

Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences

2024 - 2025

Graduate Student
Policies and Procedures



Table of Contents

Contacts	3
Frequently Used Numbers	4
Degrees Available	5
Introduction and Overview - MEPS.....	5
Scholastic Requirements - Soil and Crop Sciences	6
Grade Point Average	6
Degree Requirements	7
Maximum allowable hours of online coursework	7
Requirements for the Master of Science Degree	7
Steps leading to the Master of Science	8
Summary of steps to fulfill a Master of Science	10
Requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy	11
Steps leading to the Doctor of Philosophy	11
Summary of steps to fulfill a Doctor of Philosophy in SCSC	14
Forms	15
General Information	
Graduate Student Orientation.....	15
Required Training	16
Health Insurance	16
Tuition Calculator	16
Requirements for Assisting in Department Laboratories	17
Education Abroad Programs Office	17
Resources and Services for International Students	17
MEPS Program Benefits	
Financial Assistance -	18
Travel Awards	18
International Admission	18
Continuous Registration	19
Department Resources	
Graduate Computer Lab	20
Travel Authorization	20
Departmental Vehicles	20
Pesticide Applicator License	20
Title IX Mandatory Reporting	20

Graduate Policies and Procedures

Academic Resources - continued	
Employee/Undergraduate Relationships	21
Academic Resources	21
Email	
Catalogs	22
Registering for Courses	22
Research Courses	22
Printing your Account Balance	22
Emergency Tuition Loans	22
Graduate Catalog	23
Graduate and Professional School	23
Computing Resources	23
	24
Career Resources	
Career Center	
Student Counseling Service Center	23
	23
Safety and Security	23
Parking and Transportation Services	24
Student Services	
Student Health Services	
Student Health Insurance	24
Children’s Center	24
Student Counseling Center	24
Alcohol and Drug Education Program	24
Off Campus Student Services	25
International Student and Scholar Services	25
Multicultural Student Services	25
Women’s Resource Center	25
LGBT Education and Support	25
Disability Services	25
	25
Food Services	25
Recreation Center	25

The faculty and staff involved with the MEPS Interdisciplinary program will make every effort to ensure that your experience as a graduate student is challenging, rewarding, and preparatory for a career in agronomy, food science, plant breeding, plant physiology, soil science or related environmental sciences. Overviews of our graduate programs can be found on the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences website - <https://soilcrop.tamu.edu>. Additional graduate information, along with the forms necessary for the various aspects of your graduate career can be found on the Graduate and Professional School website - <https://grad.tamu.edu>.

Contacts:

Dr. David Stelly, *Chair—Molecular & Environmental Plant Science (MEPS)*

Beasley Laboratory - Bldg 0954

979-845-2745

david.stelly@ag.tamu.edu

Ms. Beth Ann McClosky, *Program Coordinator MEPS*

434B Heep Center

979-845-4620

beth.mcclosky@ag.tamu.edu

Dr. Casey Flint, *Graduate Advising*

114 Kleberg Ctr.

979-845-7616

casey.flint@tamu.edu

Ms. Carla Smith, *Senior Business Administrator—Bookkeeping*

412GA Heep Center

979-862-1023

carla.smith@ag.tamu.edu

Ms. Amber Sexton, *Tuition and Fees, Payroll*

412A Heep Center

979-845-9743

Amber.Sexton@ag.tamu.edu

Graduate Admissions

1601 General Services Complex

979-845-1060

<http://admissions.tamu.edu>

Graduate and Professional School

204 Nagle Hall

979-845-3631

grad@tamu.edu

Registrar's Office

General Services Complex

979-845-1031

registrar@tamu.edu

Thesis Office, *Submit thesis/dissertations*

204 Nagle Hall

979-845-3631

thesis@tamu.edu

International Student & Scholar Services

110 Pavilion

979-845-1824

<http://iss.tamu.edu>

Student Life*, *Housing assistance, etc.*

Student Life Services Bldg, 2nd floor

979-845-3111

studentlife@tamu.edu

Dr. David Baltensperger, *Professor and Department Head Soil and Crop Sciences*

434 Heep Center

979-845-3041

david.baltensperger@ag.tamu.edu

Dr. Wayne Smith, Professor, *Associate Department Head Soil and Crop Sciences*

434B Heep Center

979-845-3450

wayne.smith@ag.tamu.edu

Graduate Policies and Procedures

*Potential graduate students should check web sites such as www.apartments.com and the Bryan-College Station Eagle (local newspaper) at www.theeagle.com for additional information concerning housing in the Bryan-College Station area.

Other Frequently Used Numbers:

Admissions Office	979-845-1060
Aggie One-Stop	979-847-1787
Computing / Information Technology	979-845-8300
Counseling & Psychological Services	979-845-4427
Emergency	911 / campus phones - 9-911
Financial Aid	979-845-3236
First Call - AgriLife IT Services	979-985-5737
Graduate Student Services	979-845-1741
Health Center	979-458-8310
Helpline	979-845-2700
International Student & Scholar Services	979-845-1824
Multicultural Services	979-862-2000
New Student Orientation	979-845-5826
Off-Campus Housing Information	979-845-1741
Parking, Traffic, Transportation	979-862-7275
Registrar's Office	979-845-1031
Scholarships	979-845-3982
Security Escort Service (Corps of Cadets)	979-845-6789
Services for Students/Disabilities	979-845-1637
Student Activities	979-845-1133
Student Conflict Resolution	979-847-7272
Student Counseling Services	979-845-4427
Title IX Officer	979-458-8407
University Apartments	888-451-3896
University Operator	979-845-3211
University Police Department	979-845-2345
Veteran Services	979-845-8075
Veteran Resource and Support Center	979-845-3161
Visitor Center	979-845-5851

Molecular & Environmental Plant Sciences

Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences “MEPS” evolved from the intercollegiate faculty of Plant Physiology, originally formed in 1983, in response to recommendations from an external panel of scientists convened to review the programs in 1998. The recommendation to make the Plant Physiology program more inclusive of scientists in the plant sciences recognized an academic and research environment that is rich in facilities and personnel resources that support the plant sciences. The new name of the program received internal approval of the Faculty Senate in the fall of 1999. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved a request to change the name of M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Plant Physiology to Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences effective September 1, 2000. MEPS embraces all plant disciplines from fundamental molecular genetics to ecology and includes members from 9 departments in 3 colleges.

Prospective faculty members are nominated through their respective department heads, voted to membership by full MEPS members, and approved by the appropriate dean. The MEPS Faculty currently includes 60 members. There are 23 graduate students enrolled in MEPS M.S. and Ph.D. degree programs in the fall of 2023.

The MEPS program is administered by elected members in accordance with its By-laws. The Executive Committee is composed of a Chair and 4 members, with no more than 2 members from a single department. Activities of the faculty are carried out through a system of standing and ad hoc committees appointed by the Executive Committee.

Every interdepartmental graduate program must be associated with a formal academic department, or “unit”. MEPS is housed in the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences, which provides administrative support, and accounting and bureaucratic support services.

Principal activities of the MEPS include:

- Administration of the M.S. and Ph.D. degree programs in Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences
- Presentation of academic courses requisite to the contemporary graduate degree programs.
- Recruitment and admission of students into its graduate degree programs.
- Provision of enrichment programs for faculty and students including a seminar program based on external speakers.
- Promotion and coordination of plant science disciplines at TAMU.

MEPS Core Curriculum

- MEPS 601 Physiology of Plants
- MEPS 605 Plant Biochemistry
- BIOL 635 Plant Molecular Biology
- ESSB 621 Physiological Plant Ecology

Scholastic Requirements

This handbook summarizes policies and procedures to be followed by graduate students in Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences (MEPS). Students should consult the Graduate Catalog or the Graduate and Professional School as the final authority on all matters discussed in the handbook.

Grade Point Average

Graduate students must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 (4.0 scale) for all courses which are listed on the degree plan; as well as for all graded graduate and advanced undergraduate course work (300 and 400 level) completed at Texas A&M and eligible for application toward a graduate degree. Graduate students will not receive graduate degree credit for undergraduate courses taken on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U) basis. Graduate courses on the degree plan may not be taken S/U, except for 681, 684, 690, 691, 692, 693, 695, and 697. Graduate courses not on the degree plan may be taken S/U.

If either a student's cumulative GPA or the GPA for courses listed on the degree plan fall below 3.0, he or she will be considered scholastically deficient and may be dropped from the University unless the minimum GPA is attained by the end of the next long semester. The student will have one semester to bring their GPA back to 3.0 or risk loss of their assistantship. Various scholarships have varying requirements for minimum GPA in order to retain the scholarship.

Additional information can be found online in the Texas A&M University Graduate Catalog - <http://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/>

Advisory Committee Chair

MEPS graduate students may enter the graduate program with or without prior expectations regarding the focus of their graduate research and /or who will serve as their advisory committee chair. First year students that are supported financially by the MEPS program will normally rotate between two or three labs with MEPS faculty pursuing research in the student's area of interest. These students will be advised by the MEPS Chair until a permanent advisory committee chair is chosen, which must happen by the end of the first two long semesters. Once the committee chair is selected, the formal degree program (list of academic courses) is developed jointly by the student, committee chair and members of his/her advisory committee. This approach provides flexibility to customize student education and training rather than provide a one-size-fits-all educational experience.

Degree Requirements in Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences

The MEPS Program Chair advises until he/she chooses a permanent advisor. First year students that are supported by the MEPS program will normally undertake two or three laboratory rotations with MEPS faculty pursuing research in the student's area of interest. A permanent advisor is chosen by the end of the first two long semesters and the formal degree program (list of academic courses) is developed jointly by the student, advisor and members of his/her advisory committee. This approach provides flexibility to customize student education and training rather than provide a one-size-fits-all educational experience.

Maximum Allowable Hours of Online Coursework (non-distance students)

The Higher Education Coordinating Board is enforcing mandates about the maximum allowable amount of coursework for students **not in** distance programs that can be taken online. This includes all online, web-based (i.e. "699" sections) and distance (i.e. "700" sections) courses in which on-campus students can enroll.

Master's students not in a distance program can take a maximum of 50% of degree plan hours as online or web-based distance courses.

Ph.D. students must adhere to both the following rules:

Rule 1 - A Ph.D. student may have no more than 4 courses that are web-based (699) or distance education (700) on their degree plan under any circumstances. All other graded coursework on the degree plan must be taken as traditional face-to-face coursework. If there is a need for the student to take more than 4 web-based courses (for example – they are in a statistics certificate program that requires them to take more than 4 courses online) – then **ONLY** four of those courses can be used on their degree plan.

Rule 2 - In addition, no more than 50% of graded coursework on the degree plan can be taken web based (699) or distance (700). Be aware that this is 50% of graded coursework and **NOT** 50% of the total degree plan. Research and Thesis/Dissertation 691 hours do not count when calculating the 50% rule.

Requirements of a Master of Science Degree MEPS

1. 32 graduate credit hours beyond the B.S. degree;
2. 24 course hours must be approved by the students advisory committee and the Graduate and Professional School, including:
 - a. At least 14 hours from graduate (600 level) MEPS or related courses from other departments including at least 2 courses from the MEPS core curriculum. The exact courses are to be determined jointly by the student and his/her advisory committee.
 - b. Statistics 651 or equivalent. This will count for 3 hours of the 24 graded course hours.
 - c. Not more than 6 hours of courses at the 400 level may be counted toward the 32-hour requirement.
3. Seminar course. A seminar courses is required (1 hour) in the student's home department in which the students are required to present a seminar.
4. Only 8 hours of MEPS 691 (research) are credited to the 32 hour requirement.
5. Satisfactory completion of a final examination and a thesis.

Steps Leading to a Master of Science Degree in MEPS

There are several steps that must be successfully completed to fulfill the requirements for the M.S. degree in Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences. These include:

Committee Structure

Some MEPS students will know their advisory committee chair at the time they are admitted to the department. Others will rotate through the professors. In their first semester at Texas A&M, students should consult with their committee chair (and co-chair, if applicable) and establish their committee members. All committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty at Texas A&M University. Graduate Faculty members can be found on the GPS website: <http://gradcom.tamu.edu/FacultySearch.aspx>. Others who are not members of the Graduate Faculty can be named to a committee as Special Appointments. These Special Appointments can come from other universities, government agencies, or private industry. Special Appointments should bring specific expertise to the committee structure that will be advantageous to the student's training and research. Special Appointees are "extra", non-voting appointments and do not count toward the required number of committee members. Students should meet with the MEPS Chair for more information regarding special or "extra" committee appointments, if questions arise.

Master of Science committees are composed of the chair and at least 2 additional members. One of the additional members may be a co-chair. The chair or co-chair (if applicable) must be from the MEPS faculty. At least two departments must be represented in each Advisory Committee.

Submit a Degree Plan

In consultation with their advisory committee, each student MUST submit a degree plan that identifies the courses leading to the M.S. degree and formally establishes the student's committee. The degree plan (<http://ogsdpps.tamu.edu>) must be approved by the student's advisory committee, the MEPS Chair, and the Graduate and Professional School. The degree plan must be submitted to the Graduate School before the end of the student's second long semester and no later than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. Failure to do so will result in a registration block being placed on the student by the Graduate School. Degree plan submission is an online process initiated by the student after consultation with their advisory committee.

Submit a Thesis Proposal

In consultation with their advisory committee, students MUST submit a thesis proposal that identifies the research project to which the student has been assigned, a partial literature review of the problem, objectives of the research, and the student's approach to the research. The thesis proposal (<https://grad.tamu.edu>) must be approved by the student's graduate advisory committee, the MEPS Chair and the Graduate and Professional School.

Complete Residence Requirements

A Master's student must complete 9 resident credit hours during one regular semester or one 10-week summer semester in resident study at Texas A&M University in College Station. A minimum of 1 credit hour must be in a non-distance education delivery mode. Semesters during which the student is enrolled in all distance education coursework will not count toward fulfillment of the residence requirement. The Graduate and Professional School will confirm the residence requirement has been fulfilled before the student may defend their thesis.

Apply for Degree and Pay Graduation Fees

These items must be accomplished during the first week of the student's final semester. Students should note this and all deadlines are posted on the Graduate and Professional School calendar. (<https://grad.tamu.edu>)

Submit Thesis to Advisory Committee

Well before submitting a request to schedule the thesis defense, students should meet with their committee chair and confirm that all course work is completed or will be complete in an appropriate manner. When all course work are satisfied, the student may submit his/her thesis to their committee.

Submit Request to Schedule Final Exam

The request to schedule the student's thesis defense must be submitted to the Graduate and Professional School through DocuSign at least 10 working days prior to the exam. There may be additional time requirements posted on the Graduate and Professional School calendar. The request must be approved by the student's advisory committee chair, co-chair (if applicable), and the MEPS Chair.

The exam results must be returned to the Graduate and Professional School within 10 working days of the scheduled date of the exam.

Submit Thesis to Thesis Office

Thesis will be submitted electronically through the thesis and dissertation submission system as a single PDF file. You will submit a signed approval page and copyright form to the Graduate and Professional School through ARCS and the thesis through Vireo (etd.tamu.edu). Students should check the Graduate School calendar for semester deadlines relative to submission and graduation. The thesis must be approved by the advisory committee and the MEPS Chair.

The steps leading to an M.S. degree are illustrated on the following page:

Summary of Steps to Fulfill Master of Science Degree

Establish Advisory Committee	When: During student's first semester
Submit Degree Plan	When: Before the end of student's second long semester and no later than 90 days prior to final oral or thesis defense. (The Graduate School will block registration for the following semester). Approval: Online process after consultation with advisory committee.
Submit Thesis Proposal	Approval: Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair, Office of Graduate and Professional Studies
Complete residence requirement, if applicable	When: Before or during final semester Approval: Graduate and Professional School
Apply for Degree; Pay Graduation Fees	When: During the first week of students final semester (see GPS calendar)
Submit Thesis to Advisory Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm all degree plan courses are complete. 	When: Well before submitting request to schedule final exam.
Submit request for permission to schedule final exam	When: Must be received by the Graduate and Professional School at least 10 WORKING DAYS prior to the exam. Additional time requirements and deadlines are on the Graduate School calendar. NOTE: Results are to be submitted to the Graduate School within 10 working days of the exam. Approval: Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair, and the Graduate and Professional School.
Submit Thesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single PDF file submitted via Vireo • Thesis approval form- submit via ARCS • Copyright approval - submit via ARCS 	NOTE: See Thesis Manual for format When: See the Graduate and Professional School calendar for each semester deadline. Approval: Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair

NOTE: Student must be continuously registered until all degree requirements are met.

Requirements Leading to the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in MEPS

Complete at least 96 credit hours beyond the B.S. degree or 64 hours beyond the M.S. degree to include the following:

1. A minimum of 20 hours in MEPS courses or related departmental courses including at least three courses from the MEPS core curriculum. The exact courses for the degree program are to be determined jointly by the student and his/her advisory committee.
2. No more than 6 hours of upper division undergraduate 300 and 400 level courses may be applied to the degree program.
3. Students should take Biochemistry 601 if they lack an adequate back-ground in biochemistry, and Genetics 603 if they lack an adequate background in genetics.
4. Students lacking a rigorous, contemporary background in plant physiology, such as that provided by a graduate-level course completed at another institution, should take MEPS 601.
5. Statistics 651 or 652 or equivalent.
6. Seminar course. A seminar course in the student's home department in which students are required to present a seminar.
7. Additional hours of 685 (Directed Studies), 689 (Special Topics) and 691 (Research) courses to meet the credit hour requirements for the degree.
8. Satisfactory completion of a qualifying examination, final examination and a dissertation.

Steps Leading to a Doctor of Philosophy

There are several steps that must be successfully completed to fulfill the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in Molecular and Environmental Plant Sciences. These include:

Committee Structure

Some graduate students will know their advisory committee chair at the time they are admitted to the department. Others will rotate through the labs of two or three faculty members with similar research interest their first year. These students are advised by the MEPS Chair until a permanent committee chair is selected.

During their first semester at Texas A&M, students should consult with their committee chair (and co-chair, if applicable) and establish their committee members. All committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty at Texas A&M University. Graduate Faculty members can be found on the Graduate and Professional School website: <https://gradcom.tamu.edu/FacultySearch.aspx>. Faculty and other additional members can be appointed who are not members of the Graduate Faculty as Special Appointments. These Special Appointments can come from other universities, government agencies, or private industry. Special Appointments should bring specific expertise to the committee structure that will be advantageous to the student's training and research. Special Appointees are "extra" appointments and do not count toward the required number of committee members.

Students should meet with the MEPS Chair, for further information regarding special committee appointments, if questions arise.

Doctor of Philosophy committees are composed of the chair and at least 3 additional members. One of the additional members may be a co-chair. The chair or co-chair (if applicable) must be a MEPS faculty member, and at least two departments must be represented in each Advisory Committee.

Submit a Degree Plan

In consultation with their advisory committee, students **MUST** submit a degree plan that identifies the courses leading to the Ph.D. degree. The degree plan (<http://grad.tamu.edu>) must be approved by the student's advisory committee, the MEPS Chair, and the Graduate and Professional School. The degree plan must be submitted to Graduate School before the end of the student's fourth long semester and no later than 90 days prior to preliminary examination. Failure to do so will result in a registration block being placed on the student by the Graduate School. This is an online process initiated by the student after consultation with their advisory committee.

Review Prelim Eligibility Requirements

About the end of the fourth or fifth long semester, and several weeks before prelims are scheduled, students should review the eligibility requirements for the preliminary exam. Students should obtain the preliminary exam checklist form from DocuSign. This checklist must be approved by the student's advisory committee chair, and the MEPS Chair. **The checklist is included in the DocuSign report of preliminary exam results and forwarded to the Graduate School by the student's committee chair after completion of the preliminary exams.**

Submit a Dissertation Proposal

In consultation with their advisory committee, the student **MUST** submit a dissertation proposal that identifies the research assigned to the student, a partial literature review of the problem, objectives of the research, and the student's approach to the research. The dissertation proposal must be approved by the student's graduate advisory committee, the MEPS Chair, and the Graduate and Professional School.

MEPS students are encouraged to establish a research proposal as soon as possible; doing so typically leads to multiple benefits and no detriments. It is "a plan" indicating expected scope, composition, methods, materials and timelines, **BUT IT IS NOT IMMUTABLE**. One of the greatest benefits of early establishment is that it increases the likelihood of advantageous recommendations and adjustments early in the research process, i.e. before it is too late to enact them.

Establish Preliminary Exam Dates

Once the student's advisory chair is satisfied that all prelim eligibility requirements have been met, the student should establish the preliminary exam schedule with their committee. The oral exam should be approximately three weeks after the first written exam is submitted. Additional time requirements and deadlines are posted on the Graduate and Professional School calendar or in the graduate catalog.

Complete Prelims

The results of the preliminary exams, written and oral must be returned to the Graduate and Professional School within ten (10) working days of the oral examination. The results must be approved by the student's advisory committee. The Preliminary Examination Checklist and Report is in ARCS.

Complete Residence Requirements

A student who holds master's degree when entering a doctoral degree program must spend one academic year in resident study at Texas A&M University in College Station. A 96-hr Ph.D. student who holds a baccalaureate degree must spend one academic year plus one semester in resident study.

One academic year may include two adjacent regular semesters or one regular semester and one adjacent 10-week summer semester. The third semester is not required to be adjacent to the one year. Enrollment for each semester must be a minimum of 9 credit hours each to satisfy the residence requirement. A minimum of 1 credit hour must be in a non-distance education delivery mode. Semesters in which the student is enrolled in all distance education coursework will not count toward fulfillment of the residence requirement. The Graduate and Professional School will confirm the residence requirement has been fulfilled before the student may defend their dissertation.

Apply for Degree and Pay Graduation Fees

These items must be accomplished during the first week of the student's final semester. Students should note this and all deadlines on the Graduate and Professional School calendar.

Submit Dissertation to Advisory Committee

Well before submitting a request to schedule the final exam the student should meet with their committee and confirm that all course work is completed, or will be completed in an appropriate time frame. When all course work requirements are satisfied, the student may submit his/her dissertation to their advisory committee.

Submit Request to Schedule Final Exam

The request to announce and schedule the student's final exam must be submitted to the Graduate and Professional School at least 10 working days prior to the exam. Additional time requirements may be posted on the Graduate School calendar. The final exam request will be submitted through ARCS and must be approved by the student's advisory committee chair, co-chair if applicable, and Dr. David Stelly. The results of the exam must be returned to the Graduate School within ten (10) working days of the scheduled date of the exam.

Submit Dissertation

The approved, final copy of a dissertation will be submitted through Vireo. The signed approval page and copyright approval are submitted through ARCS. Students should check the Graduate and Professional School calendar for semester deadlines relative to dissertation submission and graduation. The dissertation must be approved by the advisory committee and the MEPS Chair.

These steps leading to a Ph.D. degree are illustrated on the following pages.

NOTE: Students must be continuously registered until all degree requirements are met.

NOTE: Special attention may be needed to verify individual requirements for registration during summer months. For an explanation of continuous enrollment, see page 19.

Summary of Steps to Fulfill Doctor of Philosophy Degree

Establish Advisory Committee	<i>When:</i> During student's first semester
Submit Degree Plan	<i>When:</i> Before the end of student's fourth long semester and no later than 90 days prior to preliminary examination (GPS will block registration following semester) <i>Approval:</i> Online process after consultation with advisory committee.
Submit dissertation proposal Students should consult with faculty on turnaround time for proposal review suggestions; 2 weeks is common.	<i>Approval:</i> Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair Typically, the student's Committee Chair will offer suggestions and revisions before submission to other committee members.
Review Preliminary Eligibility Requirements (see GPS homepage forms link for checklist)	<i>When:</i> End of fourth or fifth long semester and several weeks before the proposed date of the preliminary exams. Checklist must be submitted in DocuSign and approved by advisory committee chair and the MEPS Chair. The checklist is held and submitted to the Graduate School with the results of the preliminary exam(s)
Prepare and submit any petitions found necessary by the review of the eligibility requirements (checklist)	<i>When:</i> At least 3 weeks before the expected date of the preliminary examination <i>Approval:</i> Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair, and the Graduate and Professional School
Establish date(s) of the preliminary exam(s) with committee **Note** The Graduate School does not approve the exam date nor are they notified of the prelim	<i>When:</i> Student must be within 6 credit hours of completion of all formal course work (excluding 681, 684, 690, and 691) or no later than the end of the semester following completion of all formal course work on the degree plan. <i>Approval:</i> Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair
Complete preliminary exams, submit the Report of the Preliminary Examination and the Preliminary Examination Checklist to the Graduate and Professional School via DocuSign	<i>When:</i> No later than the semester following completion of formal course work. Complete exams within 3 week time frame and report results to the Graduate and Professional School within 10 working days. <i>Approval:</i> Advisory committee Provide copy of results to: MEPS Chair
GPS notifies the student and chair of deficiencies/problems	<i>When:</i> Following the review of the Report of the Preliminary Examination and the Preliminary Examination Checklist
Complete residency requirements	<i>When:</i> Before submitting request to schedule Final Exam <i>Approval:</i> The Graduate and Professional School
Apply for degree, pay graduation fees	<i>When:</i> During the first week of the final semester (see GPS calendar for deadlines) <i>Approval:</i> Graduate and Professional School
Confirm with advisory committee that all degree plan courses are complete; submit dissertation to advisory committee	<i>When:</i> Well before submitting request to schedule final exam
Submit request for permission to hold and announce final oral exam **Note** Results must be submitted to the Graduate and Professional School within 10 workings days of the exam	<i>When:</i> Must be received by the Graduate and Professional School at least 10 working days prior to the exam (see Graduate School calendar for deadlines) <i>Approval:</i> Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair, and the Graduate and Professional School
Submit Dissertation • Single .PDF file • Dissertation approval form - submit via ARCS • Copyright approval form - submit via ARCS	NOTE: See Thesis Manual for format <i>When:</i> See GPS calendar for each semesters deadline <i>Approval:</i> Advisory Committee, MEPS Chair

Forms

All necessary forms for your graduate program can be found online at:

<https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms>

Forms available on this site include:

Degree Plan Fact Sheet
Online Degree Plan Submission System
Written Thesis (M.S.) Approval Form
Written Dissertation (Ph.D.) Approval Form
Letter of Intent to Pursue Another Graduate Degree
Preliminary Examination Checklist
Request and Announcement of the Final Examination
Proposal Approval Page for Thesis, Dissertation, or Record of Study
GPS Calendars

Degree Plans and Petitions are submitted online via the Degree Plan Submission System:

<https://ogsdps.tamu.edu/>

PLEASE USE <https://grad.tamu.edu/> FOR THE MOST UP TO DATE FORMS AND CALENDARS.

To Submit Graduate and Professional School forms:

1. Go to <https://grad.tamu.edu/knowledge-center/forms> and select the document you need to submit
2. Follow the steps to complete the form - Use the following contact information

Staff Graduate Advisor: LeAnn Hague - leann.hague@tamu.edu

IDP Chair: David Stelly - stelly@tamu.edu

3. Finish completing the form and submit it.
4. Notify LeAnn Hague, Taylor Atkinson, and all your committee members that you have routed the form, so everyone can anticipate receiving the DocuSign email. This step is important to prevent forms from being delayed in committee member's inboxes.

!! Make sure to enter the correct names and email addresses into the form so that it is correctly routed!!
It is recommended a student be very proactive in verifying that the necessary signatory individuals are aware of the documents and the timeline involved - i.e. voice and/or text confirmation.

General Information

Graduate Student Orientation

The University holds a campus-wide graduate student orientation one week before classes begin in both the fall and spring semesters. This orientation covers the what, why and how of graduate degree requirements, the proper conduct of research, and other important issues. Students also learn about other campus resources available to them.

The Department of Soil and Crop Sciences also holds an orientation to familiarize students with requirements specific to the department and the MEPS Interdisciplinary Program.

Required Training

All employees of Texas A&M University System must comply with a number of trainings delivered via Train Trac in Workday. This includes such trainings as safety procedures, computer security, export control. All graduate students are required to complete four training modules dealing with Standards in Research, Ethics, and Compliance plus four hours of face to face training with the professor(s) providing research opportunities. Email notifications from Workday will provide due dates for each training.

All graduate students are required to complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) training within 60 days of beginning their research program, and must also complete four hours of face-to-face Core RCR training within the first six months of their research. The trainings are accessed through the Division of research website -

<https://vpr.tamu.edu/manage-research/responsible-conduct-of-research>

Health Insurance

All students who are on assistantship may elect to participate in the graduate student insurance plan through their employment. There is a 60-90 day waiting period for the employer contribution for insurance. Additional group-health insurance to cover spouse and/or children may be purchased. Insurance information and enrollment is completed in Workday.

Students receiving fellowships and some reduced effort assistantships are not automatically covered. Some fellowships provide insurance reimbursement. See Beth Ann McClosky if you have any questions about fellowship terms. (beth.luedeker@ag.tamu.edu or 979-845-4620)

International students must comply with all ISS insurance requirements. More information can be found at <http://iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/Health-Insurance>.

Self-funded students can purchase insurance through the student health plan. More information can be found at <http://tamu.myahpcare.com/>.

Tuition Calculator: <http://tuition.tamu.edu/>

This list does not include the following fees:

- Course related Educational Enhancement, Equipment Access, Lab and/or Field Trip Fees
- Optional fees (housing, meal plans, parking, etc.)
- International Student Admin Fee of \$200-\$500 - per semester charged to third-party sponsored students.
- International Student Service Fee of \$85 per semester.
- International Student Insurance
- Orientation Fees
- Distance Education Differential Tuition and Fees
- General Deposit \$100 fee which is refunded after graduation
- Parking
- Athletic Passes
- Graduation Fees
- Thesis/Dissertation Fees

Requirements for Assisting in Department Teaching Laboratories

It is departmental policy that all graduate students on assistantship gain some teaching experience during their graduate training. Thus, students on assistantship seeking an M.S. degree are expected to assist in 1 lab (2 sections) during their tenure, and Ph.D. students on assistantship are expected to assist in 2 labs (2 sections each) during their tenure. Lab assignments are made by Dr. Wayne Smith, Associate Department Head, after consultation with the student and with the student's advisory committee chair. Every effort will be made to place the student in a lab which is most closely related to his/her field of study. However, more grad students are needed to assist in SCSC 105, World Food and Fiber Crops, and SCSC 301, Soil Science, than in any other courses. Thus, some students may assist in these laboratories regardless of their field of specialty. International students must meet English Language Certification requirements before eligible to assist in a teaching lab. See Beth Ann McClosky (beth.mcclosky@ag.tamu.edu or 979-845-4620) for more information regarding English requirements.

The Education Abroad Programs Office

Education abroad encompasses a variety of experiences – study, internship, volunteer, research, and service learning programs and are available for all students – freshman through doctoral candidates. Programs can be as short as one week or as long as a full year. Students may choose to be part of a group or to pursue an individual program. More detailed information regarding studying abroad can be found on their website - <https://abroad.tamu.edu> or by contacting the Education Abroad office at abroad@tamu.edu or call 979-845-0544.

Resources and Services for International Students

The majority of international students enrolled at TAMU are enrolled at the graduate level. There are many resources and services on campus specifically to help and guide international students and to provide support to facilitate in their transition to student life in the United States and at Texas A&M. The International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) office, located in The Pavilion, is the central location to find answers to questions you may have regarding U.S. customs, government regulations, registration procedures and problems, campus community facilities, medical care, banking, shopping, and entertainment.

ISSS can also help you with questions regarding immigration-related matters, provide counseling regarding federal regulations, aid in the processing of documents and applications that impact your status as a student. The office also provides personal advising regarding cultural adjustment and socialization issues, readjustment to home country, academic concerns, health questions and concerns, emergency assistance (family tragedy, etc.) banking, transportation, and many other necessary concerns. It also acts as a liaison for the students to best represent their interests and to provide a link with government, business, University and community officials.

New International Student Organization - <https://iss.tamu.edu/Events-and-Programs/NISO> provides an online orientation for all incoming international students on pertinent issues such as: immigration check, Health Center check, scholarships and financial aid, and current information regarding banking, utility hook-ups, assistance locating housing, Social Security applications, and much more.

MEPS Program Benefits:

The MEPS Program offers its students the opportunity to study and do research in the largest research university in the Southwest. Along with state-of-the-art equipment and facilities on the cutting edge of technology, its diverse interdisciplinary group of faculty provides academic training and research experiences beyond those offered by traditional departments.

Financial Assistance

The program may offer financial assistance to qualified students. Qualified students may be awarded financial assistance such as a rotational assistantship. This may qualify a student for payment of health insurance and a waiver of out-of-state tuition and fees.

Types of Assistance

The MEPS Program offers both fellowships and assistantships to qualified, incoming students on a competitive basis. A fellowship award provides a monthly stipend which may or may not include insurance. Assistantships provide a monthly stipend and usually cover the cost of the student's insurance. An assistantship also requires a minimum number of registered hours per semester in addition to 20 hours of work for the department. Check with the specific department for its particular requirements.

Travel Awards

Travel awards to reimburse expenses may be available when traveling to professional meetings to present papers and/or posters based on the student's research. Travel awards are provided on a competitive basis.

International Admission

Foreign nationals make up a significant portion of the graduate population in the department as well as Texas A&M University. This international mix of students adds to the graduate experience. International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS, iss@tamu.edu, 979-845-1824) works with the department to make sure all immigration issues are resolved fairly and quickly. International students should submit their department offer letter to ISSS as part of their financial documents. All international students on assistantship MUST obtain a social security number. ISS will inform you of the steps to complete this.

Continuous Registration

Graduate students receiving financial assistance from the department or through University scholarships must register for 9 credit hours during each of the fall and spring semesters, and 6 hours during the summer (either 6 hours during the 10-week session or 6 hours in each of the 5-week sessions). This constitutes full-time status. **Students who are self supported are not required to meet these guidelines.**

All students in graduate degree programs requiring a thesis, dissertation, internship, or record of study (i.e., all MEPS graduate students) must be in continuous registration. This continuous registration includes graduate students who have completed all course work on their degree plans [other than MEPS 691 (Research) or MEPS 684 (Internship)]. Once all formal course work is completed and **the student is not on assistantship/fellowship** continuous registration is satisfied by registration for at least 1 hour during the fall and spring semesters. Summer semester registration is **ONLY** required if the student plans to take examinations, use university resources or facilities, or defend their thesis or dissertation.

The continuous registration can be satisfied either:

- In Absentia: the student must not have access to or use of facilities or properties belonging to the Texas A&M System during the semester;
- In Residence: students who will be on campus or located at one of the Research and Extension Centers or Experiment Stations, and therefore using University facilities must register “in residence” for at least 1 credit hour during the fall, spring, and summer semesters.

NOTE: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS may have additional requirements and should consult with International Student and Scholar Services (979-845-1824) to ensure that they are in compliance with immigration requirements and enrollment status.

NOTE: SELF-SUPPORTED STUDENTS are required to register during the summer sessions if they will be conducting research, working in faculty labs, or using university facilities or resources, regardless of whether or not they have completed their formal course work.

Department Resources

Graduate Computer Lab, Heep 221

The Graduate Computer Lab is open Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm. To use the lab after hours you must have a code. The code changes each academic year.

Travel Authorization

All Departmental employees, including graduate students, who travel on official business must complete the proper travel authorization forms at least 2 weeks PRIOR to such travel. If you are an employee, you **MUST** complete a travel authorization request in Concur. All students traveling **MUST** also complete the student activities travel form, https://stuactonline.tamu.edu/app/form_travel. Students traveling abroad **MUST** also complete the education abroad form - <https://abroad.tamu.edu/>.

*There is a maximum allowable reimbursement for travel, and it is best to speak with your professor about the amount. Committee chairs are not required to provide full reimbursement.

Pesticide Applicator License

Anytime graduate students apply pesticides, they must have their pesticide license or be instructed by someone who has their license. Check with your committee chair before applying pesticides.

Employee/Undergraduate Relationships

According to System Regulation 07.05.01: A system university employee is prohibited from pursuing or having a consensual relationship with an undergraduate student at that institution. A consensual relationship in violation of this section may result in disciplinary action against the member employee, up to and including dismissal. An employee may request an exemption from the prohibition set forth in this section from the president or designee. Exemptions may be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Documentation of an exemption will be signed by the president or designee and placed in the employee's personnel file.

Title IX Mandatory Reporting

If you are a student employee and receive information of sexual harassment, stalking, sexual exploitation, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or retaliation, you must report this information to your committee chair, a faculty member, the department head or associate department head or online at <https://orec.tamu.edu/report/>.

Please visit the Office of Risk, Ethics, and Compliance website - <https://orec.tamu.edu> - for more information about mandatory reporting and on-line reporting links.

Academic Resources

Activating your Texas A&M Email Accounts:

Texas A&M Gmail is the official email system for students.

<http://gateway.tamu.edu>

Choose: Login for current campus members if you are a current campus member and need to make changes to your email or password setting, directory entry or email subscription.

Choose: Claim Your NetID if you are new to Texas A&M.

Enter UIN and Date of Birth and click LOGIN.

Enter your NetID and click SUBMIT.

Enter a password, confirm, and click SUBMIT.

*If you have any questions or problems, call the Help Desk at 979-845-8300 or visit their website at <http://it.tamu.edu/help>. Computing Services is open 8am-midnight and located in the Computing Services Center, room 1112.

*It is your job as a graduate student to check your email. If you are not receiving emails from the department, please let us know.

Online catalogs: <http://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/>

How to Register:

Go to: <http://howdy.tamu.edu>

Click on the “Registration” icon and follow the instructions.

*You must use the section’s CRN number to register.

*Do not register for any 684, 685 or 691 course with a 700 section number unless you are in the Distance Education Plant Breeding Program.

**YOU MUST SIGN THE LAB SAFETY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT EACH SEMESTER. You will not be able to register for research hours or any course with a lab until this is signed.

To Research Courses:

In Howdy (<http://howdy.tamu.edu>) - click the Registration icon and then select “Browse for Courses”

To Print your Account Balance:

In Howdy (<http://howdy.tamu.edu>) - Select the “My Finances” tab

Those on assistantships and/or fellowships need to register full time (9 hours) as soon as possible after registration opens. Tuition payments, out of state tuition waivers, and placement on payroll for the new semester cannot be processed until you have finished registering.

****Waiting to register until school begins may cause delays and may cost you additional fees.****

If you have trouble registering for any course, please email LeAnn Hague (leann.hague@tamu.edu) or Taylor Atkinson (taylor_atkinson@tamu.edu) and include your UIN.

Emergency Tuition Loans

<http://financialaid.tamu.edu>

Eligibility

Must be enrolled at least 1 hour

Active TAMU student email account

Must be clear of ALL financial holds

Meet GPA requirements: Grad Students 3.0 minimum GPA

Interest Rate & Origination

5% simple interest rate

A \$10 processing fee is assessed on each loan. The fee will be added to the amount of the loan.

Repayment:

Repayment is contingent upon the semester in which the loan is requested. All payments will be due on the 15th day of the month.

- Fall/spring loans are due approximately 90 days after the loan is applied to your account.
- Summer loans are due approximately 30 days after the loan is applied to your account.

****If the loan is not paid in full by the due date, both transcripts and registration will be blocked until the account is paid in full.****

Graduate Catalog

The official policies of Texas A&M University are published annually in the Graduate Catalog. It is the responsibility of each graduate student to read and be familiar with the policies as set forth in the Catalog, which is published annually. The catalog is available at <https://catalog.tamu.edu/graduate/>.

****It is the graduate student's responsibility and duty to become familiar with all policies that affect their graduate program and to correctly follow all policies in a timely manner.****

Graduate and Professional School

The Graduate and Professional School is the university office responsible for administering the graduate programs of Texas A&M. The office is located on main campus in Nagle Hall. All petitions, requests, and proposals are turned in to GPS for final approval. The Graduate School publishes a graduate student calendar every semester that lists precise dates for all deadlines. This calendar is available electronically at: <https://grad.tamu.edu/buttons/calendars>, then select the semester deadline calendar you wish to view. Much of the necessary graduate information you will need, along with forms relative to graduate programs is available on the Graduate and Professional School website: <https://grad.tamu.edu>.

Academic Success Center - offers learning assistance programs designed to improve and develop skills necessary for success in college-level courses.

Computing Resources – in addition to the departmental computer labs, there are several student computer labs across campus with access to workstations, presentation equipment, printers, and scanners. IT Help Desk is also available 24/7 at 979-845-8300 or helpdesk@tamu.edu

Career Resources

Career Center– provides career information and employment connections to students throughout their academic careers with planned learning experiences relating to job search skills, interviewing skills and placement.

Student Counseling Service Center, Counseling & Testing Library– provides quality career counseling by promoting student development and self-knowledge through education in order to help students make appropriate and satisfying career choices.

Safety and Security

University Police - 979-845-2345 - the University Police Department provides protection of persons and property of Texas A&M University

After Hours Shuttle Bus Service – is available during the fall and spring semester

Escort Services – 979-845-6789 - members of the Corps of Cadets will provide escorts any time during the fall and spring semesters for extra security while walking on campus.

Emergency Phones – place strategically throughout the campus.

Sexual Violence Education & Support– Gender Issues Education Services - serves as a professional staff contact for students who have been sexually assaulted, harassed, stalked, or who are in a violent relationship. The program also offers education to raise awareness of these issues and resources for victims.

Student Conduct Office - 979-847-7272 - offers a wide range of service to educate and assist students in dispute resolution that contributes to individual growth and community responsibility.

Student Meditation Services - 979-862-4502– promotes the values, understanding, public awareness, and practice of meditation while modeling conflict resolution skills and collaborative problem solving through education, empowerment and service to students.

Student Legal Services - 979-862-4502 – provides legal services to counsel students concerning their legal rights and responsibilities and empowers them to use available legal, community, and university resources to respond to their legal issues.

Parking, Traffic & Transportation Services

Parking – all vehicles on TAMU campus, or in areas designated as TAMU parking areas, must purchase a virtual parking permit and register the license plate in association with that permit. For more information, <http://transport.tamu.edu>

Shuttles – the shuttle bus services both on and off campus locations and is at no cost to students (except for Charter Service). The on-campus system services the main and west campuses and is the easiest way for students to move around campus. The on-campus system operates from 7:00 AM until 2:00 AM, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters. The University also operates the off-campus shuttle service which serves most of the major apartment complexes and housing areas in Bryan/College Station, as well as Blinn College campus. Off-campus transit services are continued until 12:00 AM, Monday through Thursday, and until 8:00 PM on Friday night. For more detailed information, you can contact the office of Transportation Services by calling 979-862-7275 or at their website: <http://transport.tamu.edu>

Student Services

Student Health Services (979-458-8310) - Student Health Services is an accredited health care provider serving the TAMU student body by providing primary health care services and promoting health through prevention and education. It is located in the A.P. Beutel Health Center and is open 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. There is a 24-hour Dial-A-Nurse (979-458-8379) and Ambulance service (979-845-1525) available 24 hours a day except during official university holidays. These services are available to students who have paid the health service fee. The services include outpatient general medicine, preventative medicine, women's clinic, asthma clinic, ambulance service, health education, medical laboratory, pharmacy, physical therapy, and radiology.

Student Health Insurance - All registered and enrolled TAMU students are eligible to enroll in this insurance plan. International students are required to maintain approved comprehensive health insurance coverage while enrolled and in residence at TAMU. Eligible students may also insure their dependents with his coverage.

Some assistantships and fellowships include insurance coverage. If so, you will be given information to aid in your choice of insurance providers. If insurance coverage is not included in your financial package, as stated above, you must obtain coverage and the Student Health Insurance office can assist in locating the best available coverage for yourself and your dependents.

Children's Center - 979-458-5437 - an on campus child care center, call for more detailed Information.

Counseling & Psychological Services -979-845-4427 - works with students to help them explore and understand their thoughts and feelings, understand their situations, and help them work toward solutions to troubling issues in their life.

Alcohol and Drug Education/Counseling - 979-845-4427 - provides educational information regarding alcohol and drug use and abuse in the campus community.

Off-Campus student services - <https://aggierearch.tamu.edu/> - helps students/staff find housing, roommates, and information about living in College Station.

Student Affairs - 979-845-3111 - is designed to help you fully participate in the university experience. Information, services and programs include housing vacancy listings, Women's Resource Center, LGBTQ+ Pride center, Off-Campus Student Center and more. For more information, go to: <http://studentlife.tamu.edu>.

International Student and Scholar Services - 979-845-1824 - provides counseling and information in the areas of immigration and employment, financial problems, medical insurance, adjustment and tax issues. The International Student Association provides social, recreational, and intellectual services for all nationalities.

Multicultural Student Services - 979-862-2000 - provides services and programs for African American, Asian American, Hispanic and Native American students to help them succeed academically and personally.

Women's Resource Center - 979-845-8784 - provides support for and raises awareness of issues affecting women.

LGBTQ+ Pride Center - 979-862-8920 - works to foster a safer and more nurturing campus environment by educational resources which deal with these issues.

Disability Resources - 979-845-1637 - provides services and accommodation for students with documented disabilities such as mobility, hearing, visual impairments, learning, and psychological disorders.

Food Services

The various dining options and menus on campus are as diverse as the student body. For more detailed information, go to <http://dineoncampus.com/tamu> or call 979-845-0152 for meal plan information.

Recreation Center

The Department of Recreational Sports offers a variety of activities to promote healthy lifestyles for all students. Visit reconnect.tamu.edu for a complete listing of activities with times and schedules of events.