

# **GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

## **FOR**

**PH.D. FOREST & CONSERVATION SCIENCES**

**M.S. FORESTRY**

**M.S. PARKS, TOURISM & RECREATION MANAGEMENT**

**M.S. RESOURCE CONSERVATION**

# W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation

## Graduate Handbook to Degree Programs, Policies & Procedures

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## 1. W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation Graduate Programs Overview

Welcome to the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation (FCFC). This document is intended to help prospective, incoming, and current FCFC students and faculty to understand the requirements, policies, and procedures associated with graduate education in the FCFC, and to describe a set of basic expectations of all graduate students. This handbook contains detailed information about FCFC requirements and guidelines (including all relevant forms that must be submitted to the FCFC; section 12) for the Ph.D. in Forest & Conservation Sciences, the M.S. in Forestry, the M.S. in Parks, Tourism & Recreation Management, and the M.S. in Resource Conservation, including an option in International Conservation and Development (ICD). In addition to FCFC requirements, students must also comply with [UM Graduate School's Academic Policies](#).

In addition to the programs mentioned above, FCFC administers two additional graduate degree programs ([Wildlife Biology](#), interdisciplinary with the Division of Biological Sciences and Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit; and [Systems Ecology](#), University-wide) and three graduate certificates ([GIS Sciences & Technologies](#), [Natural Resources Conflict Resolution](#), and [Protected Area Distance Management](#)). These programs are not covered in this handbook, as their policies and procedures are different from those described here. For information, students should consult the relevant program website.

Faculty members in the FCFC strive to provide the best possible environment for graduate education, thereby creating the foundation to support a lifelong process of discovery and learning. The College endeavors to provide a strong community of scholarship and mentoring to support learning in a setting of scientific enquiry, critical thought, collaboration and interaction. The College will continually work to provide students the guidance, tools, skills and intellectual atmosphere best suited to develop them as scholars, professionals and leaders in their field, and to be adaptive to the changing needs of students and society. Students completing FCFC graduate programs should not only be well informed, but also well prepared to use their knowledge to the benefit of people and the environment.

### *Prospective Graduate Students*

Prospective students (i.e., those who have not been formally admitted to a graduate program) can find current FCFC degree program descriptions, admission policies and requirements (including application procedures) on the [FCFC Graduate Programs](#) page.

## 2. Graduate Student Mentoring

### *Responsibilities and Expectations of Faculty*

Mentoring graduate students is one of the most rewarding, challenging and intellectually stimulating aspects of being a faculty member. A student's acceptance letter identifies the faculty member that will be serving as the student's faculty advisor and the assigned faculty advisor works closely with the student through the entirety of the student's degree program. Faculty advisors help students gain depth and expertise in their field of study, understand the norms and practices of the profession, and improve communication skills through review and feedback on drafts of proposals, theses and professional papers, manuscripts, and presentations. The faculty

advisor is responsible for ensuring that a student's work is ready for committee review and must approve all proposal and thesis/dissertation materials before they are circulated to the rest of the committee. Some specific responsibilities of the faculty advisor include:

- Assisting the student with the selection and development of a suitable and manageable research topic.
- Helping the student choose committee members.
- Remaining accessible to the student on a regular basis for consultation and discussion of the student's academic progress and professional development.
- Helping students make appropriate progress by responding in a timely manner to written work submitted by the student with constructive suggestions for improvement and continuation.
- Making arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision when the faculty advisor will be absent for extended periods (e.g., one month or longer).
- Helping the student gain access to facilities or research materials.
- Ensuring that the working environment is safe, healthy and free from harassment, discrimination, and conflict.
- Providing career and professional advice and assisting in professional networking.
- Advising the student about current graduate program requirements, deadlines, sources of funding, etc.
- Encouraging the student to make presentations of research results within the University and to outside scholarly or professional bodies as appropriate, and assisting the student obtain funding to attend conferences or professional meetings.

### ***Responsibilities and Expectations of Committee Members***

Graduate students benefit from having multiple mentors. While the faculty advisor serves as the student's primary mentor, the student's graduate committee members also serve as mentors in various capacities. All committee members, and advisors in particular, invest a significant amount of time working with graduate students outside of the classroom and in return expect the same level of commitment from their graduate students. For a discussion of committee composition, please see section 11.

### ***Responsibilities and Expectations of Students***

Graduate school is significantly more demanding than undergraduate studies and requires intensive work and scholarship outside of and in addition to formal classes (graduate school is at least a full-time job). In addition to the time commitment, graduate school is intellectually demanding in ways that students may not have experienced, in the sense that the primary focus of graduate studies is scholarship. As a graduate student in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, we expect that you will be devoted to your project and willing to commit the time and energy to research and write a thesis, dissertation or professional paper. We also expect students to fully engage in scholarship that occurs both inside and outside of the classroom, and to contribute to a thriving intellectual community within the College. As a graduate student, you also are expected to:

- Be familiar with the requirements and procedures established by the Graduate School for your particular degree, as published on the [UM Graduate School's Academic Policies](#) page.

- Make dedicated efforts to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue your research project successfully. Such efforts include reading outside of courses, attending seminars, meeting with experts, and discussing material with other graduate students.
- In conjunction with your faculty advisor, develop a plan and timetable for completion of all stages of your thesis or dissertation project, adhere to a schedule and meet appropriate deadlines.
- Meet with your faculty advisor when requested and report fully and regularly on progress and results.
- Allow committee members adequate time (e.g., 3-4 weeks) to review documents, and contact committee well in advance to schedule meetings.
- Be prepared for and receptive to constructive criticism and academic advice from your faculty advisor and other members of your committee.
- Contribute to the intellectual life of the College as a whole, providing constructive feedback and support to peers, engaging in collaborative problem-solving, mentoring incoming students (in areas such as fundamental statistical, analytical, and computer skills; library/literature database research strategies; university norms and policies; professional networking; etc.) and working to create a thriving community of scholars.
- Attend seminars and defenses.
- Understand that plagiarism and cheating are unacceptable and are not tolerated under any circumstances (see the [UM Student Conduct Code](#)).
- Represent the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation at professional meetings and conferences when possible. We also encourage graduate students (and faculty) to participate in the [UM Graduate Student Research Conference](#) (GradCon), held annually during the spring semester.
- Present and publish thesis, dissertation or professional paper results in appropriate venues when possible.
- Recognize that self-motivated study outside of formal classroom settings, supported by mentoring but driven by student initiative, is a primary focus of graduate studies.
- Engage in civil discourse with your student, faculty, and off-campus colleagues.
- Communicate clearly with your advisor if you have any concerns or questions. Do not be afraid to let faculty know if you need guidance or resources.

### 3. FCFC Graduate Student Funding

The financial costs of attending graduate school and obtaining a graduate degree can be significant. All graduate students are strongly encouraged to pursue opportunities for obtaining financial support for their studies, through teaching and research assistantships and scholarships within the FCFC, or through other (external) channels. The student's faculty advisor can provide assistance in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities. However, in many cases neither the faculty advisor nor the FCFC can guarantee that funding will be available.

#### *Teaching Assistantships*

The W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation has a number of teaching assistantships (TAs) available to graduate students enrolled in FCFC degree programs each year. Graduate students in these positions assist faculty with course instruction through leading labs or discussion sections, delivering lectures, and grading assignments. Teaching assistants are selected according to their background in courses for which teaching assistants are needed on a semester or yearly basis. Full-time teaching assistants may expect to work between

15 and 18 hours per week for 15 weeks each semester of the academic year on TA-related duties. In addition to a stipend, teaching assistants receive a tuition fee waiver (in-state or out-of-state). Other fees charged by the University (e.g., student fees and health insurance) are not included in the TA fee waiver package. Both incoming and current graduate students may be eligible for teaching assistantships. Teaching assistants are required to register for a minimum of six credits and a maximum of ten credits each semester. If a student wishes to enroll in more than ten credits during a semester in which they are a TA, the student will be responsible for the additional tuition and fees.

*Note:* For graduate students needing health insurance through the University of Montana, a minimum number of six credits must be taken per semester. Please be aware that all students enrolled at UM must have health insurance. Student taking less than 6 credits can petition to enroll into the student health insurance plan. For more information, please visit the [Curry Health Center](#) webpage.

For students interested in being considered for TA positions, the student's graduate advisor is first point of contact. Once notified of a student's interest in a TA position, the advisor notifies the relevant Department Chair. The chair will evaluate the College's particular teaching needs and the skills of the applicants, and submit a list of candidates to the FCFC College Council. Final TA assignments are made by the FCFC College Council.

### ***Research Assistantships***

Research assistantships (RAs) may be made available to graduate students by faculty members who have received grants from outside sources (e.g., Forest Service, Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Science Foundation, or other public or private organizations). The number of research assistantships offered varies by year depending on available funds. Research assistants are assigned duties by the faculty member with funding, and these duties may or may not involve research related to the student's own research project. Research assistantships include similar financial benefits to those of teaching assistantships. Research assistants are required to register for a minimum of six credits each semester.

*Note:* For graduate students needing health insurance through the University of Montana, a minimum number of six credits must be taken per semester. Please be aware that all students enrolled at UM must have health insurance. Student taking less than 6 credits can petition to enroll into the student health insurance plan. For more information, please visit the [Curry Health Center](#) webpage.

### ***Graduate Student Scholarships***

Through the generosity of multiple donors, a number of scholarships have been established to support graduate students pursuing degrees spanning a variety of environmental- or conservation-related fields. These scholarships provide opportunities for financial assistance to FCFC students in all programs, with awards ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars each. The application period for FCFC scholarships typically runs from late-November through mid-February each year. For more information, please visit the [FCFC Scholarships](#) webpage.

In addition to scholarships and potential funding opportunities offered by the W.A Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, a number of external funding opportunities exist for graduate students, and students are strongly encouraged to explore these opportunities early in their graduate careers. For example, the National Science

Foundation provides funding opportunities for M.S. and Ph.D. students in their early graduate careers via the [NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program](#) and to Ph.D. Candidates via [NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants](#), among others. In addition, the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#) and the [US Department of Energy](#) also provide funding opportunities to students in the environmental and natural resource sciences. Finally, private organizations also provide opportunities for graduate student funding (e.g., the [Wyss Foundation](#)). Students are encouraged to meet with their advisors to discuss these and other potential funding sources and opportunities. The FCFC also lists many external scholarships on the [Scholarships](#) page of their website and students are encouraged to review this page often as deadlines are updated frequently.

#### **4. Graduate Advisors & Committees**

##### ***Graduate Advisor (M.S. and Ph.D. Students)***

At the time of admittance to an FCFC graduate program, each student is assigned a faculty advisor who will serve as their committee chair. The chair must be a faculty member in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation (see section 11). The chair and the student will work together closely throughout the student's tenure. Among other things, the chair is responsible for helping the student choose appropriate courses and committee members, select a program of study, develop the proposed thesis or professional paper, and help the student navigate through the final examination.

On rare occasions, graduate students may need to change chairs. For example, if a student's chair has an extended illness or will be out of the country for several years, if the student's research interests change dramatically and the chair can no longer advise the student because the topic is beyond their expertise (e.g. a student working on a social science study who wants to change to an ecological study or vice versa), or if there are other extenuating circumstances (e.g. a student and a chair have irreconcilable differences), the graduate student should approach the Department Chair to discuss options.

In these cases, the graduate student should approach their current chair to discuss the possibility of switching chairs. The graduate student then needs to approach other faculty to gauge their willingness to serve as chair. The prospective chair should discuss the situation with the current chair before accepting the student.

Further, when graduate students switch chairs and/or change topics, they need to contact their committee members. In these cases, committee members have the option to remain on the committee or step down.

Graduate students should discuss potential changes to committee members with their chair before contacting those committee members. It is not typically appropriate to change committee members because of a "no" vote on comprehensive exams.

If graduate students are not making sufficient progress (as outlined in the FCFC Graduate Handbook and determined by UM policy), they may be dropped from the program. The student's chair should provide a six-month probationary warning (in writing) to the student and the FCFC Student Services Office who will then forward that information to the Graduate School Office. Specific guidance regarding what the student needs to do to remain in the program must be contained in this warning. If the student has questions or concerns about

the warning that are not adequately addressed by their chair, they can also discuss the situation with their Department Chairs.

### ***Graduate Committees***

The role of the graduate committee is to help the student achieve his/her goals and objectives. The graduate committee provides feedback on and must approve:

- the student's schedule of courses (course of study)
- the thesis/dissertation proposal
- the thesis/dissertation, and
- the oral defense

In addition to the duties described above, the Ph.D. committee is also required to administer the written and oral comprehensive examinations (see section 8).

Committee member selection should be based on the ability of specific faculty to provide guidance on the research and dissertation, thesis or professional paper (see section 11 for specific information regarding committee composition). When considering inviting specific faculty to serve on your committee, students should gather as much information as possible by talking with fellow students about different faculty, reading faculty papers, attending seminars, meeting with prospective committee members, and taking classes with them whenever possible. When meeting with prospective committee members, students should describe their dissertation, thesis or professional paper topic and explain how they think that faculty member could contribute. In addition, they should ask prospective committee members about their expectations for graduate students to evaluate if the faculty member is a good fit.

After discussion with their chair about appropriate committee members, the student is responsible for contacting prospective committee members and obtaining their commitment to serve. The student must have each prospective committee member sign the Committee Appointment Form (see section 12) and submit it to the FCFC Student Services, who after checking to make sure the committee meets the criteria below, shall forward the nominations to the Dean of the Graduate School for his or her approval. Once approved, the Graduate Committee assumes the general oversight and management of the student's graduate program. The composition of the graduate committee may change as the research proposal develops. If this is the case, the FCFC Student Services Office and all committee members must be notified of any such changes. The FCFC Student Services Office will forward the change in committee membership to the Graduate School.

### **Ph.D. Committees**

The Ph.D. Dissertation Committee consists of the graduate advisor who serves as the committee chair, and must include four additional members (see section 11 for specific information regarding committee composition). No later than the third semester in residence, Ph.D. students should assemble and convene a first meeting of their graduate committee. At the conclusion of the meeting, the student should submit a signed coursework form to the FCFC Student Services Office (see section 12).

### **M.S. Committees**

In addition to the faculty advisor, M.S. students must select two additional members to serve on their committee (see section 11 for specific information regarding committee composition). No later than the end of

the second semester in residence (earlier if possible), M.S. students should assemble and convene a first meeting of their graduate committee. At the conclusion of the meeting, the student should submit a signed coursework form to the FCFC Student Services Office (see section 12).

## 5. Coursework and Academic Standards

Course requirements for graduate students are meant to be flexible, allowing students to work with their advisors and committees to design a course of study that meets their professional goals and prepares them for their dissertation, thesis or professional paper. Thus, different graduate students often take very different courses. Because graduate courses change, we encourage students to talk about classes with each other, with their advisors and with other faculty, obtain course syllabi, and sit in on classes to learn more about their options. Students typically take courses from faculty both within and outside of the FCFC, so look carefully at course offerings across campus. For a list of courses offered by faculty in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, please see the [University of Montana Catalog](#).

### *General Course Requirements*

All graduate students supported via a Research (RA) or Teaching Assistantship (TA) in the FCFC must register for a minimum of six credits each semester during the academic year. As per the University of Montana's continuous enrollment policy, graduate students must register for at least three credits each fall and spring semester until graduation (see section 7). In some cases, students can fill out a [Petition to the Graduate Dean](#) to reduce the registration requirement to one credit (e.g., students who have completed most requirements but have not submitted a final version of the thesis or dissertation). If a student wishes to submit a petition and if the petition is approved, it can only be granted for one semester. Petitions need to be signed by the faculty advisor and submitted to the FCFC Student Services Office who will then send the Petition to the Graduate Dean for final approval.

All graduate students must enroll in at least one graduate seminar each academic year from among the following options: FCFC-wide "global" seminar; a topical graduate seminar appropriate to the student's program; a departmental or program seminar (e.g., WILD 594); or a graduate seminar focused specifically on developing presentation skills (e.g., FORS 594).

*Note:* The seminar requirement may be waived by the student's faculty advisor in cases where the student is already carrying a full nine-credit load, or the student is working away from campus. Students not enrolling because they already have a ten-credit load are still expected to attend these seminars, even if they do not enroll for credit, especially the global seminar (see section 6).

### *Provisional Admission Course Requirements*

Students who have been admitted provisionally must enroll in at least six graded credits (i.e., not taken as credit/no credit) during their first semester and earn at least a 3.0 GPA. This is a minimum requirement of the College. Faculty advisors may require a student to meet additional standards. It is important for provisional students to speak with their faculty advisors prior to enrollment so that they are aware of what is expected of them. At the end of a student's first semester, the faculty advisor will inform the FCFC Student Services Office if

the student has met their expectations and if so, the status will be changed to full admission. If a provisionally admitted student has not fulfilled the requirements set forth by the FCFC and their faculty advisor, they may be dropped from the program.

### ***Ph.D. Course Requirements***

Required coursework is geared toward preparing the student to develop sound scientific knowledge and to facilitate the incorporation of that knowledge into practice. Hence, required coursework may include aspects of theory, application, biology and ecology, socio-political aspects of natural resource management, and statistical and other quantitative or qualitative methods. The coursework package is developed, in consultation with the student's graduate committee, to assist the student in planning, conducting, and writing the dissertation.

No later than the end of a student's third semester in residence (or earlier if possible), a coursework outline should be presented to, and approved by, the student's committee. A brief statement followed by the signatures of the committee members will serve as tangible evidence of the committee's approval of the coursework outline. Copies of the coursework outline and approval should be placed in the faculty advisor's files, in the student's own files, and submitted to the FCFC Student Services Office. The committee may make reasonable additions to the coursework outline if later evaluation shows that further coursework is needed.

Primary emphasis in the Ph.D. program is on professional development, stimulation of intellectual curiosity, and competency in science rather than on a specified set of courses. The course requirements for the Ph.D. program are:

- At least 60 credits beyond the Bachelor's degree; more may be required by the dissertation committee, depending on the student's background.
- At least 40 credits in coursework (not including thesis or research credits), with at least half (minimum 20 credits) of the 40 coursework credits at the 500-level or above. 400-level courses used to fulfil this requirement must include a "Graduate Increment".
- At least 30 semester graduate credits at the University of Montana.
- At least one credit of graduate seminar per academic year (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD 594). See section 6 for more information.

On the recommendation of the graduate committee and approval of the Graduate Dean, credits may be transferred (including an entire Master's degree and/or credits from a Master's degree program) from other institutions after one semester in residence. Credits with grades other than A or B, thesis or correspondence credits, extension credits outside the Montana University System, or credits earned at institutions not offering graduate degrees in the discipline of the courses are not transferable.

### ***Master's Degree Course Requirements***

#### **Choosing the Thesis or Professional Paper Option (M.S. students only)**

In the FCFC, M.S. students can select one of three options to satisfy the degree requirements: thesis, professional paper, or non-thesis options (see below). Regardless of whether the student pursues the thesis, professional paper, or non-thesis option, graduate students should be competent to participate in dialogue

about the current state of knowledge and literature in their field of study, capable of insightful, in-depth analysis of contemporary practice, and able to engage in constructive critique and problem solving with colleagues and the public. Theses and professional papers should be of a quality sufficient to meaningfully contribute to professional dialog on some currently relevant topic of managerial, conceptual, or methodological interest.

### M.S. Thesis Option

All FCFC Master of Science degree programs offer a thesis option. The thesis option for all M.S. degrees granted through the FCFC requires that the student conduct an independent, systematic, and in-depth research project. While the exact nature of the project varies by discipline, the essential requirement of a Master's Thesis is that it demonstrates mastery of a particular subject or area: the student must demonstrate understanding of the state-of-the-art and conceptual underpinnings in a particular subfield and the methodological approaches underlying the research project. The thesis requires asking a novel question and producing an original contribution to knowledge. Thesis research typically involves data collection, analysis and interpretation. The thesis is expected to be publication-quality and suitable for submission to a peer-review journal (although publishing a thesis is not a formal requirement). Students also must demonstrate:

- Substantive and contemporary theoretical and empirical knowledge of the field.
- Detailed knowledge of the research logic and methods used in the field of research.
- High quality writing and presentation, suitable for publication.

Students typically choose the thesis option if they are interested primarily in learning how to conduct scientific research, mastering particular research methods, pursuing a scientific or research-related career and/or future doctoral studies.

*M.S. Thesis Option: Coursework and Credit Requirements* – The specific courses (program of study) that a graduate student enrolls in will be tailored to each individual, based on their academic background, professional interests, and the focus of their thesis work. The course requirements for all M.S. Degrees with the thesis option include:

- At least 30 graduate semester credits.
- At least 20 credits in coursework (not including thesis or research credits), with at least half (minimum 10 credits) of the 20 coursework credits at the 500-level or above. 400-level courses used to fulfil this requirement must include a “graduate increment”.
- At least 20 credits (including coursework, research, and thesis credits) within the major discipline.
- A maximum of 10 credits of research and/or thesis.
- At least one credit of graduate seminar per academic year (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD 594). See section 6 for more information.
- A research methods course related to the student’s field of study.
- A graduate-level statistics course (or comparable analytical course) at the University.

A list of required/suggested coursework must be approved by the committee no later than the end of the second semester in residence or earlier if possible. Other suitable courses (e.g., emphasizing analytical skills) can be substituted at the discretion of the student’s committee. Copies of the coursework outline (see section 12) and approval should be placed in the faculty advisor’s files, in the student’s own files, and submitted to the

FCFC Student Services Office. The committee may make reasonable additions to the coursework outline if later evaluation shows that further coursework is needed.

Students enrolled the ICD Option of the M.S. in Resource Conservation must complete the following core curriculum (13 credits):

- NRSM 571: International Conservation and Development (3 cr)
- NRSM 575: Environment and Development (3 cr)
- A graduate ecology course (e.g., FORS 532 Forest Ecosystem Analysis, FORS 535 Applied Forest Ecology, FORS 540 Disturbance Ecology, NRSM 465 Foundation of Restoration Ecology, or other approved course; 3 cr)
- A graduate research methods (quantitative or qualitative; 3 cr)
- A graduate seminar (1 cr)

In addition, ICD students must complete an international assignment with an international conservation and development organization or the US Peace Corps.

### M.S. Professional Paper Option

The professional paper generally has a more applied focus than a thesis (e.g., a real world policy, management, or conservation problem). Professional papers are often pursued and prepared for managers and decision-makers (e.g., recreation managers, land trusts, or agency planners) rather than scientific outlets. The paper might analyze the policy, organizational, or community context of the problem, consider various strategies, and conclude with concrete recommendations or discussion of the practical implications of the analysis. Students must demonstrate:

- Substantive empirical knowledge of the field.
- Knowledge of applied research methods.
- High-quality writing and presentation skills.

The professional paper option is most appropriate for students interested in increasing their knowledge through comprehensive coursework and applied learning.

The decision to pursue a thesis or professional paper should be made with the faculty advisor. A student may change from a thesis to a professional paper, or from a professional paper to a thesis, but the latter change may be more difficult depending on the nature of the thesis and the stage of the graduate program. Please note that some advisors allow students to pursue thesis-option degrees only.

*M.S. Professional Paper Option: Coursework and Credit Requirements* – The specific courses (program of study) that a graduate student enrolls in will be tailored to each individual, based on their academic background, professional interests, and the focus of their thesis work. The course requirements for all M.S. Degrees with the professional paper option, include:

- At least 30 graduate credits. *Thesis credits cannot be counted towards the 30 total required credits under this option.*

- At least 26 credits of coursework (not including professional paper or research credits), with at least half of the coursework credits at the 500-level or above. 400-level courses used to fulfil this requirement must include a “Graduate Increment”.
- A maximum of 4 credits of professional paper or research.
- At least 20 credits (including coursework, professional paper and research credits) within the major discipline.
- At least one credit of graduate seminar per academic year (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD 594). See section 6 for more information.
- Students whose work requires assessment of quantitative data should take at least one course (or series of courses) in graduate-level statistics (e.g., STAT 451 and 452 together with companion computer labs) or comparable analytical courses.

Other suitable courses (e.g., emphasizing analytical skills) can be substituted at the discretion of the student’s committee.

Students enrolled the ICD Option of the M.S. in Resource Conservation must complete 30 credits and the following core curriculum (13 credits):

- NRSM 571: International Conservation and Development (3 cr)
- NRSM 575: Environment and Development (3 cr)
- A graduate ecology course (e.g., FORS 532 Forest Ecosystem Analysis, FORS 535 Applied Forest Ecology, FORS 540 Disturbance Ecology, NRSM 465 Foundation of Restoration Ecology, or other approved course; 3 cr)
- A graduate research methods course (quantitative or qualitative, 3 cr)
- A graduate seminar (1 cr)

In addition, ICD students must complete an international assignment with an international conservation and development organization or the US Peace Corps.

### **M.S. Non-Thesis Option**

Students typically choose the non-thesis option if they are interested primarily in more comprehensive coursework, applied learning, and graduate-level expertise for future professional endeavors.

The decision to pursue a non-thesis option should be made with the faculty advisor. A student may change from a non-thesis to a professional paper or thesis option, or from a professional paper or thesis option to a non-thesis, but the latter change may be more difficult depending on the nature of the thesis and the stage of the graduate program. Please note that some advisors allow students to pursue thesis-option degrees only.

*M.S. Non-Thesis Option: Coursework and Credit Requirements* – The specific courses (program of study) that a graduate student enrolls in will be tailored to each individual, based on their academic background, professional interests, and the focus of their thesis work. The course requirements for all M.S. Degrees with the non-thesis option include:

- At least 36 graduate credits. *Thesis credits cannot be counted towards the 36 total required credits under this option.*

- At least 32 credits of coursework (not including research credits), with at least half of the coursework credits at the 500-level or above. 400-level courses used to fulfill this requirement must include a “Graduate Increment”.
- A maximum of 4 credits of research.
- At least 20 credits (including coursework and research credits) within the major discipline.
- At least one credit of graduate seminar per academic year (FORS, NRSM, PTRM, or WILD). See section 6 for more information.
- Students whose work requires any assessment of quantitative data should take at least one course (or series of courses) in graduate-level statistics (or comparable analytical course) at the University (e.g., STAT 451 and 452 together with companion computer labs).

Other suitable courses (e.g., emphasizing analytical skills) can be substituted at the discretion of the student’s committee.

Note: This option is not available with the ICD Option of Resource Conservation.

## 6. Graduate Seminars

### Purpose and Participation

Graduate seminars in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation are designed to encourage the regular (weekly) exchange of scientific ideas among faculty and students, to provide opportunities to share their current research interests, to expose students to ideas and research within and outside of their discipline, and to improve communication and presentation skills. To that end, a mix of seminar models will be offered each semester in FCFC to instill both a breadth of knowledge across disciplines, and a depth of expertise within a student’s specific area of interest.

### The FCFC "Global" Seminar

A 1-credit, College-wide “global” seminar (offered every fall semester) will provide graduate students with a broad exposure to a range of topics, approaches, and perspectives, and will involve presentations from across all disciplines represented in the FCFC. The overall objective of this course is to provide all FCFC graduate students with a forum for exploring a range of contemporary topics, and to encourage collaboration between students and faculty from all departments and programs in the FCFC.

### FCFC Topical Seminars

Each spring, a series of focused (i.e., topical) seminars will be offered to allow for more focused examination of topics within a given area of study, interest group, or graduate program. The structure and objectives of these topical seminars will vary in terms of scope and by offering, but will meet one or more of the following learning outcomes:

- Expose students to academics and professionals working within a specific discipline
  - Interaction with a diversity of participants (graduate students with different advisors, affiliate faculty, etc.)
  - Presentations from ‘outside’ scientists, such as RMRS scientists or visiting faculty
- Provide students with the opportunity to present and solicit feedback on planned, ongoing or completed research

- Proposal/thesis/conference paper presentation
- Examine methodology, data analysis, or technical processes specific to a discipline
- Enhance critical thinking, communication and presentation skills
  - Writing and receiving feedback on grant proposals or manuscripts
  - Reading group discussions around common readings in a given discipline
  - Developing presentation skills in seminars focused on public speaking

Graduate students in the College are required to register for at least one graduate seminar each academic year. However, this requirement may be waived by the student's graduate advisor in cases where:

- the student is already carrying a full 9-credit load;
- the student is working away from campus for all or part of the semester; or
- the student's advisor deems that the seminar requirement poses an unreasonable burden on the student.

On-campus students with a full 9-credit load are still expected to attend the seminar even if they are not registered for seminar credits.

The seminar requirement can be met by selecting one of the following options:

- The FCFC-wide "global" seminar (typically offered in fall semester)
- A topical graduate seminar appropriate to the student's degree program
- A departmental or program seminar (e.g., WILD 594)
- A seminar focused specifically on developing presentation skills (e.g., FORS 594)

To qualify as graduate seminars, offerings must be open to all graduate students. The College Council will provide oversight by ensuring that a sufficient number of seminars are being offered and staffed each semester. Spring semester seminar offerings will be identified each fall prior to the opening of registration for spring semester.

## **7. Continuous Registration and Leaves of Absence**

The Graduate School requires that graduate students register for credits every fall and spring semester. The number of credits should be deemed commensurate with use of facilities and faculty time, but is at least three credits per semester (six credits for students supported via Teaching or Research Assistantships). Students must apply for a leave-of-absence if they do not plan to be continuously registered. The Graduate School will drop students that do not register for at least three credits per semester without prior approval from the program and the Graduate School. Re-admission can only be approved through a petition process. Please refer to the Graduate School website for details on the [Request for Leave of Absence](#).

## 8. Research Planning, Proposals, Exams and Defenses

### *The Thesis/Dissertation Proposal*

#### Research Statement (Ph.D. students only)

Students should prepare a one-to-two page statement describing their research topic and plan to present to their graduate committee. The student should then arrange a formal committee meeting to allow committee members to provide feedback on the research statement and offer modifications. At least one week in advance of the meeting date, the student is expected to submit the formal research plan to the committee members for discussion at the meeting. For Ph.D. students, the research statement should be completed no later than the end of the third semester (earlier if possible). In some cases, it may be recommended that its presentation should coincide with the approval of coursework by the committee, but the timing may vary by faculty, programs or departments. In addition, please recognize that different faculty may have specific rules regarding the amount of lead-time necessary to review and comment on documents and schedule meetings, so be sure to discuss these rules with each of your committee members well in advance of these stated deadlines.

#### Research Proposal

Each student (M.S. and Ph.D.) is required to complete a formal research proposal that describes the conceptual and empirical framework within which the study will be conducted. The proposal typically consists of a title, an introduction to the research problem, an explanation of how the problem fits into a broader conceptual framework defined by existing literature, a justification of its importance, the specific objectives or research questions, methods (including details about data collection and analysis), a timetable, and a budget. Research proposals must demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of relevant literature and provide a compelling justification for research focus and methods selected. Proposals vary in length and require multiple revisions in consultation with the faculty advisor before they are ready to be distributed to the entire committee. The entire committee must approve the thesis proposal prior to the student beginning data collection.

#### Research Proposal Deadlines and Approvals

M.S. candidates should write and submit their formal research proposal to their committee by the end of their second semester in residence. This proposal should be vetted and approved by the committee prior to the end of the second semester in residence.

Doctoral students must write and submit a formal research proposal and provide a formal presentation of the proposed work no later than the end of their fourth semester in residence, and receive committee approval of their proposal no later than the end of the student's fifth semester. After approval by the committee, a committee-signed copy of the proposal approval form (see section 12) must be placed in the student's file in the FCFC Student Services Office. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by a student's committee and may be considered in the case of maternal/paternal leave, serious medical conditions, family emergencies, etc.

In approving the proposal, the advisory committee agrees that successful completion of the project will provide sufficient research for a satisfactory thesis or dissertation. Any substantive changes made after committee approval must be brought back to the committee for discussion, and documented as a revised and signed proposal in the student's file. All graduate students are encouraged to meet with all of their committee members at least annually to keep them informed of progress.

## *The Comprehensive Examination (Ph.D. Students Only)*

The comprehensive (comp) exam is designed by the student's committee to assess the student's readiness for advancement from student to scholar and thus to candidacy to the degree of doctor of philosophy. Detailed objectives and conduct of examination can vary across areas and from student to student. The comp exam consists of both written and oral components and is administered by the student's Ph.D. committee. Following the completion of both the written and oral exams, the student's committee will vote on successful completion of the examination. (No more than one dissenting vote is allowed for successful completion.) Re-taking of the exam is at the discretion of the committee. Within five weeks of passing the exam, the student must file a formal application for the doctoral candidacy (Ph.D. degree) with the Graduate School.

The comp exam should be completed no later than the end of the doctoral student's fifth semester, but earlier if possible. In the case of students that convert from a M.S. to Ph.D. program before completing the M.S., the comp exam must be completed no later than the end of the sixth semester, or earlier if possible. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by a student's committee and may be considered in the case of maternal/paternal leave, serious medical conditions, family emergencies, etc. In most cases, the comprehensive examination should be scheduled only after approval of the formal research proposal, and in many cases, the research proposal helps form the basis of the material covered in the comp exams.

The specific comp exam process for each student is designed and implemented by the student's graduate committee. The following procedures are considered the minimum procedural and substantive standard that each committee will follow. To enter into the comp exam process:

1. At least one month before the beginning of the exam, the student must:
  - a. Provide a copy of these comp exam regulations to all examination committee members.
  - b. Convene a committee meeting at which an examination committee chair is selected and examination topics are discussed. The comprehensive examination committee chair is normally a member of the W.A Franke College of Forestry & Conservation faculty and the student's committee, but cannot be the student's advisor.
2. Before the beginning of the exam, the graduate committee will meet to approve the examination and to ensure consistency in the application of the examination to different students. The student will then be informed as to how the examination will be administered, and may be provided a list of materials by committee member that will be useful for preparing for the exam. The exact timing of the preparation of the exams may vary, but in most cases the exam will be approved at least two days before the exam date.
3. The written portion of the comp exam typically will include eight hours of open and/or closed book questions from each committee member (at the discretion of each committee member) typically answered by the student over consecutive days. However, the sequence and timing of student receipt of individual questions and delivery of answers may also be determined at the discretion of the examination committee. At least one committee member will ask a question pertaining to the dissertation topic, designed to strengthen the student's knowledge and consideration in the chosen area and to assist in further strengthening his/her research objectives and procedures. At least one committee member will ask a question on an important and controversial area of current interest in the student's general field, but not directly related to the dissertation topic, that will include questions related to policy or the social context of their field.

In some cases, the committee may request that written responses be typed, duplicated, and distributed to each committee member. However, in most cases, the committee will request electronic copies be sent to committee members via email only. This should be discussed and agreed upon by the student and the committee prior to the beginning of the exam. After reading the written responses, the committee may also require some or all of the written responses to be rewritten and may postpone for a reasonable time the oral portion of the examination.

4. Within ten working days after completion of the written examination (sooner if possible), each committee member will communicate his/her evaluations of the student's written answers to the examination chair, and the committee will decide on course of action. Subsequently, one of the following outcomes is typically met:
  - a. If the committee agrees that the written answers are sufficient, the student will be allowed proceed to orals.
  - b. If the committee believes that the written answers demonstrate weakness in one or more areas, the committee may require some or all of the exam be re-written and may postpone for a reasonable time the oral examination.
  - c. In some cases, extremely poor performance on the written exam may require termination of the student's program.
5. The oral examination explores in-depth the areas presented in the written questions, but is not restricted to those areas. The oral examination is restricted to three hours in length. The examination is open to all members of the faculty of the University of Montana, though all except committee members are excused before the vote.
6. Oral exams will be scheduled after the written exams have been accepted. Normally, a vote on the admission to candidacy will be taken at the conclusion of the oral exam.
7. The written questions shall constitute the point of departure for the oral portion of the examination. The oral examination shall explore in depth the areas presented in the written questions, but shall not be restricted to these questions. The examination shall be open to all members of the faculty of the University, and all such persons may question the student.

### ***Admission to Candidacy (Ph.D. students only)***

Normally, the vote for admission to candidacy will occur at the end of the oral examination. Upon successful completion of the comprehensive examination (no more than one dissenting vote constitutes successful completion), an FCFC Comp Exam Form should be signed by the full examination committee (see section 12). In case of failure, one repeat examination before the same committee is permitted. The student may pass the second vote with a maximum of one dissenting vote. Failure to pass the second exam will result in dismissal from the program.

### ***Applying for Graduation***

Students nearing the completion of their degrees (i.e., within one year) should refer to the Graduate School Website for graduation application procedures and deadlines. However, in most cases, students should notify

the Graduate School at least one semester prior to their anticipated date of graduation. In the event that the graduation date changes, please notify the FCFC Student Services Office and the Graduate School. Please note that there is an additional fee associated with changing the graduation completion date after submitting an application for graduation. All forms submitted to the Graduate School must also be submitted to the FCFC Student Services Office.

### [UM Graduate School Graduation Deadlines](#)

#### ***Thesis/Dissertation Seminar and Final Oral Exam (The Defense)***

All M.S. students pursuing the thesis option and all Ph.D. students are required to conduct a public seminar presentation of their thesis or dissertation results and pass a final oral examination. Under most circumstances the final oral examination will immediately follow the public seminar. At least two weeks prior to the intended date of the seminar/exam (earlier if possible), the student must send a draft copy of the thesis/dissertation to each member of the committee for review and comment. One copy should also be sent to the Graduate School for format approval. The thesis or dissertation must show originality and demonstrate competency in independent scientific inquiry. It must constitute a real contribution to knowledge; it must exhibit a mastery of the literature on the subject; and it must be lucid, well organized, and written in correct and concise English. Previously published material will be accepted for satisfying the thesis or dissertation requirement if the committee has authorized early publication of some of the material that appears in the thesis or dissertation. After reviewing the draft all members of the committee must agree that the draft is defensible prior to formally scheduling a seminar/defense date.

#### ***Public Seminar***

In the public seminar the student will present his/her research findings to the committee and any other interested persons. The seminar should be 30-40 minutes in duration, followed by a 10-20 minute question and answer period. The date, time, location and title of the public seminar must be advertised via e-mail announcements and postings at least one week prior (earlier if possible). Students should contact the FCFC Student Services Office to reserve a room and send the defense announcement.

#### ***Final Oral Examination***

The final oral examination generally occurs immediately following the public seminar and is typically attended only by the student's committee members, but in some cases other faculty may request to participate in the oral exam (but not vote on the outcome). The student is expected to answer questions specific to the research and those of a more general or conceptual nature. Additionally, the student may be required to defend the approach, methods, analysis, and conclusions of their research. Committee members must vote in favor of passing the student for the student to proceed to graduation.

The examination will not exceed three hours in length and it is recommended that it be completed at least two weeks before commencement. However, the exact timing of the final examination is left to the discretion of the examination committee. Following its completion, the candidate must receive either a unanimous vote or a vote showing not more than one dissenting member of the total examining committee. If the student fails, or if the thesis or dissertation requires major revision, the committee may permit a repeat exam, but this repeat

exam may not be given until at least one academic semester has elapsed. The same requirements hold for the re-exam as for the original.

### ***Submitting the Dissertation, Thesis or Professional Paper***

After successfully completing the defense, students should follow the Graduate School's procedures for submitting theses, dissertations or professional papers which can be found on the UM Graduate School's [Completing Your Graduate Degree](#) webpage.

### ***Professional Paper or Non-Thesis Option***

Each professional paper or non-thesis program will conclude with a written examination and/or a final oral examination, administered by the student's committee. Examinations may also be monitored by the Dean's office or representatives of the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation Graduate Committee to ensure adequate rigor. A unanimous favorable decision of the committee is considered passing. The opportunity to repeat the examination is at the discretion of the committee.

## **9. Assessing Student Progress**

### ***Annual Review of Graduate Student Progress***

Graduate student progress will be assessed every spring to verify that students are following requirements and suggested timelines. It should be noted that these timelines are intended as deadlines, but in some cases students may benefit from completing these requirements earlier than what is listed below.

The following items will be tracked annually:

- Enrollment in required FCFC graduate seminars (every academic year)
- Assemble committee assembled and submit appropriate forms (see section 12 for M.S. and Ph.D. Committee Appointment Forms)
  - M.S. completed by end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. completed by end of 3rd semester
- Develop plan of coursework/program of study (see section 12 for Student Required Course Forms)
  - M.S. by end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. by end of 3rd semester
- Develop 1-2 page research statement
  - M.S. by end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. by end of 3rd semester
- Research plan approved by committee
  - M.S. by end of 2nd semester
  - Ph.D. by end of 4th semester
- Required courses completed (see section 12 for Student Required Course Forms)
- Research proposal approved (see section 12 for Research and Dissertation Proposal Approval Forms)

- M.S. by end of 2nd semester
- Ph.D. by end of 5th semester
- Comp exam completed and form submitted to FCFC Student Services Office (Ph.D. only; end of 5th semester)
- Draft thesis/dissertation certified as ready for defense
- M.S./Ph.D. defense completed

Student progress will be assessed every spring based on a Degree Program Progress Checklist completed by the student and advisor by end of the spring semester each year (see section 12). If any deficiencies are identified, the student will be given one semester to rectify them. Students who do not meet stated deadlines will be placed on probation the following semester and may become ineligible for TA or RA support, unless the committee approves a revised timeline. If deficiencies continue, a formal meeting of the student's committee will then be held to determine whether additional conditions need to be set (e.g., discontinuation of field work until deficiency is corrected). If deficiencies are still not rectified by the end of the second semester after being identified, the student will be dropped from the program. Exceptions to these deadlines must be approved by a student's committee and may be considered in the case of paternal leave, serious medical conditions, family emergencies, etc.

## 10. Complaints, Grievances & Conflict Resolution

Graduate students who have a complaint or grievance regarding another student or a faculty member are encouraged to speak with their faculty advisor or Department Chair (for students whose faculty advisor is the chair of the department, the Dean of the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation is available to discuss such issues). If the situation is not resolved at this level, students should follow the steps as outlined in the [Student Concerns](#) section of the UM Provost's webpage.

Graduate students should also be familiar with the University of Montana's guidelines and expectations as outlined in the [UM Student Conduct Code](#).

For additional information, students should consult the [University of Montana's Graduate School](#) webpage.

## 11. FCFC Advisors and Graduate Student Committees

### *Definitions*

#### A. Program or unit granting the graduate degree

Graduate degrees in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation (the Ph.D. in Forest & Conservation Sciences and the M.S. Programs in Forestry; Parks, Tourism & Recreation Management; and Resource Conservation) are considered as offered by the Department (tenure home) of the student's graduate committee chair. The Departments within the FCFC are the Department of Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences (DECS), the Department of Forest Management (FM), and the Department of Society and Conservation (SoCon).

B. Graduate faculty member

For the purposes of graduate degrees in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, a faculty member is considered to include:

- i. Tenured or tenure track faculty in the same Department as the committee chair, as well as other faculty members, whether adjunct\* or research professors, that are nominated by a Department as graduate faculty and approved by an affirmative vote of the full faculty of the College;
- ii. The Dean of the College, Assistant or Associate Deans, Department Chairs, and Directors of established units such as the Wildlife Biology Program, the Resource Conservation Program, Applied Forest Management Program, the Boone and Crockett Conservation Program, the Wilderness Institute, the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, and the Bolle Center for People and Forests;
- iii. Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors approved as adjuncts to the W.A. Franke College & Forestry and Conservation from other units outside the College; and
- iv. Retired FCFC faculty on part-time appointment and Emeritus faculty.

\*An adjunct faculty member is herein defined as a non-tenure track faculty member who is a member of a Department in the FCFC where he or she serves primarily in a research context. This definition excludes non-tenure track faculty with purely teaching appointments.

C. Affiliate faculty member

For the purposes of graduate degrees in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, an affiliate faculty member is considered to be persons not principally employed by the University, or principally employed by the University in other than an academic capacity, but who nominally contribute to the instructional, research and creative activity, or service functions of the University, usually with no or minimal compensation, who hold courtesy appointments as Faculty Affiliates.

***Advisors and Committees***

A. Composition

As specified below, each graduate student committee shall include an FCFC graduate faculty advisor, additional graduate faculty member in the same Department as the chair, and a qualified UM faculty member from outside the chair's Department (whether they are from the FCFC or another college on campus). Other committee members must have earned the degree for which the student is applying.

- i. An M.S. committee is to have a minimum of three voting members.
- ii. A Ph.D. committee is to have a minimum of five voting members.

B. Committee Chairs

The chair of a graduate student's committee shall be a graduate faculty member in the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation.

- i. An M.S. committee chair is the student's advisor.
- ii. A Ph.D. committee chair is the student's advisor, but the comps chair needs to be a different FCFC faculty committee member.

C. Second thesis/dissertation committee member

- i. A second graduate faculty member in the same Department as the chair shall be appointed to an M.S. committee.

- ii. Two additional FCFC graduate faculty members in the same Department as the chair shall be appointed to a Ph.D. committee.
- D. Outside committee member  
A qualified UM faculty member from outside the chair's Department shall also be appointed to the thesis or dissertation committee.
- i. For an M.S. committee, the outside committee member is the 3<sup>rd</sup> member.
  - ii. For a Ph.D. committee, the outside committee member is the 4<sup>th</sup> member.
- E. Fifth Ph.D. committee member  
A Ph.D. committee will include a fifth member who shall be a graduate faculty member in the W. A Franke College of Forestry & Conservation, a faculty affiliate, or faculty of another institution of higher learning who has been approved by the Graduate Dean as uniquely qualified by training, experience, and/or degree held to guide and evaluate the dissertation. Any non-UM faculty member will need to provide a CV at the time the Committee Appointment Form is submitted. *(Please see the FCFC Student Services Office for rules and restrictions regarding committee members from an outside institution.)*
- F. Additional committee members  
Upon the recommendation of the FCFC faculty, an additional voting or non-voting member who is a non-academic expert may be appointed, if he or she is uniquely qualified by training, experience, and/or degrees held to guide and evaluate the degree being sought.
- G. Qualifications for committee members  
Members of the committee must have attained at least the degree level sought by the candidate. Exceptions require the approval of the Dean of the W.A. Franke College of Forestry & Conservation and of the Dean of the Graduate School.
- H. Conflict of interest  
In selecting people from non-University organizations, care must be exercised to ensure that no possible conflict of interest exists. Under no circumstances shall an off-campus employer or work supervisor of the candidate serve as a voting member of the candidate's committee, although they may be appointed as an additional non-voting committee member (as specified above). The same restriction applies to the off-campus individuals who have direct responsibility for a substantial portion of the funds supporting the student's research.
- I. Committee Appointment  
After discussion with the faculty advisor about appropriate committee members, the student is responsible for contacting prospective committee members and obtaining their commitment to serve. The student must have each prospective committee member sign the Committee Appointment Form (see section 12) and submit it to the FCFC Student Services Office, who after checking to make sure the committee meets the above criteria, shall forward the nominations to the Dean of the Graduate School for his or her approval.

## 12. M.S. and Ph.D. Student Forms

All required FCFC forms for the M.S. and Ph.D. programs may be accessed through the links below. After completed, forms should be submitted to the FCFC Graduate Program Coordinator and to the chair of the student's graduate committee (advisor). The appropriate forms will be submitted to the UM Graduate School by the FCFC Graduate Student Coordinator. Students should also keep a copy for their records.

[M.S. Committee Appointment Form](#)

[M.S. Degree Program Progress Checklist](#)

[M.S. Research Proposal Approval Form](#)

[M.S. Student Required Course Form](#)

[Ph.D. Committee Appointment Form](#)

[Ph.D. Comp Exam Form](#)

[Ph.D. Degree Program Progress Checklist](#)

[Ph.D. Dissertation Proposal Approval Form](#)

[Ph.D. Student Required Course Form](#)