AGRONY and HORTICULTURE GRADUATE PROGRAMS
GUIDELINES AND POLICIES - Revised 10/2017 (Last voted upon by faculty in 2017)

This document sets forth the guidelines and policies adopted by the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture for admission of graduate students into the Department’s accredited programs of study. The document also sets forth requirements for graduate assistantships, expectations for student conduct and performance, and graduation requirements. These requirements are in addition to any and all requirements found in the UNL Graduate Studies Bulletin: https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/. The information summarized in this document can be found on this Agronomy and Horticulture Web site: http://agronomy.unl.edu/graduate.

Graduate programs offered by the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture include:

**Degree Programs:**
Ph.D. in Agronomy & Horticulture
M.S. in Agronomy (Option I – thesis)
M.S. in Agronomy (Option II – non-thesis)
M.S. in Horticulture (Option I – thesis)
M.S. in Horticulture (Option II – non-thesis)

**Graduate Certificate Programs:**
Graduate Certificate in Grassland Management
Graduate Certificate in Floriculture and Nursery Production Management
Graduate Certificate in Ornamentals, Landscape and Turf
Graduate Certificate in Advanced Horticulture

With the exception of the Ph.D. and Option I (thesis) M.S. in Horticulture programs, all of the above-listed graduate programs can be completed online and thus are open to both on-campus and distance students.

**ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

**ENGLISH PROFICIENCY:**
A fundamental knowledge of the English language is necessary for admission to all of the Department’s graduate programs. Therefore, the following minimum scores are required for the admission of international students whose native language is not English.

- 79 on Internet TOEFL
- 550 on Paper TOEFL (600 for Graduate Certificates in Horticulture)
- 6.5 on IELTS

**Exemptions** for the English proficiency requirement are granted for non-native speakers who have received a bachelor’s or more advanced degree either from an accredited U.S. institution or from a university outside the U.S. at which English is the official language of instruction.

**APPLICATION DOCUMENTS:**
In addition to the documents required by UNL’s Office of Graduate Admissions, the Department also requires applicants to submit the following: 1) *Curriculum vita* or résumé; 2) Letter of
intent/background; and 3) Three letters of recommendation. These documents are used for decisions on eligibility.

Applicants wishing to pursue the Option I (thesis) M.S. in Agronomy program at a distance must provide written documentation from their employer that a company representative, i.e., manager or supervisor, is willing to: 1) Coordinate with UNL faculty advisors to develop an appropriate research project for the prospective student; and 2) Provide adequate oversight and supervision of the project to ensure its successful completion.

PREREQUISITES:

The rigor of graduate studies in Agronomy and Horticulture requires fundamental knowledge of math and science. Therefore, the following courses are required for full admission into the M.S. and Ph.D. programs. These prerequisites may be satisfied at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Otherwise qualified applicants with prerequisite course deficiencies will receive (1) provisional admission or (2) a waiver of prerequisite course deficiencies, based upon recommendation of the advisor, as explained below. These prerequisites do not apply to applicants to the Graduate Certificate programs

Required Prerequisite Courses:

**Ph.D. and Option I (Thesis) M.S. Programs:**
- one semester Calculus
- one semester chemistry
- one semester physics (excluding soil physics)
- two semesters biological sciences
- one additional semester of either physics or chemistry

**Option II (Non-Thesis) M.S. Program:**
- one semester mathematics
- one semester chemistry
- one semester biological sciences
- one semester plant production or plant system management
- one semester soil science

PROVISIONAL ADMISSION:

Prerequisite course deficiencies will be listed in the student’s admission letter. Students admitted provisionally are expected to remove any deficiencies by the end of their first year. Students admitted on this basis will submit a written plan to the Graduate Chair within 30 days of enrollment, detailing how the deficiencies will be met. A grade of ≥ 2.0 (C) or "pass" is required to remove a deficiency. In certain circumstances, a student may be allowed to test out of a deficiency. Students who fail to fulfill deficiencies by the end of their first year will be prohibited from course registration.
WAIVER OF PREREQUISITE COURSE DEFICIENCIES:

Advisors can choose to waive prerequisite course deficiencies according to program needs and this will be stated in the student's admission letter. Students that have been admitted prior to approval of these changes, can have their advisors submit an email to the graduate secretary stating they wish to waive these requirements. Note of the waiver will be put into the student's departmental file.

ASSISTANTSHIP REQUIREMENTS:
The department has a limited number of Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) available to Ph.D. and on-campus Option I (thesis) M.S. students. Students receiving state-funded GRAs must attain a 3.0 cumulative GPA or B equivalent in order to qualify for and maintain GRA funding.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS:
Annual Progress Reports are required from all graduate students in the Department. State-funded students may have their funds withdrawn if they do not complete a Progress Report in a timely manner.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:
All on-campus graduate students in the Department are encouraged to incorporate meaningful teaching experiences in their programs. Examples include: teaching or assisting in lab or lecture; organizing seminars; giving presentations; and contributing to extension and other educational-outreach efforts. The student's teaching experience should be noted on their Annual Progress Report. The student's advisor should assist in contacting teaching faculty to arrange for appropriate teaching or extension opportunities.

BY-PASS M.S. DEGREE:
Requires Graduate Committee approval, as per policy below:

Policy on Direct Admission to the Ph.D. Program Applicant files will be reviewed for direct admission to a Ph.D., from a B.S. or Option II M.S., on a case by case basis. Students currently in an M.S. program in our Department should follow the procedure below to request approval for by-passing the M.S. degree.

Students desiring to enter a Ph.D. program without having previously obtained a M.S. degree must demonstrate a high level of academic achievement, have excellent written and oral communication skills and provide evidence of scholarly creativity and independent thought. Students can be directly admitted to the Ph.D. program, or can petition to transfer from a M.S. to a Ph.D. program with the approval of their graduate advisor. In both instances, evidence supporting the student's ability to successfully pursue a Ph.D. degree is to be submitted to the Agronomy Graduate Committee for review and final approval.

Materials submitted to the Graduate Committee in support of the student's application or petition should include:

1. Letter of intent from the student
2. Academic transcripts
3. Three letters of recommendation, one from the major advisor for students petitioning to transfer from a masters program
4. Additional documentation of the applicant's ability to initiate study at the Ph.D. level such as GRE score, qualifying exam score, publications, abstracts, invited presentations, teaching experience or other communication-related activities.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS:
Written comprehensive exams are required for all Ph.D. and Option I (thesis) M.S. students. The type and format of the examination will be determined by the student's advisor and examination committee. These examinations are usually taken after the completion of all coursework requirements.

Oral comprehensive exams are required for all Ph.D. students. M.S. thesis (option I) students may be subject to an oral exam at the discretion of the student's committee. For M.S. students, the comprehensive examination in the minor field(s) (written and/or oral) may be waived subject to the approval of the minor department(s), provided all grades in the minor department(s) are at least a B or pass.

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

- AGRO/HORT 991: Seminar Presentation and Evaluation - required of all MS students
- AGRO/HORT 992: General Seminar - expected of all graduate students
  (this is the final oral defense/project presentation of results seminar).

EXIT INTERVIEWS:
All graduating Ph.D. and M.S. students will receive an Exit Interview form which they are expected to complete and bring with them to their exit meeting with the Department Head. Distance students are expected to e-mail their completed Exit Interview report to the Department Head.

THESIS/DISSERTATION:
The student's supervisory committee will determine if they wish the student to present them with bound or digital copies of the thesis/dissertation. UNL's Office of Graduate Studies requires all graduating thesis/dissertation students to upload an electronic copy of their thesis/dissertation to the Digital Commons in order to complete their graduation requirements.