

Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication

**GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK
2020-2021**

I. INTRODUCTION

ALEC Mission: The mission of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication is to enhance the leadership capacity for the food, fiber, and natural resource systems through the development and implementation of teaching, research and outreach in the disciplines of leadership, education and communication. Through their research, teaching and outreach/extension efforts, ALEC faculty teach others how to facilitate positive change in formal (e.g., classroom) and non-formal (e.g., outdoor) settings.

The mission is accomplished through efforts in the following eight strategic goals:

- 1) Scholarly merit measured by research productivity and grantsmanship.
- 2) Exceptional teaching and training of undergraduate students, graduate students and non-formal audiences.
- 3) Empowering learners to build capacity and apply skills that address the critical issues facing their local communities, the state of Georgia, the United States of America and the World.
- 4) Supporting agricultural and natural resource industries through timely, appropriate information that increases opportunities for our business partners and clientele.
- 5) Providing expertise to academic peers and collaborators on the human dimensions of critical issues through the lens of education, communication and leadership theory and practice.
- 6) Elevating the visibility and prestige of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the University of Georgia through relentless continuous improvement and opportunity seeking.
- 7) Cultivating a culture of mutual support, respect and collegiality within the department, across the College, throughout the University and amongst those that we come into contact with through our work.
- 8) Striving to make each day productive and fun while maintaining a focus on our fundamental goal of improving the lives of those we serve and to approach this mission with humility, enthusiasm, accountability and hopefulness.

The department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication (ALEC) offers multi-disciplinary teaching, research and outreach programs aimed at developing and supporting professionals for leadership, teaching and communication careers in agricultural and environmental fields. Students receive personal attention and a challenging and supportive learner-centered educational environment. We offer a small school atmosphere amidst the abundant opportunities and resources at the University of Georgia.

ALEC Graduate Degree Overview

The department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication (ALEC) offers multi-disciplinary teaching, research and outreach programs aimed at developing and supporting professionals for leadership, teaching and communication careers in agricultural and environmental fields. Students receive personal attention and a challenging and supportive learner-centered educational environment. We offer a small school atmosphere amidst the abundant opportunities and resources at the University of Georgia.

The Master of Agricultural and Environmental Education (MAEE) degree develops professionals to lead, teach and communicate about food, the environment, and social systems. Thesis and non-thesis options are available. The MAEE degree program is available online or face-to-face. Applications are accepted

for Fall and Spring admission. The MAEE program equips graduates to work in leadership positions within the agricultural and environmental sciences industry, educate the public about agricultural and environmental sciences, communicate with the public concerning agricultural and environmental sciences issues, use leadership skills to solve the most challenging problems of society, and conduct original research that promotes food, environmental, and social sustainability. Students can elect to focus in one of three tracks: leadership, agricultural and Extension education, and science communication.

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree provides a wide range of educational and research experiences designed specifically to prepare graduates with the skills they need to address complex issues associated with the agricultural production necessary to feed and clothe a growing population while sustaining the natural environment. The doctoral program equips graduates to move directly into faculty roles; leadership and communication positions within NGOs, government agencies, school districts, and Extension; and careers in international agricultural development. Applications of teaching and learning, leadership development, and communication theory are the foundation for the degree. Students can then elect to focus in one of three tracks: leadership, agricultural and Extension education, and science communication.

Global expectations of all students:

Students are expected to demonstrate professional behavior while enrolled in the graduate program and to act in a manner that demonstrates integrity and respect for others and the campus environment. In alignment with the strategic plan of the American Association for Agricultural Education, we expect our students to foster excellence in the discovery and exchange of evidence-based solutions for social science challenges in agriculture and related sciences by embracing inclusivity, collaboration, professionalism, impact, and innovation.

Adherence to university policies:

- **Academic Honesty:** In keeping with the academic honesty policy of the University of Georgia, all participants in ALEC PhD and MAEE programs are expected to be academically honest in all their work and not tolerate academic dishonesty of others. Academic honesty means performing all work without plagiarism, cheating, lying, tampering, stealing, receiving unauthorized or illegitimate assistance from any other person, or using any source of information that is not common knowledge. Academic dishonesty means knowingly performing, attempting to perform, or assisting any other person in performing academic work that does not meet this standard. A full statement of the policy is available online at http://www.uga.edu/honesty/aphd/culture_honesty.htm.
- **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment:** For procedures and official policy statements relating to all phases of living, working, and studying at the University of Georgia, see the important information provided by the UGA Office of Legal Affairs at <http://www.uga.edu/inside/policies.html>. This site includes information on the University of Georgia's **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy**, which includes official policy statements on discriminatory harassment, sexual harassment, academic freedom, student-to-student complaints, and the right to appeal. For a direct link to UGA's **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy**, see <https://eoo.uga.edu/policies/non-discrimination-anti-harassment-policy>.
- **Workplace Violence:** The University of Georgia (UGA) is committed to the prevention of workplace violence and the maintenance of a respectful working environment. A safe and secure environment is a fundamental prerequisite for fulfilling UGA's mission of teaching, research and public service. UGA reaffirms the basic right of employees to a safe and humane working environment.

Departmental Standards

- Academic standards for ALEC graduate students
 - Maintain a 3.00 GPA in all required coursework
 - Maintain consistent contact with academic advisor
 - Attend classes offered by the ALEC department

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students are not only members of the academic community but are also members of the larger society. Students, therefore, retain the rights, guarantees and protections afforded to and the responsibilities held by all citizens. A student is not immune to prosecution by local, state, or federal law enforcement agencies irrespective of whether the University initiates judicial proceedings in a given situation. As members of the University community, students have a responsibility to know and follow the University conduct regulations. Violations of these regulations will result in action by the Office of Student Conduct.

As would be expected, standards for University of Georgia students are higher than those of communities not engaged solely in scholarly pursuits. Not every situation a student may encounter can be anticipated in a written document. Therefore, students are expected to act in a manner that demonstrates integrity and respect for others and the campus environment. In order to provide direction for that expectation, the University of Georgia has adopted The Pillars of the Arch as a means of articulating three guiding principles or values. By adhering to these principles, students can enjoy their own rights while also respecting others' rights. By doing so, students assist in furthering the University's aspirations to uphold The Pillars of the Arch.

The Pillars of the Arch

As members of the University of Georgia community, we aspire to uphold the principles manifested in the three Pillars of the Arch:

Wisdom, Justice and Moderation

- **Wisdom** challenges us to apply lessons received inside and outside the classroom to our everyday lives. Wisdom transcends knowledge, embracing curiosity, discovery, and expression throughout our community.
- **Justice** leads us to be fair in our dealings, accountable for our actions, responsible for ourselves, and empathetic for others. Justice requires honesty and celebrates diversity, establishing credibility and integrity for our community and ourselves.
- **Moderation** compels us to act with civility, bolstering our faith in others and the faith others have in us. Moderation accentuates our self-respect, promotes responsible citizenship, and enhances pride in our university.

Without each of these pillars, the Arch would lose its strength and balance. Likewise, all three qualities are necessary for us to be strong and complete citizens.

ALEC MAEE Program Components

- The Masters of Agricultural and Environmental Education is a 36-credit hour degree.
- Graduate instruction and research may be undertaken in the following areas of specialization:

- Agricultural and Environmental Science Leadership
- Agricultural and Extension Education
- Agricultural and Environmental Science Communication

ALEC PhD Program Components

- The Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication is a 45-credit hour doctoral degree.
- Graduate instruction and research may be undertaken in the following areas of specialization:
 - Agricultural and Environmental Science Leadership
 - Agricultural and Extension Education
 - Agricultural and Environmental Science Communication

ALEC Admissions Process

Applicants to the ALEC graduate program will submit the standard UGA **Graduate School application in addition to supplemental materials** required by the ALEC Department. All materials listed below can be submitted through the online Graduate School application found at this link:

<https://www.applyweb.com/ugagrad/index.ftl>

- Grad School application/minimums:
 - The University of Georgia Graduate School requires the following minimum for admission to Graduate Programs at UGA:
 - 3.0 GPA for U.S. students
 - Transcripts from undergraduate and graduate institutions
 - Resume or Curriculum Vitae
 - Three letters of reference. They will be sent a link to complete an online letter of reference.
 - ALEC Department also requires the following additions to your application to be considered for admission into the graduate program:
 - GRE Verbal score of 150+ and Quantitative score of 140+
 - TOEFL score of 80+ for international students from non-English speaking nations
 - Statement of Purpose - In two pages or less discuss 1) your **future** career goals, 2) how the degree you are seeking will benefit you professionally, 3) how your research (MAEE thesis or PhD dissertation) ideas fit within the ALEC disciplines (if appropriate), and 4) any communication you have had with ALEC faculty and if he/she is willing serve as your advisor.
 - Writing Sample(s)

Applicants seeking an assistantship must email a letter of interest and resume/curriculum vitae by the admission deadline to Dr. Alexa Lamm, Graduate Coordinator, at alamm@uga.edu.

- The letter of interest should include the following:
 - Reasons for pursuing an assistantship
 - How your experience and education contribute to the department's teaching, research and Extension missions
 - Which ALEC faculty member you are interested in working with and why
 - Details regarding a specific assistantship opportunity (if applicable)

Graduate students will only be admitted to the ALEC department if they have a faculty member willing to advise them through their degree program. While it is not essential you communicate with a faculty member prior to submitting an application to the ALEC program, it is strongly encouraged. Only tenure track faculty members with graduate faculty status can advise graduate students. No faculty member is required to serve as an Academic Advisor for any student.

A graduate degree is a significant commitment; therefore, we encourage any interested students to visit the ALEC Department to get to know our faculty and so they can get to know you. To arrange a visit, email the Graduate Coordinator Assistant, at alec@uga.edu.

Deadlines for ALEC Graduate Program Admission are as follows:

- Fall Admission
 - February 1 – ALL doctoral students and MAEE student seeking assistantships
 - April 1 – MAEE students not seeking assistantships and Double Dawg applicants
- Spring Admission - October 1

II. ACADEMIC / CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Specific PhD Program Degree Requirements

- To obtain a PhD in ALEC you must:
 - Hold a master's degree from an Accredited Institution
 - Complete 45 hours of coursework beyond the master's degree
 - Pass a comprehensive exam
 - Complete a dissertation

Enrollment Requirements and Time Limits

- **Minimum Enrollment:** All enrolled students pursuing graduate degrees at the University of Georgia must register for a minimum of 3 hours of credit during any semester in which they use University facilities and/or faculty/staff time. This includes semesters in which they are completing comprehensive examinations (MAEE non-thesis and PhD students) and defending their thesis/dissertation.

Students enrolled full-time can enroll for a maximum of 18 credit hours in the Fall, Spring and Summer semesters.

Students enrolled utilizing the TAP program can enroll for a maximum of 9 credit hours in the Fall, Spring and Summer semesters.

- **Continuous Enrollment Policy:** All enrolled graduate students 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 (Fall, Spring, Summer) until the degree is attained or status as a degree-seeking graduate student is terminated. Doctoral students must maintain enrollment during fall and spring semesters (breaking only for summer semesters) until the residency requirement has been met. All students must be enrolled for at least three graduate credits in the semester in which degree requirements are completed.

- **Residence Credit Requirement:** The residency requirement is interpreted as 30 hours of consecutive graduate course work that is included on the approved program of study.
- **Leave of Absence:** A leave of absence provides a mechanism for students experiencing unusual circumstance to be exempt temporarily from the continuous enrollment policy. A leave of absence requires approval of the graduate program coordinator and the dean of Graduate School. A leave of absence will be granted only for good cause such as serious medical and health-related issues, major financial and employment issues; pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, elder care, and other significant family issues; and other major personal circumstances that interfere with the ability to undertake graduate study. An approved leave of absence does not stop the clock unless the leave is granted for pregnancy, childbirth or adoption (see below): time on leave counts toward any University, Graduate School, or program time limits pertaining to the degree being sought.
- **Time Limits:** Graduate students must complete all course work on their approved program of study within **six-years** of matriculation. For all degrees the six-year limit begins with the semester the student matriculated into the program and ends with the last semester before the beginning of the sixth year.

Doctoral students must complete all course work on their approved program of study and be admitted to candidacy within **six-years** of matriculation. The time limit to complete the dissertation and qualify for graduation is **five years** following admission to candidacy. After this time, the student's candidacy will be considered expired and the student must retake the comprehensive exams and be re-admitted to candidacy in order to defend the dissertation and qualify for graduation. If a doctoral student's candidacy expires after the first week of classes in the final semester of the fifth year, the student is granted the remainder of the semester to complete degree requirements without special permission of the dean of the Graduate School.

- **Extension of Time:** A special request for an extension of time on the six-year expiration of coursework or the five-year expiration of candidacy may be made to the dean of the Graduate School. This request must include specific reasons that the student did not complete requirements in the time allotted by Graduate School policy. A petition of this type must include 1) a specific timeline for the completion of requirements, 2) an approved advisory committee form, if required for the degree, 3) an approved program of study and a letter of support from both the program graduate coordinator and the major professor.

Selection of Academic Advisor

Graduate students will only be admitted to the ALEC department if they have a faculty member willing to advise them through their degree program. Working with this advisor, along with an appointed Advisory Committee, the candidate will complete coursework, take comprehensive exams (MAEE non-thesis and doctoral students), conduct research and complete a thesis/dissertation (MAEE thesis and doctoral students). Comprehensive exams are given when a student has completed all of their content courses.

- Only tenure track faculty members with graduate faculty status can advise graduate students.
- No faculty member is required to serve as an academic advisor for any student.

- The academic advisor will serve as the primary point of contact for advisory committee member selection, program of study selection, research efforts, comprehensive exams, dissertation writing and defense. The academic advisor is expected to offer support to the students they advise, answer questions and mentor their students.
- Students are solely responsible for their own progress through the program. While the academic advisor offers advisement to their students, they are NOT responsible if a student misses a deadline or has not fulfilled the requirements of the degree program.
- If an academic advisor needs to be replaced or switched for any reason, the graduate coordinator and department head must be notified of the change including approval of the change by both the past and future academic advisor. Once this is received the graduate coordinator will contact the graduate school Dean who approves the change. For doctoral students, any changes in academic advisors must be approved and on file with the graduate school by the time the comprehensive examination is given prior to admission to candidacy.

Selection of Advisory Committee

Graduate students must select their graduate advisory committee by the end of their second semester in residence. We recommend students select their committee as soon as possible.

- **Role/responsibilities of the committee**
The advisory committee, along with the academic advisor, share responsibilities to monitor graduate student progress and guide the student toward timely completion of their degree program. The advisory committee is charged with framing and approving programs of study, advising students on required research skills, directing and approving the comprehensive examinations, guiding the design of dissertation research projects, reading and approving the final dissertation document and approving the final oral examination (defense).
- **Departmental Graduate Advisory Committee Requirements:** Graduate education is a negotiated process between the student, their academic advisor and their graduate advisory committee. In conjunction they will select coursework and determine the direction of the thesis/dissertation (MAEE thesis and doctoral students). A student's graduate committee is chaired by their appointed academic faculty advisor.

The MAEE advisory committee must consist of at least:

- Chair 1: An ALEC faculty member holding at least a 50% appointment in ALEC with graduate faculty status at UGA.
- Member 2: An ALEC faculty member holding at least a 50% faculty appointment in ALEC with graduate faculty status at UGA.
- Member 3: An ALEC faculty member or a faculty member of another department holding graduate faculty status at UGA.

The doctoral advisory committee must consist of at least:

- Chair 1: An ALEC faculty member holding at least a 50% appointment in ALEC with graduate faculty status at UGA.
- Member 2: An ALEC faculty member holding at least a 50% faculty appointment in ALEC with graduate faculty status at UGA.
- Member 3: An ALEC faculty member holding at least a 50% faculty appointment in ALEC with graduate faculty status at UGA.

- Member 4: A faculty member of another department holding graduate faculty status at UGA.

Additional voting members may be appointed to the committee, including no more than one non-UGA faculty, who must hold the terminal degree in their field of study. Upon the recommendation of the departmental graduate coordinator, the dean of the Graduate School shall appoint the advisory committee for the student.

- **Graduate School Committee Forms:** [Forms for appointment](#) of the committee are available from the graduate school website and must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant by the end of the first year in residence.
- **Process for Changes to Committee:** In order to change committee members, the student must consult with their assigned academic advisor. After consultation and agreement with the advisor, the student must inform the Graduate Coordinator and copy their academic advisor in the correspondence.
- **Changes in Course or Committee Make-up:** Any changes in courses or committee make-up must be approved and on file with the graduate school before the comprehensive exam is given prior to admission to candidacy.

Program of Study

Final Program of Study Approval:

An approved MAEE program of study (both thesis and non-thesis) must carry a minimum of 36 hours of graduate course work. This must include:

- Four core courses (12 hours) including research methods and the required communication, leadership and teaching and learning course as designated by the MAEE core at the time of admittance;
- 12 hours of coursework specific to their focus area: Agricultural or extension education, AES leadership or AES communication;
- 3 hours of quantitative and qualitative research methods; and
- A minimum of six hours of thesis research (thesis option).

An approved doctoral program of study must carry a minimum of 45 hours of graduate course work. This must include:

- Four theoretical core courses (12 hours): teaching and learning theory, advanced leadership theory, agricultural communications theory and capstone theory course;
- 12 hours of coursework specific to their focus area: Agricultural or extension education, leadership or science communication;
- 12 hours of quantitative and qualitative research methods; and
- A minimum of six hours of dissertation research.

The final Program of Study must be approved by the student's Advisory Committee and the Graduate Coordinator. The student should submit the final Program of Study form using the [Web Final Program of](#)

[Study Form](#) in GradStatus.

The Final Program of Study must be turned in to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant. All content courses on the Program of Study must fall within a six-year time limit.

Preliminary program of study: The student shall submit a [preliminary Program of Study form](#) by the **end of their second semester in residence**. The Program of Study must be approved by their Advisory Committee and the Graduate Coordinator and then submitted to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant.

Required Course Substitutions: Any student interested in substituting a course must first discuss the potential opportunity with their academic advisor. The student must then contact the graduate coordinator and copy the course instructor that would be impacted by the request. The graduate coordinator (with advisement from the departmental graduate committee) and the department head must approve the change.

MAEE Non-thesis Comprehensive Examinations

The ALEC department requires all non-thesis MAEE students pass a Written Comprehensive Examination. The written comprehensive examination is given after a student has completed the bulk of his/her course work as deemed appropriate by his/her academic advisor. Students planning to take their Comprehensive Examination must meet with their academic advisor to discuss the examination. The academic advisor will report when a student is taking their exams to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant at least one week prior to the exam being given.

Written exam procedure:

- Academic advisor assigns question focus areas to each of the three faculty members on the student's advisory committee to develop 3-4 questions that test the student's ability to assimilate and apply their coursework.
- Questions will be turned in to the academic advisor and assimilated into the test with care taken to be sure questions are not duplicative.
- The student will have one work week to complete the set of questions with their resources at their disposal.
- Upon completion, the academic advisor will send the full set of responses to the committee who will review the responses and provide a pass/fail response within one week of their receipt to the student's academic advisor.

Once the written comprehensive examination has been passed, the student will be eligible to receive their MAEE degree. Students who fail to pass the exam on the first attempt are allowed one additional chance to retake the exam, after which they will be dismissed from the program if they fail to pass the second attempt.

A Final Exam Form must be completed by all Advisory Committee members upon completion of the exam. The form should be submitted by the Academic Advisor to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant immediately following the exam.

MAEE Thesis Defense and Final Submission

The ALEC department requires all MAEE thesis students submit a final draft of their thesis to their Advisory Committee no later than two weeks before their thesis defense. The draft is one which has already been approved by the student's Academic Advisor as being complete and editorially correct.

Thesis defense procedure:

- All members of the Advisory Committee must be physically present or have electronic means of meeting for the entire period of this Examination.
- It is suggested the MAEE advisor contact other committee members several days prior to the defense to see if they have issues with the candidate's thesis.
- Oral exams will last approximately 2 hours.
- At the beginning of the defense, the candidate will give a presentation providing an overview of their thesis that is open to the public.
- It is suggested the MAEE advisor then ask the candidate and those in attendance other than their committee to leave the room and ask the committee if they have specific areas of concern prior to the defense beginning. The candidate will be brought back in and each committee member will be allowed to ask questions about the thesis.
- Upon completion the candidate will be asked to leave and the committee will then decide on the outcome of the defense.
- The MAEE advisor will retrieve the candidate and present them with the outcome back in the room.

A Defense Form must be completed by all Advisory Committee members at the defense. The form should be submitted by the Academic Advisor to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant immediately following the exam.

By [the deadline listed for the graduation semester](#), a complete formatted copy of the thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School along with the [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation form](#), for a first format check. See the Graduate School website for [links to forms and deadlines](#) for thesis submission each semester.

Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations

The Graduate School requires all Doctoral students pass a Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination before they are admitted to candidacy for the Doctoral degree. The written comprehensive examination is given after a student has completed the bulk of his/her course work as deemed appropriate by his/her academic advisor and graduate advisory committee. The oral comprehensive examination should follow soon thereafter. Students planning to take their Comprehensive Examination must meet with their academic advisor to discuss the examination. The student must notify the Graduate Program Assistant they will be taking their comprehensive exams three weeks prior to the exam and the Graduate School two weeks before the exam is scheduled.

Written exam procedure:

- Academic advisor assigns question focus areas to each of the four faculty members to develop 3-4 questions that test the doctoral candidate's ability to assimilate and apply their coursework. Two of the areas would be research methods and ALEC core. The other two areas would be

open based on the student's focus area and research interests so the work done on the exam will be complementary or even used in their dissertation work.

- Questions will be turned in to the PhD advisor and assimilated into the test with care taken to be sure questions are not duplicative.
- The student will have one day to complete each set of questions and have their resources at their disposal. The questions for each section (one set of questions at a time) will be e-mailed at 8am and returned to the advisor by 5pm. Responses cannot be more than 20 pages per section each day. They should be cited with a bibliography and the student should read over them for editing purposes before being turned in.
- It is expected the student will complete all 4 days of questions within a work week.
- At the completion of the 4 days, the PhD advisor will send the full set of responses to the committee.

Oral exam procedure:

- An oral examination will be conducted by the committee approximately two weeks after completing the written exams to clarify or dive deeper into responses.
- All members of the Advisory Committee must be physically present or have electronic means of meeting for the entire period of this Examination.
- It is suggested the PhD advisor contact other committee members several days prior to the oral exam to see if they have issues with the candidate's responses.
- Oral exams will last approximately 2 hours.
- It is suggested the PhD advisor ask the candidate to leave the room and ask the committee if they have specific areas of concern prior to the defense beginning. Each committee member will then be allotted approximately 20 minutes on their section of inquiry. In addition, other members can ask questions across subject matter areas.
- Upon completion the candidate will be asked to leave and the committee will then decide on the outcome of the exam.
- The PhD advisor will retrieve the candidate and present them with the outcome back in the room.

Once the Oral Comprehensive Examination has been passed, the student will be admitted to candidacy for the Doctoral degree. Students who fail to pass either part of the exam are allowed one additional chance to retake the exam, after which they will be dismissed from the program if they fail to pass the second attempt.

If the dissertation is not completed within 5 years of being admitted to candidacy, the student must pass another set of Written and Oral Comprehensive Examinations and be readmitted to candidacy. The student may request an extension of the 5-year time limit from the Dean of the Graduate School. Such a request requires the endorsement by the student's Academic Advisor and the Graduate Coordinator.

A Student Performance Evaluation Form must be completed by all Advisory Committee members at the oral exam. These forms should be submitted by the academic advisor to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant immediately following the exam.

Doctoral Students: Candidacy

Ph.D. students must have completed all prerequisites set as a condition for admission, filed a final Program of Study, met residency requirements, passed comprehensive exams, and maintained a 3.0 average on courses listed on the plan of study.

A Ph.D. student must apply for admission to candidacy at least one full semester before the date of graduation. After admission to candidacy, a student must register for a combined minimum of six hours of dissertation or other appropriate graduate credit during the completion of the degree program.

A student must register for a minimum of three hours of credit in any semester when using UGA facilities, and/or faculty or staff time.

The [Admission to Candidacy form](#) must be filled out, approved by the Academic Advisor Coordinator and submitted to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant at least one full semester before your intended graduation date. The Graduate Coordinator Assistant will submit the form to the Graduate Coordinator and the Graduate School for approval.

Dissertation Process

The dissertation should be styled as a series of chapters that includes three journal manuscripts, based on [Graduate School Guidelines](#). It must include an introduction chapter and a final chapter that synthesizes the research.

Proposal

A student must present a research study justification, theoretical/conceptual framework and proposed methods to their graduate advisory committee in the form of a proposal defense. A student will be asked to present their research plan, answer questions and adjust their study based on committee feedback. A student may only collect data for their dissertation once they have been admitted to candidacy and successfully defended their proposal.

Final Submission and Defense

A final draft of the dissertation must be submitted to the Advisory Committee no later than two weeks before the final examination/defense. The draft is one which has already been approved by the student's Academic Advisor as being complete and editorially correct.

By [the deadline listed for the graduation semester](#), a complete formatted copy of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School along with the [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation form](#), for a first format check.

See the Graduate School website for [links to forms and deadlines](#) for dissertation submission each semester.

Graduation

Submit the application for graduation at the beginning of the semester in which you intend to graduate. See dates and deadlines on the [Graduate School Website](#). The deadline is typically two weeks after the

beginning of the semester. Failure to apply for graduation by the deadline will result in a late filing application fee.

Students who have not completed degree requirements as determined by the Graduate School and by published deadlines will not be allowed to walk in the ceremony but may return to walk in a subsequent commencement event. **There are NO exceptions to this policy.**

Notes about walking in graduation: There is no summer commencement ceremony so plan accordingly if desire to walk and be hooded.

III. INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

See links below to applicable UGA compliance and training materials:

- [SecureUGA \(mandatory for all UGA employees\)](#)
- Teaching Assistants should complete the following:
 - [Mandatory TA Orientation](#)
 - [Register for GRSC 7700](#) – consult with Academic Advisor
- [Institutional Review Board \(IRB; human subjects\)](#)
- [Responsible Conduct of Research \(RCR\)](#)

IV. EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC / RESEARCH PROGRESS

Expectations

Graduate students must earn a grade of B- or higher in all four core ALEC courses. Students who earn less than a B- will be allowed to repeat the course one time. In the event they do not achieve a grade of B- or higher during the second enrollment, they may petition the graduate faculty. Graduate faculty may, after consultation with the instructor of the class, recommend that the student be terminated from the program or recommend an alternative means of demonstrating mastery of the content taught in the course in question.

Annual Evaluation by Student

Students are required to submit an Annual Degree Progress Report to graduate faculty each spring semester. The purpose of the report is to provide a detailed description with which to monitor annual degree progress. It is also designed to allow the student to self-monitor degree progress and to assist in planning for degree completion.

The Annual Degree Progress Report form will be sent to students to complete prior to the annual evaluation by graduate faculty. The student's faculty academic advisor must sign the report before it is submitted to graduate faculty.

Annual Evaluation by Faculty

The graduate committee will evaluate each graduate student every spring semester. Based on a student's progress in the program, the graduate faculty will then make one of three recommendations: (a) student may continue in the program; (b) remedial assignments must be successfully completed by

the student before the student may continue in the program; or (c) student should withdraw from the program.

The evaluation and recommendation will be transmitted in writing to the student by the student's faculty academic advisor and the Graduate Coordinator. The Annual Evaluation by faculty is also an opportunity for faculty to acknowledge excellence in student performance and reinforce a student's progress toward degree completion. The written progress/evaluation report must be signed by the student's academic advisor and the student. A copy will then be kept by the department with a copy provided to student.

Annual evaluation response/appeal process for students

The student has the opportunity to write a rebuttal to the annual evaluation. The student must submit a response to the ALEC graduate coordinator and their faculty academic advisor within two weeks of receiving the results of their annual evaluation. Within two weeks of receiving the annual evaluation response, the graduate student, graduate coordinator and the student's academic advisor meet to converse, discuss the rebuttal and make a recommendation to the department head on how to move forward together.

Grade Appeals

Any student, undergraduate or graduate, who believes that he or she received an incorrect or unfair grade due to factual error, improper or unprofessional bias, or evaluation different from the stated course objectives/criteria or other public criteria, may appeal the grade. Grades are appealed within the department and college in which they are earned, not in the department and college in which the student's major resides. Exception: Grade appeals, when a grade of I (Incomplete) has lapsed to a grade of F, must go directly to the UGA Educational Affairs Committee. Please note that all grade appeals must be initiated within one calendar year from the end of the term in which the grade was recorded.

Appeal route:

1. Instructor
2. Department Head*
3. Dean's Office
4. Graduate School
5. UGA Educational Affairs Committee*
6. UGA President
7. Board of Regents

*Prior to review at each of these levels, the faculty member who assigned the student's final grade will receive a copy of the student's letter of appeal and be given the opportunity to provide a response for those reviewing the appeal.

Dismissal

Students (1) not making sufficient academic progress or (2) exhibiting conduct not befitting a professional or (3) exhibiting a pattern of behaviors which are judged very likely to hinder the student from adequate performance as a professional will be reviewed for possible dismissal from their program of study at the end of any academic semester.

The following indicators will precipitate a review at the Program level which may be cause for dismissal.

- Student is found guilty of academic dishonesty.
- Student exhibits a pattern of behaviors which are judged very likely to hinder the student's performance as a professional. The faculty will use as guides behaviors as described in the Code of Ethics of relevant professional associations.

The Graduate Coordinator is charged with maintaining oversight of each student's progress. When any of the above indicators is identified, the Graduate Coordinator will convene a committee of at least two faculty members from the program to review the student's progress and to determine whether the student should be dismissed from the program. The committee's decision is final. Graduate students will be dismissed through the Graduate School. For more information about the Graduate School's Dismissal Policy, please go to: <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/academics/probation-and-dismissal/>

Request for Reconsideration by Graduate Committee

A student dismissed from the graduate program may submit a letter to the Graduate Committee to ask for reconsideration if the letter provides new information regarding reasons for the failure to make adequate progress towards degree.

Dismissal Appeal to the Department Head

A student dismissed from the graduate program may submit an appeal letter to the Department Head. Upon receipt of the appeal letter, the Department Head will appoint a committee of three faculty members not serving on the Graduate Committee to handle the appeal. The appointed committee will make a decision based on information obtained from the student, his/her major professor, and the Graduate Committee.

Dismissal Appeal to the Graduate School

Dismissal by the Institute may be appealed to the dean of the Graduate School after all avenues of appeal have been exhausted within the Institute. When students are terminated by the Institute, but not simultaneously by the Graduate School, they may apply for admission to another graduate program if they wish to do so.

Graduate School Dismissal

In addition to departmental dismissal policies, students must also adhere to the standards for Dismissal outlined by the [Graduate School](#). Students who wish to appeal dismissals by the Graduate School should follow the [graduate school appeals process](#).

Grievance Process

If a student has a grievance against their academic advisor, the student can file a formal grievance in writing with the graduate coordinator outlining their concerns and what has been done thus far to resolve the issue. Within a week of receiving the grievance the graduate coordinator will contact the student's academic advisor and department head to inform them of the grievance. Within two weeks of receiving the written grievance, the graduate student, graduate coordinator, and student's academic

advisor will meet to converse, discuss the grievance and make a recommendation to the department head on how to move forward together.

If a student has a grievance against a faculty member who is not their academic advisor (e.g. advisory committee member or faculty assistantship supervisor) they must first discuss the issue with their academic advisor to determine the best way forward. If the issue is not resolved at this level, the student can file a formal grievance in writing with the graduate coordinator outlining their concerns and what has been done thus far to resolve the issue. Within a week of receiving the grievance the graduate coordinator will contact the student's academic advisor and department head to inform them of the grievance and best way forward. Within 30 days of receiving the written grievance, the graduate student, graduate coordinator student's academic advisor, and the faculty member involved will meet to converse, discuss the rebuttal and make a recommendation to the department head on how to move forward together.

If a student has a conflict with another student, they must first discuss the issue with their academic advisor to determine the best way forward. If deemed appropriate, the student's academic advisor should reach out to the other student's advisor to discuss the issue further. The four individuals (two graduate students and two faculty advisors) should meet in person to discuss the issue and way forward. If the issue is not resolved at this level, the student with their grievance and their academic advisor can file a formal grievance together with the graduate coordinator in writing outlining their concerns and what has been done thus far to resolve the issue. Within a week of receiving the grievance the graduate coordinator will contact the department head to inform them of the grievance. Within two weeks of receiving the written grievance, the two graduate students in conflict, both of the student's academic advisors, and the graduate coordinator will meet to converse, discuss the rebuttal and make a recommendation to the department head on how to move forward together including moving the issue to remediation at the university level.

V. FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

ALEC Departmental Assistantships

Assistantship Offers

Assistantships to support teaching, research and extension in the department are available for highly qualified candidates who plan to pursue a graduate degree full-time. Assistantships are awarded based on contents of the Letter of Intent, faculty preference, grade point average, GRE scores, and letters of recommendation.

Graduate research and teaching assistantships (GRA/GTA) are paid positions within the ALEC department. A graduate assistant on contract also receives a tuition waiver for both in-state and out-of-state tuition that reduces tuition to \$25 per semester; however, students must pay UGA fees and have health insurance.

Graduate students will not be granted tuition waivers for semesters during which they do not have a graduate assistant contract. Students may qualify for summer semester reduced matriculation if they held an assistantship contract either before or after the summer term. Students eligible for this reduced fee must submit a formal request through the ALEC Business Manager.

GRA/GTA assist faculty with research and/or teaching and are expected to work 13-20 hours per week during the semester. Assistantships may be offered on a 9-month (academic) or 12-month basis (annual). Students who are on assistantship, or working on-campus jobs, may not exceed 20 work hours per week per university policy.

Students interested in an assistantship should submit a Letter of Intent and resume to the Graduate Coordinator detailing their reasons for pursuing an assistantship and how their experience and education contribute to the department's teaching, research and extension missions.

Deadline: Letters of intent for assistantships are due February 1 for Fall admission and October 1 for Spring admission.

- Students on assistantship are expected to be active members of the ALEC community. This includes being present at their office, being respectful and courteous to others both inside and outside of the department, adhering to the requests of the faculty member they have been assigned to, and following through on expectations.
- Students on assistantship will be evaluated by the faculty member they are assigned to annually.
- Assistantship assignments will be renewed annually based on the student maintaining the proper academic standing, previous job performance and professionalism. Renewal of an assistantship is not guaranteed; therefore, regular communication with your assigned faculty member is strongly suggested to ensure you are meeting their needs and expectations.
- A student can be terminated from their assistantship and receipt of support at any time. Grounds for termination include inability to complete tasks assigned, lack of responsiveness, and lack of professionalism.

Vacation Time

Graduate Research Assistants do not earn vacation time. Vacation/time off has to be coordinated with the student's academic advisor and assistantship supervisor. Plan ahead of time (let both know at least one month in advance).

Resources Available

Offices in the ALEC Section of Four Towers for Athens students and NESPAL for Tifton students will be reserved for students whose assistantship supervisors are located in these respective buildings. Each student with an ALEC Departmental Assistantship will have access to the following resources:

- Designated office space
- Desktop computer
- Black & white printer access for materials supporting your research, faculty, etc.
- Key to designated office space to be returned prior to departure
- Computer lab with research software

Office Policies

Assistantship students must agree to comply with the following office policies:

- Do not hang any items with nails on the walls of offices
- Lock all offices when not in use
- Doors and door frames should not be used as display boards
- Inform ALEC staff of any and all maintenance and technology issues

- Respect others in the office by being aware of excessive noise
- Do not leave open food in your office space
- Use the refrigerator in the break room but be sure to keep it cleaned out
- Provide Advisor and Graduate Coordinator Assistant a tentative plan of working hours each week including keeping Outlook calendar up to date with class schedule and other meetings
- Empty trash/recycling regularly to maintain a clean office space

Graduate Student Employment Policy

Policies concerning the employment of graduate students at the University of Georgia are administered by the Graduate School business office. Highlights of these policies are listed below. For question, please call the business office at 706-542-4798.

1. Graduate students are employed in one of two categories: graduate assistants on the academic or monthly payrolls or as student assistants on the hourly payroll. All students must be registered any semester in which they are employed. The requirement also applies to summer semester.
2. Graduate assistantships from 33-50% time require students to be registered for 18 credit hours throughout the term of the assistantship. Requests to exceed the maximum course load must be approved by advisor and the Graduate Records Office prior to registration.
3. Graduate assistantships must be at least 33% time to qualify for the reduced matriculation fee. Written verification of assistantship must be received in the Graduate School business office prior to registration in order for fees to be properly assessed. An award letter in and of itself does not constitute verification of an assistantship.
4. Student with graduate assistantship of 33% time may work up to 7 hours per week on the University hourly payroll in addition to their assistantships.

All new GTAs (Graduate Teaching Assistants) who have instructional responsibility are required to attend the university-wide orientation for Graduate Assistants held before the beginning of fall semester classes, which is sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). Returning GTAs are encouraged to attend sessions of interest. Link to TA Orientation info page: <https://ctl.uga.edu/grad-student/ta-orientation/>

All new GTAs are also required to enroll in GRSC 7770. GTAs may have an opportunity to teach their own section of an ALDR, AGED, or AGCM course upon completion of the aforementioned courses, and with approval from their advisor.

Travel Awards

The Graduate School offers grants and other funding opportunities for master's and doctoral students. See [Graduate School Financial Information page](#).

Professional Development Opportunities (see Graduate School website for details)

The following Professional Development Opportunities are available through the Graduate School. [Click here for full details](#).

- Three Minute Thesis (3MT)
- Emerging Leaders

- Teaching Portfolio
- Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching
- Individual Development Plan (IDP)

VI. APPENDICES

Sample documents and forms referenced in this handbook can be found on the ALEC website at: <https://alec.caes.uga.edu>

OTHER RESOURCES:

Relevant Professional Journals

- Journal of Agricultural Education
- Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education
- Journal of Extension
- Journal of Leadership Education
- Journal of Applied Communications
- NACTA Journal

Relevant Professional Associations

- American Association of Agricultural Education (AAAE) - <http://aaaeonline.org>
- Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) - <https://www.aiaee.org>
- Association for Leadership Educators (ALE) - <https://www.leadershipeducators.org>
- International Leadership Association (ILA)
- Association for Communication Excellence (ACE) - <https://www.aceweb.org>
- International Association for Sustainable Resource Management (IASRM) - <https://www4.iasnr.org/>
- Rural Sociological Society (RSS) - <https://www.ruralsociology.org>

Relevant Professional Conferences

- AAAE National and southern region meetings
- AIAEE annual meeting
- ALE annual meeting
- ILA annual meeting
- ACE annual meeting
- National Agricultural Communication Symposium (NACS)
- International Symposium for Sustainable Resource Management (ISSRM)
- Rural Sociology National and southern region meetings

ALEC Graduate Student Association - <https://alec.caes.uga.edu/graduate/graduate-student-association.html>

UGA Graduate School [Financial Resources for Students](#) include:

- Dissertation Completion Grants
- Scholarships and Fellowships

UGA Resources for Students

- Graduate Student Organizations: GPSA, GAPS, GRADS
- Career Services: <http://www.career.uga.edu/>
- Alumni office: <https://alumni.uga.edu/>
- Libraries: <https://www.libs.uga.edu/>
- Health Center: <https://uhs.uga.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/caps/welcome>
- Parking: <https://tps.uga.edu/parking>
- Registrar: <https://reg.uga.edu/>
- Bursar (information on tuition and fees): <http://www.bursar.uga.edu/>
- Where to rent technology: <https://mlc.uga.edu/technology/lending>
- Financial Education / ASPIRE Clinic: <https://www.aspireclinic.org/>
- Office of International Education (OIE): <https://globalengagement.uga.edu/>
- International Student Life: <https://isl.uga.edu/>
- Writing Center: <https://www.english.uga.edu/writing-center>