

**Doctor of Philosophy
in
Agricultural Leadership,
Education and Communication**

**GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK
2024-2025**



I. INTRODUCTION

The **Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication** promotes the study and practice of messaging, educational strategies, and personal leadership as vehicles for influencing societal attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about agricultural and environmental science. With a focus on strategically promoting and strengthening the food and fiber sectors through scholarship, experiential teaching and learning, and outreach, ALEC is committed to improving lives through Georgia's land-grant mission by recruiting, retaining, and mentor the best and brightest faculty and students.

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.

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 Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) 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.

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 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 the ALEC Ph.D. program 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/aPh.D./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 the major professor
 - 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 Ph.D. Program Components

- To obtain a Ph.D. 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
- 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 Environmental Science 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 application found at this link: <https://gradapply.uga.edu/apply/>

- 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:
 - 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 ideas fit within the ALEC disciplines, and 4) any communication you have had with ALEC faculty and if he/she is willing serve as your advisor.
 - Academic Writing Sample with scholarly citations
 - GRE Scores are optional (Verbal score of 150+ and Quantitative score of 140+)

Applicants seeking an assistantship must email a letter of interest and resume/curriculum vitae by the admission deadline to Dr. Alexa Lamm, Interim Graduate Coordinator (alamm@uga.edu) until December 31. After January 1, 2025, queries and letters of interest should be addressed to Dr. Abigail Borron, Graduate Coordinator (aborron@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 applying 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 a major professor 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 Brian Brennan, Graduate Coordinator Assistant, at brian.brennan@uga.edu.

Deadlines for ALEC Graduate Program Admission are as follows:

- Fall Admission - February 1
- Spring Admission - October 1

II. ACADEMIC/CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Enrollment Requirements and Time Limits

- **Mentoring Compact:** Students starting Fall 2024 will be required to work with their faculty advisor/major professor on a mentoring compact that should be completed by October 1. The purpose of a mentoring compact is to communicate goals and expectations for working together. The faculty member will take the lead on this document and invite your input. The exact format and content of the mentoring compact will vary across faculty members/labs and projects.
- **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 and defending their dissertation.

Students enrolled full-time and on departmental assistantship are expected to enroll in the maximum of 18 credit hours in the Fall and Spring semesters. This includes 9 hours of content and 9 hours of research, internship, independent study, and/or seminar (or additional content course(s) as advised by the student's major professor).

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

- **Seminar Requirement:** All incoming graduate students must take a 1 credit hour GradFirst Seminar (GRSC 7001 or GRSC 7001E). Students are encouraged to take it within the first year. The Program of Study will not be approved if this course has not been taken at the time of submission.

All students on assistantship must take a 1 credit hour departmental seminar (ALDR 9005) each semester. Those not on assistantship may elect to enroll in the departmental seminar based on their interest in the semester's subject matter.

- **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 circumstances 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: On March 13, 2024, Graduate Council approved an updated policy effective for students who matriculate in Fall 2024 and later, regarding time limits, [linked here](#).** Doctoral students must complete all requirements for the doctoral degree within eight calendar years after initial enrollment/registration in the program. The student's time-to-degree clock starts with the first course approved for inclusion in their Program of Study, or the date of matriculation into the program, whichever occurs earlier. The Graduate School will notify all doctoral students when they have reached the 7-year mark to warn them about the impending 8-year degree time limit.
- **Extension of Time:** Doctoral students in good academic standing who experience extenuating circumstances (e.g., military service, family and medical challenges, other life altering events) that prevent them from completing their degrees within the requisite 8 years may petition for an extension of the degree time limit to the Vice Provost/Dean of the Graduate School. This petition requires support from the major professor, graduate coordinator, and academic unit head. The maximum extension that may be granted is 24 months and the total time to degree shall not exceed 10 years. The full policy on extensions can be [found here](#) (scroll to "Degree Time Limit Extensions").

Selection of Major Professor

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, conduct research and complete a dissertation. Comprehensive exams are given when a student has completed all their content courses.

- Only faculty members with graduate faculty status can advise graduate students.
- No faculty member is required to serve as a major professor for any student.
- The major professor 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 major professor 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 major professor 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 a major professor 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 major professor. Once this is received the graduate coordinator will contact the graduate school Dean who approves the change. For doctoral students, any changes in major professors must be approved and on file with the graduate school by the time the

comprehensive examination is given prior to admission to candidacy. However, advancing to candidacy does not preclude a change in either major professor or committee composition.

Selection of Advisory Committee

Graduate students must select their graduate advisory committee by the beginning of their third semester or before completing 30 credit hours in residence.

- **Role/responsibilities of the committee**
The advisory committee, along with the major professor, 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 major professor and their graduate advisory committee. In conjunction they will select coursework and determine the direction of the dissertation. A student's graduate committee is chaired by their appointed academic faculty advisor.

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 or a faculty member of another department holding graduate faculty status at UGA.
- Member 4: An ALEC faculty member holding at least a 50% faculty appointment in ALEC with graduate faculty status at UGA, a faculty member of another department holding graduate faculty status at UGA, or an individual holding a terminal degree in their field of study that does not hold UGA graduate faculty status.

Only one voting member may be appointed to the committee that does not hold UGA graduate faculty status.

- **Graduate School Committee Forms:** Upon the recommendation of the departmental graduate coordinator, the dean of the Graduate School shall appoint the advisory committee for the student. The students shall submit the request for appointment of the committee (G130) on GradStatus by the beginning of the second year or before 30 credit hours in residence.
- **Process for Changes to Committee:** To change committee members, the student must consult with their committee chair. After consultation and agreement with the chair, the student must inform the Graduate Coordinator and copy their committee chair 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

Preliminary program of study: The student shall submit a [preliminary Program of Study form](#) by the **end of their third 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.

Final Program of Study Approval: 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: AES education, AES leadership or AES 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 (G138) through GradStatus prior to sitting for the comprehensive exam. Only submit courses that should count toward the requirements of the degree (GRSC 7700 and ALDR 9005 should not be placed on the POS). All content courses on the Program of Study must fall within a six-year time limit.

Substitutions for Required Courses: Substitutions are strongly discouraged by UGA and ALEC. Any student interested in substituting a course must first discuss the situation with their major professor. The student must then submit a departmental course substitution form to the graduate coordinator. The graduate coordinator (with advisement from the departmental graduate committee and the course instructor of the required course) and the department head must approve the change.

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 their course work as deemed appropriate by their major professor and graduate advisory committee. The oral comprehensive examination should follow soon thereafter. Students planning to take their Comprehensive Examination must meet with their major professor to discuss the examination. The student must notify the ALEC Graduate Program Coordinator and Coordinator Assistant via email correspondence, at least three weeks prior to the date and location of their oral comprehensive exam. The Graduate Program Assistant will notify the Graduate School through the Comprehensive Exam Announcement (G118) on GradStatus at least two weeks prior to the comprehensive exam.

Written exam procedure:

- Major professor 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 Ph.D. 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.
- Any potential use of Generative AI must be discussed with the major professor and parameters agreed upon. Any use of Generative AI outside of those established parameters will be considered a violation of the UGA Academic Honesty policy.
- It is expected the student will complete all 4 days of questions within a work week.
- At the completion of the 4 days, the Ph.D. advisor will send the full set of responses to the committee and solicit affirmation that the written responses are sufficient to continue with the oral exam.

Oral exam procedure:

- An oral examination will be conducted by the committee no earlier than 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.
- Oral exams will last approximately 2 hours.
- It is suggested the Ph.D. advisor ask the student 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 student will be asked to leave, and the committee will then decide on the outcome of the exam.
- The Ph.D. advisor will retrieve the student and present them with the outcome back in the room.

The Graduate Coordinator Assistant will send the Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam form (G168) to the committee prior to the oral exam through GradStatus. The committee should submit their votes through GradStatus immediately following the exam.

Once the Oral Comprehensive Examination has been passed, the student will apply for Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degrees (G162). 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.

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 program of study.

A Ph.D. student must submit the Application for Admission to Candidacy for Doctoral Degrees (G162) after passing the comprehensive exam and at least one full semester before the date of graduation.

Once the Graduate School verifies the student status, the form will be sent to the department for the Ph.D. advisor to verify all requirements of candidacy have been met. The Graduate Coordinator will approve the application and send back to the Graduate School through GradStatus.

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, a literature review chapter or section, and a conclusion chapter or section that synthesizes the research.

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.

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 committee chair and the Graduate Coordinator.

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

By [the deadline listed for the graduation semester](#), a complete formatted copy of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School for a first format check (G121). In addition, the Graduate School requires that the public presentation be publicized at least two weeks prior to the date. The doctoral candidate must submit the Dissertation Defense Announcement form (G119) at least two weeks prior to the defense.

A final draft of the dissertation must be submitted to the advisory committee no later than three weeks before the final examination/defense. The draft is one which has already been approved by the Doctoral candidate's Ph.D. advisor as being complete and editorially. The Ph.D. advisor has the right and responsibility to withhold the written dissertation from the committee until they deem it is complete and editorially correct. The Ph.D. advisor must take a formal vote of the committee to move forward with the oral defense. Approval by the Ph.D. advisor to submit the written dissertation to the advisory committee counts as one vote in the affirmative. The written dissertation must receive a majority vote in the affirmative to move forward with the oral defense. The doctoral candidate may not move forward with an oral defense until the majority of the committee votes in the affirmative.

The dissertation represents originality in research, independent thinking, scholarly ability, and technical mastery of a field of study. It is the responsibility of the advisory committee to review and evaluate the dissertation as a representation of a student's individual effort. As such, the use of generative AI in dissertations is considered unauthorized assistance per the Academic Code of Honesty and is prohibited unless specifically authorized by members of the advisory committee for use within the approved scope.

If approved by the advisory committee, the extent of generative AI usage should be disclosed in a statement within the dissertation.

The doctoral candidate shall hold a public presentation of their dissertation study followed by a 15-minute Q & A session for the attendees. The defense should be scheduled on the ALEC Department calendar with the assistance of ALEC Administrative Assistant Brenda Hamilton. Once scheduled, forward the date/time/location and link for virtual participation to Graduate Coordinator Assistant Brian Brennan but no less than 2 weeks prior to the scheduled defense.

At the completion of the presentation and a short Q & A session, the audience will be dismissed. The doctoral candidate will meet with the advisory committee for a private oral defense of the written dissertation. The oral defense procedures are:

- All members of the advisory committee must be physically present or have electronic means of meeting for the entire period of this Examination.
- The oral defense will last approximately 2 hours.
- It is suggested the Ph.D. 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 Ph.D. advisor will retrieve the candidate and present them with the outcome back in the room.

The Graduate Coordinator Assistant will send the Approval Form for Dissertation and Final Oral Examination (G164) to the committee prior to the oral defense through GradStatus. The committee should submit their votes through GradStatus immediately following the exam.

The student must also submit a final copy of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School through the Electronic Thesis Dissertation system (G129).

[Click here for a list of important dates and deadlines by semester](#), updated each academic year by the Graduate School.

Graduation

Submit the application for graduation at the beginning of the semester in which you intend to graduate. The deadline is typically two weeks after the beginning of the semester (see the link above). 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 you wish to walk and be hooded by your advisor.

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 the major professor
- [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 major professor 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 major professor 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 major professor 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 graduate faculty of ALEC will write an evaluation of doctoral students each spring. The student can write a rebuttal to the annual evaluation. The student must submit a response to the ALEC graduate coordinator and their major professor 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 major professor 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 decide based on information obtained from the student, their 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 major professor, the student can file a formal written grievance 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 major professor 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 major professor 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 major professor (e.g., advisory committee member or faculty assistantship supervisor) they must first discuss the issue with their major professor to determine the best way forward. If the issue is not resolved at this level, the student can file a formal written grievance 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 major professor 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 major professor, 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 major professor to determine the best way forward. If deemed appropriate, the student's major professor 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 major professor can file a formal written grievance together 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 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 major professors, 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 on a departmental GRA/GTA are expected to enroll in ALDR 9005 Departmental Seminar during Fall and Spring semesters. This seminar does not count toward degree requirements.

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 attending departmental and college events, maintaining a presence in the office as negotiated with the faculty supervisor, 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 availability of funding, the student maintaining the proper academic standing, and 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.
- Department funded assistantships end upon graduation regardless of contract end date.

Vacation Time

Graduate Research Assistants do not earn vacation time. Vacation/time off must be coordinated with the student's major professor and assistantship supervisor. Plan ahead and 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 in these respective buildings. Each student with an ALEC Departmental Assistantship will have access to the following resources:

- Office space
- Desktop computer
- 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 maintenance and technology issues
- Respect others in the office by being aware of excessive noise; be aware that walls are thin
- Do not leave open food in your office space
- Use the refrigerators provided but be sure to keep them clean
- 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 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 ALDR 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)

Sample documents and forms referenced in this handbook can be found on the Graduate School website at: <https://grad.uga.edu/current-students/forms/>

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>
- National Communication Association – <https://www.natcom.org>
- Eastern Communication Association – <https://www.ecacomm.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>