Agroecology Student Handbook

Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook
for Graduate Work in Agroecology

University of Wisconsin – Madison

Last Revised: June 2026

Contents

Contents

PROGRAM OVERVIEW **3**

PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK **3**

KEYPEOPLE **3**

ADMISSIONS **4**

PROGRAM TRACKS AND REQUIREMENTS **5**

GRADUATE SCHOOL RULES **7**

DEGREE COMPLETION **9**

DEGREE COMPLETION CHECKLIST 9

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT **10**

CAMPUS-WIDE RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT **10**

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS – CONDUCT **10**

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT 10

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT 12

NON-ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT 13

RESEARCH MISCONDUCT 14

LIST SERVES **14**

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS AND ADVISORS **14**

FOR STUDENTS 15

FOR ADVISORS 17

Program Overview

The Agroecology Program aims to train practitioners and researchers in a broadened vision of the possibilities of agriculture. Students in this program will integrate the underexamined ecological and social components of agriculture into a vision of a more beneficent system. In accordance with this vision, students will engage with a critical examination of our current agricultural framework. Through this, students will be empowered with the knowledge and necessary skills to most effectively transform agriculture and food systems. Graduates will have employed the Wisconsin Idea such that public practice and research extend beyond the university.

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is intended for graduate students who are pursuing an MS in Agroecology. Its content focuses mainly on Program requirements, which extend beyond the foundational requirements of the Graduate School as a whole. To understand the multiple layers of requirements, students should use this handbook in conjunction with the Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures, which provide essential information regarding general University requirements. The Grad School's web site contains a wealth of information to help students navigate in this space.

The Agroecology Program's authority to set degree requirements beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the Agroecology Program's Governance Committee. Degrees and course requirements may change over time. However, the Program Manager will communicate all changes to the student body, and students will be responsible only for the degree and course requirements in effect when they entered the program.

Students should supplement the information in this handbook by individual consultation with their advisor, committee, and the Program Manager so that individual needs/interests and all degree requirements are met. The Learning Plans, included as appendices below, are the main instruments for Agroecology students to plan their course work and research to meet program requirements, and will help greatly in planning for timely completion of program requirements.

Key People

The Agroecology Program is supported by the interdisciplinary Agroecology cluster, which resulted in three faculty members hired in 2002: Michael Bell in Community and Environmental Sociology, Claudio Gratton in Entomology, and Randall Jackson in Agronomy. Michael Bell and Bill Bland (Soil Science) initiated the program in 2004.

Graduate Program Manager Caitlin Collies, Caitlin.Collies@wisc.edu serves as the main point of contact for current and prospective students on admissions and course-related issues. A student's advisor and the faculty program chair provide support and guidance on academic questions.

Admissions

The Agroecology Program accepts a wide range of undergraduate majors, not limited to the social and natural sciences. The admissions process is highly competitive, so all applicants should have a record of strong grades, Agroecology-relevant experience, and a commitment to learning in a multidisciplinary program.

The process for admission to the Agroecology Program has two linked stages. First, the Admissions Committee reviews all applications for fall entry in December or January. The Program Chair will notify all applicants of their status shortly thereafter. However, this is not the end of the process. After this initial acceptance to the program, all prospective students must secure a faculty advisor and have a plan for financial support for their studies before the Agroecology Program will officially recommend them for admission to the Graduate School. While the Agroecology Program will assist admissible students in securing funding and an advisor, the process is ultimately the responsibility of the incoming student, and can take several weeks and in some cases several months.

In seeking out an advisor, students are encouraged to gather information from the Agroecology Program website and departmental and faculty websites to help identify faculty with matching interests. Students should then directly contact their preferred faculty to discuss their interests and the potential for advising and funding. Polite persistence is helpful in ensuring consideration, and it is often helpful for prospective students to travel to Madison and schedule in-person visits with faculty and the Program Manager in late fall or spring.

For most Agroecology students, financial support for their graduate studies comes in the form of a Graduate Assistantship such as a Teaching, Research, or Project Assistantship that includes tuition remission and a stipend. In many cases, the faculty academic advisor is also the faculty member with whom the student will work as a Graduate Assistant. Thus, the availability of funding can play a strong role in guiding the selection process between prospective students and would-be advisors. Fellowships and other avenues of financial support are possible funding mechanisms for Agroecology Students. All prospective students should be in contact with the Agroecology Program Manager during this process.

For more information on advisors, please see the advisor policy from the Graduate School.

Program Tracks and Requirements

The Agroecology Program offers a Master's degree with two tracks. The Public Practice Track trains project developers and program managers at the interfaces of agriculture and other sectors of society. Students enrolled in this track will have the opportunity to combine the academic rigor of their coursework with the practical challenges of managing an applied project and generating useful deliverables for stakeholders. (See Agroecology website for learning plan and available courses in upcoming semester).

The Research Track addresses the need for continued research and scholarship to inform scientific discussions and negotiations. Students will have the opportunity to obtain experience in the scholarship of original research, culminating in the writing of a thesis. The research track is more common than the Public Practice track, with about 75 percent of students pursuing the research option. (See Agroecology website for learning plan and available courses in upcoming semester).

Students may change Tracks in the course of their studies, but this is dependent on approval from their advisor and the Agroecology Program.

Please review our guide page for all information

The two program tracks in summary are:

	Public Practice Track	Research Track
Goals	Giving students the skills for engaging broad public discussion concerning the place of agriculture in a multifunctional landscape	Giving students the necessary interdisciplinary foundation for advanced agroecological research and scholarship
Course Work	Core curriculum; cross-training electives	Core curriculum; cross-training electives based on thesis research
Major Product	Project	Thesis
Advising	Electives chosen through Learning Plan signed with Program Manager and advisor; master's project carried out with Project Committee	Electives chosen with Thesis Committee; master's thesis conducted with Thesis Committee

Sample Semester by Semester Course Plan

Sample Semester by Semester Plan - Public Practice Option

*note: see Learning Plan for course descriptions and specific requirements

	year 1	year 2	year 3
Fall	Agroecol 720 (1) Agroecol 701 (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	As needed to fulfill requirements/ complete project
Spring	Agroecol 702 (3) Agroecol 710 (1) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3) Agroecol 990 (3)	
Summer	Agroecol 990 as needed	Agroecol 990 as needed	

Sample Semester by Semester Plan - Research Option

*note: see Learning Plan for course descriptions and specific requirements

	year 1	year 2	year 3
Fall	Agroecol 720 (1) Agroecol 701(3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) Agroecol 990 (3) cross-training elective (3) cross-training elective (3)	As needed to fulfill requirements/ complete thesis
Spring	Agroecol 702 (3) (1) Agroecol 710 Agroecol 990 (3) cross-training elective (3)	Agroecol 710 (1) Agroecol 990 (3) cross-training elective (3) Agroecol 990 (3)	
Summer	Agroecol 990 as needed	Agroecol 990 as needed	

Graduate School Rules

Minimum Masters Degree Requirements

All Agroecology Graduate Students must meet Graduate School requirements and Program requirements. Graduate School Requirements include a minimum GPA of 3.0 and a minimum of 16 credits of graduate level coursework (300 and above). Please see the Agroecology Learning Plans on how Graduate School requirements affect Agroecology cross-training electives. Agroecology requires a minimum of 34 credits for the degree.

Joint Degrees

Agroecology students can pursue a joint degree with an affiliated department such as Agronomy, Entomology, Horticulture, Soil Science or Community & Environmental Sociology. A joint degree consists of one graduate degree with two majors. To apply for a joint degree a student must submit a proposal for the degree to the Graduate School along with an Application for Change of Major/Addition of Major for Currently Enrolled Students. The student must also be admitted to the second major. The Graduate School Academic Associate Deans review all such proposals. Students must submit the proposal no later than the beginning of their second year of graduate study. Students interested in pursuing a joint degree should contact the Agroecology Program manager ASAP.

Funding and Financial Information

Incoming Agroecology students must secure a plan for financial support for their studies as part of the admissions process. Typically, this funding comes in the form of a graduate assistantship of 33-50% that includes tuition remission (research, project, or teaching assistantship). Other forms of funding such as fellowships are acceptable substitutes. Students with alternative funding should contact the Program Chair. If you do not have a (guaranteed) appointment and are looking for funding, the Graduate School provides a list of steps to follow. Teaching assistantships throughout the campus are listed here (be sure to click the subset for *UW Graduate Assistant* to be sure it's a tuition-remitting position).

TA and PA Collective Bargaining

The contract between the state and the Teaching Assistant's Association covering TAs and PAs is no longer in force; however, the university is continuing to use the terms of the contract until campus formally adopts new university policies. Since the TAA no longer represents TAs and PAs, sections of the contract referring to "union" rights and responsibilities are no longer in effect. TAs and PAs can find policies in the contract related to: grievance procedures; appointments; orientation, training, and evaluation; non-discrimination; termination; health and safety; and benefits, including sick leave, vacation, and leave of absence.

Stipend Levels and Paychecks

Stipend rates for graduate assistantships are set by the University. Current rates for TAs, PAs, and RAs are on the Graduate School website here. Graduate assistants receive stipends on a monthly. They may authorize direct deposit by filling out the Authorization for Direct Deposit of Payroll form and returning it to Sandra Bennett in the Agronomy Department. (https://uwservice.wisc.edu/docs/forms/pay-direct- deposit.pdf)

Tuition Remission and Payment of Segregated Fees

TAs, PAs, RA, and Lecturers (Students Assistants) with appointments of 33.3% or higher (approximately 13 hrs/week) receive remission of their full tuition (in- and out-of-state, as

applicable). Students with these appointments are still responsible for paying segregated fees. For students enrolled at less than full time (less than 8 credits), segregated fees are pro-rated by credit. International students also pay an international fee of $100/semester.

Health Insurance Benefits

TAs, PAs, RA, and Lecturers (Student Assistants) with appointments of 33.3% or higher (approximately 13 hrs/week) for at least the length of a semester are eligible to enroll in a health insurance program. Information about health insurance options can be found at http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/benefits/new- emp/grad.aspx.

Thesis Committee

This minimum 3-member committee will oversee a public practice student's project and a research student's thesis. The committee must be composed of the student's faculty advisor and two other members at least two of whom are also a member of the faculty affiliates. One or more committee members must be from a department other than that of the advisor, and students are encouraged to pursue committee representation from both social and natural sciences. At least two members must be UW-Madison faculty and the third member can be non-faculty according to UW Graduate School policies. https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201

Prior coursework

If you are interested in transferring prior coursework, with the permission of your committee, see the full policy here https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216

Enrollment Requirements for Graduate Assistants

Students with graduate assistantships must enroll as full time students (min 8 credits in the fall and spring semesters and 4 credits during the summer). Detailed information about enrollment requirements is located in the Graduate School's academic policies here.

Graduate School Fellowships

The Graduate School administers a number of different fellowships on campus, including: the University Fellowships, Chancellor's Fellowships, Mellon-Wisconsin Fellowships, the Dickie Fellowships, and a variety of external fellowships
https://kb.wisc.edu/gsadminkb/page.php?id=34761

External Funding/Fellowships

We encourage all students to seek out and apply for funding from sources external to the university (e.g., federal agencies, professional organizations, private foundations). The Graduate School supports selected federal/private fellowships through the provision of tuition support and health insurance, list here

Funding for Study Abroad and International Research

The Institute for Regional and International Studies provides information about opportunities for international research, grants, scholarships and other funding.

Degree Completion

At the beginning of the semester in which a student anticipates graduating, they should report to the Program Manager. Together they will check their coursework against their learning plan and insure the student has completed all Graduate School and Agroecology degree requirements. At this point, the student must set a date with their thesis committee and ask that the Program Manager requests a graduation warrant **at least 3 weeks before the anticipated date of their final presentation**. All incompletes must be removed before a warrant can be issued for a Master's degree.

Students must be registered for at least two credits in the semester in which they plan to receive a Master's degree. In rare situations the Graduate School will approve the payment of a degree completion fee for students who have met all degree requirements except thesis defense or removal of an incomplete. To be eligible the student must have submitted the thesis paper while registered. The fee is equal to 2 graduate credits at the in-state rate. The department must complete a request for this exception to be made.

Degree Completion Checklist

- Complete coursework, maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA, and clear all incompletes.
- Early in the semester, notify the Program Manager that you intend to graduate.
- You must be registered for at least 2 credits for the semester in which you receive your degree, or pay a degree completion fee. (see Graduate School Master's Degree Deadlines and Events).
- Schedule a thesis defense (Research Track) or a final presentation (Public Practice Track) in consultation with your committee and the Program Manager
    - Choose a defense/presentation date. This is a public event
    - At least 3 weeks before your scheduled defense/presentation, contact the Program Manager to request a warrant.
    - Students are responsible for gathering signatures on warrant and being aware of all deadlines.
- Submit electronic version of Thesis to the Program Manager.
- If submitting a thesis to Memorial Library, consult the Graduate School's Guide to Preparing Your Master's Thesis;
- See graduation checklist on website under student resources.

Professional Development

The Agroecology program may have funds available for travel and expenses related to conferences or collaborative efforts that result in extracurricular learning or networking. The Governance Committee will decide awards based on merit, need, and availability of funds.

Campus-wide Resources for Professional Development

In addition to opportunities at the local level, the Graduate School Office of Professional Development and Engagement (OPDE) provides direct programming in the areas of career development and skill building, and also serves as a clearing house for professional development resources across campus. The best way to stay informed is to watch for the weekly newsletter from OPDE, GradConnections, and to visit the webpage [TBD] for an up-to-date list of events. For example, typical topics covered throughout the year are:

- Individual development plans
- Planning for academic success
- Dissertation writing support
- Communication skills
- Grant writing
- Teaching
- Mentoring
- Research ethics
- Community engagement
- Entrepreneurship
- Career exploration: academic, non-profit, industry, government, etc.
- Job search support
- Pursuing postdoctoral training

Be sure to keep a pulse on programs offered by the following campus services as well.

- Writing Center http://www.writing.wisc.edu/
- Grants Information Collection http://grants.library.wisc.edu/
- Student Technology Training (STS) http://sts.doit.wisc.edu/
- Delta Program http://www.delta.wisc.edu
- UW Teaching Academy https://tle.wisc.edu/teaching-academy
- UW Center for the Humanities http://humanities.wisc.edu
- Wisconsin Entrepreneurial Bootcamp http://bus.wisc.edu/degrees-programs/non-business- majors/wisconsin-entrepreneurial-bootcamp

Satisfactory Progress – Conduct

Professional Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of professional behavior and ethics. Students should avoid even an appearance of improper behavior or lack of ethical standards while in Graduate School at UW-Madison, in all professional settings, and in their personal lives. Students should conduct themselves according to the standards expected of members of the profession to whichthe student aspires. Concerns about infractions of Professional Conduct may be effectively handled informally between the instructor/advisor and the student. If a resolution is not achieved, a graduate program representative may be included in the discussion. Separate and apart from a violation of Professional Conduct, a student may face University disciplinary action with regard to

the same action. Students are responsible for reading the information here as well as the information published on all the relevant web sites. Lack of knowledge of this information does not excuse any infraction.

1. Professional Ethics: Students shall show respect for a diversity of opinions, perspectives and cultures; accurately represent their work and acknowledge the contributions of others; participate in and commit to related opportunities; aim to gain knowledge and contribute to the knowledge base of others; understand the UW Student Code of Conduct; represent their profession and the program; and strive to incorporate and practice disciplinary ideals in their daily lives. Resumes/CVs must reflect accurate information.

2. Honesty and Integrity: Students shall demonstrate honesty and integrity as shown by their challenging of themselves in academic pursuits; honesty and ethics in research and IRB applications—including honesty in interpretation of data, commitment to an unbiased interpretation of academic and professional endeavors; and the need to document research activities, protect subject/client confidentiality and HIPPA regulations. Students shall follow- through and pull their weight in group activities and understand where collaboration among students is or is not allowed; not plagiarize others or past work (self-plagiarism), cheat, or purposefully undermine the work of others; and avoid conflicts of interest for the duration of their time in the program. Asa professional, honesty and integrity also extends to personal behavior in life outside of the academic setting by realizing that students are representatives of the program, UW-Madison, and the profession as a whole.

3. Interpersonal and Workplace Relationships: Students shall interact with peers, faculty, staff and those they encounter in their professional capacity in a manner that is respectful, considerate, and professional. This includes and is not limited to attending all scheduled meetings, honoring agreed upon work schedules, being on-time and prepared for work/meetings, contributing collaboratively to the team, keeping the lines of communication open, offering prompt response to inquiries, and employing respectful use of available equipment/technology/resources. Chronic or unexplained absences are unprofessional in the workplace and could be grounds for termination or removal of funding. To facilitate the free and open exchange of ideas, any criticism shall be offered in a constructive manner, and the right of others to hold different opinions shall be respected.

4. Commitment to Learning: Students are expected to meet their educational responsibilities at all times. Be actively prepared for class and be ready for questions and answers. Be on time for every class and always show courtesy during class or if you have to leave class early. If possible, students should notify the instructor at least one day in advance of a planned absence. Students who are unable to attend class are responsible for finding out what occurred that day and should not expect instructors to give them individual instruction. Recognizing that the pursuit of knowledge is a continuous process, students shall show commitment to learning by persevering despite adversity and seeking guidance in order to adapt to change. Students shall strive for academic excellence and pursue and incorporate all critique, both positive and negative, in the acquisition of knowledge in order to understand and respect the community inwhich they work.

5. Professional Appearance: Students shall convey a positive, professional appearance in order to represent the program in a dignified manner. Appearance includes a person's dress, hygiene, and appropriate etiquette/protocols for the environment (including safety protocols and protective clothing in environments that require them).

This graduate program, the Graduate School, and the Division of Student Life all uphold the UW-System policies and procedures in place for academic and non-academic misconduct. In addition,

graduate students are held to the same standards of responsible conduct of research as faculty and staff. Furthermore, unprofessional behavior towards clients/subjects, faculty, staff, peers and public are significant issues in the evaluation and promotion of students. In turn, we hold expectations for the highest level of academic integrity and expect professional, ethical, and respectful conduct in all interactions. Students may be disciplined or dismissed from the graduate program for misconduct or disregard for professional conduct expectations regardless of their academic standing in the program. Separate and apart from a violation of Professional Conduct, a student may face University disciplinary action with regard to the same action. Students are responsible for reading the information here as well as the information published on all the relevant web sites. Lack of knowledge of this information does not excuse any infraction.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is an act in which a student (UWS 14.03(1)):

1. seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
2. uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
3. forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
4. intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
5. engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or
6. assists other students in any of these acts.

Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to:

1. cutting and pasting text from the Web without quotation marks or proper citation;
2. paraphrasing from the Web without crediting the source;
3. using notes or a programmable calculator in an exam when such use is not allowed;
4. using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own by not properly crediting the originator;
5. stealing examinations or course materials;
6. changing or creating data in a lab experiment;
7. altering a transcript;
8. signing another person's name to an attendance sheet;
9. hiding a book knowing that another student needs it to prepare for an assignment;
10. collaboration that is contrary to the stated rules of the course; or
11. tampering with a lab experiment or computer program of another student.

Additional information regarding Academic Misconduct:
Graduate School policy and procedure on academic and non-academic misconduct.

University of Wisconsin System: Chapter UWS 14: Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures:
http://students.wisc.edu/doso/docs/uws_chapter_14.pdf

Non-Academic Misconduct

The university may discipline a student in non-academic matters in the following situations:

1. for conduct which constitutes a serious danger to the personal safety of a member of the university community or guest;
2. for stalking or harassment;
3. for conduct that seriously damages or destroys university property or attempts to damage or destroy university property, or the property of a member of the university community or guest;
4. for conduct that obstructs or seriously impairs university-run or university-authorized activities, or that interferes with or impedes the ability of a member of the university community, or guest, to participate in university-run or university-authorized activities;
5. for unauthorized possession of university property or property of another member of the university community or guest;
6. for acts which violate the provisions of UWS 18, Conduct on University Lands;
7. for knowingly making a false statement to any university employee or agent on a university- related matter, or for refusing to identify oneself to such employee or agent;
8. for violating a standard of conduct, or other requirement or restriction imposed in connection with disciplinary action.

Examples of non-academic misconduct include but are not limited to:

1. engaging in conduct that is a crime involving danger to property or persons, as defined in UWS 18.06(22)(d);
2. attacking or otherwise physically abusing, threatening to physically injure, or physically intimidating member of the university community ;
3. attacking or throwing rocks or other dangerous objects at law enforcement personnel, or inciting others to do so;
4. selling or delivering a controlled substance, as defined in 161 Wis. Stats., or possessing a controlled substance with intent to sell or deliver;
5. removing, tampering with, or otherwise rendering useless university equipment or property intended for use in preserving or protecting the safety of members of the university community, such as fire alarms, fire extinguisher, fire exit signs, first aid equipment, or emergency telephones; or obstructing fire escape routes;
6. preventing or blocking physical entry to or exit from a university building, corridor, or room;
7. engaging in shouted interruptions, whistling, or similar means of interfering with a classroom presentation or a university-sponsored speech or program;
8. obstructing a university officer or employee engaged in the lawful performance of duties;
9. obstructing or interfering with a student engaged in attending classes or participating in university-run or university-authorized activities;
10. knowingly disrupting access to university computing resources or misusing university computing resources.

Research Misconduct

Much of graduate education is carried out not in classrooms, but in laboratories and other research venues, often supported by federal or other external funding sources. Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish between academic misconduct and cases of research misconduct. Graduate students are held to the same standards of responsible conduct of research as faculty and staff. The Graduate School is responsible for investigating allegations of research misconduct. This is often done in consultation with the Division of Student Life as well as with federal and state agencies to monitor, investigate, determine sanctions, and train about the responsible conduct of research. For more information, contact the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research Policy, 333 Bascom Hall, (608) 262-1044.

Please see section on "Grievance Procedures and Misconduct Reporting" for further information on reporting research misconduct of others. Here are links for additional information regarding Research Misconduct and Responsible Conduct:

Graduate School Policies & Procedures: Responsible Conduct of Research

List Serves

The program maintains a list serve for all current Agroecology Graduate Students to communicate events and other relevant information. The Program Manager will add all incoming students to this list upon admission, but not before.

The ESSA (Environmental Studies Student Organization) list is useful list serve for incoming, current, and past students. To subscribe, contact owner-essa@lists.wisc.edu

Guidelines for Graduate Students and Advisors

The Agroecology program requires a strong relation with an advisor, whether in the research or public practice track. For any graduate thesis work, the student-advisor relationship plays a large role in student success.

Agroecology has unique characteristics affecting graduate advising. Faculty advisors are drawn from over 50 affiliates in many departments on campus, offering our graduate students a wide range of potential academic and research experiences. Each student can connect with an advisor that fits his or her learning goals and work style, and can engage additional faculty expertise through the thesis committee or as co-advisors.

This interdisciplinary richness is a strength, but there are challenges. Some advisors may not have had experience working with interdisciplinary students, and may bring different departmental cultures and disciplinary norms to bear on the advising relationship. This may increase the risk of mismatch in expectations, especially around funding, accountability, authorship, and the differing roles of students within a research group.

These characteristics of interdisciplinary programs may compound recognized challenges in graduate advising such as advisor feedback on student work, disagreement among committee members, authorship on publications, rate of student progress, appropriate boundaries for personal relationships, work environment, and sexual harassment.

Here we set forward the expectations and norms for Agroecology graduate advising. By ensuring that both students and advisors understand the basic tenets of graduate advising within the program, all members of the community have a basis for building successful and productive advising relationships.

For Students

* *Communication is key*. If you feel you are unable to have frank and helpful conversations with an advisor on subjects related to your program and your prospects after graduation, you should probably consider changing advisors. You have a right to do this, though you should be respectful and courteous in the process.

* *Take responsibility for your program*. Your advisor is expected to be a supportive mentor. Part of that should include being aware of your progress, encouraging you when things are going well, and expressing concerns if problems are perceived. However, you have primary responsibility for getting through your program. Many significant problems will not be apparent to an advisor, and it is your responsibility to come to them (or to someone) with your concerns.

* *Do not expect your advisor to know all the rules or be sensitive to your deadlines*. This recognition is especially important if your advisor has not advised Agroecology students in the past. You are responsible for scheduling meetings with your advisor, and for keeping track of deadlines and requirements. You are responsible for keeping your committee members informed as to your progress. Be aware of the major milestones for your degrees and the associated requirements.

* Lay out, with your advisor, *a plan and a schedule for your progress through the program*, to be revised as appropriate. This is always important, but it becomes crucial as you approach the final stages of your program. One reason is that the final stages require coordination with your committee. Make sure you have realistic self-imposed deadlines and that your advisor and committee members agree to your proposed schedule for reviews of and feedback on your thesis. Recognize that faculty have many responsibilities, so please provide adequate time for their responses. You may benefit from using the Graduate School's process for developing an Individual Development Plan (https://grad.wisc.edu/professional-development/individual-development-plan/).

* *Ask questions, and consider the work relationship early* in the research and grad school process. Recognize that advisors will have different expectations for your working relationship.

Different academic cultures have different norms about graduate student independence, authorship of work, and financial support for graduate students. Some advisors may provide written agreements about aspects of the advising relation. Make sure you understand all the tenets, whether expressed in written or oral form. Ask your advisor about research and teaching opportunities if you want to practice those skills. Sometimes they have data on which you can hone your statistical, analytical, and written skill sets.

* *Talk with advisors about the expectations for funding*, both prior to enrolling and throughout the graduate process. Students should understand the connections between funding and the nature of their work. Depending on the source of funding, advisors may expect that a student will work on a project of the student's own choosing, may expect that a student will work on a research activity that is already underway, or on a new research project designed and managed in collaboration with the advisor.

* *Some advisors may expect research contributions or professional activities beyond your thesis or formal coursework*. For example, you may be expected to attend the advisor's lab meetings, to assist in organizing visits by visiting scholars, or to write parts of papers for publication. If you feel these expectations are unreasonable, or that they interfere with your education, discuss your concerns first with your advisor. If you are unable to do this, or if the outcome is not satisfactory to you, you may consult with your committee members or the program chair.

* *All students have the right to work in a safe environment*. If you feel uncomfortable with your work environment, it is best to be proactive – consultation is not escalation. Timely discussion of people's concerns may allow resolution before alternatives become limited. The university will protect confidentiality to the extent possible under the law." The university provides information online on:
Hate and bias: https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/
Sexual harassment and violence: https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/prevention/violence-prevention/reporting-options/

* *Talking with someone is the first step* if you feel your academic or personal rights have been violated, or you have been sexually harassed. Even if you simply feel uncomfortable, our staff and trained faculty can help you think about next steps. If you feel your professional relationship with your advisor has been compromised, regardless of the type of disagreement or negative interaction, Program staff and leaders will work with you to find an alternate advisor.

CONTACTS:

Counseling/Psychological Health:

If you are seeking personal counseling, contact University Health Services' Counseling and Consultation at 608-265-5600.

If it is an urgent mental health issue, contact 608-265-5600 ext 9. If it is an emergency, then just dial 911.

Research Ethics

For questions about research ethics, go to https://www.rsp.wisc.edu/ethics.html You can also contact Brian Fox for questions/concerns about research misconduct.

Contact information: 608-262-1044; RIO@research.wisc.edu

Academic Issues

Contact the instructor if there are grade discrepancies. If there are more issues, contact the Program Manager or Director of Graduate Studies. https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/plant-agroecosystem-sciences/agroecology-ms/

Funding/Financial Aid

Talk to your advisor first about possible funding they may have available.
If funding beyond your first year in the program is not available through your advisor and you are still searching, talk to the program chair and go to https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/ to learn about other possible ways you might obtain it.

For Advisors

* Prior to accepting the responsibility of advising an Agroecology graduate student, *clarify your expectations and standard advising processes* with the prospective student. Written guidelines, informal emails, and/or candid discussions can all work to ensure that a prospect understands your expectations before joining your research group or student cohort.

* *Talk with prospective graduate students about funding opportunities*, both prior to accepting a prospect, and throughout the graduate process. Advisors makes a commitment to providing students with funded assistantships, but circumstances arise that may prevent full support throughout a student's participation in the program. You should be aware of your advisee's funding status and share information on funding opportunities. Provide timely notification of changes, particularly unexpected funding losses that will affect your ability to support a student.

* *Act in the best interest of your advisee*. Be transparent and proactive about your expectations. Meet and communicate with them on a regular basis to discuss courses, research, timelines, deadlines, professional development, and employment. You are expected to provide timely and substantive feedback on research design, methods, literature reviews, and thesis/dissertation drafts along with a reasonable timeline for each. Talk and be clear about policies regarding authorship with your student. Discuss your expectations for meetings, communication, feedback, timelines, deadlines, and authorship early in the advisor-advisee arrangement. Expect to help your student with their job search by talking about their options. Be prepared to write them letters of recommendation and to advocate for them in their quest for employment.

* If you expect advisees to attend events or contribute work products beyond the graduate thesis or specifically paid activities (like a TA or PA), *these should be clearly discussed and explained*. The student should know how his or her contribution will be recognized, and how this activity supports the broader educational or research goals.

* *Advisors are responsible for administering a final thesis defense* (though students are expected to attend to logistics of setting up the meeting). Advisors are strongly encouraged to conduct an initial review of the thesis topic or proposal review with the student and entire thesis committee.

* *You are responsible for creating a safe work environment* for your student advisees. The advisor should keep in mind professional ethics and responsibility in both work and informal

engagement. Avoid any actions or discourse of a personal nature that are inappropriate to a professional relationship. As the overseer of a group of students, you should be mindful of interactions within your group as well.

* *All advisors should be aware of UW-Madison sexual harassment policies and definitions,* and keep in mind that even consensual romantic or sexual relationships present a conflict of interest when a student-advisor power differential is involved. Advisors are expected to read: https://compliance.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/102/2018/01/UW-Madison-Policy-on-Sexual-Harassment-And-Sexual-Violence-January-2018.pdf

* You should *expect intellectual engagement and professional respect from your student*, and you should provide intellectual support, academic mentorship, and a professional work environment. Resources within the Program and across campus can help you deal with problems that arise in graduate advising. In conforming to the above principles, do not sacrifice professionally appropriate insistence on rigor and high academic standards. While each advisor-advisee arrangement is unique, the practice of frequent and clear communication is crucial.

* TA positions in Agroecology: There is an expectation of summer funding at the equivalent rate to an RA-ship from the faculty advisor for any work towards the degree in the summer term. In other words, if a student advisee has an agroecology TA position during the academic year, it is expected that the faculty advisor will provide RA level funding for that student during the summer term should they enroll or engage in research.

Contact points for faculty:

Director of Graduate Studies: Claudio Gratton cgratton@wisc.edu

Graduate Program Manager: Caitlin Collies
Caitlin.collies@wisc.edu