

IDIS Graduate Student Handbook

Revised August 2026



Graduate School
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

INTRODUCTION

Department of Infectious Diseases Mission

The mission of the Department of Infectious Diseases is to:

- **Educate** graduate and professional students about the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and control of bacterial, fungal, viral, and parasitic diseases, with an emphasis on protecting human and animal health.
- **Train** graduate and professional students in advanced technologies and interdisciplinary approaches to understand, prevent, diagnose, and treat infectious diseases, including emerging and re-emerging infections that threaten human and animal health.
- **Develop and translate** innovative technologies and approaches for the prevention, diagnosis, and control of infectious diseases, with the goal of improving human health and advancing the health and welfare of animals.
- **Conduct innovative research** to understand microbial pathogenesis, the molecular biology of microbial and parasitic pathogens, host–pathogen interactions, and the mechanisms of innate and adaptive immunity.

Graduate Education

The Department of Infectious Diseases offers graduate training leading to a **PhD in Infectious Diseases**. The department's diverse graduate faculty provide expertise in molecular virology, pathogenic bacteriology, classical and molecular parasitology, vaccinology, vector biology, disease modeling, epidemiology, and immunology.

Faculty research encompasses a broad range of infectious diseases affecting humans and animals, including emerging and zoonotic pathogens, antimicrobial resistance, viral and bacterial pathogenesis, host–pathogen interactions, vaccine development, and mechanisms of immunity. This breadth provides students with opportunities to study infectious diseases from molecular and cellular mechanisms through population-level transmission and disease prevention.

Interdisciplinary Education and Training

Graduate education in the Department of Infectious Diseases is inherently interdisciplinary and draws on courses and expertise across the University of Georgia. Students take courses offered by the Department of Infectious Diseases as well as departments within the **College of Veterinary Medicine, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, and College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences**.

The department incorporates expertise from statistics and computer science, particularly in epidemiology, disease modeling, and quantitative approaches to infectious disease research. Appropriate courses from these departments are incorporated into individual students' programs of study.

Training and research are further strengthened through collaborations with other departments within the College of Veterinary Medicine, across the University of Georgia, and with regional and federal research facilities. These collaborations provide students with opportunities to engage in multidisciplinary research on infectious diseases spanning molecular, cellular, clinical, and population levels, with a strong emphasis on diseases of importance to human health.

Through this interdisciplinary approach, the Department of Infectious Diseases prepares graduate students to address current and emerging challenges in infectious disease research and to contribute to the development of new diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, and prevention strategies that improve human and animal health.

IDIS Program Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the program . . .

- Graduates will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of infectious disease biology and their specialized area of research, including underlying mechanisms, current knowledge, and emerging trends.
- Graduates will apply analytical, methodological, and critical thinking skills to evaluate, interpret, and synthesize research findings in their field.
- Graduates will design, conduct, and analyze experiments using appropriate techniques and methodologies to address specific scientific questions and research objectives.
- Graduates will communicate complex scientific concepts effectively through oral presentations to diverse audiences, including peers, faculty, and broader scientific communities.
- Graduates will produce clear, well-structured written scientific documents, including grant proposals, manuscripts, and research reports, tailored to professional and academic audiences

Global expectations of all students:

- Professional standards of behavior
 - 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.
 - Students are expected to maintain annual UGA training required to work in the laboratory (Bloodborne pathogen training, Chemical Safety, Hazardous Waste training, etc); *see Major Professor for lab specific training requirements*
 - All UGA students are responsible for knowing the policy and procedures on academic honesty at UGA and must adhere to the University Student Honor Code. The policies and procedures on academic honesty are described in A Culture of Honesty.
 - Adherence to university policies governing research and [academic conduct](#), [non-discrimination and anti-harassment](#), and [workplace violence](#) ([Student Code of Conduct](#))
 - Academic standards (e.g. maintain a 3.0 in all required coursework, attendance at seminars, meeting presentations, etc.)
 - All UGA Graduate Student deadlines and forms are completed

[Academic Honesty Policy](#)

UGA Graduate School deadlines

Important dates and deadlines can be found on the Graduate School website. Students meeting Graduate School deadlines must allow ample time to acquire necessary departmental approval and signatures in advance. Although the Director of Graduate Studies and the graduate assistant will advise students of deadlines whenever possible, **students are responsible for being aware of Graduate School and departmental requirements and filing appropriate forms on time.** Details of all degree requirements are described in the Graduate School Bulletin, which students are strongly advised to consult.

[Graduate School Deadlines](#)

[Graduate School Forms for Current Students](#)

[Graduate Bulletin](#)

Department Participation

Graduate students are expected to actively contribute to and participate in the overall graduate program of the Department of Infectious Diseases. Such participation includes attending departmental seminars, retreats, annual student symposium, and other functions, participating in graduate student and faculty recruitment, and engaging fully in the intellectual life of the department.

Teaching Responsibilities

There is no departmental teaching requirement for students who enter the IDIS graduate program and whose subsequent stipend support is provided by a grant to their major professor. In the event that a student is supported for a time on a departmental assistantship, the student will be required to TA in one of the IDIS courses for each semester they are supported by the department. Students who are not required, but wish to have teaching experience, may find teaching opportunities in the Department of Infectious Diseases or in departments with large undergraduate teaching components, such as Microbiology or Cellular Biology. In addition, some faculty encourage their graduate students to TA to gain teaching experience and to have a portion of their graduate stipend paid by the department in which they are TAing.

Admissions Requirements

Students with BS, MS, or DVM degrees are eligible to pursue doctoral training. The Department of Infectious Diseases participates in the University of Georgia's **Integrated Life Sciences (ILS)**

program and relies on the program for recruitment of graduate students. Prospective students interested in infectious disease research should apply through the [Integrated Life Sciences program](#).

IDIS ACADEMIC / CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Specific Degree Requirements for a PhD in Infectious Diseases

- **Required courses**
 - IDIS6100 Immunology (4 credits)
 - IDIS8010 Advanced Studies in Infectious Diseases (4 credits)
 - IDIS8160 Seminar in Infectious Diseases
 - IDIS8170 Research in Progress Seminar
 - A course in Statistics (3 credits)
 - Students must complete at least 3 different IDIS Journal Clubs (non-IDIS journal clubs accepted upon request – requests can be made through the DGS)
 - Project related elective courses to fulfill the total credit hours required
 - IDIS 9300 (3 credits)
- Minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on all graduate courses; all grades must be C or higher
- Students should form their Graduate Advisory Committee by July of their first year
- At minimum, hold annual Graduate Advisory Committee meetings until thesis defense
- Full Program of Study is approved and submitted by July of the first year
- Completion of a Prospectus due by December in the second year of the program
- Completion of Comprehensive Exam in the third year of the program
- Students in the IDIS PhD program are expected to have first-author publications in peer-reviewed journals prior to their Final Dissertation Defense. Publications must be original research articles; review articles and short communications do not fulfill this requirement.*

* Exceptions will be considered only under extraordinary circumstances and require approval from all other members of the Graduate Advisory Committee

Enrollment Requirements and Time Limits

- **Enrollment Requirements if on assistantship**

Students on a Research Assistantship should register for a total of 18 credit hours during the Fall and Spring semesters and 9 hours during the summer. The bulk of these credit hours will be research hours. A student who holds a teaching assistantship must register for a minimum of 12 hours of graduate credit during the fall and spring semesters and 9 hours of graduate credit during the summer semester. College of Veterinary Medicine has specific credit hour requirements for its graduate students listed on the departmental intranet. Other programs, offices, and agencies, such as the Veterans Administration, Immigration and Naturalization Service, and financial aid programs may have other minimum requirements for enrollment.
- **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 thesis or dissertation.
- **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.

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 for the Doctor of Philosophy degree 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 Director of Graduate Studies 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, child care, 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.

- **Doctoral Time Limits**

On March 13, 2024, Graduate Council approved the following updated policy, effective for students who matriculate in Fall 2024 and later:

Doctoral students must complete all requirements for the doctoral degree and the degree must be awarded within eight (8) calendar years after initial enrollment/registration in the program. For example, if the date of first registration for a doctoral student is the fall semester of 2024, the eight-year time limit expires in summer semester of 2032. The student's time-to-degree clock starts with the first course approved for inclusion in their doctoral Program of Study, or the date of matriculation into the program, whichever occurred earlier.

Students who fail to complete their degrees within eight years after initial enrollment will be considered as not making satisfactory progress to degree completion and will be dismissed from Graduate School. 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 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. Such circumstances include military obligations, family and medical challenges, and other life events. A petition for an extension of the degree time limit requires support from the major professor, graduate coordinator, and academic unit head.

The petition for an extension of time must include the specific reasons why the student did not complete the degree in the time allotted and a detailed timeline proposal for the completion of the degree. The student's major professor must review the extension of time request and write a letter to the Vice Provost/Dean of the Graduate School stating approval or disapproval of the petition. The Director of Graduate Studies and department head/chair (or Dean/Dean's delegate in instances where the School/College does not have departments) must review the major professor's recommendation and indicate their concurrence by writing an additional letter. If they do not concur with the recommendation, further justification should be provided in the letter.

The maximum extension of the degree time limit that may be granted is 24 months and the total time to degree shall not exceed 10 years.

Role and Selection of Major Professor

The major professor serves as the chair of the student's Graduate Advisory Committee and provides primary research mentorship and supervision throughout the doctoral program. The major professor is also responsible for ensuring that appropriate resources and funding are available to support the student's approved research activities.

Only faculty members who hold a full or courtesy appointment in the Department of Infectious Diseases and are members of the UGA Graduate Faculty may serve as a major professor for an IDIS PhD student.

Students entering through the ILS Program will have the opportunity to rotate through three laboratories. It is the student's responsibility to identify a graduate faculty member willing to serve as their major professor by the end of their first semester. Students who do not have a major professor may be dismissed from the program. No faculty member is required to serve as the major professor for any student. If the major professor is within the Department of Infectious Diseases, or holds a courtesy appointment in IDIS, the student can matriculate into the Infectious Diseases Graduate Program in Spring of their first year.

Responsibilities of Major Professor

The Major Professor will provide financial support to the student at the published rate as he/she completes all of the degree requirements for the PhD in Infectious Diseases. Support will include stipend and other expenses related to completion of the student's research project.

In order to accept a student into their laboratory, the IDIS department requires the major

professor to demonstrate they have funds to cover 2.5 years of stipend support at the time of acceptance. If the Major Professor is unable to provide financial support for the student at any time after the 2.5 years, the student will be required to serve as a Teaching Assistant. The DGS and Department head should be informed if this should occur. TA stipends are less than the minimum stipend for Infectious Diseases PhD students and it is expected that the Major Professor's home department will cover the cost of the required stipend supplement.

In addition to financially supporting the student, the Major Professor's responsibilities include:

- The training and skill development of the student.
- The mentorship and guidance of the student.
- The professional development of the student.
- Ensure the student is completing PhD milestones in a timely manner.
- Formal evaluation of the student and their progress towards degree on an annual basis, typically occurs after annual Committee Meeting

[Major professor Graduate Student Evaluation Form](#)

Role and Selection of Advisory 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 thesis/dissertation research projects, reading and approving the final thesis/dissertation document and approving the final oral examination (defense).

Responsibilities of the Graduate Advisory Committee

The Graduate Advisory Committee plays an important role in guiding the student's academic, research, and professional development. Committee responsibilities include:

- Annual progress meetings: The Advisory Committee must meet with the student at least once each year. The student is responsible for initiating and scheduling these meetings, and committee members are expected to provide reasonable flexibility to accommodate the student's schedule. Following each meeting, committee members must complete a Graduate Student Evaluation form. These evaluations are required as part of the annual assessment of the student's progress.
- Research and academic guidance: The committee provides guidance and support regarding the student's research and coursework, including development of the student's Program of Study. Recommendations from committee members regarding specific courses should be carefully considered, as coursework may be relevant to the expectations for the student's preliminary examination.
- Progress toward degree completion: The IDIS Graduate Program expects students to complete their formal coursework within approximately 24 months. The committee should

help students balance this goal with meaningful progress toward their research and dissertation, taking into account the individual needs and circumstances of each student.

- Qualifying examinations: The Advisory Committee is responsible for preparing, administering, and evaluating the student's qualifying examinations in accordance with program and Graduate School requirements.
- Ongoing mentorship: Committee members should be available to provide advice and guidance beyond the annual committee meeting. Students are encouraged to view their committee members as resources for scientific and research-related questions as well as for professional development and career guidance.

[Committee Member Graduate Student Evaluation Form](#)

Selection of Advisory Committee

Each doctoral student, in consultation with their major professor, will select a Graduate Advisory Committee. The committee should be established by the end of the student's first year in the IDIS program, typically by July. Whenever possible, the committee should include faculty with a breadth of expertise that complements the student's planned research and provides appropriate guidance throughout the doctoral program.

At least three committee members must be core or courtesy faculty in the Department of Infectious Diseases, and at least four committee members must be members of the UGA Graduate Faculty.

Please refer to the chart below for the allowable faculty ranks and appointments for individuals serving on doctoral advisory committees.

Allowable UGA Ranks	Unallowable UGA Ranks
Professor	Instructor
Associate Professor	Lecturer
Assistant Professor	Academic Professional
Public Service Assistant	
Public Service Associate	
Senior Public Service Associate	
Assistant Research Scientist	
Associate Research Scientist	
Senior Research Scientist	

Non-UGA Committee Members

In addition to UGA affiliated committee members, a person who has no official affiliation with the University of Georgia may be appointed as a voting member of a graduate student's Advisory Committee. Such appointments require nomination by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

The non-affiliated individual must have distinguished credentials in the student's field of study. Examples may include researchers or scientists at organizations such as the USDA, CDC, or other external institutions.

To request appointment of a non-affiliated committee member, the student should provide the DGS with a letter addressed to the Dean of the Graduate School explaining the rationale for including the individual on the committee. The student should also provide the individual's current CV.

A non-affiliated committee member is expected to participate in all committee meetings associated with the appointment. Participation may be in person or via videoconference.

When submitting the electronic Advisory Committee for Doctoral Candidates form through GradSlate, students may attach the required support letter and the proposed committee member's CV to the submission.

[Non-UGA Member CV and Support Letter Attachments](#)

Changes to Advisory Committee

The composition of a student's Graduate Advisory Committee may change throughout the doctoral program as needed to ensure that the student has appropriate expertise and guidance as their research project evolves. Any changes must continue to meet the general requirements for committee composition described above.

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) should be notified in writing of any proposed committee changes as soon as possible and before the student's first meeting with the new committee member(s). A new electronic Advisory Committee for Doctoral Candidates form must also be submitted to the Graduate School through GradSlate to document the revised committee membership.

If circumstances arise that necessitate a change in the student's major professor, the student should first consult with the DGS to discuss the situation and determine the appropriate next steps.

[Advisory Committee for Doctoral Candidates Form](#)

- **Timeline**

Once the committee has been established, the student must submit the electronic Advisory Committee for Doctoral Candidates form through GradSlate. This needs to be completed by July of their first year.

[Advisory Committee for Doctoral Candidates Form](#)

Coursework and Final Program of Study Approval

The Program of Study is a formal statement of the coursework planned for a graduate degree and should be carefully designed to reflect the student's academic and research interests, as well as the requirements of the student's Advisory Committee, the Department of Infectious Diseases, and the Graduate School. The Program of Study should include all graduate-level courses relevant to the doctoral program, not only those required to meet the minimum degree requirements.

The Full Doctoral Program of Study must be submitted and approved in DegreeWorks by July of the student's first year. Students are expected to work with their major professor and Advisory Committee to develop a reasonable plan for completing their coursework.

The IDIS Graduate Program expects students to complete most of their coursework within the first two years of the program. However, some elective courses are offered only every other year, and students may therefore need to plan for an elective to be completed outside this timeframe.

For the Doctor of Philosophy degree an approved program of study must carry a minimum of 30 hours of graduate course work, three hours of which must be dissertation writing (9300).

- Grades must be C or above (C- will not be accepted by the Graduate School.)
- Minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on all graduate courses
- Department of Infectious Diseases required courses
 - IDIS6100 Immunology (4 credits)
 - IDIS8010 Advanced Studies in Infectious Diseases (4 credits)
 - IDIS8160 Seminar in Infectious Diseases
 - IDIS8170 Research in Progress Seminar
 - A course in Statistics (3 credits)
 - Students must complete at least 3 different IDIS Journal Clubs (non-IDIS journal clubs accepted upon request – requests can be made through the DGS)
 - IDIS 9300 (3 credits)
- 16 credit hours of 8000 or 9000 level courses (enter with master's degree)+\$#
- 20 credit hours of 8000 or 9000 level courses (enter with bachelor's degree)+\$#

+ Excluding IDIS 9000 (research) and IDIS 9300 (dissertation)

\$ Seminar only counts for 1 of 20 credit hours (1 of 16 credit hours with master's degree).

Additional seminar credit hours count towards 30 credit hour minimum.

Each of the journal clubs offered by the department can count as 1 credit hour each towards the 20 credit hours (towards 16 credit hours with master's degree). Repeat journal club credit hours count towards 30 credit hour minimum.

A complete **Program of Study must be reviewed and approved by the Advisory Committee by the end of July of the student's first year.** The Program of Study should be finalized and submitted following the first committee meeting.

[Program of Study Form in DegreeWorks](#)

Research Prospectus

Each PhD student must develop a research prospectus describing their proposed dissertation research. The prospectus should be completed and distributed to the Graduate Advisory Committee **by the beginning of the student's second year, no later than September**. Once the prospectus has been distributed, the student should notify the Graduate Program Assistant by email.

The committee will review the prospectus and, within **two weeks**, notify the student and Graduate Program Assistant whether it is acceptable or whether revisions are required.

If revisions are requested, the committee will provide specific feedback. The student should revise the prospectus in consultation with their major professor and, as appropriate, individual committee members. The revised prospectus should then be resubmitted to the full committee for review. The committee will again notify the student and Graduate Program Assistant of its decision within two weeks of receiving the revised prospectus.

The final prospectus is expected to be approved by all committee members by the end of December.

A committee meeting is not required for review of the prospectus. However, any committee member may request a meeting if additional discussion is warranted.

Prospectus Format

The prospectus should follow the general format of a **Specific Aims page for an NIH grant**. The student should work closely with their major professor in developing the prospectus. This differs from the comprehensive written examination, which must be completed independently by the student without contributions from the major professor.

The prospectus should:

- Be **one typed, single-spaced page** with minimum 0.5-inch margins.
- Use a minimum **11-point font** in Times, Times New Roman, or Arial.
- Include a separate title page, which does **not** count toward the one-page limit.

Prospectus Organization

Title Page — Does Not Count Toward Page Limit

Include:

- A succinct but informative project title

- Student name
- Date (month and year)
- Names of all Graduate Advisory Committee members
- The “**Note to Committee**” provided below

Note to Committee

The following statement should be included at the bottom of the prospectus title page:

Note to Committee:

The Infectious Diseases graduate program requires that a one-page prospectus be distributed to members of a doctoral student’s Graduate Advisory Committee in the fall of the student’s second year. The prospectus does not require a committee meeting but serves as a precursor to the written and oral examinations, which are typically completed during the summer of the second year.

The student is expected to work closely with their major professor to develop the prospectus. The prospectus informs the committee of the student’s planned research, including the major research questions and proposed approaches. It also provides an opportunity for the committee to identify potentially significant concerns regarding the proposed research or experimental approaches.

The committee may request revisions if the prospectus is not considered sufficient. Students should carefully consider and incorporate relevant committee feedback when subsequently developing their written examination.

Evaluation of the prospectus should proceed as follows:

- Within **two weeks** of receiving the prospectus, committee members should notify the student and Graduate Program Assistant whether the prospectus is acceptable or whether revisions are required.
- If significant revisions are warranted, committee members should communicate the requested changes to the student, major professor, and Graduate Program Assistant. The revised prospectus should be reviewed within two weeks of resubmission.
- If requested by a committee member, a full committee meeting may be held to discuss the prospectus.

The prospectus is expected to be **approved by all committee members by the end of December**.

- **Examples of Specific Aims**

The specific aims page should follow the format for an NIH grant. You can find examples here: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/sample-applications>

A guide to assist in writing the specific aims can be found here: <https://writingcenter.catalyst.harvard.edu/write-your-specific-aims-page>

Doctoral Comprehensive Exams

Before a student can advance to PhD candidacy, they must successfully complete a comprehensive **Qualifying Examination**, which consists of two parts: a **written examination** and an **oral examination**. Both examinations are designed and evaluated by the student's Advisory Committee. Students are responsible for scheduling both examinations. The date of the **oral examination** must be submitted to the Graduate School through the Graduate Program Assistant **at least two weeks prior to the examination**.

Schedule for Examination

It is recommended that students complete the comprehensive Qualifying Examination by the **24th month of matriculation**, approximately **July of the student's second year** in the program. The written examination must be provided to the Graduate Advisory Committee **at least four weeks prior to the proposed oral examination date**. The committee will have **two weeks to review and evaluate the written examination** and will notify the student and major professor whether the student has passed.

The oral examination may be scheduled before the results of the written examination are known; however, the oral examination must be postponed if the committee determines that the student has not passed the written examination.

Format of Written Examination

The written portion of the comprehensive Qualifying Examination consists of a grant proposal prepared in the format of an NIH R21 application. All applicable NIH R21 formatting requirements should be followed.

- Examples of several R21 grants:
<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/sample-applications#r21>

Grading the Written Examination

As noted above, the written examination must be provided to all Advisory Committee members **at least four weeks prior to the proposed date of the oral examination**. Each committee member is responsible for reviewing the written examination and providing a pass/fail evaluation to the major professor within **two weeks of receiving the proposal**.

The committee's pass/fail determination must be communicated to the student, major professor, and DGS before the oral examination. Detailed critiques and feedback on the written examination are typically discussed by the Advisory Committee during the oral examination.

There are two possible outcomes for the written examination: pass or fail. A student passes the written examination if no more than one committee member assigns a failing grade.

If a student performs poorly on a specific section of the examination (e.g., a particular aim), the committee may require additional coursework or directed reading and a rewrite of that section. Students are encouraged to communicate with committee members about their written examination before the oral examination to identify and address potentially weak areas.

If the committee determines that the student has not demonstrated sufficient proficiency on the examination as a whole, the student may be required to revise and resubmit the entire written examination. In this case, the oral examination will be postponed until the written examination has been successfully passed. Any additional requirements or remediation must be discussed and approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee in writing and the DGS should be informed.

Oral Examination

The Graduate School requires that **all members of the student's Advisory Committee attend the oral examination for its entire duration**. Committee members who are unable to attend in person may participate via teleconference or video conference.

The oral comprehensive examination is formally announced by the Graduate School and is open to all members of the University's Graduate Faculty. The examination will follow the format outlined below:

- **Chair of the Examination:** The committee will designate a committee member other than the major professor to serve as chair of the oral examination.
- **Student Presentation:** The student will present a **concise summary of their research project**, limited to **20 minutes**. The presentation should follow the organization and content of the written proposal. Students may not prepare additional slides specifically to address potential questions.
- **Questioning:** The majority of the examination will consist of questions from Advisory Committee members. Questions may address the student's research project as well as general knowledge in relevant areas of immunology and infectious diseases.
- **Role of the Major Professor:** The major professor may not provide comments, prompts, or questions to the student during the examination. The sole exception is that the major professor may respond to requests for clarification from the chair of the oral examination.
- **Committee Feedback:** Following the examination, the major professor will provide the student with a summary of the committee's comments, critiques, and recommendations.

Grading of the Oral Comprehensive Examination

The Graduate School provides the **Comprehensive Exam Report** form. Currently the form is sent to the committee over email and each committee member votes through the GradStatus online form. Following the examination, each Advisory Committee member must cast a vote of **pass or fail** for both the written and oral portions of the exam. Abstentions are not permitted.

The major professor's or co-major professor's vote of approval is required for the student to pass the examination. For each component of the Qualifying Examination (written and oral), the

student may receive **no more than one dissenting vote**. The results of both examinations are reported to the Graduate School.

If a student receives more than one **fail** vote on the oral examination from committee members other than the major professor, the student will be required to repeat the comprehensive examination. The Graduate Advisory Committee will determine whether the student is permitted to retake the examination. A second attempt must be scheduled **no later than the semester following the initial attempt**.

Failure to pass the examination on the second attempt will result in dismissal from the PhD program. In some cases, the Advisory Committee may determine that the student has made sufficient progress to meet the requirements for a **Master's degree**. Students should discuss this option with their major professor, Advisory Committee members, and the Graduate Coordinator.

If a student is required to retake all or a portion of the comprehensive examination, the student must notify the Graduate Program Assistant so that a new examination can be formally announced to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will provide a second **Comprehensive Exam Report** form for the subsequent examination.

Admission to Candidacy

Following successful completion of both the written and oral Qualifying Examinations, the student must submit the **Application for Admission to Candidacy** to the Graduate School through the Graduate Program Assistant. The Graduate School requires that the following conditions be met for admission to candidacy:

1. **Prerequisites:** All prerequisites established as conditions of admission have been satisfactorily completed.
2. **Research Skills:** Any applicable research skills requirements have been completed.
3. **Final Program of Study:** The final Program of Study has been approved by the Advisory Committee, Director of Graduate Studies, and Dean of the Graduate School.
4. **Academic Standing:** A minimum GPA of **3.0 (B)** has been maintained for all graduate coursework and for all completed courses included on the Program of Study. No course with a grade below **C** may be included on the final Program of Study.
5. **Qualifying Examination:** Both the written and oral portions of the Qualifying Examination have been successfully completed and reported to the Graduate School.
6. **Advisory Committee:** The Advisory Committee is confirmed, including any necessary changes in membership, and all committee members have been notified of their appointment.
7. **Dissertation Prospectus:** The dissertation prospectus has been approved and filed with the departmental Graduate Program Assistant.
8. **Residence Requirement:** The residence requirement has been satisfied through enrollment in a minimum of **30 credit hours of consecutive coursework** included on the Program of Study and completed on the UGA campus.

- **Timeline**

The Infectious Disease Program expects students to complete their qualification exams and be admitted to candidacy by May of their third year.

Registration Following Admission to Candidacy

Following admission to candidacy, students must register for the required research hours each semester until the dissertation defense. Students should register for 18 research credit hours during the Fall and Spring semesters and 9 credit hours during the Summer semester. In the semester in which the dissertation defense is scheduled, students must also register for IDIS 9300 (3 credit hours).

Students who plan to graduate in the same semester in which they are admitted to candidacy must be admitted to candidacy by the Graduate School deadline for that semester and must also be registered for the required hours. Students must meet all other Graduate School graduation requirements and deadlines for that semester.

[Application for Admission to Candidacy](#)

[Graduate School Deadlines](#)

Dissertation Writing

The dissertation may be written as a series of manuscripts that have been published or are prepared for publication, accompanied by an appropriate introduction and literature review as the first chapter and an integrated discussion of the research findings as the final chapter. In general, dissertations should contain **four or five chapters**, including at least **two chapters presenting original research findings**.

Students should carefully review the **Graduate School Style Manual** to ensure that their dissertation meets all formatting and submission requirements. Examples of previous UGA theses and dissertations are available through the University Libraries for students to consult.

Doctoral students must submit their dissertation to their major professor for review and approval **before distributing it to members of the Advisory Committee**. Once approved by the major professor, the dissertation should be provided to all Advisory Committee members with sufficient time for review and evaluation prior to the defense.

[Graduate School: Theses and Dissertations Overview](#)

[Graduate School Style Manual](#)

[University Libraries: Previous Theses and Dissertations](#)

Use of Published Papers in Thesis Chapters

Students may include published or submitted papers as chapters in their thesis or dissertation under the following conditions:

Authorship Requirements

The student must be the first author or co-first author of any paper submitted as a manuscript chapter. When a paper is designated as co-first authored, both co-first authors may include the paper as a thesis chapter in their respective dissertations.

Defense and Understanding

The student must be prepared to defend the entirety of the research presented in the paper during their thesis or dissertation defense. This requirement ensures that the student has a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the work, regardless of their specific contributions.

Author Contributions Section

An Author Contributions section is required for all papers included as thesis chapters, whether unpublished, submitted for publication, or already published. This section must:

- Detail the specific contributions of each author, including the thesis or dissertation author
- Assign credit according to the disciplinary norms and conventions
- Include a declarative statement confirming that all co-authors have agreed to the inclusion of the work in the thesis or dissertation

If one or more co-authors did not respond despite due diligence efforts to secure their consent, the Author Contributions section must include a statement documenting the good-faith attempts made to obtain their approval.

Dissertation Defense and Final Oral Examination

The student must notify the Graduate Program Assistant in writing **at least two weeks prior to the scheduled defense date.**

The notification must include:

- Student's name
- Title of the presentation
- Date
- Time
- Building and room

The student is responsible for scheduling a seminar room. The student should contact the Graduate Program Assistant for assistance with reserving a seminar room. The Graduate Program Assistant will provide the seminar details to the Graduate School so that the defense can be officially announced to the University. The defense seminar is open to all members of the UGA Graduate Faculty.

All members of the Graduate Advisory Committee must be present for the entire defense seminar and the subsequent Final Oral Examination. If a committee member cannot attend in person for a valid reason, one of the following options may be used:

1. **Remote participation:** The absent committee member may participate via teleconference or video conference, provided that all participants can hear and communicate with one another.
2. **Committee member substitution:** The absent member may be replaced by another faculty member with appropriate expertise in the relevant subject area and sufficient knowledge of the student's research. A revised Advisory Committee form must be submitted to the Graduate School prior to the examination. The committee must maintain the minimum number of required Graduate Faculty members.
3. **Rescheduling:** The defense may be canceled and rescheduled for a later date. The Graduate School must be notified of any cancellation or rescheduling.

Following an oral presentation of the research described in the dissertation, the student must be prepared to defend the dissertation before members of the faculty and participate in a Final Oral Examination administered by the Advisory Committee.

The committee will receive the Doctoral Dissertation and Final Oral Examination Approval form through an email. Committee members will approve on GradStatus.

[Graduate School Deadlines](#)

[Approval Form for Doctoral Dissertation and Final Oral Examination](#)

Dissertation Submission

Following the defense, the Advisory Committee may require revisions to the dissertation before the final version is submitted to the Graduate School. Once all required revisions have been completed, students must submit the dissertation for a **format check** in accordance with Graduate School requirements.

The Graduate School must receive the electronic submission of the final dissertation by the applicable deadline. Students should be aware that the Graduate School does not accept dissertations for format checking or dean's approval between the last day of classes and the late registration period of the following semester.

Students must submit the required **Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD)** form through GradStatus by the appropriate Graduate School deadline. Students who wish to place an embargo

on their dissertation must obtain prior written approval from the Dean of the Graduate School **at least four weeks before the final submission deadline**. Supporting documentation for the embargo may be attached to the GradStatus ETD form.

[Graduate School Deadlines](#)

[Format Check Guidelines](#)

[Electronic Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\) Submission](#)

Graduation

Completion of degree requirements and graduation are not synonymous. Students must be enrolled for a minimum of **3 credit hours during the semester in which they complete their degree requirements**, but they may graduate in the following semester. The student's transcript must be free of any **"I" (Incomplete)** or **"NG" (No Grade)** grades. Once any outstanding grades have been resolved, the student's graduate GPA must meet the minimum required for graduation.

Graduation in the Same Semester

Students who wish to graduate in the same semester in which they complete all degree requirements must submit their final dissertation and all required graduation documents to the Graduate School by the applicable posted deadlines. These documents include the **Doctoral Dissertation and Final Oral Examination Approval Form** and the **Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) form**.

Graduation in a Subsequent Semester

Students who complete their degree requirements but do not meet the deadlines for graduation in that semester will graduate in a subsequent semester. In this situation, the Graduate School will notify the student that all degree requirements have been completed and that graduation will occur in the following semester.

Students should note that they must be registered during any semester in which they use University facilities or staff resources. Students in this situation may request enrollment in **GRSC 9270: Graduate Study Completion** through Enrolled Student Services, when appropriate.

[Graduate School Deadlines](#)

Application for Graduation

Students must submit an **Application for Graduation through Athena** to the Graduate School no later than **Friday of the second full week of classes** during the semester in which they anticipate graduating. For Summer graduation, the application must be submitted by the **first week of classes**.

Instructions for submitting the application are available on the department intranet. If a student does not complete all graduation requirements during the semester for which they applied, the Graduate School will notify the student that the graduation application has been canceled. The student must then submit a new graduation application for a future semester.

[Apply for Graduation](#)

[Instructions for Applying for Graduation in Athena](#)

Late Application for Graduation

Students who miss a graduation deadline because they fail to submit the Application for Graduation, Advisory Committee Form, and/or completed Program of Study Form may be eligible for late processing.

The Graduate School permits late processing upon payment of a **\$50 fee** and submission of the completed **Late Filing for Graduation Form**, all required graduation forms, and the fee payment to the Graduate School Office of Enrolled Student Services within **45 calendar days of the original deadline**. After the 45-day late-filing period, students cannot be added to the commencement roster for the current semester.

[Late Filing of Graduation Form](#) **[Instructions for Late Filing for Graduation](#)**

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.

Exit Survey

Upon completion of their doctoral degree, all students will be asked to complete an exit survey and degree conferred form. These can be found on the departmental intranet and submitted electronically to the graduate assistant.

[Exit Survey](#)

INTEGRITY IN RESEARCH

Compliance training if applicable:

Students should discuss the requirements of their individual research projects with their Major Professor to determine which compliance training requirements apply to their work.

- SecureUGA
- Teaching Assistant Orientation and completion of GRSC 7770
- Institutional Review Board (IRB; human subjects)
- Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)
- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)
- Right to Know, Lab Safety (Chemical Specific/Hazardous Waste), BioSafety, Radiation Safety

EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL ACADEMIC / RESEARCH PROGRESS

Expectations

Academic standard

- Grades must be C or above
- Minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on all graduate courses
- Students must rectify any Incomplete grades on their transcript

Satisfactory progress

- A student's progress toward the doctoral degree will be evaluated at least annually by the major professor and Graduate Advisory Committee. As part of this process, the major professor and committee members will complete a Graduate Student Evaluation form and discuss the student's progress, accomplishments, and goals with the student.
- Beginning in January 2026, these evaluations will be completed and submitted electronically to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Following the committee meeting, the student should notify the DGS and DGS Assistant that the meeting has occurred. The completed evaluation forms will then be provided to the student for their records.
- Graduate Advisory Committee meetings must be held at **least once each year**. Students may schedule additional committee meetings as needed or as recommended by their major professor or committee.
 - [Major professor Graduate Student Evaluation Form](#)
 - [Committee Member Graduate Student Evaluation Form](#)
- Annual committee meeting evaluations will be used to assess whether students are

making satisfactory progress toward their degree. Therefore, students must complete their annual committee meetings and ensure that all required evaluation forms are submitted.

- If the committee determines that satisfactory progress has not been demonstrated, a remediation plan will be developed in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. The plan will identify the specific skills, behaviors, or performance expectations the student must demonstrate to remain in the program. A formal Remediation plan will be written up and presented to the student by the Director of Graduate Studies. The student, Major Professor, and DGS will sign the final plan. Failure to demonstrate significant progress during the following semester may result in initiation of the dismissal process.

Dismissal from Program

Students may be dismissed by the department at the end of any semester if they have not made sufficient academic progress to warrant continuance of study. Failure to follow the Program of Study or other departmental and Graduate School guidelines, low grades, and lack of progress on a dissertation or thesis are among the reasons dismissal might occur. Students may also be dismissed when there is no clear path toward completion of the degree, such as when a student is unable to identify a Major Professor who can provide appropriate research supervision.

Students have the right to appeal dismissal decisions and other academic decisions in accordance with the grievance and appeals procedures outlined below.

Grievance Procedures

Academic Appeals

Students have the right to appeal decisions related to academic matters. An appeal must be initiated within **30 days of receiving written notification of the decision**.

Academic appeals should generally begin at the level at which the decision was made. Grade appeals are handled by the department or college in which the course was taken rather than by the student's major department or college. For example, a student appealing a course grade should first address the appeal with the course instructor.

For graduate students, the next level of appeal following the instructor is the **Graduate School**, in accordance with Graduate School policies and procedures.

[Graduate School Probation & Dismissal Policy](#)

[Graduate School Appeals Policy](#)

Doctoral Program Appeals

All graduate students have the right to have their grievances heard and to seek appropriate resolution of concerns related to their doctoral program. A student's first course of action should

be to discuss the concern with their **Major Professor or Graduate Advisory Committee**. The Advisory Committee may also assist in resolving grievances related to the student's research or dissertation work.

The student and faculty member(s) involved should make every reasonable effort to resolve the concern at this level. If the issue cannot be resolved, the student may bring the grievance to the **Director of Graduate Studies**. If necessary, grievances may then be appealed, in succession, to the Department's **Graduate Affairs Committee**, the **Department Head**, the College's **Associate Dean for Graduate Affairs**, and ultimately the **Graduate School**. Grievances brought before the Graduate Affairs Committee should be submitted in writing.

A dismissal decision made by the Department may be appealed to the Dean of the Graduate School after all avenues of appeal at the Department and/or College level have been exhausted.

Conflicts with Major Professor

Students who experience concerns or conflicts with their Major Professor are encouraged to seek guidance from a member of their Advisory Committee or the Director of Graduate Studies.

FUNDING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Health Insurance

International students and students receiving assistantships, fellowships, or training grants are required to have health insurance and will be automatically enrolled in UGA's Mandatory Student Health Insurance Plan. **Coverage under this plan cannot be prorated or ended early.** The cost of health insurance for the student is subsidized by the university, and the remaining expense is charged to the student's account. However, mandated students who already have qualifying health insurance are permitted to waive the university health insurance through a waiver request by the stated deadline listed on UGA HR's website. Students not in the above list may still purchase health insurance through the university via the Voluntary Student Health Insurance Plan. Students are able to purchase health insurance for their spouses and/or dependents. However, the university does not subsidize premiums for these individuals.

[Mandatory Plan](#)

[Mandatory Plan Waiver](#)

[Voluntary Plan](#)

Stipend & Fees

Those students receiving a departmental, research, or teaching assistantship or receiving funding from a fellowship, will be paid according to the CVM stipend rates. Tuition waivers will be submitted for these students so they only have to pay a \$25 tuition fee per semester, instead of the full tuition rate. Other student fees are set by Bursar and Treasury Services, which publishes rates by semester. International students should reference information from the Office of International Education for any additional fees that may pertain to them. All student fees are the responsibility of the student. However, the university does offer payment plans for graduate students.

[Tuition & Fees](#)

[Office of Global Engagement: Immigration Services](#)

[Tuition Payment Plan](#)

Travel

Graduate students interested in attending conferences should obtain approval from their faculty mentor before registering for the meeting. Once approved, students should complete the required Travel Authorization form in OneSource. Travel awards may be available through the Graduate School for domestic travel and the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) for international travel. Conference organizers also frequently offer travel awards, and students are strongly encouraged to apply for these opportunities.

Additional information regarding travel procedures and requirements is available on the departmental intranet.

Travel Information:

<https://in.vet.uga.edu/display/IDI/Travel>

<https://grad.uga.edu/funding/travel-grants/>

Professional Development Opportunities (see Graduate School website for details)

- Three Minute Thesis (3MT)
- Emerging Leaders
- Teaching Portfolio
- Interdisciplinary Certificate in University Teaching
- Individual Development Plan (IDP)

APPENDICES

Graduate Advisory Committee Meetings

Doctoral students must meet with their Graduate Advisory Committee at least once each year. Students should come prepared to discuss their progress, research, coursework, and goals and should make effective use of the committee's time. All members of the Graduate Advisory Committee are expected to attend each committee meeting. However, if an unforeseen, last-minute emergency prevents one committee member from attending an annual meeting, the meeting may proceed. In such cases, the student is responsible for meeting individually with the absent committee member to provide an update and obtain their feedback.

All committee members must be present for the Qualifying Examination and Final Dissertation Defense. Committee members may participate in meetings virtually when necessary.

The Graduate Assistant can assist students with reserving a room for committee meetings. Students are responsible for sending the appropriate links to the annual evaluation forms to their committee members on the day of the meeting and for ensuring that the forms are completed following the meeting.

Required Graduate School electronic forms will be submitted through the appropriate workflow for review and approval by faculty and the Graduate Coordinator. A current list of required Graduate School forms is available on the Graduate School website.

[Graduate School Forms](#)

Suggested Format and Topics for Advisory Committee Meetings

The following provides a suggested format and topics for Advisory Committee meetings. Students may adapt the format as appropriate for their individual research and academic progress.

First Committee Meeting

The first Advisory Committee meeting should be held **no later than the summer semester of the student's first year**. This introductory meeting provides an opportunity for the student to introduce themselves to the committee, present the general direction of their research, and discuss their proposed Program of Study.

Students should prepare a brief presentation, typically using PowerPoint, outlining their research interests and plans. The meeting should generally last **no more than 60 minutes**.

A complete **Program of Study must be reviewed and approved by the Advisory Committee by the end of July of the student's first year**. The Program of Study should be finalized and

submitted following the first committee meeting.

What to Bring

Students are encouraged to provide each committee member with a folder containing key information and documents related to their graduate program. The folder should include:

1. **Student and Committee Information**

Include the student's name, meeting date, degree objective, and committee composition, clearly identifying the major professor.

2. **Meeting Agenda**

Include an agenda covering introductions, the student's start date, coursework, research plans, and other relevant topics.

3. **Proposed Program of Study**

Provide a list of completed and planned coursework developed in consultation with the major professor. The proposed Program of Study should include both IDIS program requirements and courses relevant to the student's research.

Include the **full course title and course number**, as committee members may not be familiar with course numbers alone. Students should take notes during the meeting regarding committee recommendations for additional coursework.

Reminder: The Advisory Committee must approve the student's complete Program of Study by the end of July of the student's first year.

4. **Research Presentation**

Provide the committee members with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation or other materials used during the meeting so they can refer to the information and make notes as needed.

5. **Tentative Degree Timeline**

Include a general timeline for major milestones, such as submission of the prospectus and completion of the written and oral examinations. At this stage, students do not need to provide specific dates; instead, indicate an approximate timeframe (e.g., fall semester, spring semester, or by the end of the academic year).

Completion of Prospectus

During the first Advisory Committee meeting, typically held during the summer of the student's first year, the student will introduce themselves to the committee and present their proposed research project. Discussion during this meeting may result in modifications or a change in the student's original research direction.

Following the meeting, the student, in consultation with their major professor, should develop a

one-page research prospectus that reflects the committee's feedback and the student's proposed research direction. The prospectus should be distributed to all committee members by the end of September of the student's second year, approximately two months after the first committee meeting.

Completion and review of the prospectus does not require a committee meeting. However, the committee may request a meeting if additional discussion or clarification is needed.

Second Committee Meeting

Students may schedule a second Advisory Committee meeting toward the end of their second year to discuss research progress and plans for the Qualifying Examination.

If significant changes to the research prospectus have been made based on newly acquired data or other developments, a committee meeting may be helpful to discuss and obtain feedback on these changes. If no significant changes are needed, the student may proceed directly to the Qualifying Examination.

The oral portion of the Qualifying Examination may serve as the student's second committee meeting when appropriate.

Post Qualification Exam Meetings

After successfully completing the Qualifying Examination, students advance to PhD candidacy. Subsequent Advisory Committee meetings should be held at least annually and should focus primarily on research progress and progress toward degree completion.

The student's presentation should summarize:

- Research accomplishments since the previous meeting
- Progress toward the research goals and dissertation
- Any challenges, unexpected findings, or changes in research direction
- Plans and a timeline for completing the remaining degree requirements
- Anticipated publications and plans for disseminating the research

Each meeting should result in a clear understanding and consensus between the student and committee regarding the remaining research goals and expectations for degree completion. Students are responsible for ensuring that they understand the committee's expectations, including alternative approaches if a particular research aim cannot be completed as originally proposed.

During later committee meetings, students should also discuss plans for completing and

distributing the dissertation and scheduling the Final Dissertation Defense. Defense planning should begin well in advance; 12–16 weeks before the anticipated defense date is recommended to ensure that all committee members can attend.

Because all Advisory Committee members must be present for the Final Dissertation Defense, students should coordinate the date with the entire committee well in advance. The student is responsible for providing the Graduate School, through the graduate program assistant, with the defense date, time, building, room, and dissertation title **at least two weeks before the defense**.

Final Committee Meeting

The final committee meeting should take place immediately following the student's dissertation defense. The meeting provides an opportunity for the Advisory Committee to discuss the dissertation with the student and address any remaining questions or required revisions.

IDIS Timeline example

Year 1

- Fall** ILS Rotations
GRSC 8010 (1 hr). Rigor, Reproducibility, and Transparency.
GRSC 8020 (3 hr). Critical Reading of the Primary Scientific Literature.
GRSC 8550 (1 hr). Responsible Conduct of Research.
- Spring** GRSC 7001 (1 hr) GradFIRST: First-year Research and Scholarship Training Seminar
Matriculate into the IDIS Program
IDIS6100 (4 hr.) Immunology
IDIS8010 (4 hr.) Advanced Studies in Infectious Diseases
IDIS8160 (1 hr) Seminar in Infectious Diseases
- Summer** Biostats (3 hr)
Form Graduate Advisory Committee – complete form on GradSlate
Complete Full Program of Study in DegreeWorks and submit for committee approval

Year 2

- Fall** IDIS8200 (2 hr.) Infectious Diseases Grant Writing
IDIS8160 (1 hr) Seminar in Infectious Diseases
Journal Club (1 hr)
Journal Club (1 hr)
Complete Prospectus and submit to Advisory Committee
- Spring** IDIS8160 (1 hr) Seminar in Infectious Diseases
IDIS8170 (1 hr) Research in Progress Seminar
Journal Club (1 hr)
Graduate Elective course (3 hr)
- Summer** Second annual committee meeting and prepare for Qualification Exam

Year 3

- Fall** **Written and Oral Qualification Exam**
- Spring** IDIS8170 (1 hr) Research in Progress Seminar
Complete Application to Candidacy
Focus on completing research project
- Summer** Third annual committee meeting

Year 4

- Fall** Focus on completing research project
- Spring** Focus on completing research project
- Summer** Fourth annual committee meeting

Year 5

- Fall** Focus on completing research project
- Spring** Focus on completing research project
- Summer** IDIS9300 (3 hr)
Thesis defense, final committee meeting

Example of Forms:

Annual assessment form to be completed by Major Professor:

Please evaluate your student in the following traits, 1=deficient 5=excellent

1. Intellectual curiosity and effort towards gaining an in-depth understanding of student's topic area
2. Self-motivation and initiative
3. Verbal and written communication skills
4. Ability to work independently
5. Ability to define research problems & organize research accordingly
6. Ability to think critically and analyze results
7. Participation in seminars, journal clubs, and other professional activities
8. Ability to manage time effectively
9. Ability to communicate effectively with major professor
10. Progress towards completion of thesis/dissertation research

Additional comments or points for improvement:

Annual Committee Meeting assessment

(completed by both Major Professor and committee members)

Based on the student's presentation and committee meeting performance, please assess the student, 1=poor 10=excellent. Note: it is expected that students early in the program will not earn many excellent ratings and the numerical scores should increase over the course of the program with students earning 8-10 by the end of the program.

1. Student demonstrated a depth of knowledge in their specialty area.
2. Student demonstrated a breadth of knowledge in their specialty area.
3. Student demonstrated analytical/methodological and critical thinking skills needed to evaluate research in their area of specialization
4. Student demonstrated the ability to design, conduct and analyze experiments using appropriate methods to achieve specific research objectives
5. Student demonstrated strong verbal communication skills
6. Student demonstrated strong written communication skills

Is there any reason the student should be placed on a remediation plan (ie. the student is not meeting expectations or completing program milestones in a timely manner?)

Comments/Suggestions:

Example of assistantship letter

Congratulations! You have been selected to receive a Research Assistantship for 2026-2027. Recipients are selected through a competitive process, and assistantships are awarded only to the University's most qualified individuals to support them in their graduate study.

The benefits of this assistantship include an annual payment of \$38,044 and a reduction of tuition to \$25 per semester,¹ instead of the standard tuition, which for the 2026-2027 school year is \$5,172 for in-state students, \$15,912 for out-of-state students, and \$16,368 for out-of-country students.² Therefore, the full value of this award includes your annual assistantship payment *and* the savings in tuition that you will receive should you accept this award.

Please note that your monthly assistantship paycheck amounts may vary. Your monthly payments are prorated depending on the start and end dates of your appointment, and if your hire date is delayed beyond the start date of your assistantship your payment will be prorated accordingly. Likewise, the total annual payment will be prorated according to actual months worked. Please note, if you do not arrive on campus by the first day of classes, your assistantship may be revoked.

Your assistantship will begin on July 1, 2026 and end on June 30, 2027. Your assistantship monthly payment amounts will be \$3,170.30.

The University is committed to renewing this award for additional years, contingent upon your satisfactory academic progress, satisfactory work performance, and continued availability of funding. As a Research Assistant, you are considered a part-time, temporary employee as well as a student, and you are required to follow all University policies. Notwithstanding this offer of assistantship, in the event you are found in violation of a University policy, you may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of your employment. If your employment is terminated, you may become responsible for the full amount of your tuition and fees for the semester in which the termination occurred.

All University of Georgia students are required to pay mandated student fees. For fall semester 2025, these are \$729 for students located on the Athens campus and include services of the University Health Center and Ramsey Student Center for Physical Activities, as well as transportation, athletic, technology, and activity fees. For further information on tuition and fees, including applicable fee schedules for other campuses, please see <http://www.bursar.uga.edu>. Additionally, international students will be required to pay an International Student Compliance Fee. Further information on this fee can be found at <https://globalengagement.uga.edu/immigration/fees-page>.

All students on assistantship are required to have health insurance unless they qualify to opt out of the University System's health insurance plan. Further information on student health insurance and the premiums for the Mandatory Plan is available at <https://hr.uga.edu/benefits-wellbeing/health-insurance-retirement-plans/student-health-insurance/mandatory-plan/>.

To determine what impact, if any, this assistantship will have on your financial aid eligibility for the academic year, please contact the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) at 706-542-6147 or osfa@uga.edu.

¹ Graduate Assistants enrolled in an e-rate program pay \$25 per semester for tuition plus the e-rate differential. The e-rate differential is the difference between the in-state standard grad rate and the hourly e-rate assessment.

² The most current rates can be found here: https://busfin.uga.edu/bursar/bursar_quick_links/

Your assistantship award is intended to contribute to your scholarly development and is contingent on your continued status as a graduate student in good standing. While on the IDIS assistantship, you must register for a total of eighteen (18) graduate credit hours for the Fall and Spring semesters and nine (9) graduate credit hours during the Summer semester. You will be expected to complete annual committee meetings, attend IDIS Seminars, complete qualification exams in a timely manner, participate in the annual Student Symposium, and take advanced-level courses. Please contact your Director of Graduate Studies if you have questions about your academic obligations.

For your assistantship, you must spend 18.6 hours per week working in your academic department on research determined by you and your PI. These hours are in addition to the Research Credit hours which are a distinct time commitment to lab work. It is expected that you will perform these duties to the satisfaction of your department and faculty mentor. If you have questions about your work obligations, please contact Melinda Brindley, Director of Graduate Studies.

We hope you will accept this assistantship to pursue your degree at the University of Georgia. Please inform us of your decision by signing and returning one copy of this letter to Jessica Moss at jart@uga.edu on or before July 1, 2026.

Sincerely,

Faculty Member (PI)

Director of Graduate Studies

UGA Graduate School Resources for Students

- Dissertation Completion Grants
- [Scholarships and Fellowships](#)

UGA Resources For Students (more of a general list for all graduate students)

- Graduate Student Organizations: [GPSA](#), [GAPS](#), GRADS
- [Career Services](#)
- [Alumni office](#)
- [Libraries](#)
- [Health Center](#)
- [CAPS](#)
- [Parking](#)
- [Registrar](#)
- [Bursar](#)
- [Where to rent technology](#)
- [Financial Education / ASPIRE Clinic](#)
- [Office of Global Engagement \(OGE\)](#)
- [Center for Global and Cultural Student Engagement](#)
- [Writing Center](#)