

Animal & Range Sciences Graduate Student Policy and Procedures

Department of Animal & Range Sciences
Montana State University
Last Revised August 2025

Mission Statement

The mission of the Animal and Range Sciences Department is to create, evaluate and communicate science-based knowledge to enhance the management of Montana's livestock and rangeland resources in ways that are economically, socially and ecologically sustainable.

Faculty and Staff Resources

Department of Animal & Range Sciences

PO Box 172900

103 Animal Bioscience Bldg

Bozeman, MT 59717-2900

406-994-3721 PHONE / 406-994-5589 FAX

Department Head:

Dr. Tim DelCurto, 103 Animal Bioscience, 406-994-4850, tim.delcurto@montana.edu

The Department Head has final approval of all appointments and is the person to contact if a student/advisor or student/faculty conflict arises.

Animal & Range Sciences Graduate Coordinator:

Dr. Christian Posbergh, 311 Animal Bioscience, 406-994-3736, christian.posbergh@montana.edu

The graduate coordinator handles admission and academic requirement questions.

Student Records

Haily Griggs, 123 Animal Bioscience, 406-994-5582, haily.griggs1@montana.edu

The student success coordinator can help with paperwork necessary for graduate school. She also assists the Graduate Coordinator with admissions and academic information.

List of Faculty can be found at <http://animalrange.montana.edu/directory/faculty/>.

Offices and Desks

The Department of Animal & Range Sciences will provide office space and desks for students as space allows. Contact Lorinda Fields, 103 ABB, 406-994-3722, lorinda.fields@montana.edu for a desk and space assignment.

Address

Your address for outside mailing related to your graduate work will be:

PO Box 172900

Dept. of Animal & Range Sciences

Montana State University Bozeman, MT 59717-2900

Policies and Procedures

Introduction

The Animal and Range Sciences Department offers a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in 'Animal & Range Sciences' and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees in 'Animal & Range Sciences', and 'Ecology and Environmental Sciences'. The M.S. degree requires the student to choose either an Animal Science emphasis, a Range Science emphasis, or a Biological Science emphasis. This information must be included with all paperwork that is filed. Students are expected to have completed the equivalent of a B.S. degree in Animal Science, Range Science, Ecology, or a closely related area for application for the M.S. degree or an M.S. degree for application for the Ph.D. degree. Under exceptional circumstances, students may be admitted to the Ph.D. degree program without a previous M.S. degree.

Departmental Application and Degree Requirements for Animal & Range Sciences degrees can be found at <http://animalrange.montana.edu/students/degree-require.html>

Requirements for the Ecology and Environmental Sciences PhD degree can be found at <https://www.montana.edu/ees/>

Graduate School requirements can be found at http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/policy/degreq_general.html

Course Descriptions for Animal & Range graduate courses can be found here: <http://catalog.montana.edu/coursedescriptions/arnr/>

Graduate Appointments

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) are typically grant-funded. Grant-based funding is at the discretion of the faculty mentor's research program and is dependent on funding availability. GRAs may be partially supplemented by Departmentally-administered Graduate Teaching assistantships (GTAs) at the discretion of the Department Head. GTAs are associated with a requirement to assist in teaching undergraduate courses within the department. Students with GTA appointments involving 10 or more hours a week of teaching assistance are entitled to 6 credit or more tuition waivers.

New students appointed to grant or ARS departmental assistantships (GTA or GRA) should contact the departmental fiscal operations manager (FOM) to complete the required forms. The current FOM is Lisa White (lawhite@montana.edu). Supporting documentation needed will vary based on appointment type, please be sure to work with our FOM to ensure you provide all the necessary documentation.

Information from the Graduate School on Graduate Appointments can be found in the Graduate School Policies at <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/#policiestext>. This information includes a description of a teaching or research assistantship, tuition waivers, and other student employment.

A collective bargaining agreement is in place between the University and the Graduate Employee Organization. More information can be found at: <https://mus.edu/hr/cba/collbarg.asp>.

Information about Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities can be found in the Graduate School Policies at <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/#policiestext>. This information includes policy for appeals, academic conduct expectations, research compliance, privacy rights, and the policy on sexual harassment.

Staff Assistance

Graduate students may request secretarial assistance only in limited situations. Administrative Assistants will not type personal letters, class reports, or similar materials for students. Typing of your thesis or dissertation is considered personal work. You may request assistance with ordering, mailing, or shipping packages if they are clearly related to faculty-led research or teaching work. Lorinda Fields, 103 ABB, 406-994-3722, will assist you in meeting room, departmental vehicles, and AV equipment reservations.

Travel

For liability and reimbursement purposes, all students must complete a Travel Authorization Form for any business-related trip taken that is outside of the state. This form must be submitted and signed by the Department Head. A leave form indicating emergency contact information should also be filed with the department before leaving. More information about travel requirements can be found at https://www.montana.edu/policy/student_trips/ for student travel and https://www.montana.edu/policy/business_manual/bus500.html in the Business Policy Handbook.

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to attend professional meetings. However, the department does not pay travel expenses of graduate students. Advisors may use grant or project monies to pay full or partial travel expenses for graduate students attending meetings. In addition, space may be available in a university vehicle being taken to a meeting, or faculty members may share travel expenses.

Fees and Holds

The graduate school has outlined information for fees for the graduate programs. These fees include training as well as the application for graduation. Several types of holds may be administered during the admissions process and during the course of the student's graduate career. Two holds are billing and program of study hold. The information for these can all be found at <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/#policiestext>

Advisor:

The *major advisor* is the thesis or dissertation advisor and is the graduate student's primary contact for all matters related to the program of study and research. The major advisor assists in the selection of the graduate committee and the development of a program of study and research proposal. The major advisor monitors the student's academic and professional progress,

reviews program changes, and arranges for graduate student support.

Committee:

All graduate students are required to have a graduate committee to help guide them through their program. Committee composition requirements require at least [3 members for M.S.](#) and [4 members for Ph.D.](#) The committee must be established by the end of the student's 2nd term (M.S.) or 3rd term (Ph.D.) of attendance. The students should meet with their committee at least once per academic year to monitor progress. The committee aids in developing the program of study and provides guidance and expertise for the student's research. There are also [Guidelines for Graduate Committee Members](#). Forms for committee members and the program of study can be found at <http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>.

Program of Study:

The program of study is a contract between the graduate student, department, college, graduate school, and university. The program of study defines the minimum requirements for the degree. The program of study is completed and filed by the graduate student with input from the graduate committee. The program of study must be submitted via the [Graduate Program of Study](#) process in MyInfo to The Graduate School by the end of the student's 2nd term (M.S.) or 3rd term (Ph.D.) of graduate attendance. A program of study must be approved and filed with the graduate school prior to sitting for any portion of the comprehensive exam or thesis/dissertation defense.

More information on the graduate committee and program of study requirements for Master's students can be found at <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-degree-requirements/#5.2>

For more information on the graduate committee and program of study requirements for Doctoral students, please go to https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-degree-requirements/#doctoral_requirements

Comprehensive Exam

Doctor of Philosophy candidates are required to take a comprehensive exam. The intent of the comprehensive exam is to establish that the candidate has attained sufficient mastery of concepts related to animal science, range science, or ecology and environmental science. It is not the defense of the dissertation. The comprehensive exam will have written and oral portions. Passing the comprehensive exam requires a majority vote of the student's graduate committee. Continuing the process beyond the written portion will be considered passing of the student for the written portion of the exam. For more requirements of the comprehensive exam, see <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-degree-requirements/#5.3.5>

Thesis/Dissertation Preparation

Graduate students are required to prepare a thesis (M.S.) or dissertation (Ph.D.) that is approved by their graduate committee and submitted to the Graduate School. Formal guidelines for the preparation of the thesis or dissertation are available on the Graduate School website. A clean

thesis copy must be given to all committee members and the Department Head a week prior to the thesis defense.

For more information on thesis/dissertation preparation, go to <https://www.montana.edu/etd/>

Defense of Thesis/Dissertation

The final exam has two parts: a public seminar and a defense. The seminar is presented before the defense and is a public oral presentation highlighting the research results and major accomplishments. All graduate students are encouraged to attend all department public defense seminars. The closed portion of the defense is an oral exam, with only the graduate committee present, at which the student defends the approach, methods, conclusions, background, etc., of the research to their graduate committee.

It is the student's responsibility to schedule a room for the seminar and distribute seminar announcements at least one week ahead of the presentation. The student success coordinator can help graduate students submit an announcement to the [MSU calendar](#).

For more information about the Master's defense, go to <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-degree-requirements/#5.2.9> . The information included on this page covers the minimum course hours you are required to be registered in the semester of your defense, the timing and advertising required, as well as what would happen if the defense is not passed.

For more information about the Doctoral defense, go to <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-degree-requirements/#5.3.6> . The information included on this page covers the minimum course hours you are required to be registered in the semester of your defense, the timing, and advertising required, as well as what would happen if the defense is not passed.

The Comprehensive Exam/Thesis Defense form is due to the Graduate School within 5 days and should be submitted by the committee chair, not the student. The thesis/dissertation with approved revisions must be accepted by the Graduate School before the semester deadline. <https://www.montana.edu/etd/submission/index.html>

Graduation

Information about graduation can be found at <https://catalog.montana.edu/graduate/policiestext-graduation/index.html> .

Graduate forms can be found at <http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/forms.html>. These forms include a program of study, electronic thesis, and graduation forms.

Graduate Student Support:

New Graduate Student Information:

<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/admissions/newgradstudent.html>

Graduate Student Training and Orientation:

<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/admissions/orientation-videos.html>

Professional Development:

<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/professionaldevelopment/index.html>

<https://www.montana.edu/aycss/careers/hireabobcat.html>

Financial Resources:

<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/fellowships/index.html>

<https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/wellbeing/index.html>

Additional Support:

https://www.montana.edu/gradschool/resources/student_support.html