ve logged into the Slack account, you can click the “+” next to “Channels” to browse other channels that might be of interest.

Software

As a UGA student, you have access to some software (e.g., Microsoft products, Zoom, Matlab, ArcGIS, etc.). Please refer to the Enterprise Information Technology Services (EITS) website, [hardware and software](#) webpage. Please note: OSE is not a part of the Adobe licensing program for students; however there are

⁹ OdumAll does not go to undergraduates, nor does it go to all Graduate Program Faculty (i.e., it excludes Adjunct and Courtesy appointments).

some lab and OSE computers with Adobe products that can be used. The Digital Humanities Lab in Main Library is also a useful resource for accessing a wide range of software.

Laptops and second monitors for checkout

OSE maintains several laptops for graduate student checkout (mac and windows). These laptops can be checked out with OSE IT staff and are meant to be checked out for a maximum of 3 days at a time. Monitors are available from the Graduate Program Advisor and can be checked out for the entire semester.

Zoom Cart

OSE has a Zoom cart that can be checked out and used for Zoom meetings in a conference setting if a room is not equipped with microphones or a camera. Please check out the cart with the IT staff.

Grants Database

The GSO maintains a grants database of past grants that have been submitted by graduate students. This provides current graduate students with access to examples of successful grants and increase their likelihood of successful grant writing. Please contact OSE IT staff for access.

Professional conduct

As a member of the Odum community, you are expected to be respectful and to follow the ethical standards of our professions. The Graduate School lays out a diversity of issues related to honesty and professional conduct. You should review [these policies](#). We very briefly highlight some key issues below.

Permits

When conducting research, you are expected to have all of the necessary permissions required to execute those studies. That can include permission from UGA committees (e.g., that govern the use of vertebrates or human subjects: see section on [PEP, IRB, IACUC, Chematix](#)). It can also include permissions that come from outside agencies (e.g., collecting permits or research permits to work in other countries). We expect that you will obtain all necessary permissions prior to initiating your research.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of another's work without appropriate citation or attribution. Sometimes these lines can be fuzzier than we think (and there can be cultural differences), so when in doubt be clear and explicit, and discuss these issues with your mentors and peers.

The use of Generative AI

The use of Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not allowed unless specifically permitted in a class or by your advisory committee. While AI can be a useful tool, a thesis/dissertation is supposed to result from original research, independent creativity, and technical mastery. Thus, the use of AI can be viewed as a violation of the Academic Code of Honesty. As a result, any use of AI in your research needs to be specifically authorized by your advisory committee, and then clearly disclosed in your thesis/dissertation. Please refer to the [Graduate School policy](#), and subheading under the section [Compacts and lab handbooks](#).

Scientific misconduct

Scientific misconduct is a large umbrella that includes a variety of violations of scientific integrity. It includes all other items in this section, as well as things such as multiple publication of research results, fabrication of

data, omission of data (e.g., dropping data that conflict with your pet hypothesis), providing authorship to someone who has not earned it, omitting an collaborator who is entitled to authorship, manipulation of images to distort their meaning, and failure to appropriately cite prior studies to enhance the priority of your results. This topic is very important and complex, and we hope it will provide grist for enlightening discussions in your lab groups and classes and during informal chats.

Graduate Programs in Ecology

The Odum School of Ecology offers MS and PhD graduate degrees with several foci. The programs vary in their course requirements, and in all cases, we expect our graduate students to benefit from expertise and courses offered by Ecology as well as other units (including the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources, College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Departments of Entomology, Genetics, Geography, Geology, Marine Science, Mathematics, Microbiology, Plant Biology, and Statistics). Coursework is determined through discussion between the student and their committee, tailored to satisfy the degree requirements and the student's professional goals.

The **M.S. in Ecology** has two options: 1) a thesis-based option; and 2) a non-thesis option. The thesis option has no specific course requirements, so the program can be tailored by the committee and student to the student's professional goals. In general, students will address research topics appropriate for a two-year program, learning research design, specialized skills, data analysis and interpretation, and methods to disseminate their results to the scientific community and broader public. The program culminates with a public seminar, followed by a defense with the advisory committee.

The non-thesis option is intended for students pursuing a professionally-oriented program of study who do not require independent research as part of their portfolio. The non-thesis option supports our long-term goal to enhance and broaden the MS Ecology degree to appeal to more students with a broader career outlook. Some coursework is required in lieu of a thesis.

A MS student can also choose to include an area of emphasis (AoE) in Integrative Conservation and Sustainability (ICAS)¹⁰ as part of their program. If you choose this option, you'll have some additional course requirements. The ICAS program aims to train the next generation of conservation professionals and therefore includes coursework for building practical skills under the direction of mentors with both academic expertise and real-world conservation experience. Many graduates of the program hold leadership positions in conservation organizations and state and federal management agencies, while others have gone on to earn PhDs and law degrees.

Thus, the MS Ecology program comes in three different flavors, each with a different set of expectations and requirements (see below).

The **Ph.D. in Ecology**¹¹ provides a scholarly setting within which a course of study can be designed to fit the professional goals of each student. The program requires several courses in ecology but is otherwise

¹⁰ In 2024, the MS-Ecology and MS-ICAS programs were merged into a single MS program (named "Ecology"). The ICAS program then became an "area of emphasis" within the MS-Ecology degree program. This was proposed to ensure that we consistently graduated ≥ 5 students each year (which is required by the university). This formal change had no effect on the content of the ICAS program.

¹¹ The **Interdisciplinary Disease Ecology Across Scales (IDEAS)**¹¹ program, was part of the PhD-Ecology program from 2015-2022. IDEAS was designed to address the complex challenges infectious diseases pose to ecosystems,

deliberately designed to be flexible, to complement the student's background, and to facilitate their career objectives in ecology. Major emphasis is on the development of the student's dissertation research, but students are expected to develop a broad background in ecology, evolutionary, and environmental science.

The **Ph.D. in Integrative Conservation (ICON) with an Area of Emphasis in Ecology** provides students with multi-disciplinary theoretical and methodological training to address complex environmental challenges in the context of human society. ICON students choose from one of five disciplinary emphases – the one associated with our School is Ecology. ICON students in Ecology gain a deep understanding of ecology alongside broad exposure to social science and other life science disciplines. They also gain practical experience in tackling real-world environmental problems alongside conservation practitioners.

The **Double Dawgs** program is not a degree program, but rather a pathway for UGA undergraduates to enter one of our MS programs. It is intended as a 4+1 program in which an undergraduate can spend a total of 5 years at UGA and receive two degrees (AB or BS, and an MS). During their fourth year, they are doing work that contributes to both their undergraduate and graduate degree.

Graduate Certificates

Some programs at UGA offer “certificates”, which typically provide additional training that can be added to a student's transcript upon graduation. These certificates can be useful in demonstrating expertise outside of the focal area of a degree program, although this can also be demonstrated via coursework or research publications, without formally enrolling in the certificate program. These certificates typically require 12-20 credit hours of training in an interdisciplinary area. Details about the graduate certificates offered at UGA are available from the Graduate School ([listed here](#)). Those of particular interest to our students include Bioinformatics; Integrative Conservation and Ecology (previously Conservation Ecology and Sustainable Development); Environmental Ethics; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Geographic Information Science; Global Health; STEM Education; Sustainability; University Teaching; Water Resources; and Women's Studies.

human health, social stability, and economic welfare. Funded in 2015, by an NSF training grant, IDEAS took a cross-disciplinary approach, bringing together faculty and students from Ecology and other departments. By working with academics and professionals within and beyond the UGA campus IDEAS provided a unique program to train PhD students in new ways to solve infectious disease problems occurring at the interface of different scales of biological organization. Ecology students who participated in the IDEAS program received a PhD in Ecology. This program is no longer funded, although portions of the academic program remain in existence.

Degree Requirements¹²

Much of your graduate program will be decided in consultation with your graduate committee, and much of this goes far beyond coursework. There are, however, specific curricular requirements that must be satisfied to complete your degree. These requirements differ among our degree programs, but in all cases, only courses with grades of C and above can count towards these requirements, and the GPA must be ≥ 3.0 .

Master of Science in Ecology (thesis)¹³

MS Ecology degree requires at least 30 hours of graduate credit:

- 21 hours¹⁴ (or more) of in-class graduate instruction, including:
 - GRSC 7001 GradFirst; 1 hour (must be taken in your first year)
- 9 hours of research and writing
 - ECOL 7000 6 hours (a maximum of 6 hrs can count toward the 30 hr requirement)
 - ECOL 7300 3 hours (3 hrs, and no more, must be applied toward the 30 hr requirement)
- You must also write a thesis, present that research at a public seminar, and successfully defend your thesis to your committee. You cannot graduate until a final, approved thesis is approved and submitted to the Graduate School.

Master of Science in Ecology (non-thesis option)

MS Ecology degree requires at least 30 hours of graduate credit:

- 21 hours¹⁵ (or more) of in-class graduate instruction, including:
 - GRSC 7001 (GradFirst), 1 hour (must be taken in your first year)
 - At least two courses chosen from ECOL 8000, 8100, 8310, or 8322 (to provide knowledge of ecological concepts).
 - At least one (3 credit) statistics course at the 6000 – 8000 level.
- Research experience
 - 3 hours: e.g., ECOL 7000, 8710, or 8750
 - A written report is due at the end of the semester and presented to the advisory committee
- Additional electives should be chosen in consultation with the advisory committee
- In your final semester, you must pass an exit exam administered by your advisory committee. This exam covers the material identified in your Program of Study.

¹² As of Fall 2022, UGA is requiring all incoming graduate students (MS and PhD) to take (GRSC 7001; 1 credit hour) in their first year. A student may take any section of GRSC 7001, but we highly encourage you to take one offered by Ecology faculty. We anticipate an Ecology version will be taught each Fall semester. This course will be part of your program of study and will satisfy 1 credit hour of your degree requirements.

¹³ If you think you might be petitioning the GPC to move from a MS program to the PhD program, we encourage you to take the required PhD courses during your first year (see information about the PhD program), to facilitate that transition.

¹⁴ At least 12 hours must be graduate credit only. ECOL 7000 and 7300 do not count towards the 12 hours.

¹⁵ At least 12 hours must be graduate credit only. ECOL 7000 and 7300 do not count towards the 12 hours.

Master of Science in Ecology (with an Area of Emphasis in Integrative Conservation and Sustainability; AoE in ICAS) ¹⁶

A student in the MS Ecology program (thesis or non-thesis) may opt to include this AoE. In addition to the requirements noted above, the student must also satisfy requirements of the AoE:

- Required core courses:
 - ECOL 6080 Principles of CESD I 4 hours (fall only)
 - ECOL 8400 Perspectives on CESD 1 or 2 hours (fall only)
- At least one practicum course, selected from the following¹⁷:
 - ECOL 8710 Environmental Law Practicum 4 hours (spring only)
 - ECOL 8750 Endangered Species Practicum 4 hours (sporadically offered)
- In addition, a thesis-based student must write a thesis that involves “engaged research” that addresses an applied problem, is designed *in collaboration with a non-academic partner*, and includes a deliverable product to the partner. The non-academic partner may be identified independently by the student, or with guidance/coordination from their major professor. At the time the student submits the Advisory Committee form, they will also identify their non-academic partner for approval by the GPC. In many cases, a member of the partner group will be appointed as a member of the student’s advisory committee. The student, advisor, and non-academic partner will agree on an appropriate deliverable product at the outset of the project. Depending on the partner’s needs, the deliverable product may be readily formatted as a traditional thesis chapter, such as a peer-reviewed paper or a technical report. If so, the thesis would not differ from a standard MS thesis. Some possible deliverable products will not be readily formatted as a thesis chapter, such as a research-informed action plan or guide, audience-specific informational media, an analytical tool or program, a website, etc. In that case, the thesis would contain a more traditional chapter (or chapters) providing all required components (such as the literature review, detailed analytical methods, etc.) not covered in the deliverable, and will include the deliverable product as an appendix.
 - The thesis will therefore incorporate the following required elements:
 - Student will conduct original research and fully document it within the thesis, including a scholarly literature review, methods, and findings.
 - Thesis will include a deliverable product to non-academic partner, incorporated into the thesis document as a standard formatted chapter, or as an appendix if differently formatted.
 - Thesis will include a reflection on the process of engagement.
- For students with the non-thesis option, the research experience must be conducted with a non-academic partner, with a deliverable (but not thesis) decided in consultation with the partner.

¹⁶ In 2021, we changed the name of the MS in Conservation Ecology and Sustainability Development to MS in ICAS. Changes in the degree requirements were approved by the Graduate School on 15 July 2021. In 2024, in response to the low number of graduates in each of the two MS programs, we combined the two programs into a single program and shifted the MS ICAS to an Area of Emphasis under the MS Ecology program (this AoE is identical to the previous MS program).

¹⁷ An ICAS student can petition the GPC to substitute a different practicum course.

Doctor of Philosophy in Ecology¹⁸

PhD Ecology requires at least 34 hours (30 if you matriculate with a MS) [these requirements include 3 hours of ECOL 9300] to be distributed in the following way:

- 21 hours of in-class instruction (face-to-face classes) (*16 hours must be 8000-level or above*)
 - GRSC 7001 GradFirst 1 hour
 - ECOL 8000 Topics in Modern Ecology 3 hours (fall only)
 - At least two of the following courses:
 - ECOL 8310 Population Ecology 3 hours (fall only)
 - ECOL 8322 Ecosystem Concepts 4 hours (spring only)
 - ECOL 8100¹⁹ Evolutionary Ecology 3 hours (spring only)
 - Additional electives, at least 6 hrs of which must be 8000/9000 in-class instruction (face-to-face classes), but do not have to be within Ecology
- Ecology recommendations/options*
 - A third course in the ECOL 8310/8322/83xx series
 - ECOL 8030 Cross-disciplinary Ecology 1 hour (repeatable to 8 hrs)
 - ECOL 8060²⁰ Ecology Seminar Series 1 hour (repeatable to 12 hrs)
 - ECOL 8990 Problems in Ecology 1-2 hours (repeatable to 3 hrs)
- 9 hours of dissertation research and writing (required)
 - ECOL 9000 Doctoral Research 6 hours (maximum 14 hours)
 - ECOL 9300 Doctoral Dissertation 3 hours (maximum 3 hours)
- If you don't have a MS, then you will require 4 additional hours of graduate electives (these do not have to be face-to-face nor 8000-level or above, but they do need to be open only to graduate students)
- You must also write a dissertation, present that research at a public seminar, and successfully defend your dissertation to your committee. You cannot graduate until a final, approved dissertation is approved and submitted to the Graduate School.

Doctor of Philosophy in Integrative Conservation (ICON) with an emphasis in Ecology

PhD ICON students must fulfill requirements of the ICON *and* Ecology programs: i.e.,

- Participate in integrative activities
- Fulfill the requirements of the PhD in Ecology
- Fulfill the 12 hours of ICON requirements
 - ICON 8001 Integrative Conservation 1 3 hours
 - ICON 8110 Field Planning and Preparation 1 hour
 - ICON 8002 Integrative Conservation II 3 hours
 - ICON 8400 Perspectives on CESD 2 hours
 - ICON 8111 or E ICON Internship 3-8 hours (max 16)
- 6 hours of graduate-level ICON electives (minimum 2 courses; which can also fulfill the Ecology requirements)

¹⁸ PhD-Ecology students participating in additional non-degree programs (such as IDEAS) may have additional requirements in addition to these.

¹⁹ Prior to 2022, both 8310 and 8322 were required. In 2022, the faculty voted to develop a new course in Evolutionary Ecology and two require that all PhD students take at least 2 of these 3 courses. 8100 was first offered in Spring 2024. We expect 8322 and 8100 to alternate being offered during Spring semesters.

²⁰ We ask our students to enroll in 8060 whenever possible to help us schedule the auditorium for our Ecology seminar series. The class has no formal requirements and is typically administered by the Graduate Coordinator.

- You must also write a dissertation, present that research at a public seminar, and successfully defend your dissertation to your committee. You cannot graduate until a final, approved dissertation is approved and submitted to the Graduate School.

Toxicology – MS and PhD program

The Toxicology degrees are administered by the College of Veterinary Medicine. The Odum School of Ecology has little direct engagement in these programs (unlike the ICON program): e.g., we are not involved in admission decisions. Thus, we do not promise financial support to these students. Our role in these programs is being evaluated.

Exceptions to degree requirements

In some cases, a student may not be able to take a required course (e.g., it may not be offered in a given year and the student may not be on campus during the year it is offered). In such cases, a student may petition the GPC and request that they be able to substitute a different course or experience for a specific course requirement (e.g., replacing the PhD requirement of ECOL 8322 or ECOL 8310 with another comparable course offered at UGA or another institution). Requests should be submitted via email to the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Advisor with a detailed rationale and justification for the request. We expect such requests to most often be made during Yr 1 of a MS program or Yrs 1&2 of a PhD program. Requests made at the end of a program are likely to be declined. If such an exemption is granted, the student will still need to satisfy the overall credit hour requirements of the OSE and Graduate School. Exceptions for GRSC 7001 are not allowed.

Degree and Program Milestones

We have ordered this section chronologically. We also have put key steps in **bold**, many of which require submission of a specific form to the Graduate Program Advisor and/or the Graduate School (often via GradStatus). Many of these forms are initiated by you, so it's important that you be aware of these requirements. Although you probably have already been admitted to our program, we start with the admission process so that you understand the process that brought you here, and because you will play a role in recruiting future students to the program.

The Application, Recruitment and Admissions Process

All of our graduate students, including students in the Double Dawgs pathway, must apply for admission to one of our degree programs (through the Graduate School's admission portal²¹). No student will be admitted to the program without a faculty member who advocates for and supports the student's admission. Thus, we recommend that all potential applicants research the interests of our faculty (e.g., check out their webpages and publications) and then reach out to the prospective advisors who best align with the professional interests and aspirations of the student. That dialogue is important not only to establish a conversation but also to determine if that person is potentially taking any students the coming year. Our application deadline is December 1 (for matriculation in Fall of the following year²²), so we recommend that students initiate these discussions in October (if not earlier). As you will discover, the advisor-student relationship is

²¹ Students apply through "Slate": <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/prospective-students/apply-now/>. Slate is mostly used for applications and admissions, but many functions of GradStatus will eventually be moved to Slate

²² Although the default is matriculation in the subsequent Fall, some students may start earlier in the Summer (e.g., to initiate their research) and they may also request a deferral to the following Spring. Deferrals to the following Fall cannot be made; those applicants are encouraged to re-apply.

extremely important, so a student will benefit from finding an advisor with common academic interests and whom the student can develop an effective working relationship.

Once a potential applicant has identified one or more potential advisors, they should apply for admission to one of the graduate programs. We encourage students to apply prior to the deadline to ensure that all of their material is available for review by Dec. 1 and that letter writers have sufficient time to submit their letters.

The faculty on the Graduate Program Committee review all applications during the first half of December. Each application is reviewed by at least 3 faculty. Based upon these reviews, the GPC selects a subset of applicants that they feel are sufficiently prepared to succeed in their chosen graduate program with the appropriate guidance and mentoring. The GPC also ensures that the interests of the student align with the program and expertise and resources of the School (e.g., “do we have someone who has expertise in this research field who can potentially serve as an effective advisor?”). The GPC then releases this list of applicants to the Graduate Program Faculty in OSE and solicits their feedback regarding which of these applicants each GPF is potentially interested in and which they would like invited to our Recruitment Event (typically held in January or early February and immediately before our annual Graduate Student Symposium). The GPC issues invitations to the Recruitment Event (the number is typically limited to 20-25 depending on budgets and availability of housing and hosts, and is typically limited to domestic applicants). The Recruitment Event lets applicants get a better feel for our program, but it also serves as an interview. Applicants not invited to the Recruitment Event (or who were unable to attend) remain under consideration and are welcome to visit campus at other times. Following the Recruitment Event, the GPC solicits new input from faculty and asks for a final set of applicants each faculty member would like admitted to our programs, a ranking of those applicants, and a funding plan for each student.

The GPC then makes admissions decisions based on a range of factors, including the strength of the applicant, what that student would bring to the program, the availability of funding (via RAs, TAs, and fellowships), the projected size of the lab (faculty who have just graduated students and have an empty lab have higher priority). The GPC also gives priority to students being recruited by newly hired faculty, especially at the Assistant Professor rank. We make offers to the top-ranked candidates and move through a waitlist depending on how many declines we receive. One of the biggest technical challenges in this process is determining the availability of funding, which is determined by existing grants and fellowships, and our projections about TA needed by our existing students. We will not admit a MS (thesis-based) or PhD student without an identified mechanism that will provide the student with a stipend and tuition waiver (see section on funding). We also will only admit a student whom we are excited to have in our program, who brings an interesting perspective to our community, and whom we think can succeed in our program. Every student admitted to our program has earned that opportunity.

Deferrals and early admissions

Students typically matriculate in Fall. However, if desired by the PI and student, matriculation can be moved up to summer (e.g., to facilitate fieldwork prior to starting coursework in the Fall), or deferred until spring (e.g., because of visa issues for international students). Requests for matriculating in a semester other than the Fall should be made to the Graduate Program Advisor as soon as possible. Longer deferrals or more rapid matriculations are not possible.

Consideration of admissions outside of the normal cycle

The GPC will consider applications that appear in Slate (the online system used now by UGA) up until the time we start to review applications, usually a few days after the deadline [there is a short time lag between a submission and the time the application appears in our workboxes, so this soft deadline ensures that we

don't penalize a student who applied on time but whose application was late in appearing in Slate]. We do not review applications that arrive after we start reviewing applications. However, some extenuating circumstances (new grants with critical work that must be initiated by a graduate student prior to the next matriculation cycle) may require special consideration. Thus, we will consider admission of students outside of this timeframe on a case-by-case basis if requested by a faculty member. To be considered, a faculty member must petition the GPC. The petition should be submitted to the GPC between April 15-Nov 1 (for matriculation in Spring), or between Dec 1 and April 15 (for matriculation in Summer or Fall) and should include:

- a rationale;
- a statement about funding (we typically expect a guarantee of RA/Fellowship support for at least the first year);
- the standard materials required for admission (a CV and a research statement; plus a request that letters be sent to the Graduate Program Advisor);

If approved, the student will then be asked to formally apply for admission to UGA through Slate (which must be done so that we can issue the formal offer of admission).

Changing from an MS program to the PhD-Ecology program

Some students admitted to the MS (thesis-based) program may decide that they would like to pursue a PhD-Ecology in OSE. Those students may choose one of two options (these options are only available to MS students who have been conducting thesis-based research).

Option One: Under this option, the student would complete their thesis, earn their MS, and apply to the PhD program (see above) by the standard deadline to be considered along with other applicants. If the student is admitted to the PhD program, they would start a new research project for their dissertation (possibly, but not necessarily building on their MS research). Given the timelines, a student requesting Option One would typically apply to the PhD program during the final year in their MS program.

Option Two: Under this option, a MS student can petition the GPC to transition from the MS program into the PhD program without earning their MS. This scenario is intended for students who are making good progress and who want to expand the scope of their MS project. The accomplishments during their MS program simply get transferred into their PhD program: e.g., the research plan they started with gets expanded in scope to satisfy the expectations of a dissertation. A student who wishes to change their degree objective from a MS program to a PhD program must have the support of their advisor and the approval of the Graduate Program Committee (GPC). The student and advisor must agree that such a path is beneficial for the student and the research project.

Under Option Two, the student should prepare a packet for the advisor to review, and the advisor should then submit the packet to the GPC (via an email to the Graduate Program Advisor). **The deadline of October 15 (in the student's second year)** is intended to be late enough in the MS program to provide students with sufficient knowledge to know if such a path is warranted, and early enough to provide them with options if the request is denied (e.g., to complete their MS by the upcoming spring semester). Requests after this deadline will only be considered under exceptional circumstances as Option Two is intended for students making timely progress and have demonstrated an ability to succeed in the PhD program.

1. To be considered for Option Two, the student should prepare a:
 - a. letter to request a change from the MS to PhD. That letter should include:
 - i. clear rationale to change degree programs,
 - ii. review of work that has been done and a proposal for progressing through the PhD program—in terms of coursework, research, and timetable,

- iii. list of proposed PhD committee members,
 - b. research statement (1-page) outlining PhD research, and
 - c. CV.
2. The advisor should then add their own letter (appended before the student's information) that includes:
 - a. assessment of student's progress to date,
 - b. financial support the advisor plans to provide, and
 - c. likely timeline for the student to complete the PhD program (which may or may not be the same as that provided by the student).
3. The Advisor should submit the materials as a single pdf to the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Advisor **by October 15 (11:59pm)**.

The Graduate Program Committee will make decisions no later than mid-November. Any approved transfer into the PhD program will take effect on 1 January.

Double Dawgs program

Double Dawgs is a UGA program in which UGA undergraduates take graduate coursework in the senior year of their undergraduate program, and in this way their master's degree will only take one year beyond their undergraduate training (it's a 4+1 program). While Double Dawgs does not provide any direct financial support, it can reduce the overall cost of a MS degree. Admission to the B.S./M.S. Double Dawgs program is a two-step process. First, a UGA undergraduate must be admitted to the Double Dawgs Pathway; later, they must be admitted to one of the OSE MS programs. The latter requires all the same steps as outlined above. Here we briefly summarize the process:

Admission to Pathway

Ecology majors apply to the B.S./M.S. Double Dawgs pathway in the fall semester of their junior year.

Being admitted to the B.S./M.S. Double Dawgs pathway allows students to take up to 12 credits of graduate level courses during their senior year and apply them to both their undergraduate degree and the M.S. degree (if admitted to the Graduate Program). To be eligible for the Ecology B.S./M.S. Double Dawgs pathway, students must:

- have completed at least 60 credit hours before the start of their junior year;
- be on track to complete a minimum of 15 hours of their 3000-level and above Ecology major coursework by the end of their junior year;
- have a minimum GPA of 3.2 at the time they apply to the Double Dawgs pathway;
- have selected an ecology graduate faculty advisor prior to admission to the Double Dawgs pathway.

Curriculum

Graduate-level courses may be used to satisfy undergraduate and graduate program requirements. Any 6000, 7000, or 8000-level ECOL course may be used towards the undergraduate Ecology degree (maximum 12 credit hours). Additionally, students may enroll in the 6000-level option when available for courses from other departments that are currently listed as Major Electives for the Ecology degree (see the UGA Bulletin for complete list).

Admission to Graduate Program

Students in the Double Dawgs pathway **must apply and be admitted to the Odum School of Ecology graduate program during their senior year** (see above: *The Application, Recruitment, and Admissions Process*). The application process for a Double Dawg student to the graduate program is identical to that required for all other applicants to the MS program, except that one of the three letters of recommendation

must come from the prospective faculty advisor from the Odum School of Ecology. Having been admitted to the “pathway” is not an assurance that you will be admitted to the MS program – it is very competitive.

Navigating the advisor-student relationship

The relationship you have with your advisor is a very important one; it can be extremely rewarding, but it can also be challenging. One key to a successful relationship with your advisor is clear, open, and respectful communication. They are here to help you – they want to see you succeed – but they may not know your goals, your aspirations, your workstyle, your strengths and your weaknesses. Tell them! Likewise, you don’t know theirs. Ask them!

Mentor-Mentee compacts and other documents

Mentee-Mentor compacts, individual development plans, and lab handbooks are tools that can be very effective in helping you and your advisor (and your committee) communicate and function more effectively, especially with respect to your professional development. There are a diversity of compacts and you can find examples on-line (e.g., see our [Graduate School’s examples](#)). Discussion of and examples of lab handbooks can be found at ([The Biologist article](#); [crowd-sourced template](#); [CLEAR lab book](#)). Together, these documents typically clarify:

- the student’s professional aspirations
- the student’s goals during their degree program
- the student’s expectations
- the advisor’s expectations
- how the lab works (group dynamics, meetings, roles of personnel, equipment maintenance and checkouts, etc.)
- the means by which the student and advisor can work most effectively together (e.g., frequency of meetings, establishment of deadlines, means of contact, availability outside of normal work hours, boundaries between personal and professional lives, etc.)
- expected funding plan for the student
- expected timeline for the student’s progression through program
- how the student and their advisor will navigate conflicts that arise.

Lab handbooks. We encourage all labs to create lab handbooks.

Mentor-mentee compacts. **Compacts are required for all incoming students**²³. The compact is different from the more generic issues laid out in a lab manual. It should lay out specific goals and strategies that are unique to you and your advisor. You and your advisor(s)²⁴ should work to complete a compact near the time you matriculate into your graduate program (before you arrive in Athens, or in the first half of your first semester). The format is flexible, but some helpful examples are available from the Graduate School (at this [site](#) or this [site](#)) or via the [OSE Teams site](#). Once created, a compact should serve as a working document that is revisited at least annually and modified as needed throughout your program. At a minimum, you and your advisor(s) should revisit your compact during your discussion at your annual evaluation. You and your advisor(s) are responsible for maintaining and updating your compact.

1. Please upload your mentor-mentee compact to your Graduate Program OneDrive folder: Progress Reports / Mentor-Mentee Compacts.

²³ On 2 November 2020, the faculty voted upon a motion made by the Graduate Program Committee to require mentor-mentee compacts for all new incoming students (effective 1 January 2021), but only recommended for existing students.

²⁴ If you are co-advised, we encourage you to draft a single compact co-written by you and your two co-advisors (rather than two separate compacts).

2. The file should be named “StudentLastName_AdvisorLastName_MMC_yyyymmdd.pdf” (e.g., Vaughn_Osenberg_MMC_20240926.pdf).
3. Please email the Graduate Program Advisor to let them know that you have completed your MMC.
4. The initial version of your MMC should be completed at the start of your first semester in the program.
5. If you revise the MMC, it should have a new date. Please do not delete the older versions.

Generative AI agreement.

The OSE adheres to the Graduate School policy about the use of generative AI in theses and dissertations (<https://grad.uga.edu/policy-on-use-of-generative-ai-in-theses-and-dissertations/>). If you plan to use generative AI in your thesis/dissertation (e.g., to create code, to analyze data, to write text), it’s important that your committee approve its use, so that you can avoid surprises and problems that could arise during your defense. Thus, **during your first semester, you and your advisor(s) must:**

1. Craft an agreement that details **if generative AI can be used** and, if it can, **the conditions under which it may be used and how the use will be documented or cited**. We suggest that the agreement specifically distinguish between the creation of text, the design of studies, the writing of code, and the analysis of data.
2. This agreement should be e-signed by you and your advisor(s) and placed in your Graduate Program OneDrive folder where the mentor-mentee compacts also are stored. The file should be named “StudentLastName_AI_yyyymmdd.pdf” (e.g., Vaughn_AI_20240908.pdf)
3. The agreement should be shared with the entire committee and discussed at your next committee meeting to ensure consensus. The document should be revised if there are disagreements when presented to your committee.
4. Once agreed to by you and your committee, you should email Julie (and cc their advisor(s)) that the agreement has been approved, so that she can record this in our GSD.
5. Please revise the AI agreement as needed. Upload the new pdf to your folder but do not remove the previous agreement.
6. The AI agreement should be completed during the first semester (ideally when the mentor-mentee compact is completed) and discussed at your first committee meeting. We anticipate that many agreements will require updating as research plans (and our applications of AI) evolve, but that it is important to have these initial agreements in place at the start of your graduate program.

Individual Development Plans. IDPs can be very useful in helping you plan your degree program, as informed by your career goals. IDPs are especially valuable in combination with the mentor-mentee compacts. Useful resources can be found at myIDP (<https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>; ImaginePhD.com is a similar site, but designed for humanities). Other useful information is available from the Graduate School ([link](#)), and UGA’s Experiential Professional Development website ([xPD](#)). If you complete an IDP, please

1. Upload your IDP to your Graduate Program OneDrive folder in the same folder as your MMC: Progress Reports / Mentor-Mentee Compacts.
2. The file should be named “StudentLastName_IDP_yyyymmdd.pdf” (e.g., Vaughn_IDP_20240926.pdf).
3. Please email the Graduate Program Advisor to let them know that you have completed your IDP.
4. The initial version of your IDP should be completed at the start of your first semester in the program.
5. If you revise the IDP, it should have a new date. Please do not delete the older versions.

Leading and managing up

You can take control of many aspects of your program and training. For example, most well-run meetings have an agenda – set the agendas for your committee meetings and distribute them ahead of time (along

with any material that your committee may have to review). Take notes during those meetings and then distribute them to the committee afterwards. Don't expect your advisor or committee to remember everything – remind them of the key details to facilitate more effective discussions. You should be the director of your program, managing your team of advisors, to get the most out of your program as you advance towards your professional goals. Lead, but also be attentive to, and respectful of, the advice from your committee. Expectations related to how you, your advisor, and your committee will function should be clarified in your compact or the lab's handbook and during discussions with your committee. In some cases, you may find that material on “managing up” may be helpful as you direct your program and work as an RA or TA (e.g., see [‘managing your advisor’](#); [UW handout](#))

Conflict resolution

We expect that conflicts and disagreement will sometimes arise between you and your advisor, instructor, job supervisor (and/or committee). We trust that you will be able to resolve most of these, by discussing the matter with the other person(s) in a respectful and honest manner. Such conflicts are best handled privately, rather than publicly. On occasion, conflicts may be more significant and you may need some help navigating the situation. There are several persons in OSE who can help. We encourage you to reach out to anyone you trust to gain advice and guidance. In particular, we hope that you will reach out to the Graduate Coordinator and/or Graduate Program Advisor, who can offer advice or serve as a mediator to help you and the other person (e.g., your advisor) resolve the conflict. If they are not able to help, then we suggest you discuss the situation with one of the OSE Deans. In some cases involving more serious conflict, the [Office of Legal Affairs](#), [Human Resources](#), the [Equal Opportunity Office](#) (including the [UGA Ombudspersons](#) may need to become involved: see section below on *Bullying and Harassment*).

Courses and Course Registration

During your graduate program, you will design, execute and write-up your research, interact with colleagues and collaborators, mentor undergraduates, teach, procure grants, and take classes. These courses will be decided in consultation with your advisor and your committee, and informed by your background and current knowledge, your degree and career objectives, and your degree requirements.

Students on a graduate assistantship must register for a minimum of 12 hours during fall and spring semester, and a minimum of 9 hours during the summer. During each term you are on an assistantship, we request that you actually **register for 18 hours during fall and spring, and 12 hours in the summer** because our School benefits financially from these hours while it will not cost you more. For example, once you've registered for formal classes (<18 hrs), you will fill in the rest of your schedule with the departmental seminar (ECOL 8060) and research hours (e.g., ECOL 7000 for MS (thesis-based) or ECOL 9000 for PhD) to create a schedule with 18 hours. If you aren't on an assistantship, you must register for a minimum of 3 hours in the semester you plan to graduate (do not register for more because you are responsible for paying tuition when you are not on an assistantship!); you may also need to register for 3 hrs to maintain continuous enrollment (see [below](#)). If you are not on an assistantship, you don't have to register – this is primarily an option you might invoke in the summer if you don't have summer support (but remember to either maintain continuous enrollment or request a leave of absence: see below).

Before the start of each semester, the Graduate Program Advisor will clear your advisement flag, which is required for you to register for classes. There may be other holds on your account (e.g., Student Accounts Acknowledgement Hold, Contact Information Hold, and holds for unpaid fees), which you will need to clear before you'll be allowed to register for classes (see next section).

Please also note that the Graduate School has several other requirements:

- you must maintain a GPA of 3.0 (else you'll be placed on academic probation);

[\[Return to start of document\]](#)

- only grades of C and above will count towards your Program of Study;
- any “incomplete” grade will convert to an F if it is not completed and regraded within three semesters.

Hold

The registrar may place a hold on your account, which will prevent you from registering for classes. There are lots of causes for these holds, which will be displayed to you on Athena. You will need to clear them in order to register. The first three types of holds likely only apply to students the first semester they attempt to register.

PODT=Proof of Degree/Transcript

Although you provided unofficial transcripts as part of your application, once you accept our offer of admission, you need to provide official transcripts to the Graduate School. For more information, refer to: <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/prospective-students/domestic-application-information/requirements/transcripts-and-academic-records/>

Health Immunization

All new students are required to submit verification of immunity: see <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/immunizations>

Verification of Lawful Presence

All incoming students must show proof that they are in the US legally. Please refer to: <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/prospective-students/university-system-of-georgia-residency-policy/>

Academic Advisement

This hold means the Graduate Program Advisor has not cleared you for registration. Please let the Graduate Program Advisor know, and they will clear that for you.

Bursar's Office/Student Accounts

If you have an unpaid bill, you may have a hold from the Bursar's Office. Please follow up with them; it may be a mistake. https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/bursar_quick_links/

Graduate School

If you have not submitted a transcript or have other outstanding business with the Graduate School, you may have a hold on your account. Please follow up with the Graduate School.

Health Center

If you have missed an appointment at the University Health Center or have an outstanding bill, you may have a flag placed on your student account. See: <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/site>

Parking Tickets

Getting a parking ticket can generate a hold on your student account. If you see a parking hold, call Parking Services so that you can arrange to have it removed. Parking regulations are strictly enforced, especially during football season! See: <https://tps.uga.edu/parking/>

Continuous Enrollment

All enrolled students pursuing graduate degrees at the University of Georgia must maintain continuous enrollment from matriculation until completion of all degree requirements. Continuous enrollment is defined as registering for a minimum of three (3) credits in at least two semesters per academic year until the degree is attained or status as a degree-seeking graduate student is terminated. There are three semesters each year (Fall, Spring, and Summer). If you fail to enroll for two semesters in any given academic year (and do not

have an approved leave of absence), you will need to reapply for admission to the Graduate School and degree program (and pay additional tuition) – readmission is not assured.

Leaves of Absence and Hardship Withdrawals

During your graduate program, unanticipated challenges can sometimes arise that may prevent you from devoting the necessary time, energy, and mental effort required for you to make progress in your program. The Leave of Absence and the Hardship Withdrawal processes are available when you are facing such challenges.

Maintaining your health and well-being is important, and we (the graduate program, your advisor and the entire Odum community) will do what we can to help. So, please reach out if you are struggling so that we can seek solutions before a situation becomes overwhelming. That's not always possible. In extreme cases, an accident or acute health issue might require an emergency Hardship Withdrawal from the university. In other cases, the issues may be more chronic and slower to develop – in those cases a Leave of Absence may be an effective mechanism to help you.

A Leave of Absence is a period of time in which you do not register for courses – it has an established process and is sufficiently common that there is a form on GradStatus. In contrast, a Hardship Withdrawal is a withdrawal from your coursework (in the midst of a term), and is approved on a case-by-case basis (with specific provisions).

Leaves of Absence

If you foresee that you must interrupt continuous enrollment in your graduate program (see section on Continuous Enrollment) due to upcoming or ongoing medical or mental health issues, major financial and employment issues, significant family issues, or other major personal challenges that interfere with your ability to make progress in your graduate studies, you may apply for a Leave of Absence for the upcoming semester(s). A Leave of Absence allows you to remain in your graduate program, but puts it on hold while you address other pressing matters. An approved Leave of Absence allows you to take time off (for one, two or three consecutive semesters, up to a maximum of 12 months). Upon your return to your studies, you will register as usual.

You should apply for the Leave of Absence in the semester before you decide to take the Leave, or in a semester in which you are not enrolled in classes. (If you have already registered for credit hours, and need to withdraw mid-term, then you may need to explore the Hardship Withdrawal.)

Please note, the UGA continuous enrollment policy states that you must be enrolled for 2 of the 3 academic terms (fall, spring, and summer.) If you do not take a leave of absence, and register for only 1 of 3 terms, you will have violated the continuous enrollment policy, which has several consequences. You would have to: 1) re-apply to the program; 2) pay the application fee; 3) and pay a re-enrollment fee equivalent to registering for 3 graduate credits of in-state rate tuition (up to a total of 9 credit hours).

Considerations Before Taking a Leave of Absence

- **Salary.** Since you are not enrolled, you will not be eligible to stay on an assistantship. Thus, a Leave of Absence may require that you obtain outside employment.
- **Insurance.** Because you will not be holding an assistantship or enrolled for credits while you are on leave, you will not be eligible to enroll in the Mandatory Student Insurance Plan or the Voluntary Student Insurance Plan. You will need to enroll in an outside plan.

- *Access to UGA resources.* During your Leave of Absence you will not have access to university resources, and you should not be working on your degree. The Leave of Absence is dedicated time allowing you to focus on your other priorities.

How to Request a Leave of Absence

If you are considering taking a Leave of Absence, here are the steps to take:

- **Step 1.** We encourage you to discuss the possibility of taking a Leave of Absence with your advisor (or with the Graduate Program Advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator). During this discussion, you may discover additional resources that may help you address your situation. If a Leave of Absence is the best way forward, go to next step.
- **Step 2.** Apply for the Leave of Absence on GradStatus using the “Request for Leave of Absence from Graduate Enrollment” (G133.) This form requires the approval of your advisor and the Graduate Coordinator. You will also need to provide a reason and explanation. If you have documentation about the reason for your requested leave, you can upload that as well. This process may take up to a week.
- **Step 3.** Take care of yourself during this break. This is time you should devote to yourself (or your dependents) to best resolve the issues that led to the Leave of Absence.
- **Step 4.** When you are ready to restart your graduate program, you should register for credit hours for the semester in which you plan to return. If necessary, contact the Graduate Program Advisor, who can clear you for registration. Obviously, you should also get in touch with your advisor to let them know of your plans.
- **Step 5.** Resume your program.

Hardship Withdrawal

In the event that you are experiencing a situation in which a Leave of Absence cannot be planned ahead of time, and you need to take time off in the middle of the semester in which you are already enrolled, it is possible to coordinate a Hardship Withdrawal with the Office of Student Care and Outreach and the Graduate School’s Business Office along with additional offices outlined below. If approved for a mid-semester Hardship Withdrawal, there are several important benefits to you especially if you have an assistantship.

- Your tuition waiver stays in place. This prevents you from being billed for tuition after you withdraw from your coursework. Please note that you will still have to pay fees.
- If you withdraw at least 31 days after your insurance coverage begins, you are able to keep your Mandatory Student Health Insurance Plan. You are still responsible for your portion of the premium.
- In addition, if SCO determines that you are not ready to return to your academic and work duties the following semester, you have the option to enroll in the Voluntary Student Insurance Plan without having to register for 3 credit hours. This needs to be coordinated with the Student Health Insurance Plan personnel.

Considerations Before Initiating a Hardship Withdrawal

- The Hardship Withdrawal process requires communication and collaboration with several contacts: Student Care and Outreach team, Graduate School Business Office, Registrar, Human Resources (Student Health Insurance Plan), Odum School Business Office, your advisor, and the Ecology Graduate Program. We are committed to helping you so that the process is not a burden for you at a vulnerable time.

- If the Hardship Withdrawal is not granted, and you still wish to withdraw, you will be responsible for any outstanding tuition and fees. This is a prorated amount that is determined by the number of days completed in the semester.

How to Request a Hardship Withdrawal

If you are experiencing an acute medical situation, here are the steps to complete a Hardship Withdrawal.

Step 1. We encourage you to discuss the possibility of a Hardship Withdrawal with your advisor (or with the Graduate Program Advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator). If you decide that a Hardship Withdrawal is the best path for you, continue with the next steps.

Step 2. Contact Student Care and Outreach. The Student Care and Outreach team will: 1) determine if you are eligible for a Hardship Withdrawal; and if you are, SCO will 2) inform the Graduate School that you will withdraw from your classes and the date of the withdrawal. Documentation may be required. The approval of a Hardship Withdrawal is what allows you to keep your tuition waiver. This could take between one and two weeks.

Step 3. Withdraw from your classes. Go to Athena and withdraw from your classes. You can do this on your own if the withdrawal deadline has not passed. If the deadline has passed, then SCO can help you arrange this withdrawal. You will receive W's for this term.

Step 4. Contact the Ecology Business Office regarding payroll. Work with your advisor and the Ecology Business Office to determine the date that you will be removed from payroll.

Step 5. Maintain mandatory student health insurance. If, at the time your withdrawal is approved, you have been enrolled in the Mandatory Plan 31 days or more, your insurance will continue for the rest of the insurance coverage period. You will be responsible for your part of the premium (50%.) The student health insurance contact is in Human Resources. If the withdrawal will continue for the next semester, HR can assist you with the process of enrolling in the Voluntary Plan.

Step 6. When you are ready to return, you should register for credit hours for the semester you plan to return. If necessary, contact the Graduate Program Advisor, who can clear you for registration.

Emergency (Support) Funds

Students can apply to Student Care and Outreach (SCO) to [request funds](#) to help them through a particularly challenging and temporary financial situation (e.g., foster care, mental health care, other health emergencies, natural disasters, car repair, etc). SCO administers funds from a variety of different sources (both the Graduate School and OSE provide funds to SCO to support these programs). Funds can be requested prior to incurring the costs or on a reimbursement basis. These requests are confidential (OSE does not receive any notifications from SCO) and we encourage you to take advantage of this program if you find yourself in a challenging financial situation.

Forming an Advisory Committee

Your committee's expertise and perspective will help you through your program and help you produce the best thesis or dissertation possible. As you assemble your committee, think of them as a team – put together a group that works well together and will provide complementary strengths and expertise. Ask your advisor as well as other students about the strengths (and weaknesses) that faculty might bring to your committee. Consider faculty in other UGA departments, as well as faculty and scientists outside of UGA (e.g., at other institutions or at state or federal agencies).

In addition to meeting regularly to assist you with your research, your Advisory Committee is also responsible for other tasks. They must approve your Program of Study. Therefore, they must be familiar with your coursework and degree requirements. For PhD students, the Advisory Committee will oversee the

development and defense of the Prospectus (an OSE requirement) and the Written and Oral Comprehensive Exams. Finally, the Advisory Committee will approve your written thesis or dissertation, including the oral defense.

While your committee plays an important role in your program, we encourage you to seek advice, mentorship and guidance from a wide range of people. Neither your advisor, nor even your entire committee, can provide you all of the guidance and insight you need to succeed. Seek diverse interactions within OSE, throughout UGA, and from the entire scientific community. You may also find useful mentorship from alumni of OSE or from folks outside of the scientific community.

MS committee composition

A MS committee requires at least 3 faculty members who will guide your research, approve your program of study, and vote to approve your thesis (or conduct the exit exam if you are doing the non-thesis option).

- Member 1—Committee Chair (aka your faculty advisor or major professor)
 - Must hold Graduate Program Faculty (GPF) status in OSE²⁵
- Member 2 (could be a co-advisor)
 - Holds GPF status at UGA (if they are a co-advisor, they must be GPF in OSE)
 - Recommended to have an appointment in OSE
- Member 3
 - Can come from outside of OSE (i.e, another department) or outside of UGA entirely.
 - If they are from outside of UGA, follow instructions for External Committee Members

You can have more than 3 committee members, but only 1 external member can be a voting member. A majority of your committee members must be GPF at UGA.

Once you have formed your committee, you should go to your [Enrolled Student Progress Portal](#) (in Slate) using the AdCmte tab to identify your advisor(s) and other committee members. Your committee will then be reviewed and approved by the Graduate School and your Graduate Coordinator.

PhD committee composition

A PhD committee requires at least 4 faculty members who will guide your research, approve your program of study, and vote to approve your comprehensive exams, prospectus, and dissertation.

- Member 1—Committee Chair (aka your faculty advisor or major professor)
 - Must be Graduate Program Faculty (GPF) in OSE
- Member 2 (could be a co-advisor)
 - Must be GPF at UGA
 - Must hold an appointment in OSE
- Member 3
 - Must be GPF at UGA
 - Recommended to have an appointment in OSE
- Member 4

²⁵ Not all OSE GPF can serve as sole advisors. Some GPF can only co-advise. This is something you should ascertain during your initial conversations with your prospective advisor (before you enter the program). Rules about GPF are not included in this handbook (some are in the OSE by-laws and others might be found at the Graduate School's website). Please consult with the Graduate Coordinator or Graduate Program Advisor if you have questions or are uncertain if a particular faculty member is part of the OSE GPF (or is GPF elsewhere at UGA).

- Can come from outside of OSE (i.e, another department) or outside of UGA entirely.
- If they are from outside of UGA, follow instructions for External Committee Members (see next section)

You can have more than 4 committee members, but only 1 external member can be a voting member. A majority of your committee members must be GPF at UGA.

Once you have formed your committee, you should go to your [Enrolled Student Progress Portal](#) (in Slate) using the AdcCmte tab to identify your advisor(s) and other committee members. Your committee will then be reviewed and approved by the Graduate School and your Graduate Coordinator.

External committee members

If you want to include an external member on your Advisory Committee (someone who is not a member of the GPF at UGA), there are a few extra steps to take:

1. Email the Graduate Program Assistant the following information:
 - a. Rationale. Explain how this person's expertise facilitates your program and professional development and what they add to the existing expertise on your committee.
 - b. The person's CV.
 - c. List of your other committee members.
2. The Graduate Program Advisor will draft a letter to the Dean of the Graduate School and send it to the Graduate Coordinator for editing and their signature. That letter will be returned to you to complete step 3.
3. You will then upload the member's CV and letter from the Graduate Coordinator when you submit the committee information in Slate.

Changing your advisor or a member of your advisory committee

Your research direction might change, or you may find that you don't work well with your advisor or one of your committee members. That's okay. This is especially true given that you will form your committee early in your program (typically by the end of your first year) – for a PhD student many things are likely to change during your second year. It can be awkward changing advisors or letting a committee member know that you've decided to remove them from your committee, but that shouldn't stop you if it's the right decision. If you do find yourself in this situation, it's important that you communicate honestly, openly, and effectively. We suggest you chat with the Graduate Coordinator or Graduate Program Advisor before you make a decision about changing your advisor (or a committee member) – they can help you strategize about the decision as well as your options. If you do change your advisor/committee, you will need to **refile your Advisory Committee form** in Slate. If you are changing advisors, we also ask that you have **your previous and new advisor email the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Advisor to convey that they are aware of this change** (and that the new advisor supports the transition). Please be assured that although this might seem difficult to do, in all cases we've observed, these changes work out for the best (for all parties).

Committee meetings

You should form your committee during your first year, and you must meet with your committee at least once a year. These meetings are very important. From a student's point of view, the meeting provides an opportunity to receive advice on your coursework and research project. From the committee's point of view, the meeting allows them to have input during the early stages of the research project, rather than being faced with problems in the completed project. We also encourage you to meet with your committee members individually as well. You are not limited to discussing your science with them only during

committee meetings. It's also helpful to appreciate that ideas (and concerns) raised by your committee may be different when they meet as a group than the aggregate input you get when you meet with them individually – group dynamics are an interesting phenomenon.

As you schedule and run committee meetings, be sure to set an agenda or “goals for this meeting”. Take good notes, being mindful of action items for the next meeting. We encourage you to write up these minutes after each meeting and distribute them to your committee so that you are all on the same page, and took away the same messages from the meeting, especially if there were specific issues that your committee asked you to address or key decisions that you've made. You should keep a file of these minutes so that you can follow up as needed, set goals, evaluate progress, and manage challenges. Make the most of your time together in each meeting and take the ownership necessary to make good things happen.

Timeline and requirements²⁶

Your committee plays an important role in your program. Thus, it is essential that you receive their advice as soon as possible:

- **MS committees** must be **formed by the end of the first semester** and a committee meeting held in that same timeframe, with the Program of Study being submitted after the meeting and before the end of the semester.
- **PhD committees** must be **formed by the end of the second semester**, and a meeting held in that same timeframe, with the Program of Study being submitted after the meeting and before the end of the second semester.
- We also encourage students to meet even earlier with faculty (in addition to their advisor) to discuss coursework and overall strategy. We also note that committees, once formed, can be readily changed if research plans shift and different forms of advice are needed. Programs of Study can also be resubmitted if coursework changes. Students who do not satisfy this milestone will have reduced priority for an assistantship.

Annual Progress Report

At the end of each calendar year, you and your advisor(s) will be asked to complete an **annual progress report**²⁷. The purpose of the evaluation is several-fold. It's an opportunity for you to reflect on your accomplishments, and to acknowledge the challenges you've faced. It also helps you set goals for the coming year. The report also offers an opportunity for formal feedback from your advisor and for you and your advisor to share your perspectives on how you can better work together to facilitate your progress through the program. The reports also are used by the OSE to compile data about our graduate programs. You and your advisor will fill out separate reports –and you'll then have a face-to-face meeting to discuss the report and make any changes. At the end of that meeting, you'll insert any additional comments into your document(s) based upon that conversation. These reports should be uploaded to your One Drive “Progress Reports” folder in the appropriate year²⁸.

We encourage faculty to provide honest annual assessments that accurately reflect your progress in your program. Similarly, we encourage you to provide honest input regarding how your advisor can best help you

²⁶ Because of the important role of your committee in advising you throughout your program (including helping you choose coursework in your first two years), you must form your committee during your first year. This change in policy was implemented in 2024.

²⁷ We ask co-advisors to each fill out their own evaluation rather than filling one out jointly.

²⁸ The Graduate Program has a onedrive account where we retain records for each of our students. You and your advisor have access to the subfolder “Progress Reports”, which is where your Mentor-mentee compacts, Individual Development Plans, and progress reports should be kept.

succeed. It does a disservice to everyone if concerns are not raised and discussed, nor does it help if beneficial approaches are not presented that can best help you succeed.

Similarly, we encourage faculty to provide accurate assessments of progress when they assign grades in ECOL 7000 or ECOL 9000. While it might be hard to accept a U grade in ECOL 7000 or ECOL 9000, it's also helpful to know if you are not progressing adequately. Please keep in mind that there is no immediate, formal, consequence to receiving such a grade. Of course, you cannot use a course with a 'U' grade on your Program of Study, but you will likely have many more credits of 7000/9000 than you can use (even if a few of them are 'U'). A 'U' also will make you ineligible for some funding awards from the Graduate School (e.g., travel funds and dissertation completion awards), but a 'U' will not make you ineligible for funding that comes directly from the Odum School.

Program of Study²⁹

The **Program of Study (PoS)** refers to form **G138 in GradStatus**. It is the set of courses (and associated credit hours) that you will take (or have taken) during your degree program and that you and your committee have agreed upon. The Program of Study should satisfy the requirements of your degree program as laid out in the Degree Requirements section of this handbook and in the [Graduate Bulletin](#). Completing form G138 is a requirement.

Once you have determined your Program of Study with your committee, you will go to GradStatus, and complete the form by entering all of these classes and the term you plan to take them that satisfy the requirements imposed by the Grad School, your degree program, and your committee. The form is electronically forwarded to each committee member and the Graduate Coordinator who will be asked if they approve it. Once it is approved by your committee and the Graduate Coordinator, it goes on to the Graduate School for final approval.

NOTE: You must **form your Advisory Committee form before you submit your Program of Study form**. If you are a PhD student, you must **file both of these forms before you can take your comprehensive exams** (see next section).

Prospectus, Comprehensive Exams, and Advancement to Candidacy³⁰

[this section applies only to PhD students]

Advancing to candidacy signifies that you have accumulated foundational knowledge in your discipline and are prepared to undertake independent research in ecology. You will demonstrate this through the comprehensive exams, which consist of a written and an oral exam and by writing and defending a Prospectus, which is a proposal for your dissertation research. The exams and prospectus defense are administered by your Advisory Committee and chaired by your major advisor. The written exam is given prior to (and is separate from) the oral exam. The oral exam and prospectus defense are held during a single in-person meeting with the committee, but are distinct. Format and content of the prospectus, orals and writtens will depend upon your career aspirations and background, as well as the philosophies of your

²⁹ The PoS form, G138, should be filled out and submitted by the student after their first committee meeting. The Graduate School also has a "preliminary PoS" form on their webpage. Do NOT use this. If your PoS requires updating, simply submit a new G138 in GradStatus.

³⁰ On 5 April 2021, the faculty approved a motion from the GPC to change the comprehensive exams. The previous policy required that the student do a written exam, followed by an oral exam. They also had to write and then defend (in another oral format) a prospectus during another meeting. The new policy (reflected in this handbook) combines the oral exam and prospectus defense into a single meeting, but at which both activities will occur.

committee members. We encourage you to have a detailed conversation with your committee to clarify the format of the prospectus and material likely to be covered on the exams. This will reduce unwarranted surprises.

Prospectus

The prospectus should be written by the end of your second year. The Prospectus is a framework that motivates and defines the research that you plan to do for your dissertation, and therefore it should be defended before you have conducted a significant portion of your research. There is no fixed format for the written Prospectus; rather you should discuss this expectation with your committee – do not expect your prospectus to look like another student's. Most often, the prospectus resembles a grant proposal (ask your advisor or other students/postdocs for copies of their recent grant proposals so that you can see what goes into a grant proposal). An effective Prospectus reviews the literature, identifies gaps in our knowledge, motivates the research that you will propose, and specifies the research projects that will comprise your dissertation. A Prospectus is generally 8-15 pages (single-spaced) in length, ignoring citations and addenda. Your committee might also request that you include a budget so that you are explicit about the resources that are required for your project to succeed.

As you write your Prospectus, you should obtain considerable feedback from your advisor, peers, committee, etc. Because your Prospectus Defense is done at the same meeting as your Oral Exam (see below), which is sometimes not done until the start of your third year, we strongly encourage you to draft your prospectus earlier and to have a committee meeting as soon as possible to go over your plans. It's very important for you to get feedback on your research prior to expending considerable time on your project. In addition, getting feedback from your committee early in the process also will make your formal prospectus defense go more smoothly. By the time your Prospectus is formally approved, you and your committee should have a clear sense of what research you will be doing and what your dissertation will look like (barring major changes or disasters). This Prospectus serves as a rough plan agreed upon by you and your committee –if well executed, it provides an appropriate framework for your dissertation. In many cases, those plans will change. You should discuss those changes with your committee – it's important to get their buy-in so that your committee is not surprised by the final thesis/dissertation, and you aren't surprised by their response. Please see additional information under "Oral exam".

Comprehensive exams

You should take your comprehensive exams (writtens and orals) during your second year or during the first semester of your third year. The purpose of the exams is, in part, to determine if you have sufficient knowledge in your discipline to progress to a phase of your program that is focused primarily on research (rather than coursework), and to demonstrate that you have a well-conceived research plan (via the Prospectus). The comprehensive exam has two parts: a written exam typically administered over a week, and an oral (in-person) exam that lasts approximately 3 hours (when combined with the prospectus defense). The exams have two purposes albeit in different formats: 1) they emphasize depth and breadth of knowledge in ecology (and other aspects of your program, such as evolutionary biology, conservation, etc.), as well as integrative and critical thinking and problem-solving, and 2) they evaluate your knowledge of a specific subdiscipline, your ability to motivate a research problem, and your ability to design a well-conceived research plan, as articulated in your Prospectus.

Written exam

The written exam (aka "writtens") is coordinated by your Advisor who will solicit questions from your entire committee that you will be asked to answer. Your advisor will review these questions to ensure balance and lack of redundancy before distributing them to you. Each question should include a set of expectations

including time or page limits and whether you can consult with any outside resources (e.g., closed or open book). You will answer one set of questions (from one committee member) each day (no set of questions should require more than 8 hours of effort). At the end of each day, you should send the questions and your responses to your advisor and the committee member who provided the question(s). After the final day of your exam, the entire exam should be distributed (by your advisor) to your entire committee for their review. Each committee member should offer you feedback prior to your oral exam and within a week of receiving the completed exam, indicating if you passed or failed their part of the exam.

Oral exam³¹

The oral examination follows the written exam by at least 2 weeks (and often up to a couple of months), to allow time for feedback from your committee based upon the written exam. The orals have several purposes: 1) they might provide an opportunity for the committee to ask questions that follow up on issues raised in the writtens – this is especially appropriate if there were gaps identified during your writtens; and 2) they provide an opportunity to explore broader concepts that were not tackled in the writtens. The meeting for the oral exam will also be used for the formal defense of your Prospectus. Because the oral exam and prospectus defense occur during the same meeting, **you must submit a final draft of your Prospectus to your committee at least two weeks prior to your oral exam** (this will be the version that your prospectus defense will be based upon).

There is no fixed format to the meeting that includes the oral exam and prospectus defense. We suggest a flexible approach that reflects your professional goals as well as the philosophy of the committee members. In general, we anticipate that ~1/2 of this meeting will be allocated to general knowledge in your discipline (the oral exam) and ~1/2 allocated to the prospectus (and associated concepts), but recognize this will vary from committee to committee. It is the responsibility of the committee chair (Advisor) to moderate the length and format of the oral exam and prospectus defense, but both parts are required. To help you best prepare for your exam, please have clear discussions with your advisor and committee members. Every faculty member has a different approach and set of expectations for the oral exam (as well as the writtens and prospectus). Some members may ask that you read several books to prepare for your exams; others will suggest you read dozens of papers; others may not require anything special. This is a conversation you should initiate with your committee members well in advance of your exams.

Votes and signature forms

You must notify the Graduate Program Advisor at least two weeks prior to your oral exam, providing them with the date, time, and place for the exam. The Graduate Program Advisor can help you find a room for your exam if this poses a challenge. The Graduate Program Advisor will take your information and submit **form G118** via GradStatus. At the same time, the Graduate Program Advisor will provide you with a copy of the **Prospectus Signature Form**. At the conclusion of your oral exam and prospectus defense, your Advisor will request votes from your committee and prior to ending the meeting, they will convey their votes to you.

Each member will indicate “pass” or “fail” on the **Prospectus Signature Form**. They will receive an email directing them to a form in GradStatus, where they will indicate if you passed or failed the written exam and the oral exam. Thus, there are three votes. You are allowed one vote of “fail” in each section (written exam, oral exam, written prospectus), so long as it is not from your advisor (or one of your co-advisors). The

³¹ In many departments (and previously in OSE), students sometimes provided snacks (beverages and food) during their committee meetings, exams and defenses. This put an inappropriate burden on students and, in 2019, the Ecology faculty voted to not allow students to provide snacks at these meetings. If faculty desire refreshments or snacks, then the advisor or committee members must provide them.

Graduate Coordinator will also sign these forms. Please give the signed version of the **Prospectus Signature Form** to the Graduate Program Advisor.

If you do not pass

If you do not pass one of the three elements (i.e., if your advisor or two or more members of your committee do not pass you on either the written or oral exam or approve your Prospectus), you may either withdraw from the program, request a change to the MS Ecology program, or retake the exam (or rewrite your Prospectus) within one year from the date of the original exam. Your committee's votes will determine if you need to retake only the orals, only the writtens, only rewrite the prospectus, or some combination of all three. If you do not pass on the second attempt (or choose not to retake the exam) within a year of your first attempt, you will be dismissed from the program at the end of that semester, unless the GPC approves an extension.

Candidacy

Once you have passed your comprehensive exams and had your Prospectus approved, you should **submit the Application for Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degrees (form G162)**. This application must be approved by the Graduate Coordinator and by your Advisory Committee. Advancing to candidacy, demonstrates that your committee feels you have the background, the foresight, and the discipline to complete your dissertation. Your primary responsibility is now the completion of your research and the writing of your dissertation. Of course, you likely have many other duties and desires as well (teaching, participating in other collaborative projects, outreach, and outside life), so time management will remain a major consideration.

The Graduate School requires that your dissertation be completed within 8 years following matriculation.

If >5 yrs have elapsed, then you will be required to retake your qualifying exams, unless you petition the Graduate School for a waiver.

Timeline

To help you plan for your comprehensive exams and prospectus defense, we offer the following timeline and suggestions as a general guide.

Long-term planning

4-6 months prior to the written exam ('writtens') and oral exam/prospectus defense ('oral exam'):

1. Meet with your advisor and committee members to agree on a range of dates to hold exams and topics to be covered in the exams. You could do this individually or during a committee meeting, with more specific follow-up meetings with your committee members.
2. Your Advisor should communicate with your committee regarding guidelines for the written questions. These guidelines include those laid out in this document such as cap on time length of exam (1 day/committee member) and when feedback to the student should be provided (within a week of completing the writtens, unless other arrangements are agreed upon). Advisors are encouraged to ask all committee members to read relevant information in the OSE Graduate Handbook (which is available to all members of the Odum community and which the Graduate Program Advisor will distribute to non-OSE committee members).
3. You should communicate with committee members to schedule exams and set up individual meeting times to discuss the content and format of the written questions that you'll receive from your committee member.
4. During these meetings, you might want to ask questions to help you anticipate the format of the exam:

- What is the duration of the written exam (how many days)? Answer – no more than the number of committee members (each committee member gets one day).
- Where can you take the written exam? Can you take it at home? In your office? Is this up to you or does your committee have a requirement?
- How many hours each day? Answer – no more than 8 hrs of work each day.
- Is the exam open or closed book, or a combination? [This will likely vary from committee member to committee member.]
- Do the writtens have to be completed in consecutive days? Answer – in general, no, but the exam should be completed with a minimal number of gaps. Most committees will be happy to accommodate, for example, your teaching schedule. Some students schedule their exams for semester breaks to minimize these conflicts.
- What is the duration of the oral exam/prospectus defense? Answer – no more than 3 hours (although deliberations sometimes take additional time).
- What topics should you expect the committee member to cover on the exams?
- Is there any specific material you should read or review to prepare for the exams? If a reading list is provided, should you read the recommended material only, or is that just suggested as a starting point?
- You might also ask the committee member about their general philosophy about exams and/or the content and format of questions they typically ask. Some committee member will focus narrowly on your research topic while others will target broader ecological concepts and theory.
- You would likely benefit from talking to senior students who have already gone through the comprehensive exams.

Prior to the writtens

1. Your advisor should solicit questions from committee members at least two weeks prior to your writtens.
2. Committee members send exam questions (and instructions) to your advisor, at least one week prior to the written exam.
3. Your advisor should review these questions (e.g., for clarity).

During the writtens

1. Your advisor will send you the exam questions at the start of each day (you should communicate earlier about when each day starts).
2. At the end of each day, you should return your response to that day's questions to the advisor and committee member.
3. At the conclusion of the exam, you or your advisor should distribute the entire exam (the questions and instructions and your responses) to the entire committee for their review.

After the writtens

1. Within a week of receiving the completed written exam, each committee member should have provided you with feedback regarding your performance on the exam. They may suggest that you do additional reading and that they may follow-up on a topic during your oral exam.
2. A committee member should indicate if you passed or failed your writtens, but in some cases they might defer that decision until after your oral exam, where they might receive some clarification about your answers.

Prior to the orals

1. You should schedule a day and time for your exam. Be sure to leave enough time between the written exams and oral exam to receive feedback from committee members (at least 2 weeks).
2. You should reserve a room for at least a 3 hr time slot. Given limited availability of rooms, you should do this ~3 months prior to your oral exam. If you have problems finding a room, the Graduate Program Advisor can help.
3. At least two weeks prior to the oral exam, you need to email the Graduate Program Advisor information about your oral exam (date, time, and location). The Graduate Program Advisor will relay this information to The Graduate School through GradStatus (Comprehensive Exam Announcement – Form G118.)
4. You should prepare for your orals by addressing any deficiencies that your committee identified in your written exam.
5. Prior to your prospectus defense/orals, the Graduate Program Advisor will distribute the **Prospectus Signature Form** (which is a OSE-specific form) to you and your advisor. If you don't receive it, please speak with the Graduate Program Advisor. Take this form to your prospectus defense.

At the conclusion of the orals and prospectus defense

1. Your advisor and committee should convey their votes to you at the conclusion of the exam. They also should provide you with their rationale for their votes, and if you failed, to articulate what you will need to do to increase your odds of passing (if you choose to retake that exam).
2. All committee members should sign the **Prospectus Signature Form**, and you or your advisor should return the form to the Graduate Program Advisor (who will get the signature of the Graduate Coordinator).
3. Your advisor and your committee members will receive form **G118** electronically to indicate their votes on your written and oral exam. They are expected to reply to the electronic prompt for this form within 2 weeks of the oral exam.
4. Upon passing your written and oral exams and successfully defending your prospectus, you should request to advance to candidacy by completing form **G162** in GradStatus.
5. You will see an official congratulatory letter from the Graduate School confirming your advancement to candidacy.
6. You also should upload a copy of your prospectus to your personnel folder on OneDrive, or give a pdf to the Graduate Program Advisor.

Thesis or Dissertation

Content and Format

In general, a MS thesis typically consists of 1-2 research chapters (executed over 1-2 years), while a PhD dissertation typically includes 3-5 chapters (excluding the introductory and concluding chapters; executed over 3-5 years). We encourage you to write up your chapters as the research is completed and to submit each chapter for publication upon its completion – don't wait for data from the final chapter before you start writing the first. It will be a great benefit to you if most of your chapters are already published (or in review) when you defend your thesis/dissertation. Your advisor may have specific requirements, which you should discuss with them. Of course, publishing prior to your defense is less likely for a MS thesis, given the compressed time frame.

We also encourage you to seek input from your committee prior to submitting a body of work for publication, rather than waiting until your defense. Lastly, we hope that you will already have presented most of the work in each of your chapters at conferences and at lab and committee meetings, and thus you

will be well prepared to present the work at your defense seminar and to defend the work before your committee.

The Graduate School also has specific rules about formatting and content. Please read the Style Manual, available on the Graduate School [webpage](#) that provides basics about theses and dissertations.

Authorship

If a chapter in your thesis/dissertation has already been published, you must be the sole or first author on that paper. If the research is not yet published you should expect to be the sole or first author of the eventual publication. You should be able to defend all of the research included in your thesis or dissertation, even if the work is highly collaborative. If a chapter is the result of collaborative work (i.e., is or is expected to be co-authored), the chapter must include a “Author Contribution” section that includes the contribution of each co-author (if published) or expected co-author (if not yet published). In addition, you must state that every co-author has agreed that the research can be included in the thesis/dissertation. We suggest that this be done as a footnote on each chapter or as a cover page prior to each chapter. That footnote should include the full citation if the chapter is already published, or an expected authorship order if the chapter is not yet published, as well as the Author Contributions and the approval of each author that the research be part of the thesis/dissertation. Please refer to the Graduate Schools Style Guide for additional information.

If you are a co-first author of a paper (i.e., in which you and one other person share “first” authorship), that paper can be included in your dissertation so long as you can defend the entirety of the work and so long as all of the co-authors and members of your committee agree that it can be included.

Thesis or Dissertation Defense³²

Your perseverance, patience, and hard work will be recognized on the (hopefully) satisfying and culminating day of your thesis or dissertation defense. This is the opportunity to present your research to a public audience (including OSE) and to defend your thesis/dissertation to your committee. Thus, there are two components to the “defense” – the public seminar (where you present your research) and the formal defense (in which you meet privately with your committee). Of course, prior to the defense, you will have worked very hard writing and revising your dissertation. As this is the pinnacle of your graduate program, you should be very well prepared for this event. It requires a lot of preparation.

The Graduate School has [specific guidelines](#) on the style of your thesis or dissertation. You should consult these guidelines before you start writing your thesis or dissertation.

In addition to the time devoted to writing (and revising, and re-revising) your chapters, you also need to prepare for the seminar – it takes an immense amount of time to craft a compelling and lucid seminar.

Deadlines for various steps are posted by the Graduate School (see [deadlines](#)) – most of these dates change each year (and semester). Below is a quick summary.

Confirm your Program of Study. It’s been a while since you submitted your Program of Study. You may not have taken all of the courses you intended. Check your Program of Study and confirm that you took those courses and received appropriate grades and that the PoS still satisfies your degree requirements. If not, submit a new PoS.

³² In 2021, the Graduate School approved a change to GS rules – defenses should be in person, but can be held remotely (e.g., via zoom) if approved by the Graduate Coordinator and Dean (on a case-by-case basis).

Apply for graduation. You must **apply for graduation** by submitting an application to the Graduate School no later than Friday of the second full week (the first full week for summer) of classes in the semester of the anticipated graduation date. This is done through **Athena** (not GradStatus).

PhD commencement. If you are a PhD student, you also need to submit the **Doctoral Commencement Information (form G120)** so that your name and your dissertation title are printed in the commencement program. This is typically required about mid-semester and is a separate form from the application for graduation.

At least six weeks prior to defense: You should have finalized the title of your thesis/dissertation, the date of your defense with your committee, and made reservations for the room to be used for your seminar and your defense (speak with the Ecology front office about requesting rooms). **Provide this information to the Graduate Program Advisor**, along with an IRB project number (if your research required IRB approval).

Format check. Also around the mid-way point in the semester, you should also **submit a draft of your thesis/dissertation to the graduate school for a Format Check (form G121)**. This format check is required and there is a fixed deadline each semester for the format check. Prior to writing your thesis or dissertation, you should consult the [UGA formatting guide](#). When you access Form G121 on GradStatus, you will be taken to a third-party provider called ProQuest which serves as an electronic repository for theses and dissertations. You will upload your draft, and the UGA Graduate School will review the format of your document. You will return here to “revise” (upload) your final document once the final version has been approved by your committee.

Seminar. You also should begin putting together and practicing your seminar. Plan ~45 minutes for your seminar (although a MS seminar can be shorter since it covers less material). Please check with your committee about their expectations, but we encourage you to put together a compelling “story” built around the body of work that you’ve conducted – if you did a dissertation, you probably can’t cover everything you’ve done, so be selective and integrate the body of work into the most compelling seminar you can envision. We also encourage you to tell a story – personally, we prefer a well-connected story line that flows continuously, rather than a punctuated seminar that starts and stops by proceeding chapter by chapter.

At least two weeks prior to defense: For PhD candidates, an **official announcement must be made through GradStatus by the Graduate Program Advisor (form G119)**, which is why you need to let the Graduate Program Advisor know about the date/time/location for your defense. The public portion for both PhD candidates and MS students will be announced to OSE by the Graduate Program Advisor. In general, you also should **provide your complete thesis/dissertation to your committee at least three weeks before your defense**, but you should confirm expectations with them well before this time.

Day of defense: You will **present your seminar to the Odum community**. Your family and friends outside of OSE also are welcome. This is a big day for our School as we celebrate your accomplishments. After the public seminar, you will **meet with your committee for the defense**, where they will review not only your presentation, but also your thesis or dissertation. The defense typically lasts 2-3 hrs. It is called a defense because you will be challenged – be prepared to explain and justify the choices you’ve made, the studies you’ve designed, the analyses you’ve done, the conclusions you’ve drawn, and the overall contribution of this body of work to your discipline. If you’ve been in regular and effective communication with your committee, very little in your defense should be a surprise. The more you interact with your committee (and get feedback on drafts of your chapters), the more smoothly your defense is likely to go.

At the conclusion of your defense, your committee will likely ask you to leave the room so they can have a private discussion. When they call you back into the room, they will discuss their overall evaluation. Each

committee member will then need to sign off on the **Approval Form for Doctoral Dissertation and Final Oral Examination (PhD)** or the **Approval Form for Master's Thesis and Final Oral Examination (MS)** made available in GradStatus. The form has four parts: name of thesis or dissertation; the vote by each member on the thesis/dissertation (approval, approval with suggested changes, or disapproval of written work); a vote on the oral defense; and final approval by your advisor. You are allowed to have one committee member not approve your defense and one member not approve your thesis/dissertation. Even with that one 'disapprove', you will still graduate so long as that person was not your advisor (or co-advisor). In many cases, your committee will request some revisions. In that case, they will either ask to see a revision of the thesis/dissertation or they will give the advisor the authority to determine if you've made the required changes. Once those revisions have been accepted by the committee (or by your advisor on behalf of the committee), the advisor will sign the form under "final approval". After that, the Graduate Coordinator will sign the form, and it will be transmitted to the Graduate School. **The Graduate School must receive the Final Defense Approval Form at least two weeks prior to graduation. OSE also requires that you hold your defense at least 2 weeks prior to the Graduate School's "Deadline for Final Defense and ETD Approval Forms"** to allow some time for revisions and the filing of the required paperwork. Exceptions can be granted by the Graduate Coordinator for extenuating circumstances.

The Final Steps

You're almost done...

Thesis/dissertation submission.

Submission of the final thesis or dissertation is done via the **ETD Submission Approval (form G129)** via ProQuest. This is the same site you submitted a preliminary version of document for a format check. This official copy of the thesis/dissertation will be electronically submitted by the Graduate School to the main library for archiving – it should be the final version approved by your committee. **The Graduate School must receive the final, corrected thesis/dissertation no later than two weeks prior to graduation.** The ETD submission is usually one of the last University requirements. There also is a form that you must submit, in addition to the final version of your thesis/dissertation (ETD Submission Approval, G129). That form will be assigned to your advisor for approval. This step is not complete until your advisor signs off on it, and the Graduate School approves it. It is recommended that you submit this form at least a day (if not a week) before the deadline so that the Graduate School has time to send it to your advisor and your advisor has time to approve it.

Miscellaneous.

All requirements for the degree must be completed and reported to the Graduate School no later than one week prior to graduation (e.g., you will need to have addressed any incompletes or holds). Remember, that **you also must have been enrolled for a minimum of three credit hours the semester in which you complete the degree requirements and plan to graduate.**

Graduation ceremonies.

If you plan to participate in the graduate ceremony, please be sure that you have ordered the proper attire. Information about commencement is usually posted on the UGA webpage. The Odum School also has a small ceremony for our AB, BS, MS and PhD graduates. There is no summer commencement, so if you finish in the summer, you will need to return to campus in Fall if you want to participate in the UGA commencement ceremonies. UGA does not allow graduates to "walk early" (e.g., in Spring if they plan to finish in summer). In the Odum School, however, we will let you walk early because we understand that many students cannot return to campus after starting a post-doc or job. If you plan to graduate in summer, and walk in the OSE ceremony in May, you cannot walk again in December.

Exit interview.

After you have completed all other requirements, you should complete an on-line exit interview (see Appendix). The link to the exit interview will be emailed to the graduate by the Graduate Program Advisor. The survey will ask about basic information (name, advisor, program), accomplishments (publications, awards, outreach activities), future plans and career objectives, as well as your assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses. The survey will take about 30-60 minutes to complete. We greatly value your time – this information will be invaluable as we strive to improve our program. A copy of the exit interview is provided in the Appendices, so that you can prepare the information ahead of time.

An Alternate Outcome: Dismissal From the Program

In some uncommon situations, things don't go as well as we'd all hoped. Those situations include:

1. Not passing your qualifying exams or successfully defending your prospectus (see [above](#)).
2. Not turning in an approved version of your thesis or dissertation in a timely manner.
3. Not making satisfactory progress in your program (e.g., as assessed by your annual evaluations, your grades, or your timeline).
4. Not having a committee (e.g., after Year 2). This most often happens when a faculty member steps down as the chair of your committee (i.e., as your advisor), and you are unable to find another person willing to assume that role. To remain in the program, you must be able to constitute an advisory committee and to have one of those persons serve as the chair/advisor.
5. Failure to adhere to the honor code.
6. Violation of professional ethics (including research misconduct).
7. Title IX / non-discrimination and anti-harassment violation.
8. Dismissals may come from either the Graduate School or from the Program. Graduate School dismissals arise if the cumulative GPA is <3.0 (the GPA excludes grades of S,U,I,V) or if you exceed the time limit (e.g., 8 years for a PhD).

If any of the above situations occur, or if you foresee a problem, we encourage you to reach out to the Graduate Coordinator, the Graduate Program Advisor, and your committee to discuss your options as soon as possible. If you are a PhD student, one option that is sometimes valuable is to move to an MS program in Ecology or to look for another program at UGA or elsewhere. In the most extreme cases, a student who is failing to progress in their program will be dismissed from the program. A dismissal from the Program will be communicated in a letter from the Graduate Coordinator, and can be appealed to the Dean of the Odum School and then (if you remain unsatisfied) to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Our hope is to avoid these situations and to work with you to find the best path forward. In some cases, a student might realize that graduate school and research isn't the right option for them, and they might decide to voluntarily withdraw from the program. In other cases, a student may realize that the particular research lab, or program, or advisor isn't well suited to their interests, goals, or philosophy – and in those cases, we can help you consider other options (e.g., helping you change your degree or finding a new advisor).

Summary of Milestones

The following pages list required forms and milestones for Double Dawg MS, MS, and PhD students. This is intended as a summary of the above information and a general guide to help students assess their timely progress toward target graduation dates. These should serve as a **general guide – not a fixed schedule**.

Ecological research is unpredictable, and we all enter our graduate program with different backgrounds and experiences. As a result, time-to-degree and milestones can vary among individuals within our programs, even when each student is making good progress. However, our financial support for students is finite and therefore we strive to have students stay on track for graduation in 1, 2, and 5 years (for DD, MS and PhD programs). Although some delays are inevitable, delays may affect funding.

Some important milestones are not indicated because they will vary with the student's background, career aspirations, and the vagaries of research. No matter what your career aspiration is, you have been supported in some capacity with public tax dollars, and as a scientist it is your responsibility to disseminate the results of your research to the scientific community and/or the public. This can be done via the publication of peer-reviewed scientific publications, popular articles, and governmental reports, and through other outlets, such as scientific conferences, K-12 outreach, and public seminars. Thus, it is expected that all students will publish and disseminate the results of their research.







Many milestones are achieved via submission of formal paperwork via GradStatus or Slate³³. For example, all graduate students need to complete and file:

- **Advisory Committee (in Slate, via the AdvCmt tab)**
- **Program of Study (GradStatus form G138)**
- **Approval Form for Master's Thesis and Final Oral Examination (MS)** or the **Approval Form for Doctoral Dissertation and Final Oral Examination (PhD) in GradStatus**
- **Apply to graduate** (through the student section in Athena)
- **Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Submission Approval (GradStatus form G129)**

Additional forms are required for PhD students (some are completed by the students; others are generated by the Graduate School or the Graduate Program Advisor):

- **Comprehensive Exam Announcement (form G118)** – submitted to GradStatus by the Graduate Program Advisor, with information provided by the student.
- **Report of Comprehensive Exam** -- generated by the Graduate School after submission of G118, and filed by the Graduate Program Advisor after signed by the committee and Graduate Coordinator.
- **Prospectus Defense Form** -- available from the Graduate Program Advisor.
- **Application for Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degrees (GradStatus form G162)** – initiated by the student.
- **Defense announcement** – submitted and communicated by the Graduate Program Advisor with information provided by the student.

The tables below provide summaries of milestones for students in our different degree programs. The most notable requirements are indicated in bold, with symbols that indicate how the paperwork is submitted:

- : the student submits a form via GradStatus or Slate
- : the student initiates this step this via Athena
- : requires an application, submitted by the student
- : the student submits information or gives signed form to the Graduate Program Advisor who then submits via GradStatus or Slate
- : signatures from the committee and/or grad coordinator are required
- : another milestone that should be satisfied.

³³ The Graduate School is transitioning all forms from GradStatus to Slate. This is long process, and we suspect that some forms that this handbook identifies as in GradStatus may actually be in Slate by the time you read this.

Milestones may not happen at the recommended time, so recurrences of those milestones in these schedules are in a gray font (not black) and indicate actions that should be taken if they have not already been satisfied.

Please also note that most faculty are on 9-month appointments (i.e., they are not paid by the state during the summer), so a committee's willingness to convene during the summer for a defense or other committee activities should not be assumed.

Milestones for Double-Dawg (DD) MS students

Year	Term	Activity
Junior (undergraduate)	Fall	Initiate discussions with faculty mentor (if not already started) Express interest in DD program via Athena Meet with Undergraduate Coordinator to discuss program Meet with Undergraduate Advisor and Graduate Advisor to discuss program requirements, timing and logistics ✓ Apply for the DD pathway ✍️ Discuss and clarify funding arrangement with PI
	Spring ³⁴	Discuss overall coursework and research plan with PI
	Summer	Initiate research activities (if not already started)
Senior (undergraduate)	Fall	Continue research activities and coursework ³⁵ Apply to MS program ✍️
	Spring ³⁶	Formulate a mentor-mentee compact with your advisor ✓ Write and have approved an AI agreement ✓ Form advisory committee (and submit form) 📁✍️ Meet with advisory committee ✓ Submit Program of Study (form G138) ✓📁✍️ Finalize research plan (with advisor's approval) and distribute to committee ✓ Continue research activities and coursework
	Summer	Continue research activities
First (graduate)	Fall	Continue research activities and coursework Complete research and data analyses Begin writing thesis (with feedback from advisor and from committee, as needed)
	Spring	Complete research and data analyses Submit thesis to Graduate School for format check 📁 Schedule defense and notify Graduate School 📧 Distribute thesis to committee (after approval from advisor), at least two weeks prior to defense ✓ Give public seminar & defend thesis ✓ File Approval Form for Thesis and Final Oral Examination (MS) 📁✍️ File final ETD (form G129) 📁 Graduate ✓
	Summer	Complete above activities and graduate
Second (graduate), if needed		Complete above activities and graduate

³⁴ Subsequent items assume the student is admitted to the DD pathway.

³⁵ The 12 credits of graduate coursework are taken during the fall and spring semester of the senior year.

³⁶ Subsequent items assume the student is admitted to the MS program.

Milestones for MS students (with thesis)

Year	Term	Activity
Prior to matriculation		Enroll for courses (based on discussion with advisor and Graduate Program Advisor) 📖 Discuss and clarify funding arrangement with advisor
First	Fall	Formulate a mentor-mentee compact with your advisor ✓ Write and have approved an AI agreement ✓ Discuss overall coursework and research plan with advisor Take courses and attend seminars Form advisory committee (and submit form) ✓ 📖 ✎ Meet with advisory committee ✓ Submit Program of Study (form G138) for approval ✓ 📖 ✎
	Spring	Take courses and attend seminars Finalize research plan (with advisor's approval) and distribute to committee ✓ Initiate research activities (if not already started)
	Summer	Continue research activities
Second	Fall	Complete desired coursework Complete research and data analyses Begin writing thesis (with feedback from advisor; and from committee, as needed)
	Spring	Complete research and data analyses Apply to graduate 📖 Submit thesis to Graduate School for format check 📖 Schedule defense and notify Graduate School 📧 Distribute thesis to committee (after approval from advisor), at least two weeks prior to defense ✓ Give public seminar & defend thesis ✓ File Approval Form for Thesis and Final Oral Examination (MS) 📖 ✎ File final ETD (form G129) 📖 Graduate ✓
	Summer	Complete above activities and graduate
Third (if needed)		Complete above activities and graduate

Milestones for MS students (non-thesis)

This has been written as a two-year plan, although we expect some non-thesis students will choose to complete their program in one year, especially if they do not have TA support.

Year	Term	Activity
Prior to matriculation		Enroll for courses (based on discussion with advisor and Graduate Program Advisor) 📖 Discuss and clarify funding arrangement with advisor
First	Fall	Formulate a mentor-mentee compact with your advisor ✓ Form advisory committee Discuss overall coursework with advisory committee Take courses and attend seminars Form advisory committee (and submit form) ✓ 📖 ✍️ Meet with advisory committee ✓ Submit Program of Study (form G138) for approval ✓ 📖 ✍️
	Spring	Take courses and attend seminars Determine your research experience (with committee's approval) ✓
	Summer	Conduct your research experience (if appropriate in summer) Write report on your activity You might also choose the summer as a time to work an outside job to help support yourself
Second	Fall	Continue with coursework
	Spring	Complete coursework Apply to graduate 📖 Schedule your exit exam Graduate ✓

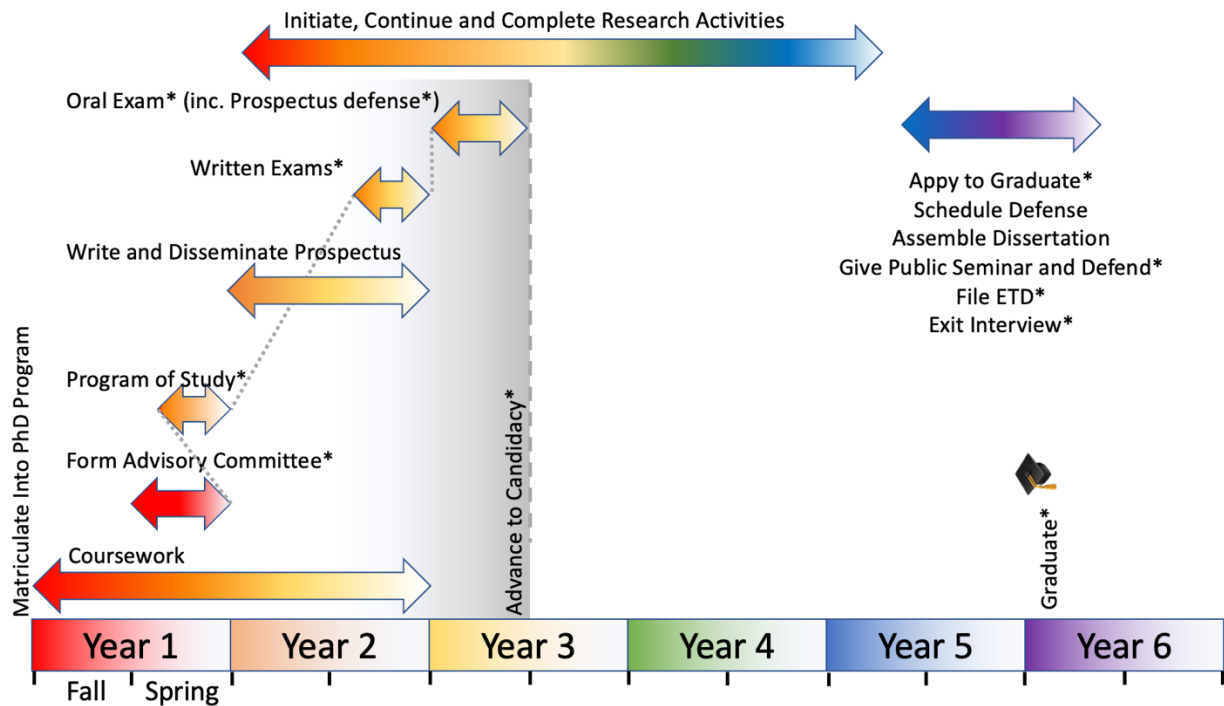
Milestones for PhD students

Year	Term	Activity
Prior to matriculation		Enroll for courses (based on discussion with advisor and GA) 📖 Discuss and clarify funding arrangement with advisor
First	Fall	Formulate a mentor-mentee compact with your advisor ✓ Write and have approved an AI agreement ✓ Discuss overall coursework and research plan with advisor Take courses and attend seminars
	Spring	Take courses and attend seminars Form advisory committee (and submit form) 📖 ✍️ Meet with advisory committee ✓ Submit Program of Study (G138) (prior to qualifying exams) 📖 ✍️ Layout initial research activities to committee and obtain feedback
	Summer	Initiate research activities (if not already started)
Second	Fall	Continue research development and activities Take courses and attend seminars Start writing prospectus Seek funding for research (continue in later semesters) Discuss format and expectations for qualifying exam with committee

	Spring³⁷	Continue research activities, coursework, and seminars Meet with committee (at least once per year) Prepare for qualifying exams Finalize prospectus (with advisor's approval) and distribute to committee at least two weeks prior to oral exam ✅ Schedule qualifying exams (Graduate Program Advisor submits G118 and obtains Comprehensive Exam Signature Form) 📄 Take written exams (must be done prior to oral exam) Take oral exam ✍️ (form covers writtens and orals and must be initiated at least 2 weeks prior to exam) Submit signed Comprehensive Exam Signature Form ✍️ and Prospectus Signature Form ✍️ to the Graduate Program Advisor Advance to candidacy (form G162) 📄 ✍️
	Summer	Continue research activities
Third	Fall	Continue research activities, coursework, and seminars Complete above activities if not already done
	Spring	Continue research activities, coursework, and seminars Complete above activities if not already done Meet with committee (at least once per year)
	Summer	Continue research activities
Fourth	Fall	Complete desired coursework Continue research activities and seminars
	Spring	Continue research activities, coursework, and seminars Complete coursework Meet with committee (at least once per year) ✅
	Summer	Complete research and data analyses
Fifth	Fall	Complete research and data analyses Meet with committee to finalize plans as defense approaches
	Spring	Attend seminars Apply to graduate 📄 Submit entire thesis to Graduate School for format check 📄 Schedule defense and notify Graduate School 📄 Distribute dissertation to committee (after approval from advisor), at least two weeks prior to defense ✅ Give public seminar & defend thesis ✅ File Approval Form for Dissertation and Final Oral Examination (PhD) 📄 ✍️ File final ETD (form G129) 📄 Graduate ✅
	Summer	Complete above activities and graduate
Sixth+ (if needed)		Complete above activities and graduate

³⁷ Some students will choose to do their written and oral exams in different semesters (e.g., writtens during spring of Yr 2 and orals in fall Yr 3). That's okay, but we strongly encourage you to write and defend your prospectus prior to conducting a significant amount of your research – the prospectus is your research *plan*, so it should be done before executing most of your research. Because lots of research is conducted in the summer, it is likely to your advantage to write your prospectus (and do your orals) prior to the summer before your third year.

Summary For PhD Students



NOTES: --Committee meetings should be held at least annually
--Dashed grey vertical lines connect items that must be completed sequentially
--'*' indicates that a form is required

Funding, Finances and Fees

Overview

The Odum School of Ecology and its faculty aim to **provide all of our research-based students with funding** necessary for timely completion of their degrees, and to facilitate students' procurement of their own grants and fellowships. **We do not however promise financial support for students in the MS non-thesis program.** While students in the non-thesis program might receive an offer to TA classes, these offers are not guaranteed and are only available if there are unfilled teaching appointments.

Support covers two major type of funding: 1) assistantships or fellowships (which help the student cover their living expenses; these are typically accompanied by a tuition waiver); and 2) research funding to cover expenses incurred to conduct research (e.g., supplies and materials) and to disseminate the results (e.g., travel to conferences; page charges for publications). Funding comes from a combination of sources, including those provided by UGA (e.g., Graduate School Fellowships), the Odum School (e.g., Teaching Assistantships and small grants), the faculty advisor (e.g., Research Assistantships and research support via research grants), and the student (e.g., NSF GRFPs and small external research grants).

In most cases, a student's funding source for their salary may change over the course of their program, and usually more than once! This may happen because funding is not available in the summer or because a grant

has ended and thus the students moves from an RA to a TA. Therefore, students are advised to keep in close touch with their advisor to confirm the terms of your funding – the Graduate Student Database (GSD) should facilitate a student’s knowledge of their funding situation.

It also helps to know that the university operates on a fiscal year that goes from 1 July – 30 June. Fiscal years are referred to by the year at the end of that period (e.g., the period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025 is referred to as FY25). Many issues related to pay raises, travel authorizations, and OSE budgets are governed by this annual cycle.

Work Expectations

As a graduate student you have many responsibilities (taking classes, attending seminars, participating in lab meetings, outreach, duties related to your TA or RA, etc.), which when combined with your personal needs (family responsibilities, work-life balance) requires that you be good at time management. Your job responsibilities (e.g., RA or TA) have a specific set of expectations with respect to your duties and your time commitment (usually 17-20 hrs/wk). Although that TA or RA appointment is the primary source of income for you, it’s not necessarily a formal part of your graduate program (although it will certainly help you professionally). Thus, the rest of your week will be dedicated to ensuring that you progress successfully through your graduate program. This distinction between your “job” and your “program” may be a bit confusing and hard to distinguish if you are an RA – especially if your RA duties are tied to your research project. Thus, it’s essential that you view your time commitment through multiple lenses. Your formal job duties should not exceed your appointment level (e.g., 20 hrs/wk for a 50% appointment), while the requirements for your program are that “you make suitable progress” and the timeline for milestones above should help clarify what “suitable” suggests. Some students may succeed in making suitable progress by investing a total of 40 hrs / wk to their TA/RA and their program, while others may require (or desire) a greater investment.

As a student on an assistantship, you do not accrue vacation time (the same is true for most of our faculty), although you do have official university holidays “off”. Technically, if we are on “break”, it only means that courses do not formally meet. You are likely still being paid and therefore expected to be managing your work-related responsibilities. Aside from RA/TA duties and formal class meeting times, you have great flexibility in your schedule. Many of you will work non-traditional hours owing to the demands of field work, lab work or for other reasons. Thus, taking other days off is a reasonable and fair thing to do. You should discuss time-off (or vacations), as well as any time away from campus, with your advisor or supervisor to work out a mutually agreeable approach – this should obviously be done as far in advance as possible. As in most matters, good communication is essential.

Please keep in mind that your assistantship is a job. It is expected that you conduct yourself professionally and take your work responsibilities seriously.

Salaries

Research Assistantships

Research Assistantships are the primary way in which an advisor can provide stipend support to their student. Funding for RAs come from grants held by the PI or their collaborators. RAs not only provide a salary for the student, but they can also provide opportunities to:

- learn new research skills;
- engage in collaborative research experiences, with the advisor and other scientists;

- co-author papers (if appropriate) that may expand the student's publication record beyond their focal graduate research;
- train, supervise, and mentor undergraduates.

RAs should discuss responsibilities (as well as start/end dates) directly with the PI.

Teaching Assistantships

Teaching Assistantships are the primary source of stipend support for graduate students that comes directly from OSE. Teaching Assistantships not only provide salary for graduate students, they can also:

- serve as a professional development and skill-building opportunity, including effective science communication;
- facilitate undergraduate educational opportunities by directly mentoring and teaching undergraduate courses and labs; and
- support faculty with their teaching responsibilities.

TAs should discuss their responsibilities and expectations with the OSE Laboratory Coordinator and/or the course instructor. These duties often require work prior to the first day of class (e.g., to set up eLC, order supplies, prepare the syllabus) and after the final day of instruction (e.g., for grading, entering of final grades), so TAs (and instructors) are expected to initiate discussions about duties and expectations in the semester prior to their appointment. Helpful and important policies and resources for TAs also are available through the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#).

Fellowships

Fellowships are available to students via UGA and OSE (e.g., Presidential, Graduate School, Spencer, Butler) and are usually awarded to incoming students and are based upon nominations from the GPC and/or your advisor. Some Fellowships (e.g., Dissertation Completion Awards from the Graduate School) might be available to more senior students. Other fellowships (e.g., NSF Graduate Research Fellowships and Ford Foundation Fellowships) are available from outside sources and are initiated by the student. We encourage our students to seek external fellowships whenever possible. Information on some of these fellowships are available through the [Graduate School](#) and the [GSO](#).

Some of these fellowships have specific requirements associated with them: e.g., completing an Individual Development Plan (IDP), completing a Responsible Conduct of Research Course, or attending specific seminars or luncheons.

Other sources of pay

In some situations, students may be paid by other mechanisms: e.g., they may have already been full-time UGA employees and then entered the graduate program via the TAP program, or their employer may be supporting them during their graduate students. In general, we do not accept students into our research-based programs who do not have financial support (i.e., "self-funded" students). Some students, however, may be self-supported at some point in their program – e.g., if a student is beyond their target timeframe (e.g., a PhD student in their 7th year) or a student who has elected to move away from campus and is therefore not able to receive a TA. Occasionally, a student may choose to go without support to free them to focus on their research or the writing of their thesis/dissertation. In such cases they would likely register for just three credits (e.g., this is common in their final semester).

Duration and appointment levels for stipends

Because most graduate students are considered full-time students, they cannot be considered full-time employees. Thus, graduate student stipends, which are calculated as a percentage of full time, cannot exceed 50% (20 hr/wk) for all combined appointments at UGA. It is important to note that assistantships do not take the place of course work or effort devoted to their degree program. For example, if students are enrolled in graduate research hours (e.g., ECOL 7000 or 9000), this is considered separate from the assistantship. Please also note, that while there are no specific rules about outside (non-UGA) employment, such employment would seem implausible during a semester in which the student holds a UGA assistantship and also is expected to be making suitable progress in their degree program.

It is our goal to ensure that graduate students doing a thesis or dissertation receive stipends during the fall and spring semesters³⁸. In general, we aim for MS students to complete their degree requirements in 2 years (1 year for students in the Double Dawgs program) and for PhD students to finish in 5 years. Within those timeframes, and barring any major changes in our fiscal projections, we will ensure each student has at least a 40% appointment each academic year (fall and spring semesters) during which they remain in good academic standing. Funding after these timeframes (1, 2, or 5 years for Double Dawgs, MS, and PhD students, respectively) is possible, but students beyond these timeframes will have lower funding priority than students within the timeframe (see below). That said, we appreciate that ecological research is sometimes unpredictable. Therefore, as long as a student is making satisfactory progress and remains in good standing, we will make our best effort to provide an additional academic year of support (recognizing that priority goes to supporting students within the target window and ensuring a viable cohort of incoming students).

Appointments in OSE typically range from 40-50% (with an average work requirement of 16-20 hrs/wk). We only allow appointments <40% upon approval of the Graduate Coordinator or Graduate Program Committee (GPC). TAs are usually appointed at 44.44% (technically, a 4/9 appointment). PIs have the option of “topping up” these TA appointments by the addition of an RA of up to 5.56% (for a total not to exceed 50%). RAs are typically appointed at 44.44% or 50%. All graduate assistantships appointed at or above 33% time are eligible for a tuition reduction to \$25/semester. However, students are usually responsible for paying student fees and health insurance³⁹, although the university subsidizes the standard health insurance costs for students on assistantships.

Support during the summer is possible, but is primarily the responsibility of the student (via fellowships) or the faculty advisor (via an RA on a grant). A few TAs are usually available over the summer, although these opportunities are limited. If a student does not have a stipend over the summer, or there are only funds to support a student at <40% or for less than the full summer, the PI should put a note in the GSD explaining the situation or directly contact the Graduate Coordinator or Graduate Program Advisor for approval. We strive to support students year-round, but that is not always possible (due to limited grant support) or desirable (if a student wants to focus on their program without a work requirement).

³⁸ We refer to the combined fall and spring semester as the “academic year”, which is approximately 9-months in duration. We refer to the rest of the year as “summer”.

³⁹ The cost of fees and health insurance, and exceptions to those policies, are complex and vary from student to student: e.g., some fees can be waived for students who are off campus or no longer taking face-to-face courses, and health insurance premiums also can vary considerably. For details on these issues, please refer to information available from the bursar’s office (<https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/>) and human resources (<https://hr.uga.edu/students/student-health-insurance/>).

Start-end dates

OSE attempts to align RA appointment dates to avoid gaps in employment. The start of appointments for the fall term and end of appointments for the spring are always shifting, but together comprise a total of approximately nine months. In general, Fall TA appointments start mid-August and go through the end of December. Spring appointments start January 1 and go through mid-May. RA appointments may occur on different timeframes, and fellowships may deviate even more dramatically.

Start and end dates are most confusing over the summer, especially for students supported on a TA. Students with a summer appointment should get clarification about start/end dates from the PI (if an RA) or the OSE Laboratory Coordinator (if a TA) if it's not clear from the GSD.

Pay scales

Historically, OSE had two pay scales – one for MS students and another for PhD students. In FY26, we adopted a new system in which all incoming students are paid at one rate, which then increases after a PhD student advances to candidacy. Please note that appointments from the Graduate School, other UGA departments, and external fellowships may impose different salaries. Also, for TA and RA pay, the total pay for fall and spring may deviate slightly from “nine months” due to the way in which pay is calculated during partial months.

Pay is distributed at the end of each month. As a result, an incoming student will not receive their first check until the end of August, and this pay check will only be for ~1/2 of a month.

Pay is defined based on an annual pay scale with a 100% appointment, so the actual gross pay you will receive is considerably less than this posted rate. To calculate the pay you will receive for a full month, multiply the annual pay scale x your appointment level (e.g., 4/9 or 0.50) and divide by 12. The full-time equivalent (FTE) pay rates in the Odum School are:

2025-2026 (FY26)

MS and Pre-candidate PhD	\$71,042 / yr = \$5,920.17 / month (for 1.0 appointment)
Post-candidate PhD	\$73,636 / yr = \$6,136.33 / month (for 1.0 appointment)
E.g., the annual pay for a PhD student with a 44.44% (4/9) appointment for 12 months is $(4/9) \times 73,636 = \$32,727$.	

Pay scales and start-end dates for fellowships from UGA, the Graduate School, other units at UGA, and from outside sources (e.g., NSF) will likely deviate from those defined by OSE.

Current and historical pay scales

The current and historical pay rates for OSE, the Graduate School, Franklin College, and the Office of the Vice President of Research (OVPR) are/were:

Fiscal Year	Ecology	Ecology	Grad School	Grad School	Franklin (Bio)	Franklin (Bio)	OVPR	OVPR
	MS	PhD	MS	PhD	MS	PhD	MS	PhD
2008	\$ 41,375	\$ 44,720	\$ 44,805	\$ 49,842	\$ 42,180	\$ 45,000		
2009	\$ 42,616	\$ 46,062	\$ 46,149	\$ 51,337	\$ 43,440	\$ 46,356		
2010	\$ 42,616	\$ 46,062	\$ 46,149	\$ 51,337	\$ 43,440	\$ 46,356		
2011	\$ 42,616	\$ 46,062	\$ 46,149	\$ 51,337	\$ 43,440	\$ 46,356		
2012	\$ 42,616	\$ 46,062	\$ 46,149	\$ 51,337	\$ 43,440	\$ 46,356		
2013	\$ 42,616	\$ 46,062	\$ 46,149	\$ 51,337	\$ 43,440	\$ 46,356		
2014	\$ 43,042	\$ 46,523	\$ 46,610	\$ 51,850	\$ 46,440	\$ 49,356		
2015	\$ 45,194	\$ 48,849	\$ 48,941	\$ 54,443	\$ 48,780	\$ 51,840		
2016	\$ 47,454	\$ 51,291	\$ 51,388	\$ 57,165	\$ 51,228	\$ 54,432		
2017	\$ 52,776	\$ 56,076	\$ 52,930	\$ 58,880	\$ 52,776	\$ 56,076		
2018	\$ 47,454	\$ 51,291	\$ 51,388	\$ 57,165	\$ 51,228	\$ 54,432		
2019	\$ 51,351	\$ 55,503	\$ 55,608	\$ 61,857	\$ 60,780	\$ 63,978		
2020	\$ 56,556	\$ 60,093	\$ 56,720	\$ 63,094	\$ 56,856	\$ 60,415		
2021	\$ 56,556	\$ 60,093	\$ 56,720	\$ 63,094	\$ 56,856	\$ 60,415		
2022	\$ 59,989	\$ 63,744	\$ 58,988	\$ 65,618	\$ 59,989	\$ 63,744		
2023	\$ 61,189	\$ 65,019	\$ 60,168	\$ 66,930	\$ 61,189	\$ 65,019	\$ 55,600	\$ 60,100
2024	\$ 63,025	\$ 66,970	\$ 61,973	\$ 68,938	\$ 63,025	\$ 66,970	\$ 57,250	\$ 61,900
2025	\$ 65,546	\$ 69,649	\$ 64,452	\$ 71,695	\$ 65,546	\$ 69,649	\$ 59,540	\$ 64,376
	MS & pre- candidat e PhD	Post- candidat e PhD						
2026	\$ 71,042	\$ 73,636	\$ 65,741	\$ 73,129	\$ 66,855	\$ 71,041	\$ 60,731	\$ 65,668

Partial pay months and short work-breaks

If you have an appointment that does not span the entire month (e.g., you are appointed for fall and spring, but not summer), then for the months in which you are not fully employed (e.g., May and August), you will receive partial pay (e.g., in May and August). The amount of that partial pay is prorated: if the monthly pay is P, then pay for a month in which you are not employed for the entire month is calculated as $(P) \times (\text{number of worked days}) / (\text{number of workdays in the month})$. As a result, the pay for a full day of work will depend on the number of potential work days in that month.

If you have a gap in your appointment, then the OSE Business Office must place you on a *short work-break*. You should be able to view the occurrences of short work-breaks via the [Graduate Student Database](#). Short work-breaks are intensive administratively, and costly for the student, so we strive to minimize the number and duration of short work-breaks. Ideally, you will be appointed continuously, although that is not always feasible (especially during summer).

Responsibilities about pay information

It is essential that students and their advisors (PIs) coordinate and communicate clearly with each other and the OSE Business Office. It is the responsibility of the OSE Grad Program and OSE Business Office to communicate the pay scales, appointment levels, and start/end dates for RA/TA appointments during the academic year (this information will be communicated via email or the GSD (see next item)). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these dates and to understand how these align with other funding sources as the students transition from one funding source to another. It is the PI's responsibility to clearly communicate the time frame over which they are providing RA support to the student, especially during the summer. The GSD (see next item) should facilitate this process. PI's and students also should discuss future funding plans during each student's annual meeting/evaluation with their advisor(s).

Prioritization for TA funding

The selection and assignment of students to TA appointments is done by the Academic Coordinator and Laboratory Coordinator in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Program Advisor. TA appointments are based on a number of considerations. In general, priority will be given to students who:

- are enrolled in thesis/dissertation-based programs;
- are within the normal timeframe for TA support (1, 2, or 5 years for Double Dawgs, MS, and PhD students, respectively);
- have received the least amount of prior TA support (i.e., we aim to distribute TA support as much as possible);
- have received positive teaching evaluations from their students and from the Laboratory Coordinator (if they have taught previously);
- have a teaching requirement as part of their UGA assistantships (e.g., such as a fellowship that requires a teaching appointment for one year);
- have not previously accepted and then declined a TA appointment⁴⁰.

Students who have received poor evaluations during prior TA appointments may not be reappointed.

The assignment of a student to a particular class, will be based, in part, on:

- prior teaching experience;
- familiarity with course content;
- student preference;
- instructor preference;
- teaching evaluations (which might favor one type of course format over another).
- Other issues (e.g., ADA accommodations and demands of the course)

⁴⁰ Declining an accepted position creates extreme challenges in staffing our courses and places an added burden on our business office.

Timeline for TA funding

To facilitate the appointment of TAs and to clarify the process, the table below provides approximate dates for various actions that must be taken to finalize the appointment and training of TAs.

ITEM	WHO?	ACTION	Response Time	Deadlines for each semester:		
				SPRING	SUMMER	FALL
Budget	GC/GPA/APC	Determine annual budget with input from Business and Development Offices		By September 1		
TA Preferences	LC	a) Sends students teaching experience and course preferences survey		15-Sep	15-Feb	30-Mar
	TAs	b) Students return survey to LC	10 days	25-Sep	25-Feb	09-Apr
Instructor preferences	LC	Lab coordinator contacts faculty instructors about TA preferences		26-Sep	26-Feb	10-Apr
TAs allocated to courses	Faculty/LC	Faculty instructors respond with TA preferences; LC allocates TAs to courses/OSE/Bio and emails Bio	1 week	05-Oct	05-Mar	17-Apr
GSD input	GPA	a) GPA finalizes all fellowships and non-TA/RA appointments		01-Sept	01-Feb	15-Mar
	GC/GPA	b) GC/GPA invite faculty to check/finalize support for the upcoming semester (and update future projections)		1-Sept	01-Feb	15-Mar
	Faculty	c) Faculty finalize data in GSD	2 weeks	14-Sept	14-Feb	29-Mar
	GPA	d) GPA finalizes TAs (e.g., Bio vs. OSE) and proofs GSD		14-Oct	14-Mar	29-Apr
GSD finalized	GC/GPA	Grad Coordinator/GPA finalize GSD and release to Business Office	1 week	15-Oct	15-Mar	30-Apr
TA appointment letters	LC	a) LC finalizes appointment letters and sends to GPA		05-Oct	05-Mar	17-Apr
	GPA	b) GPA sends letters to TAs		06-Oct	06-Mar	18-Apr
	TAs	c) Students return signed letters and GRSC waiver materials (if applicable)	1 week	13-Oct	13-Mar	25-Apr
TA availability	LC	a) LC sends scheduling form to OSE TAs		07-Nov	NA	04-Apr
	TAs	b) Students return form to LC	1 week	14-Nov	NA	11-Apr
	LC	c) LC sends out final TA schedule	1 week	21-Nov	NA	18-Apr
TA credentials	GPA	GPA submits first-time TA credentials to Provost		1-Dec	1-Mar	1-May
TA training	TAs	a) First-time or future TA's register for GRSC 7770, which must be taken prior to or concurrent with the first semester TAing		Nov	limited (or no) offerings	April
	LC	b) LC submits names of TAs requiring van training to UGA Insurance Office		Prior to semester	Prior to semester	Prior to semester
	TAs	c) TA's complete/renew necessary trainings (van safety, CPR & first aid training)		Prior to semester	Prior to semester	Prior to semester
	TAs	d) First-time TA's take CTL TA Orientation		Prior to semester	not offered	Prior to semester
Semester begins				early Jan	mid-May	mid-Aug

APC=Academic Program Committee
 CTL=Center for Teaching and Learning
 GC=Graduate Coordinator
 GPA=Graduate Program Advisor
 GSD=Graduate Student Database
 LC=Lab Coordinator

Contact persons

Issues about assistantships vary widely. Below are the people whom you should contact to help clarify or resolve any challenges or problems:

Advisor/PI	In general, this is your primary advocate, go-to person, and supervisor. The PI also is the person you should consult about RA duties, duration of assignment, responsibilities, and expectations.
Laboratory Coordinator and/or Academic Coordinator	The Laboratory Coordinator and/or Academic Coordinator are the primary contacts if you are a TA and have questions about TA appointments, training, responsibilities, and job expectations.
Graduate Coordinator and/or Graduate Program Advisor	In general, the Graduate Coordinator and/or Graduate Program Advisor can help you with a wide range of issues relating to assistantships, including helping you navigate conflicts that arise with supervisors, options regarding transitioning from one funding source to another, tuition waivers, and Graduate School issues.
Business office (ecologybusiness@uga.edu)	The Business Office handles all technical matters related to hiring, termination, HR/EOO, and can answer detailed questions that arise about pay dates, pay periods, timing of short work-breaks, pay scales, and job application and hiring processes.

Tuition Waivers, Fees, Insurance

Students with University funding (that exceeds 33%) receive a tuition waiver. This waives in-state and out-of-state tuition, and you'll pay only \$25 per semester. The Graduate Program Advisor submits waivers for students who have been awarded RAs, TAs, and Odum Assistantships. The Graduate School enters waivers for Graduate School Assistantships and some external programs. If you receive a bill for tuition when you should have received a waiver, please contact the Graduate Program Advisor who can help resolve the problem.

During summer, students can receive a tuition waiver even if they are not on an assistantship for the summer. A student who held an assistantship (and received a tuition waiver) the previous Fall and Spring semesters, or who can provide documentation of an assistantship in the upcoming Fall and Spring, can receive a summer tuition waiver. Please speak with the Graduate Program Advisor if you require a summer tuition waiver and are not on a summer assistantship (the advisor will need to submit **form G160**, and possibly **G104** in GradStatus). We encourage all students to register for 12 credit hours during the summer (typically via ECOL 7000/9000) as it helps generate student credit hours, which increases our budget and helps us support our students.

Although your tuition will be waived, all enrolled students are required to pay mandatory fees. These fees are not trivial. Note that if you are not enrolled in any face-to-face courses you can have some of your fees waived. Students also are required to have health insurance. Please see the Bursar and Student Accounts webpage for information about [fees](#), and the UGA Human Resources webpage for information about [student health insurance](#).

Research Funding

Research needs are highly variable. Some students may have relatively small needs (e.g., access to a computer), while other students may have extensive requirements (e.g., reagents and equipment for complex chemical analyses, frequent travel to remote international field sites, etc.). In general, you should design your research project with funding in mind – some very exciting projects may not be feasible given the funds available to support the research. Research funding is the responsibility of you and your advisor, so it's important that the two of you have very explicit discussions about the availability of funding, the sources of research funds, strategies to obtain those funds, and contingencies if those attempts fail. In general, your research funds (to purchase field supplies, travel to field sites, travel to conferences) will come from research grants to your advisor (e.g., from NSF, NIH or DOE) or from small grants that you receive (e.g., from Sigma Xi, OSE, or the Graduate School). In some cases, you may not obtain the grants you've applied for and your advisor might not have funds appropriate to the support the research you have identified. In that case, you can either try other options for funding, modify your research plans to be feasible on the budget that you do have available, or you might be able to use personal funds.

While the Odum School has some funds available to support research (e.g., the Odum Small Grants) and travel, we encourage you to seek outside funding as a means to support your program and to further your professional development. The Graduate School also offers travel and research grants. Many societies will offer reductions in conference fees and/or housing for work that you contribute to help run the conference (e.g., IT support for AV equipment or working the registration desk).

The OSE Business Office manages all grants (although a few sources for students will provide funds directly to you). Please speak with your advisor before speaking with the Business Office to get informed about the process. If you are purchasing items from a grant account, or seeking reimbursement from a grant, you will need to know the "speedtype" and should be familiar with [UGAMart](#) and [UGA purchasing & reimbursement policy](#).

Outside grant funding

Well before submitting any grant to an outside agency, you should speak with the grants person in the OSE business office. In some cases, students may submit grants without any involvement of UGA (those funds would go directly to the student), but in other cases, the grant proposal must be run through the Sponsored Projects Administration ([SPA](#)). If you do not run a grant through SPA (but should have), the award might be rejected. Thus, it's essential that you speak with the grants person in the OSE business office if you are considering applying for external funds – they can help explain the process and clarify if you need to submit through SPA or directly to the granting agency.

Odum Research Grants and Awards

Through endowments that have been created by, or in the memory of, past students, staff, and faculty, OSE is able to provide awards and grants that recognize the accomplishments of our students and provide funding for their research and travel to conferences. Details can be found at the [OSE Graduate Awards and Scholarships](#) page. Expenditures must be made in the fiscal year in which they were approved.

Summary

- Everyone's graduate program, experience, and objectives are different. You and your advisor have different needs, working styles, and interpersonal dynamics than other students and their advisors. Your committee has different expectations than another student's committee. You will progress through your program at a different rate and with different products and outcomes than other students. We encourage you to focus on *your* program and *your* progress and how they match *your* professional goals rather than comparing yourself to other students.
- Take charge. You are the primary person responsible for your graduate program. Be clear about your expectations and lead, while also respecting the advisement provided by your advisor and committee.
- Take responsibility.
- Interact. Challenge yourself by sharing your ideas and letting them be discussed and critiqued. Expose yourself to other ideas and research projects.
- Keep an open mind. Be open to new ideas and different perspectives.
- Communicate. Be clear and explicit.
- If you are not getting the mentorship you need from your advisor or committee, tell them what you need to succeed, what works best given your work style, and how they can best help you. If that doesn't work, discuss these challenges with the Graduate Program Advisor and/or Graduate Coordinator and seek out additional mentors, including other students in the program, and colleagues inside or outside of UGA.
- You *can* move labs (and change advisors) and change committee membership, if it is best for your program.
- Seek your own funding. Nothing helps build independence more than having a fellowship to free you from working as an RA or TA, or having a grant to free you from asking your advisor for research funds.
- Be respectful and kind to yourself and others.
- Have fun. Graduate school is an exciting time (meeting new people, being exposed to new ideas, being challenged to be an expert in your discipline) – it is not easy, but it should still be fun.

Appendices

Work Place Issues (including harassment, and violence)

(taken, and modified, from a document distributed by the OSE administration)

The Odum School of Ecology values an interactive community in which students, staff and faculty work together to advance our understanding and appreciation of the natural world. We value a respectful, positive and supportive environment, while seeking excellence in individual and collaborative efforts. Our work is sometimes intense, and often challenging, but we strive to make it always rewarding and often enjoyable. Success usually includes collaboration, mentorship, and friendship. While we strive for positive interactions, challenges will sometimes arise. Some challenges are natural results of differing workstyles and personalities, while others arise from poor understanding of personal boundaries, and others may require the intervention of personnel in other offices (Legal Affairs, Human Resources, Equal Opportunity Office) or even the police.

This section attempts to clarify the types of situations that require particular actions and whom will help if you encounter challenges while working or studying in the Odum School of Ecology. Our goal is to make sure everyone is safe and supported, but when that fails, it is essential that everyone know how to seek help to ensure that problems are addressed and do not escalate.

Work and school-related issues vary greatly and require different approaches, depending on the nature of the situation and the positions of the people involved. Below, we provide a simple guide to help you navigate these complexities; we also provide contact information for various campus resources within and outside of OSE. This guide is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather comprises a general guide to assist you.

There are four broad classes of situations:

- 1) **Immediate danger.** If a situation poses a danger to you or others, you should immediately alert authorities (e.g., call the police or 911). You can later notify personnel in OSE to make them aware of the situation.
- 2) **Discrimination and harassment.** Violations of UGA's non-discrimination and antiharassment policy (NDAH), as well as sexual misconduct must be reported to the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO). The NDAH policy precludes discrimination and harassment that is *targeted at protected classes* (e.g., based on gender, sexual orientation, race, etc.); other forms of bullying and harassment should be referred to OSE and/or Human Resources (see below). All members of OSE are mandatory reporters, as outlined in the resources below. These allegations should NOT be investigated by OSE; EOO will conduct their own investigation since they are trained in these matters.
- 3) **Workplace violence** (intimidation, bullying, stalking, threats, physical attack, property damage, or domestic and family violence committed by or against a UGA employee, student or visitor) should be referred to your supervisor, the OSE HR representative, or UGA's Human Resources (HR) if the complaint is against a staff or faculty member, or the Office of Student Affairs (if the complaint is directed at a student). UGA defines bullying as "Unwanted offensive and malicious behavior that undermines an individual or group through persistently negative attacks. The behavior generally includes an element of vindictiveness, and is intended to undermine, patronize, humiliate, intimidate or demean the recipient." If this bullying involves any categories protected under NDAH, you should contact EOO rather than HR. In some cases, you should also contact the police (see above).

- 4) **Workplace environment and other interpersonal challenges.** Other matters regarding your workplace environment can be referred to HR, although in these matters, we generally recommend a more local response (if possible):
- a) First, speak directly with the person to express your concern and see if the issues can be resolved.
 - b) If this approach (4a) is insufficient, or you do not feel safe or comfortable taking this approach, or the situation is more serious, speak with your supervisor (for graduate students, this would be your major advisor, or Graduate Advisor or Graduate Coordinator; for staff this would be the person you report to; for faculty this would be the Dean or Associate Dean of Academic Affairs). If that person is the source of your complaint, then you'll need to approach a different individual (e.g., if a student's concern is with their advisor, then they could go to the Graduate Advisor or the Graduate Coordinator or another trusted faculty member; if a staff member's concern is with their supervisor, then they could go to the HR rep in OSE or the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, or another trusted faculty member).
 - c) If you take a specific concern to your supervisor or another member of the OSE community, and that complaint constitutes a potential violation of UGA's NDAH policy, then they will be obligated to make an EOO report (see item #2 above).
 - d) Your supervisor or the responsible person to whom you take your complaint should ensure that you are provided with information about how to proceed and where to obtain further help, including coordination with the appropriate faculty, staff, or administrator to assist you in resolving the issue or in obtaining further information.

It is also helpful to keep in mind two general points:

Meetings with EOO/HR. If a situation arises that leads you to make a report to EOO or HR, and someone in EOO/HR requests a meeting with you to gather information (evidence), you might want to request having someone accompany you (e.g., your advisor, the Graduate Coordinator, or the Dean). Those meetings can sometimes be formal and intimidating, and even when you are "doing the right thing", it can help to have some moral support (especially from someone with some 'authority' in the eyes of the university).

Confidentiality. To the extent possible, it is important to maintain confidentiality of information related to all parties who are subjects of a report or complaint. This is particularly important while an investigation is being conducted – to maintain a degree of independence of information that is collected. Personnel matters can be volatile and sensitive, and must be conducted in accordance with EOO policies and other relevant UGA guidelines.

People are sometimes reluctant to seek advice from supervisors or report complaints because they want to protect their own identity. Although supervisors are mandatory reporters, there are also measures to ensure the greatest discretion possible. Mandatory reporters are only obliged to report to EOO if the complaint would constitute an NDAH violation or sexual misconduct. Also, if EOO must be notified, students can request that their identity remains confidential. EOO makes every effort to honor confidentiality requests as completely as possible unless it hampers their ability to investigate, in which case the complainant is informed by EOO.

Investigations. If an incident is to be investigated internally (i.e., by OSE) it is important that the investigating team consult with the Dean, UGA Office of Legal Affairs, and possibly other offices (e.g., the Graduate School, or HR) to ensure that the investigation is conducted in a manner that is consistent with UGA policy.

Typically, if you are a...	your first point of contact is...
Undergraduate student	Undergraduate Coordinator or Undergraduate Advisor
Graduate student	Graduate Coordinator or Graduate Program Advisor
Staff member	OSE HR Representative or Associate Dean for Research
Faculty member	Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or Dean

Resources

Human Resources

- Workplace Concerns (Involving Faculty and Staff):
<https://hr.uga.edu/supervisors/workplace-concerns-faculty-staff-relations/>
- Disability Services and Accommodations for UGA Employees:
<https://hr.uga.edu/employees/workplace-concerns/disability-services-accommodations/>
- UGA Workplace Violence Policy:
<https://policies.uga.edu/Human-Resources/Employment/Employment-Related-Policies/Workplace-Violence/>

Equal Opportunity Office

- UGA Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy:
<https://eoo.uga.edu/policies/nonhttps://eoo.uga.edu/policies/non-discrimination-anti-harassment-policydiscrimination-anti-harassment-policy>
- Student Sexual Misconduct Policy: <https://eoo.uga.edu/policies/student-sexualhttps://eoo.uga.edu/policies/student-sexual-misconduct-policymisconduct-policy>
- UGA Ombudspersons:
<https://eoo.uga.edu/Meet-the-Ombudspersons>

Graduate Student Concerns

- Graduate Bulletin: <https://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policieshttps://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/graduate-bulletin/graduate-bulletin-a-c/procedures/graduate-bulletin/graduate-bulletin-a-c/>
- Graduate School Appeals Procedures:
<https://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.php/currenthttps://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.phttps://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/academics/appeals/students/policies-procedures/academics/appeals/>
- Graduate School Mentor-Mentee Compacts:
<https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/currenthttps://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/mentor-mentee-compacts/students/mentor-mentee-compacts/>
- Graduate Program Faculty Information:
<https://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.php/facultyhttps://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.phttps://gradweb01.cc.uga.edu/index.php/faculty-and-staff/graduate-faculty-information/and-staff/graduate-faculty-information/>

Research Misconduct

- <https://research.uga.edu/misconduct/>

UGA Student Complaint Portal

- UGA Student Complaints Portal (General): <https://studentcomplaints.uga.edu/>
- UGA Student Academic Complaints Portal:
https://studentaffairs.uga.edu/site/content_page/academic-complaints-information

Disability Resource Center

- Register for Services: https://drc.uga.edu/content_page/register-for-services

UGA Police Department

- Emergencies: <https://www.police.uga.edu/campus-safety/emergencies/report><https://www.police.uga.edu/campus-safety/emergencies/report-emergencies>

Counseling services

- In some cases, work-place conflicts can be emotionally challenging and stressful. If you are having challenges that exceed the support offered by your normal social network and professional mentors and peers, some help is available on-campus:
 - [Counseling and Psychiatric Service \(CAPS\)](#)
 - [Student Care and Outreach \(SCO\)](#)

Miscellaneous:

For clarification on “whom a student could reasonably believe has the authority or duty of reporting” see:

<https://eoo.uga.edu/definitions/position-authority>

In addition, the following is an On-Campus Resource Guide:

https://provost.uga.edu/faculty-affairs/campus_wide_resources_2019.pdf

Health and Wellness

A healthy mind and body are vital to happiness and longevity. The demands of graduate school may sometimes cause you to forget to look after yourself and maintain your physical and emotional well-being. In addition, stresses associated with graduate school may in some cases play a causal role in mental health issues. UGA offers a variety of [Wellness Resources](#) and workshops. There’s also a [Health and Wellness section](#) of the [UGA Master calendar](#). You can add it to your Google calendar with this [link](#). Below are some other useful resources.

Student Affairs Programs and Services

offers a variety of services, including:

- [Disability Resource Center](#)
- [LGBT Resource Center](#)
- [Student Care and Outreach](#). SCO works with a student to create customized networks of support and resources to help students achieve their goals. SCO also provides a quick reference guide to many student services ([reference guide](#)), including how to make

anonymous reports if you are concerned about the wellbeing of another student (access that form [here](#)).

General Wellness:

UGA has several sources that support well-being. Student Care and Outreach (706-542-8479; sco.uga.edu) is a key resource that will help connect students with the most appropriate resources or services. SCO also administers an emergency fund for students facing financial hardship due to unusual circumstances, and the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu

Stress and Time Management:

- [Time Management: Learning to say No](#)
- Slow Scholarship - [Mountz et al 2015](#) Learning to value your time

Work- Life Balance

- [How to set Strong work-life boundaries as a remote worker](#)

Counseling Services

If you are searching for a mental health care provider, or might in the future, it can be daunting to figure out where to start. Some options that you can consider, include:

- UGA has on campus resources through [CAPS](#) (Counseling and Psychiatric Services). CAPS only provides **short-term** counseling, but they can provide assistance with transitioning to other on- or off-campus resources.
- If you have the student health insurance plan, you can also access resources through the [United Health Student Resources page](#). Sign in to your account and use the link on the right-hand side to locate mental health providers in your area as well as virtual counseling and therapy through the HealthiestYou App. Virtual counseling through [HealthiestYou](#) allows students to access appointments over the phone or online.
- You can also use [Psychology today](#) to search for providers based on zip code and insurance provider.
- [Student Care and Outreach](#) (mentioned above) is another valuable resource.

Additional Information and Policies

Mentor-Mentee Compacts

<https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/mentor-mentee-compacts/>

Enrollment Policy, Minimum Enrollment, Leave of Absence

<https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/enrollment-policy/>

PhD Requirements

<https://grad.uga.edu/graduate-bulletin/doctoral-degree-requirements/phd-requirements/>

Research Integrity and Safety

[\[Return to start of document\]](#)

<https://research.uga.edu/integrity/>

IRB—Institutional Review Board

<https://research.uga.edu/hrpp/>

IACUC—Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

<https://research.uga.edu/oacu/iacuc/>

Graduate Student Organizations: GPSA, GAPS, GRADS

<https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/student-organizations/>

UGA Ombudspersons

<https://eoo.uga.edu/Meet-the-Ombudspersons>

Career Services

<https://www.career.uga.edu/>

Graduate Student Professional Development

<https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/professional-development/>

Development and Alumni Relations

<https://dar.uga.edu/alumni-relations/>

Libraries

<https://www.libs.uga.edu/>

University Health Center

<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/>

Parking

<https://tps.uga.edu/parking>

Registrar

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

Bursar

<https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/>

Financial Advice (credit, loans, benefits, investing)

<https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/financial-information/financial-education-program/>

Office of Global Engagement

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

International Student Life

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

Writing Support at the Science Library

<https://www.libs.uga.edu/science/southcampuswritingcenter>

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Writing Center, Department of English

<https://www.english.uga.edu/writing-center>

Division of Academic Enhancement

<https://dae.uga.edu/services/tutoring/writing/>

Exit Interview

After you graduate, you will be sent a request to respond to an on-line survey. Below, we have copied the basic content of the exit interview so that you can have the necessary information available as you fill out the survey. We greatly appreciate your time and effort to help us. [Please, excuse the formatting, it was pulled from a Qualtrics form]

Q1 Odum School of Ecology EXIT INTERVIEW FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Congratulations on completing your program in the Odum School of Ecology. As your “final” activity, we would appreciate it if you could provide us with some data on your scholarly activities, and your reflections as you look back on your experiences over the past several years. This information will not only help us assess some basic information (e.g., level of scholarly activities in our different programs) but will also help us identify areas where we can improve (as well as identify those where we are most successful). Your responses, together with those from other graduates, will be tabulated and shared with the Graduate Program Committee; we also anticipate that summarized versions of the responses and analyses of long-term trends may be shared with faculty, staff and students in response to particular initiatives or program assessments.

We anticipate this on-line survey will require about an hour to complete if you are being thoughtful. Thank you for taking this time, sharing your insight, and being a part of the OSE community.

Q2 Name

- ☐ Last name (1) _____
- ☐ First name (4) _____

Q3 Please provide an email we can use to contact you in the future.

Q4 Degree program

- ☐ PhD Ecology (10)
- ☐ PhD ICON (12)
- ☐ PhD IDEAS (11)
- ☐ MS Ecology (8)
- ☐ MS CESD/ICAS (9)
- ☐ Double Dawgs-MS Ecology (13)
- ☐ Double Dawgs-MS CESD (14)

Q5 Advisor(s)

☐ Last name, first name (1) _____

☐ Last name, first name (2) _____

Q6 Title of your thesis or dissertation

Q7 When did you matriculate into the program? (Term)

☐ Summer (1)

☐ Fall (2)

☐ Spring (3)

Q8 When did you matriculate into the program? (Year)

▼ 2010 (1) ... 2035 (23)

Q9 When did you graduate from the program? (Term)

☐ Summer (1)

☐ Fall (2)

☐ Spring (3)

Q10 When did you graduate from the program? (Year)

▼ 2019 (7) ... 2044 (30)

Q11 Number of papers you have published (or are in press) based upon your research activities in the Odum School:

☐ As 1st author (1) _____

☐ As a co-author (2) _____

Q12 Number of other papers you have in review or that you expect to submit for publication based upon your research activities in the Odum School:

☐ As 1st author (1) _____

☐ As a co-author (2) _____

Q13 Number of talks or posters you have given at conferences (in which you were the lead author/presenter):

- ☐ International conferences/workshops (include any meeting outside of the US): (1) _____
- ☐ National conferences/workshops (any meeting in the US): (2) _____
- ☐ State/regional: (3) _____
- ☐ UGA conferences (e.g., GSS): (4) _____

Q14 Number of outreach activities you engaged in while in OSE aimed at different audiences:

- ☐ K-12 (6) _____
- ☐ College-level (7) _____
- ☐ Policy-makers (8) _____
- ☐ General public (9) _____

Q15 How many students did you mentor while at OSE:

- ☐ High School (6) _____
- ☐ Undergraduate (7) _____
- ☐ Graduate (8) _____
- ☐ Other (e.g., middle school teachers) (9) _____

Q16 Considering only Fall and Spring semesters, how many semesters of support did you have from each of the following:

- ☐ RA (6) _____
- ☐ TA (7) _____
- ☐ Fellowship (8) _____
- ☐ Self-funded (9) _____
- ☐ TAP (10) _____
- ☐ Other (please describe) (11) _____

Q17 How many Summers of support did you receive from:

- ☐ RA (6) _____
- ☐ TA (7) _____
- ☐ Fellowship (8) _____
- ☐ Self-funded (9) _____
- ☐ TAP (10) _____
- ☐ Other (please describe) (11) _____

Q18 What are your immediate plans after graduation? Please provide detail (e.g. "I have a post-doc at the University of Chicago with Dr. Who").

- ☐ Faculty position (9) _____
- ☐ Post-doc (5) _____
- ☐ Temporary teaching position (6) _____
- ☐ A PhD program at UGA (8) _____
- ☐ A PhD program at another institution (7) _____
- ☐ I have a MS and have a job with: (10) _____
- ☐ Other (11) _____
- ☐ Unknown (12)

Q19 What is your longer-term career goal?

- ☐ Faculty at a major research university (4)
- ☐ Faculty at a teaching-oriented university or college (5)
- ☐ Policy position with government or NGO (6)
- ☐ Research scientist with government or NGO or university (7)
- ☐ Industry (8)
- ☐ Environmental consulting (9)
- ☐ Other (please describe) (10) _____

Q20 Did your career goals change between matriculating and graduating?

☐ Yes (26)

☐ No (27)

Display This Question:

If Did your career goals change between matriculating and graduating? = Yes

Q21 If your goals changed, please briefly describe how this change came about.

Q22 How well did the training you received at UGA prepare you for your career goals? What could have been done better?

Q23 What would you like to see more of in terms of career preparation?

Q24 What are your top two highlights of the program?

☐ #1 (21) _____

☐ #2 (22) _____

Q25 What two things would you most like to see changed or improved about the graduate program?

☐ #1 (20) _____

☐ #2 (21) _____

Q26 What were the two most valuable courses that you took during your degree program, and why?

☐ #1 (9) _____

☐ #2 (10) _____

Q27 Were there any courses you took that were not valuable to you?

☐ Yes (23)

☐ No (24)

Display This Question:

If Were there any courses you took that were not valuable to you? = Yes

Q28 Which course(s) was not valuable to you and why? What improvements would make it more valuable?

Q29 Describe your view of the culture (or sense of community) at Odum:

Q30 Were there any particular challenges you faced while in the program? How can we better help future students navigate these issues?

Q31 Discuss the working relationship between you, your major professor, and your committee. Can you suggest specific ways to improve it?

Q32 What advice would you give to an incoming student in the same degree program?

Q33 Would you recommend the program to other students? Please elaborate.

End of Survey

Things to do around Athens

The Graduate students have assembled a list of things to do around town, Athens resources, and community events...

What's up around town

- Flagpole Interactive Calendar: <http://flagpole.com>
- www.downtownathensga.com
- www.visitathensga.com
- www.guide2s.com

Athens food and drink culture

- Flagpole Restaurant Guide: <http://flagpole.com/Guide/Restaurants>
- Breakfast: Big City Bread, The Grit, Mama's Boy,
- Lunch: lots of great lunch deals (Siri Thai, White Tiger, Cali-n-titos, Dawg-Gone Good, Maepole)
- Locally Grown: buy goods online from local farms <http://athens.locallygrown.net>
- Athens Farmers Market-Local food sold various locations & days <http://athensfarmersmarket.net/>
- Grocery Stores:
 - Daily Groceries Co-op: "for shoppers looking to buy high-quality, organic groceries, produce, supplements and lots more. They feature vegetarian and vegan items, ready-made dips, salads, sandwiches, plus organic and local produce" www.dailygroceries.org
 - Kroger/Publix/Ingles/Publix/Aldi: your standard supermarkets... be sure to sign up for a Kroger Plus card/Ingles Advantage card to get all the discounts.
 - Trader Joes - Generally good quality food
 - Fresh Market - has student discount, but still expensive
- EcoGrads' Favorite Bars:
 - 40-Watt (lots of shows/events)
 - Flicker (movies, shows, dance parties, and free popcorn)
 - The Globe (good happy hour hangout –free cheese spread on some days)
 - Little Kings (corn hole, gummy bears)
 - Manhattan (nice, dark, sultry bar –also has free popcorn)
 - Trapeze (the beer-drinker's bar)
 - Allgood's (outdoor private patio;)
 - Max Canada (can bring your dog inside/lots of games)
 - Creature Comforts Brewery - downtown
 - Southern Brewing Company - a drive, but massive backyard
 - Hi-Lo (also has good vegetarian/vegan options for food)
 - Normal Bar
 - Royal Peasant
 - The World Famous
- Coffee Shops/Internet Access:
 - Five Points –Jittery Joes,
 - Downtown –Starbucks, Walkers,, Trapeze, Jittery Joes, 1000 Faces
 - Eastside –Jittery Joes
 - Atlanta Hwy -Barnes & Noble, Jittery Joes
 - Prince Ave-Hendershot's, SIPS, Buvez
- Misc. Good Stuff to Know about:
 - Karaoke–Walker's Pub & Shokitini
 - \$1 ice cream–Hodgson's & Add Drug

- Rook and Pawn Board game cafe
- King of Pops –Delicious ice cream truck downtown most afternoon/evenings
- Trivia–Blind Pig, HiLo, Johnny’s, Willy’s, Taco Stand, etc.
- Deal of the Day –sign up for a daily discount to some business in Athens, <http://dailydeals.onlineathens.com/> & dealmobs &groupon
- Story telling -- “Rabbit Box” hosted at The Foundry every second Wednesday of the month <https://rabbitbox.org/about/>
- Comedy -- “Open Toad” hosted at Flicker Bar every other Tuesday night at 9pm (check [Flicker Bar’s schedule](#))

Movies

- Athens Ciné: Indie film theatre downtown-a must go: www.athenscine.com/intro.php
- TATE Center: \$2 movies, www.uga.edu/campuslife/movies.html
- Vision Video: rent movies for cheap! Wide selection, good indie flicks.
- Flicker Bar and Theater: downtown bar that projects movies at scheduled times, specializing in fun-offbeat flicks. www.myspace.com/flickerbar
- Mainstream Cinemas: Beechwood Cinemas, Carmike Cinemas, Ovations. Typically offer student discounts with UGA ID card.

Live music venues

- Georgia Theatre
- 40 Watt Club
- Flicker Bar
- Caledonia Lounge
- The Foundry

Transportation

- Alternative Transportation Passes (ATP): Those biking, walking & riding an Athens Transit Bus as their primary means of getting to campus will receive 24 days of free parking per year in designated locations. (distributed 2 uses per month) www.parking.uga.edu/ATP.aspx
- Athens Bike Map: www.bikeathens.com/resources/bikemap/index.htm
- Taking the campus bus: www.transit.uga.edu/
- Taking the city bus: www.athenstransit.com (free for students; many busses go between campus and other useful locations)
- Parking on campus: www.parking.uga.edu/

Athens events and festivals

- Halloween/Wild Rumpus–great fun downtown!
- Twilight Criterium –downtown all-weekend-long bike race in April: www.athenstwilight.com
- Athens Human Rights Festival–political/cultural event downtown with speeches, music, etc. in May: <http://athenshumanrightsfest.org/>
- ATHFest –all weekend-long local music festival in June: www.athfest.com

Sports and recreation

- UGA Ramsey Gym free to fees-paid students, but must pay extra for classes (Swimming, Weights, Indoor/outdoor track, Cardio machines, Aerobic/Dance/Martial Arts Classes, Game courts) Store for

renting camping gear or sports equipment: <http://www.recsports.uga.edu/>** The first week of every semester is Free Week where you may try out all of the Ramsey classes for FREE!

- There is also Pound Hall Gym on Health Science Campus that is smaller but closer to Normaltown
- UGA Intramural http://www.recsports.uga.edu/intramural_sports.php
- Club Sports http://www.recsports.uga.edu/club_sports.php
- Paddling (Broad River, UGA Whitewater Club)
- Rock climbing: Ramsey climbing wall, Active Climbing Indoor Climbing Gym <http://activeclimbing.com/>
- Biking Pro or leisure; there's something for everyone: www.cyclenittygritty.org , <http://winterbikeleague.com/site> , <http://www.uga.edu/cycling/>
- Disc golf (Sandy Creek Park, Oconee Co. Rec. Park)
- Hiking -- (Botanical Gardens, Lake Herrick, Sandy Creek Nature Center, Sandy Creek Park)
- Classic City Rollergirls, www.classiccityrollergirls.com
- Dance (belly dancing, salsa, swing, tango, hip hop, jazz, ballet, contra, line and more)
 - www.danceathens.com,
 - <https://www.ugasalsaclub.com/>,
 - <https://www.dancefx.org/athens-home>
- Yoga www.rubbersoulyoga.com , www.healingartscentre.net , www.athensfivepointsyoga.com , <http://www.recsports.uga.edu/aerobics.php> <https://www.m3yoga.com/>
- Trapeze yes, you can even learn to be a trapeze artist in Athens www.canopystudio.com
- Pottery: Good Dirt Pottery classes - well worth it! And taught by Odum Alum!
- Running
 - Fleet Feet -- located in Five Points, hosts 3 and 5 mile group runs on Monday evenings at 6PM <https://www.facebook.com/FleetFeetAthens/>
 - Athens Running Company -- located in Five Points, hosts 3 and 5 mile group runs on Thursday evenings <https://www.facebook.com/athensrun/>
 - Trail Sisters -- Trail running/walking/hiking group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/tsathensga>

Register to vote!

Tate Student Center Information Desk has mail-in forms

Community involvement opportunities

Athens area organization and associations

- <https://www.libs.uga.edu/athens/organizations.html> A list of various organizations and associations in Athens sorted by theme.
- [United Way of Northeast Georgia](http://www.unitedwayofnortheastgeorgia.org) supports 29 human service agencies in an eight county area that includes: Barrow, Clarke, Franklin, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Oglethorpe and Oconee.

Environmental

- [Athens Grow Green Alliance](http://www.athensgrowgreenalliance.org) promotes responsible community development and growth management policies and practices that protect natural resources, prevent sprawl, maintain a healthy economy, and preserve a high quality of life for all in the Athens region.

- [BikeAthens](#) promotes transportation and land-use policies that improve alternative modes of transportation, including pedestrian, cycling, and public transit options. They also host a Bike Recycling Program that refurbishes used bikes and donates them to folks in need.
- [Georgia River Network](#) works to ensure a clean water legacy by engaging and empowering Georgians to protect and restore our rivers from the mountains to the coast.
- [The Upper Oconee Watershed Monitoring](#) (UOWN) was formed in response to citizen concern about the region's rapid growth and its impact to local streams and rivers. UOWN members engage in advocacy, education, and stream monitoring initiatives to raise community awareness about local water resource issues and to facilitate a cooperative spirit for long-term watershed protection.

Grassroots activism

- [Athens Mutual Aid Network](#) is a coalition of Athens organizations and community members coming together to support the most vulnerable members of Athens through this public health emergency. They connect people with ongoing relief efforts, collect and distribute accurate information to the community, and advocate for critical policy actions to address unmet needs.
- [The Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement](#) (AADM) advocates for racial and social justice and strives to combat discrimination through education and activism.
- [Athens for Everyone](#) is a left-progressive political organization fighting for social and economic justice and transformational change oriented toward action at the local and state level.
- [The Athens Immigrant Rights Coalition](#) (AIRC) seeks to highlight the collective vision of Human Rights and Immigrant Rights Advocates in Athens GA, channeling and organizing their efforts in the areas of labor and human rights, solidarity, education, migrant youth, spirituality and culture.
- [Athens Community Fridge Project](#) provides communal places where surplus food is shared with the local community. They help people connect to their communities, access nutritious food, save money and reduce waste. Surplus food is provided by local businesses or members of the public, and is then available for collection by people who need it.
- [FreeIT Athens](#) is dedicated to providing reclaimed and refurbished technology, as well as educational opportunities, to those in need.

Farmers markets and co-ops

- [Athens Locally Grown](#). Order food Sun/Mon –Pick up at Ben’s Bikes on Thursdays. All food is relatively local (GA and some SC, AL) from various farmers.
- [The Athens Farmers Market](#) provides the community with a place to buy fresh produce, crafts, objects of art and food direct from producers in a congenial atmosphere.
 - Saturdays, May –November, 8 am –12 noon; Bishop Park in Athens.
 - Tuesdays, May –November, 4pm-7pm; Little Kings parking lot, downtown.
- [Full Moon COOP](#) is a community supported biodynamic farm and research center founded by a group of farmers, ecologists, culinary artists, activists, and educators. They offer community-based solutions to the most critical environmental, economic, and social challenges of our time.

Nature centers

- [Georgia Botanical Gardens](#)
- [Sandy Creek Nature Center](#)
- [Georgia Nature Center](#)
- [Bear Hollow Zoo](#)
- [Memorial Park](#)

End of Handbook