

# GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

*DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP,  
EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS*



The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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## WELCOME TO OUR PROGRAM!

This is a short message from the Graduate School Coordinator, Carrie Ann Stephens.

“ We would like to welcome you to the greatest experience you will encounter over the next few years - GRADUATE SCHOOL. We know that school can be a challenging process but we are here to make life and school more enjoyable for you! This program will offer you many opportunities to enhance your skill base and educational knowledge. Over the course of the next few years, you will be engaged in education, leadership, communication, and extension coursework. The participation in these courses will prepare you for the dynamic future in our field. I would like to welcome you to the program and wish you luck as you become a further educated individual. ”

- Carrie Stephens  
Professor

## GRADUATE SCHOOL INTRODUCTION

“In order to serve the mission and vision of the Graduate School and preserve the integrity of Graduate Programs at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, information related to the process of graduate education in each department is to be provided for all graduate students. ‘*Based on Best Practices*’ is offered by the Council of Graduate Schools; it is important that detailed articulation of the information specific to the graduate degrees offered in each department/program be disseminated. The Department Graduate Handbook does not deviate from established Graduate School Policies noted in the Graduate Catalog, but rather provides the specific ways in which those policies are carried out.” [University of Tennessee, Knoxville - Acalog ACMS™ \(utk.edu\)](http://catalog.utk.edu)

## PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

This handbook is published to provide information to graduate students and prospective graduate students in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. The program offers a Master of Science degree with a major in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. Courses and degrees are offered via traditional on-campus delivery and through distance delivery technologies. Although the program does not offer a doctoral degree, special programs emphasizing Agricultural and/or Extension Education can be cooperatively developed with the College of Education, Health and Human Services; the Agricultural Leadership emphasis can utilize courses from the College of Arts and Sciences, and Agricultural Communication emphasis can utilize courses from the College of Communications and Information Sciences. The graduate program is designed primarily for those seeking advanced study in agricultural teacher preparation for the secondary schools; advanced study in Extension education for careers in the Agricultural Extension Service; and individuals seeking advanced leadership and communication studies. However, the program is beneficial to any student interested in leadership, communication, extension, or educational development.

This handbook should be used in conjunction with a current copy of The University of Tennessee's Graduate Catalog <http://catalog.utk.edu/index.php>. None of the information in this handbook precludes those minimum program requirements outlined in the Graduate Catalog. However, the handbook may stipulate certain requirements above-and-beyond those in the Graduate Catalog. If there is conflict between the documents, the Graduate Catalog should be followed. It is each student's responsibility to become familiar with the procedures and requirements of The University of Tennessee Graduate School. Graduate students are expected to be aware of and satisfy all regulations governing their work and study at the University. If a student has any concerns or questions, please refer to ‘Hilltopics’ as well as the Graduate Handbook found on the Graduate School website at ([University of Tennessee, Knoxville - Acalog ACMS™ \(utk.edu\)](http://catalog.utk.edu)). Hopefully, this handbook will provide additional information and assistance to students interested in graduate study in the program.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The faculty in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications are committed to meeting a variety of needs, which exist among our students in agriculturally related fields. The overall goal is to help students increase their knowledge and develop their intellectual abilities to prepare them for productive careers through which they can make significant contributions to the welfare of society.

The preparation of present and prospective agricultural professionals for proficiency in their chosen fields is the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications' primary mission. The curriculum is designed to prepare students to be effective educators in agricultural education or extension education and effective leaders and communicators in their chosen field of study.

## ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Candidates applying for admission to the graduate program in Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications must meet the requirements outlined in the Graduate Catalog. Admission to a degree program requires a **minimum** overall grade-point average of **2.7** out of a possible 4.0, or a **3.0** during the senior year of undergraduate study. Applicants who have previously completed graduate work must have a **minimum** grade-point average of **3.0** out of a possible 4.0. The equivalent of a minimum B average is required for international students. Ultimately, your course performance is your responsibility. Never hesitate to contact your instructor directly to discuss concerns or unanticipated circumstances that may impact your ability to fulfill one or more course expectations.

Other admission requirements include a completed graduate application, a **non-refundable** application fee, one official transcript from **each** institution previously attended by the student, three rating forms, and a goal statement letter. Finally, the Graduate Program Committee must approve each candidate for admission into the graduate program. For special admission categories (non-degree, conditional, probationary or readmission) please refer to the Graduate Catalog ([graduateadmissions.utk.edu/](http://graduateadmissions.utk.edu/)).

The process for being admitted into the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications is as follows:

1. For full consideration into the graduate program, the graduate application, transcripts, three rating forms, and goal statement letter should be submitted online at [gradschool.utk.edu/admissions/applying-to-graduate-school/new-applicants](http://gradschool.utk.edu/admissions/applying-to-graduate-school/new-applicants)
2. Students may be admitted into the graduate program for fall, spring, and summer terms. The application deadline for fall term is **June 1st**. The application deadline for spring term is **November 1st**. The application deadline for summer term is **April 1st**.
2. Once a student's file is complete, the file will be evaluated by the Graduate Admissions Committee, which consists faculty members from the Department Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications.

3. The student will either be accepted or denied admission by the Graduate Admissions Committee and will be notified within **10 days** of reviewing the application of the decision.

4. A student seeking information related to this process may contact Dr. Carrie Stephens at 865-974-4830.

### FINANCIAL AID

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville offers several types of financial assistance. These include assistantships, fellowships, employment, loans, and veteran benefits. General descriptions of these programs may be found on the Graduate School website ([gradschool.utk.edu/gradfund.shtml](http://gradschool.utk.edu/gradfund.shtml)).

### GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP

The Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications has a limited number of graduate assistantships available to full-time students on a competitive basis. Graduate assistantships are awarded based upon the availability of funds, program needs, and the qualifications of interested students. An assistantship generally includes tuition (excluding maintenance fees) plus a stipend. Graduate assistants work approximately 20 hours per week with a professor while completing their Master of Science degree. Graduate assistants are appointed for a 12-18 month period. Responsibilities vary but may include: research participation, co-teaching, and departmental representation at various conventions or events.

If selected in the graduate assistantship role, graduate students will be expected to dress in business casual attire while assisting faculty members with recruitment activities, teaching responsibilities, and campus-wide activities. Most importantly, graduate students are expected to dress in appropriate attire while on campus.

If a student is interested in an assistantship, the steps are to apply as follows:

1. Apply to the Graduate School & Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications at [Applying to Graduate School | The Graduate School \(utk.edu\)](#).
2. Submit a goal statement letter, which includes your professional goals and the overall contribution you will make to the department by the due date for entering semester (see page 7-8) on the electronic application under “additional materials,” which can be found at [applyweb.com/apply/utg/](http://applyweb.com/apply/utg/).
3. Participate in a face-to-face interview with the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication faculty.

# FACULTY MEMBERS

THE FOLLOWING ARE FACULTY MEMBERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS. THEY ARE WILLING TO ASSIST YOU AT ANY TIME WITH QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE REGARDING YOUR DEGREE PROGRAM. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT THEM AT THE ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS LISTED BELOW.



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## TRANSFER CREDITS

Students accepted into the graduate program at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville who wish to transfer credits to their Master of Science degree program must follow the guidelines stated in the Graduate Catalog. The latest copy of the Graduate Catalog should be referred to for stipulations and guidelines on transferring credits.

Courses transferred into a Master of Science degree program will not be counted in determining the student's grade-point average. If universities other than those in The University of Tennessee system are attended, credits transferred will not be used to meet the thesis requirement. Transfer credit will not be given for courses taken at any unaccredited and/or foreign institution. Candidates for Master of Science degrees are required to take a minimum of one-half of the total number of hours at The University of Tennessee at the Knoxville campus. Transferred courses will be placed on students' transcripts only after admission to candidacy. These courses must have been completed within a six-year period prior to receipt of the Master of Science degree. NOTE: **The official application for candidacy must be filed with The Graduate School at least one semester before the student plans to graduate.**

## ADVISEMENT AND THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE

When students are admitted to the graduate program an advisor will be assigned. The assigned advisor will assist students in course selection and communication with other members of the student's graduate committee and The Graduate School.

No later than **one year** before a student completes his/her program, the student and major advisor will form the student's graduate committee. This committee must consist of three faculty members. All those members of the committee may be from the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications or if the student and advisor so desire, one member can be from outside the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. Although not required, some students choose to add an additional member to the committee. All persons serving on graduate committees must have faculty rank and meet other requirements set by The Graduate School.

The assigned advisor must approve minor changes in course work prior to any actions taken by students. Major changes in course work must be approved by the student's graduate committee and the Graduate Director.

## REGISTRATION

Upon entering the graduate program, the graduate student and advisor should develop a course of study for the student's graduate program. This course of study should involve courses needed to complete the Masters of Science degree in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. Registration for courses is the responsibility of the individual graduate student.

Deadlines for registering for courses are listed in the Timetable Calendar ([registrar.tennessee.edu/academic\\_calendar/index.shtml](http://registrar.tennessee.edu/academic_calendar/index.shtml)). Graduate students should adhere to these deadlines to avoid paying late registration fees. There are also deadlines listed for adding or dropping courses from your schedule. Please pay particular attention to these guidelines as well to avoid penalties.

## MASTER'S DEGREE OPTIONS

The program offers a Master of Science (M.S.) degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. The ALEC Master's degree programs have been specifically designed to deliver research-based education so that students are empowered to succeed in these career opportunities:

- Agricultural leadership: For students who want to develop personal leadership skills, engage in community and organizational development, serve others, and network with leadership constituents in global environments.
- Agricultural education: For students who want an exciting career in education and related areas as a certified agriscience instructor and educational specialist.
- Extension education: For students who want to lead outreach and non-formal education in government service, community, and industry settings.
- Agricultural communications: For students who want to focus on anticipatory and strategic communications to build, maintain, and repair relationships with agricultural stakeholders and stakeholders."

Students may elect either an online or on-campus option for completing requirements of the Master's degree. The online option consists of a general degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications. The on-campus option consists of the agricultural education and agricultural communication options

### **A. DISTANCE EDUCATION (DE) MS, COURSE ONLY WITH COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

Students will complete online coursework in leadership, teaching and learning, extension program planning, and communications.

#### **Credit Hours Required**

- 30 graduate credit hours

#### **Required Courses**

- A minimum of 18 credit hours of graduate credit in courses in ALED
- A minimum of 12 credit hours of electives chosen in consultation with the academic advisor and guidance committee

#### **Non-Course Requirements**

- A final written examination

### **B. THESIS OR COURSE ONLY WITH COMPREHENSIVE EXAM, AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FOCUS AREA**

Students will complete coursework for teacher licensure in agricultural education.

#### **Credit Hours Required**

- 30 graduate credit hours

#### **Required Courses**

- Required courses for agricultural education teacher licensure (15 credit hours)
  - EDPY 401

- SPED 402
- ETEC 586
- ALEC 534
- ALEC 545
- Courses recommended by academic advisor (15 credit hours)
  - Thesis option: ALEC 500 (6 credit hours)

### **Non-Course Requirements**

- Thesis Option: Preparation and defense of a thesis,
  - An understanding of research ethics is also required. This departmentally-enforced requirement may be achieved through coursework (e.g., PLSC 525/ANSC 525/CEM 525; BCMB 614; PSYC 660) or via online (CITI RCR) training, as evidenced by presenting a valid CITI RCR certificate to the Graduate Director upon submission of the Application to Candidacy form. For research involving human subjects, CITI IRB certification may also be required.
- Course Only with Comprehensive Exam: Successfully pass a department prepared final written examination, or the EdTPA

### **C. THESIS OR COURSE ONLY WITH COMPREHENSIVE EXAM, GENERAL IN LEADERSHIP, EXTENSION, OR COMMUNICATIONS FOCUS AREA**

Students will complete coursework in leadership, teaching and learning, extension program planning, and communications.

### **Credit Hours Required**

- 30 graduate credit hours

### **Required Courses**

- ALEC courses (18 credit hours)
  - Thesis Option: ALEC 500 (6 credit hours)
- Electives (12 credit hours)

### **Non-Course Requirements**

- Thesis Option: Preparation and defense of a thesis,
- Course Only with Comprehensive Exam: Successfully pass a department prepared final written examination



## COURSE LIST

### *ALEC 440 - Business and Research Writing*

#### *3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)*

Develop professional and scholarly interactions through business and research writing.

(RE) Prerequisite(s): English 102, 132, 290, or 298.

Comment(s): Minimum student level — junior.

### *ALEC 500 - Thesis*

#### *1-15 Credit Hours*

Grading Restriction: P/NP only.

Repeatability: May be repeated.

Credit Level Restriction: Graduate credit only.

Registration Restriction(s): Minimum student level – graduate.

### *ALEC 501 - Creative Component in Lieu of Thesis*

#### *3 Credit Hours*

Capstone experience completed under the supervision of the student's major professor and masters' committee. Individual project involving a literature survey; development of teaching software; development of curriculum materials; development of a white paper; or other suitable project.

Grading Restriction: Satisfactory/No Credit only.

Comment(s): For Non-thesis majors only.

Registration Permission: Consent of Graduate Committee.

### *ALEC 502 - Registration for use of Facilities*

#### *1-3 Credit Hours*

Required for the student not otherwise registered during any semester when student uses University facilities and/or faculty time before degree is completed.

Grading Restriction: Satisfactory/No Credit only.

Repeatability: May be repeated.

Credit Restriction: May not be used toward degree requirements.

Credit Level Restriction: Graduate credit only.

Registration Restriction(s): Minimum student level - graduate.

### *ALEC 510 - Ethical Leadership in Agriculture*

#### *3 Credit Hours- Summer Only*

Analysis of theories, models, and practices of ethical decision making and leadership through agriculture contexts.

Registration Restriction(s): Minimum student level – graduate.

### *ALEC 512 - Program Planning and Evaluation of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication Organizations*

#### *3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)*

Historical and philosophical foundation of adult education in American agriculture, key figures, issues, legislative movement, organizations and programs. Theories and models of program development and evaluation and their use in planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating



a program's content and learning activities; development and interaction of the work plan; and principles, techniques and instruments used to identify, gather and analyze information to evaluate programs.

**ALEC 520 - Leadership Development in Organizations and Community Nonprofit** (Even years)

**3 Credit Hours Spring Only**

Application of concepts related to developing leaders for organizing and maintaining extension and community nonprofit organizations. The foundation of this course is grounded in traditional and contemporary leadership philosophies and practices but emphasizes leadership in agricultural professions.

**ALEC 521 - Youth Development**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Introduces youth development (ages 6-18) principles and focuses on the major developmental domains of physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Major theories relevant to the domains of development are introduced and discussed and application of these principles in context of family, school and community.

**ALEC 522 - Supervisory Leadership** (Odd Years)

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Exploring techniques, models and theories of supervision. Principles and best practices for leading, administering, supervising, and managing agricultural leadership, education, extension and communication organizations. Analyzing selected case studies that apply theory to practice.

**ALEC 523 - Women in Leadership**

**3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)**

Examination of theories and practical experiences of women in leadership positions. Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of women in leadership by examining literature, case studies, autobiographies and personal experiences.

**ALEC 524 - Research Methodology**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

An introduction to methods and procedures of social science research with an emphasis on acquiring skills necessary to analyze and critique scholarly literature and develop fundamental research plans.

**ALEC 525 - Curriculum Development in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Models, principles and procedures for developing curricula in educational programs and scheduling learning activities used to implement these planned programs.

**ALEC 530 - Specials Topics in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications**  
**1-3 Credit Hours**

Current issues.

Repeatability: May be repeated. Maximum 9 hours.

Registration Permission: Consent of instructor

**ALEC 531 - Developing and Leading a Volunteer Program in Agricultural Education, Extension and Community Nonprofits**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Recruitment, selection, training, retention and supervision of volunteers. Will explore the praxis between volunteer leadership theories and the practical application of those behaviors to effectively develop and lead a volunteer program in the contexts of agricultural education, Extension and community nonprofits.

**ALEC 532 - Introduction to Agricultural Communications**

**3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)**

*Understanding the role of agricultural communicators. Explore elements of written, visual, and digital communication methods to interact with agricultural audiences.*

*Credit Restriction: May not receive credit for both 330 and 532.*

**ALEC 533 - Teaching and Learning Theory: Applications in Agricultural Disciplines**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Introduction to theories of teaching and learning and related research. Explores the neuroscience of learning, behaviorism, social cognitive theory, information processing theory, constructivism, cognitive learning processes, experiential learning, motivation, self-regulation, and developmental theories. Additionally, explores the applications of teaching and learning theory in the context of teaching agricultural subject matter.

**ALEC 534 - Methods of Teaching Agriscience**

**3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)**

Methods and techniques for teaching agriculture, preparing lesson plans and units of instruction, developing activities for agriculture programs, and utilizing resources, multimedia, and computer technology into instruction.

Contact Hour Distribution: 2 hours of lecture and one 2-hour lab.

Credit Restriction: Students cannot receive credit for both 434 and 534.

**ALEC 535 - Communicating in Agriculture and Natural Resources**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Focuses on strategic communication for agriculture and life science industries. The content is designed to explore the practical and philosophical elements when communicating with both agricultural and nonagricultural audiences. Additionally, students will explore the historical and foundational elements of agriculture and communications.

**ALEC 536 – Communicating Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy Issues**  
**3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)**

Focuses on policy issues in agriculture and natural resources. Designed to expose students to the various issues and a variety of methods used to communicate and inform policy decisions about these issues.

**ALEC 537 – Communication Strategies for Leaders**  
**3 Credit Hours**

Effective leaders are able to implement communication strategies that inspire action. Through hands-on learning and presentations by current leaders from various fields (sport, industry, education), students learn how to communicate clearly and persuasively. Will learn how to tailor communications to different audiences, apply the various strategic leadership principles in structuring communications, connect authentically with their audience through their unique leadership style, and create compelling, high-impact presentation and communications.

**ALEC 539 - Basic Applied Data Analysis in Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Select (a) appropriate statistical techniques to use in analyzing ALEC quantitative research data, and (b) appropriate coding methods for analyzing ALEC qualitative data. Use appropriate software to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. Report results in narrative and appropriate table, graphic, or visual forms for inclusion in scholarly writing and impact communications.

**ALEC 541 – Issues and Crisis Communication in Agriculture and Natural Resources**  
**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Focuses on strategic communication in agriculture and natural resources. Students will explore contemporary agriculture and natural resource issues and discuss the impact public opinion has on the agriculture industry. Through case studies and issues management plans students will address contemporary issues or challenges, defined as a topic that currently affects individuals' ability to lead safe, fulfilling, healthy lives and to contribute to productive societies.

**ALEC 542 - Layout and Design** (Even Years)  
**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Explore elements of desktop layout and visual design principles to develop effective communication material for agricultural audiences.

Credit Restriction: Students may not receive credit for both ALEC 330 and ALEC 532.  
(RE) Prerequisite(s): 330 or 532.

**ALEC 543 - Digital Media Production** (Odd Years)  
**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Explore elements of video production techniques with a focus on camera, lighting, audio, and editing methods.

Credit Restriction: Cannot receive credit for both ALEC 330 and ALEC 532.

(RE) Prerequisite(s): ALEC 330 or ALEC 532 (Student cannot receive credit for both)

**ALEC 545 - Program Planning and Learning Design in Agriscience Education**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Overview of program planning and learning design of school-based agricultural education.  
Credit Restriction: Students may not use 545 towards their graduate degree requirements if they received credit for 345.

Registration Restriction(s): minimum student level – graduate.

**ALEC 548 – Theory and Practice of Agricultural Public Relations**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Focuses on the communications theory and practice of public relations between agriculture producers and consumers.

**ALEC 551 - Servant Leadership in Agriculture and Natural Resources**

**3 Credit Hours Summer Only**

Theoretical underpinnings based on servant leadership and the development of a servant leader; servant leadership in business, education and foundations; servant leader responsibility; America and world leadership; and ethical considerations for leaders. A broad-based review of the primary disciplines in agriculture with an emphasis on servant leadership.

Credit Restriction: Students may not apply 551 towards their graduate degree requirements if they received credit for 450.

Registration Restriction(s): minimum student level – graduate

**ALEC 552 - Organizational Leadership and Change**

**3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)**

Theories of leadership and change. Implementing changes in order to guide successful organizations. Topics include discussion of principled leadership, organizational behavior, human diversity, and leading organizational change.

**ALEC 576 – School-Based Teaching Practicum in Agriculture Education**

**3 Credit Hours Fall and Summer Only**

Full-time job-embedded teaching practicum and teaching-related experiences in approved school-based agricultural education settings.

Grading Restriction: Satisfactory/No Credit grading only.

Repeatability: May be repeated. Maximum 18 hours.

**ALEC 585 - Global Sustainable Development Goals**

**3 Credit Hours (Fall Only)**

The United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were adopted in 2015 and provide a framework and direction for all countries of the world towards 17 common global goals. The SDGs are goals towards which our global society has agreed and outline high-level targets in all spheres of human interaction with each other and the planet. Will provide a transdisciplinary introduction and assessment of these global SDGs. Will present each of the SDGs, look at global progress towards each SDG, and provide opportunities for students to explore the synergies of the SDGs. While emphasis will be placed on the global nature of the SDGs, this course will provide students with the opportunities to reflect on these goals and



participate in multidisciplinary teams to develop action plans for addressing multiple SDGs as individuals and for the UT community.

**ALEC 592 - Internship in Agricultural Leadership. Education and Communications**

**1-6 Credit Hours**

Practical field experience in a selected setting under the supervision of a local practitioner and departmental representative.

Grading Restriction: Satisfactory/No Credit only.

Repeatability: May be repeated. Maximum 6 hours.

Registration Permission: Consent of Instructor.

**ALEC 593 - Special Problems in Agricultural Leadership. Education and Communications**

**1-4 Credit Hours**

Special research and/or special reports based on supervised independent study.

Repeatability: May be repeated. Maximum 6 hours.

Registration Permission: Consent of instructor.

## SELECTING A THESIS OR CREATIVE COMPONENT TOPIC

Graduate students can complete either a thesis or creative component prior to completing degree requirements. A **creative component** may be defined as an original piece of work completed by the student, which exhibits a high degree of scholarly writing ability. Creative components will be student-created articles that contribute to the scholarly work in the fields of leadership, the agricultural extension service, or communications. Examples of journals in which articles can/should be published are: *Journal of Extension* ([joe.org](http://joe.org)), *Journal of Leadership Education* ([journalofleadershiped.org](http://journalofleadershiped.org)), and *Journal of Southern Agriculture Education Research* ([jsaer.org](http://jsaer.org)). Other scholarly publications may be utilized, as long as they are relevant to the subject of the work and accept publications that are general articles or briefs. Creative components are presented to, and approved by, the student's graduate committee.

A **thesis** is also an original piece of work by the student. It involves more scientific rigor than is often exhibited in the creative component. The thesis should be based upon a well-defined social science problem that may be logically scrutinized using specific research methodologies under clearly defined theoretical limitations. The thesis is presented to the student's graduate committee and The Graduate School.

Although not required, it is suggested that students take a social science research methods course prior to identifying the potential topic for a thesis or creative component. Potential topics can be generated from interest areas in other graduate courses, discussions with fellow students or faculty, and ideas which students may have developed from previous experience.

Students should schedule time to discuss potential topics with their major advisor prior to developing a full proposal. After identifying a topic and gaining initial approval of the major advisor, the student will develop a formal proposal for consideration by the graduate committee. Proposals should include the proposed research, title, objectives, procedure, timetable for completion, and any other information requested by the major advisor. The proposal should be formally approved by the student's graduate committee prior to beginning the research or creative work (any social science research which involves the collection of primary data from human subjects must also be approved by the Office of Research prior to initiating the research. Discuss your proposal with your advisor regarding whether it must first be approved by the Institutional Review Board).

The approval of proposals is usually formalized during the first meeting of the student's graduate committee. Any changes in previously approved proposals must be approved by the entire graduate committee before the student can proceed.

## **THESIS COMPLETION**

After completing the thesis, students will be administered a final oral examination by the graduate committee (although not commonly attended by anyone other than the student's graduate committee members, all oral examinations are open to all UT faculty). Students should discuss procedures for the oral examinations with their advisor prior to scheduling them with The Graduate School.

At the end of oral examinations, students will be informed by their graduate committee whether they have passed or failed and what additional work must be completed (if any) to meet the requirements of program completion. Generally, this should not entail additional work above and beyond that specified in the original course of study and thesis proposal, unless some aspect of the student's work is unsatisfactory.

## **CREATIVE COMPONENT COMPLETION**

After completing the creative component, the student will be required to deliver an oral presentation to the graduate committee related to his or her creative component. At the end of the oral examination, the student will be informed by the graduate committee whether they passed or failed and what additional work must be completed (if any) to meet the requirements of program completion. Generally, this should not entail additional work above and beyond that specified in the original course of study and creative component proposal, unless some aspect of the student's work is unsatisfactory.

## **FINAL WRITTEN EXAM**

Students who are enrolled in the online Master of Science degree program will be required to take a final written exam. The exam will consist of two questions from each member of the graduate student's committee related to the student's coursework. The exam questions will be requested from the graduate committee by the student's Chair and will then be administered to the graduate student. The graduate must complete the exam, return to the Chair, and the Chair will distribute the graduate student's responses to the graduate committee. The student's graduate committee will evaluate the answers to the exam by utilizing the assigned rubrics used to measure the Department's student learning outcomes for graduate students. Once the scores have been compiled by the Chair, the graduate student will be notified whether he or she has passed the exam.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Information taken from the Graduate School  
website [http://catalog.utk.edu/preview\\_program.php?catoid=23&pooid=9733](http://catalog.utk.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=23&pooid=9733)

Graduate education requires continuous evaluation of the student. This includes not only periodic objective evaluation, such as the cumulative grade point average, performance on comprehensive examinations, but also judgments by the faculty of the student's progress and potential. Continuation in a program is determined by consideration of all these elements by the faculty and the head of the academic unit.

The academic records of all graduate students are reviewed at the end of each semester, including the summer term. Graduate students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least **3.0** on all graduate courses taken for a letter grade of A-F. Grades of S/NC, P/NP, and I, which have no numerical equivalent, are excluded from this computation.

Departments and programs may have requirements for continuation or graduation in addition to the minimum requirements set forth in this catalog for all graduate programs. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the special requirements of the department or program.

## ACADEMIC PROBATION

Upon completion of 9 hours of graduate coursework, a graduate student will be placed on academic probation when his/her cumulative GPA falls **below** 3.0. A student will be allowed to continue graduate study in subsequent semesters if each semester's grade point average is 3.0 or greater. Upon achieving a cumulative GPA of 3.0, the student will be removed from probationary status.

## DISMISSAL

If a student is on academic probation, the degree or non-degree status will be terminated by the Dean of the Graduate School if the student's semester GPA falls **below** 3.0 in a subsequent semester. When the particular circumstances are deemed to justify continuation, and upon recommendation of the appropriate academic unit and approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, a student on probation whose semester GPA is **below** 3.0 may be allowed to continue on a semester-by-semester basis.

Dismissal of a graduate student by a department or program is accomplished by written notice to the student with a copy to the Graduate School. In cases where the Departmental requirements for continuation are more stringent than university requirements for graduate programs, the Dean of the Graduate School will evaluate the student's record to determine whether the student is eligible to apply for a change of status and register in another area of study. Registration for courses in a department from which a student has been dismissed will not be permitted, except by written authorization from that department.

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all members of the academic community. An honor statement is included on the application for admission and readmission. The applicant's signature acknowledges that adherence is confirmed. The honor statement declares:

*An essential feature of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.*

## ACADEMIC HONOR

The Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications takes academic dishonesty and misconduct (<https://studentconduct.utk.edu/>) seriously. If a student is found responsible for academic misconduct, the department may recommend penalties **up to program dismissal on the first offense.**

## PLAGIARISM

Students shall not plagiarize. Plagiarism is using the intellectual property or product of someone else without giving proper credit. The undocumented use of someone else's words or ideas in any medium of communication (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge) is a serious offense subject to disciplinary action that may include failure in a course and/or dismissal from the university. Some examples of plagiarism are

1. Using without proper documentation (quotation marks and a citation) written or spoken words, phrases, or sentences from any source.
2. Summarizing without proper documentation (usually a citation) ideas from another source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge).
3. Borrowing facts, statistics, graphs, pictorial representations, or phrases without acknowledging the source (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge).
4. Submitting work, both in whole or in part, created by a professional service and used without attribution (e.g., paper, speech, bibliography, or photograph).

Extreme caution should be exercised by students involved in collaborative research to avoid questions of plagiarism. If in doubt, students should check with the major professor and the Dean of the Graduate School about the project. Plagiarism will be investigated when suspected and prosecuted if established.

## APPEALS PROCEDURE

The Graduate Council Appeal Procedure can be obtained at the Graduate School or at [gradschool.utk.edu/GraduateCouncil/AcadPoli/appealprocedure.pdf](https://gradschool.utk.edu/GraduateCouncil/AcadPoli/appealprocedure.pdf). Normally, grievances should be handled first at the department level through the student's academic advisor, the graduate program director, or the department or program head. Further appeal may be made to the dean of the respective college, the Graduate Council through the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, and ultimately to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Appeals may involve the interpretation of and adherence to university, college, and department policies and procedures as they apply to graduate education and the issuance of grades based on specific allowable reasons stipulated in the Graduate Council Appeal Procedure.

Appeal procedures in regard to allegations of misconduct or academic dishonesty are presented in Hilltopics under "Disciplinary Regulations and Procedures." Students with grievances related to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or veteran status should file a formal complaint with the Office of Equity and Diversity.

## PERTINENT GRADUATE STUDENT WEBSITES

- Best Practices in teaching [gradschool.utk.edu/orientation/teaching.shtml](https://gradschool.utk.edu/orientation/teaching.shtml)
- Center for International Education <https://international.utk.edu>
- Counseling Center [counselingcenter.utk.edu/](https://counselingcenter.utk.edu/)
- Funding, Fellowships, Assistantships for Graduate Students [gradschool.utk.edu/gradfund.shtml](https://gradschool.utk.edu/gradfund.shtml)
- Graduate School [gradschool.utk.edu](https://gradschool.utk.edu)
- Graduate Catalog <https://catalog.utk.edu/index.php?catoid=27>
- Graduate Student Appeals Procedure [gradschool.utk.edu/GraduateCouncil/AcadPoli/appealprocedure.pdf](https://gradschool.utk.edu/GraduateCouncil/AcadPoli/appealprocedure.pdf)
- Graduate Student Senate [gss.utk.edu/](https://gss.utk.edu/)
- Graduate Admissions [graduateadmissions.utk.edu/](https://graduateadmissions.utk.edu/)
- Housing [housing.utk.edu/](https://housing.utk.edu/)
- International Graduate Admissions [graduateadmissions.utk.edu/int-adm-guide.shtml](https://graduateadmissions.utk.edu/int-adm-guide.shtml)
- International House [ihouse.utk.edu/](https://ihouse.utk.edu/)
- Judicial Affairs [Student Conduct & Community Standards | The University of Tennessee, Knoxville \(utk.edu\)](https://studentconductandcommunitystandards.utk.edu/)
- Library Website for Graduate Students [lib.utk.edu/info/grad/](https://lib.utk.edu/info/grad/)
- Office of Equity and Diversity [oed.utk.edu/](https://oed.utk.edu/)
- Office of Minority Student Affairs/Black Cultural Center [multicultural.utk.edu/](https://multicultural.utk.edu/)
- OIT [oit.utk.edu/](https://oit.utk.edu/)
- Research Compliance/Research with Human Subjects [research.utk.edu/compliance/](https://research.utk.edu/compliance/)
- SPEAK Testing Program [http://gradschool.utk.edu/graduate-student-life/ita-testing-program/](https://gradschool.utk.edu/graduate-student-life/ita-testing-program/)
  - Theses/ Dissertation <https://gradschool.utk.edu/thesesdissertations/>

## **APPENDIX I: AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS GRADUATE STUDENT EVALUATION INFORMATION**

Graduate education requires continuous evaluation of your progress. This evaluation includes your academic and research progress and assistantship performance, if applicable. Continuation in the program is determined by consideration of all these factors.

### **ACADEMIC REVIEW**

The academic schedules and records of all graduate students are reviewed at the beginning and end of each semester, including the summer term.

### **ACADEMIC PROBATION**

You will be placed on academic probation if your UT cumulative grade point average (GPA) falls **below** a 3.0 and at least 6 hours of graduate coursework have been completed. You will also be placed on academic probation if you earn **less** than a C in any course or if you withdraw from a course without pre-approval of your advisory committee.

For doctoral students, coursework for the M.S. degree, whether taken at UT or elsewhere, will not be included in cumulative GPA calculations. You will be allowed to continue graduate study in subsequent semesters if each semester's GPA is a 3.0 or greater. Upon achieving a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0, you will be removed from probationary status.

### **DEGREE PROGRAM PROGRESS**

In accordance with Graduate School guidelines, your degree progress will be evaluated yearly by the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications Committee. Typically, this will be after finals of the 2nd, 4th and 6th fall or spring semesters in your program. Please refer to Appendix I as a checklist and guideline if you are working to complete your MS program within 2 years.

### **ASSISTANTSHIP PERFORMANCE**

If you have the privilege to hold a GTA or GRA position, your performance in the work assigned to you may be evaluated each semester. Performance evaluation will be conducted as with any employee, considering the quantity and quality of work that you have performed.

Evaluation by your major professor will be used as part of the evaluation. Similar to the form you fill out, your major professor will be asked to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of your performance, and identify limitations in your program, such as courses or necessary research equipment being unavailable.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assure that you are making appropriate progress and to discover areas that need you and your major professor's attention. The evaluation is also your opportunity to identify factors limiting your progress that are outside your direct control. Your major professor can serve as an advocate within the department to help address such roadblocks.

Evaluation will result in a "Satisfactory" or "Not Satisfactory" rating along with explanatory comments. Comments with "Not Satisfactory" ratings will detail expectations for the next

semester that must be met or termination may occur (see below). The evaluation will be sent to you and your major professor, with copies to the department head, and will be included in your academic file. You may appeal a "Not Satisfactory" rating by written communication with any supporting documents to the Graduate Committee. If the appeal is denied, it will be automatically forwarded to the department head for resolution.

### **TERMINATION AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES**

Dismissal from graduate program may result if you are on academic probation and earn less than a 3.0 semester grade point average, or less than a C in any course, or if you withdraw from a course without pre-approval from your advisory committee.

Even if not on academic probation, other reasons for dismissal include failure to make adequate progress towards other degree requirements (e.g., research project, thesis/dissertation preparation), academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, falsification of data), or other forms of gross misconduct as defined by the Office of Equity and Diversity, Human Resources, Dean of Students' Office, Hilltopics, or Graduate Council. Dismissal will be accomplished by written notice to the student with a copy to The Graduate School.

Termination of financial support can occur and is done by the following process. If performance reviews find any of the following:

- Grades of D or F, or a W without pre-approval of your advisory committee
- Academic probation
- Failure to complete degree requirements within the time frames specified in this handbook
- Inadequate performance of assigned duties or research activities

This MAY result in termination of financial support. The Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications has the flexibility to consider any additional factors (including source of financial support) in making a final recommendation. This recommendation is sent to the department head and major professor. If in agreement, the department head sends a written notice of termination of financial support to the student, with copies to the major professor and Graduate Director. In most cases a 30 day notice is given, such that the student will receive a final monthly paycheck at least 30 days after written notice is sent. However, if performance is very inadequate, termination can be immediate, even within a semester. For example, this can occur if you are essentially absent from all duties, making no research progress or are not available for assistantship duties. It is strongly recommended that you meet frequently with your major professor to keep them informed of your activities.

A major professor may initiate this termination of financial support process without involving the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications by working directly with the department head. This will typically occur when the student is being funded by the major professor, as opposed to departmentally-funded assistantships.

### **RESIGNATION FROM GTA, GRA, OR DEGREE PROGRAM**

If circumstances lead you to withdraw from any of these commitments, provide a hard copy letter stating your resignation to the department head and the Graduate Director. Note that not

registering for any coursework in a fall or spring semester leads to automatic termination from the degree program, and will require a readmission decision by the department and payment of any associated readmission fees.

Note that if you resign during the semester, as opposed to between semesters, you will be personally responsible for tuition costs for that semester, even if you have a tuition waiver. Essentially, a tuition waiver is given after completion of the semester, not at the beginning.

**PROGRESS IN REACHING MS DEGREE DEPARTMENTAL MILESTONES**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Entered Program Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Identified Courses Needed No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Formed MS Advisory Committee No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Held MS Advisory Committee Meeting No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Course of Study Approved by Committee No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Submitted Proposal to Chair No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposal Approved by Committee No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Submitted Admission to Candidacy Form No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Completed MS Data/ Project Material Collection No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Completed Course Work No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Taken Final Exam No Yes Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Received/Will Receive MS Degree Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX II: STUDENT ASSISTANTSHIP EVALUATION FORM

The forms and tables in this appendix are to be filled out by you for the annual evaluation review by the Graduate Committee.

### DEGREE PROGRESS REPORT

(To be completed by the Student)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Curriculum Vitae:** (Attach a Copy to this Report) Typically, this would include

- Contact information (name, address, phone, email);
- Education background (degrees, majors, colleges or universities), and employment (positions held, name of institution or company)
- Honor or professional society memberships; honors or academic awards
- Research publications (referred journal articles and conference proceedings, no referred articles or conference proceedings, abstracts, popular press articles, web based contributions, reports granting agencies or supporters, other publications)
- Presentations (seminars, conferences, professional society meeting, etc.)
- Teaching (courses and responsibilities)
- Service (clubs, associations, department, college, university, community)
- Professional Development (workshops, short courses, conferences, professional meetings)

**Course Work Planned:** You should have already met with your advisory committee and have a list of planned coursework by semester. Attach or paste a copy of this.

**Research Planned for Coming Year:** What research experiences have you planned for the next year? Include specifics as literature reviews, protocols designs, proposal writing, data collection and analysis and any new skills you plan to obtain.

**Anticipated Progress:** Indicate what you plan to accomplish in the next 12 months. How do these planned activities relate to your program of study?

**Suggestions for Improvement:** Identify specific needs or items that would help improve your program, covering all aspects of your program, including faculty, coursework and departmental and university resources.

# The University of Tennessee

## Staff Performance Review Summary Form (to be completed for all staff and forwarded to Human Resources)

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Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Review Period: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Review Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Key Elements:

1. **Accomplishments-** The extent to which the employee meets expectations in performing the job functions of his/her position as defined by the PDQ

- Rarely Achieves Expectations (supporting documentation required)
- Sometimes Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves and Occasionally Exceeds Expectations
- Consistently Exceeds Expectations (supporting statement/documentation required)

2. **Service & Relationships-** The extent to which the employee's behaviors are directed toward fostering positive working relationships in a diverse workplace, respect for one's fellow workers, and cooperation with students, customers, and visitors.

- Rarely Achieves Expectations (supporting documentation required)
- Sometimes Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves and Occasionally Exceeds Expectations
- Consistently Exceeds Expectations (supporting statement/documentation required)

3. **Accountability & Dependability-** The extent to which the employee contributes to the effectiveness of the department and the overall mission of the university.

- Rarely Achieves Expectations (supporting documentation required)
- Sometimes Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves and Occasionally Exceeds Expectations
- Consistently Exceeds Expectations (supporting statement/documentation required)

4. **Adaptability & Flexibility-** The extent to which the employee exhibits openness to new ideas, programs, systems, and/or structures.

- Rarely Achieves Expectations (supporting documentation required)
- Sometimes Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves and Occasionally Exceeds Expectations
- Consistently Exceeds Expectations (supporting statement/documentation required)

5. **Decision Making & Problem Solving-** The extent to which the employee makes sound and logical job-related decisions that are in the best interest of the University. (As applicable, this element includes developing and managing human and fiscal resources within the framework of the university policy.)

- Rarely Achieves Expectations (supporting documentation required)
- Sometimes Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves Expectations
- Fully Achieves and Occasionally Exceeds Expectations

- Consistently Exceeds Expectations (supporting statement/documentation required)

**TOTAL**

**POINTS**

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**1. Accomplishments (45 points maximum)**

The extent to which the employee meets expectations in performing the job functions of his/her position as defined by the PDQ.

- Fulfills assigned workload, efficiently completing tasks within prescribed guidelines (0-5 points)
- Positively contributes to the unit in work productivity and output (0-5 points)
- Assigns proper priorities and uses time effectively (0-5 points)
- Demonstrates self-sufficiency in completing assignments (0-5 points)
- Demonstrates appropriate initiative in identifying and completing assignments (0-5 points)
- Completes duties with accuracy, care, and attention to detail (0-5 points)
- Utilizes concise, factual, and clear verbal written communications (0-5 points)
- Applies appropriate innovation in completing assignments (0-5 points)
- Effectively maintains files and records, utilizes applicable software, and retrieves information from appropriate sources (0-5 points)

**TOTAL**

**POINTS**

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**2. Service & Relationships (20 points maximum)**

The extent to which the employee's behaviors are directed toward fostering positive working relationships in a diverse workplace, respect for one's fellow workers, and cooperation with students, customers, and visitors.

- Demonstrates knowledge of and follows supervisory/organizational structures and procedures (0-5 points)
- Demonstrates teamwork and cooperation in support of organizational goals (0-5 points)
- Demonstrates proper attitude and conduct toward supervisors, coworkers, students, and the public (0-5 points)
- 
- Fosters positive working relationships in a diverse workplace (0-5 points)

**TOTAL**

**POINTS**

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3. **Accountability & Dependability (15 points maximum)**

The extent to which the employee contributes to the effectiveness of the department and the overall mission of the university.

- Attendance and punctuality (0-5 points)
- Exhibits professional demeanor and properly maintains workstation (0-5 points)
- Demonstrates integrity, loyalty, and commitment to the organization’s mission and goals (0-5 points)

**TOTAL**

**POINTS**

4. **Adaptability & Flexibility (10 points maximum)**

The extent to which the employee exhibits openness to new ideas, programs, systems, and/or structures.

- Engages in appropriate professional development and training activities (0-5 points)
- Adaptability and flexibility in acceptance of prescribed responsibilities and in acceptance of changes in techniques, procedures, systems, and/or structures (0-5 points)

**TOTAL**

**POINTS**

5. **Decision Making & Problem Solving (10 points maximum)**

The extent to which the employee makes sound and logical job-related decisions that are in the best interest of the University. (As applicable, this element includes developing and managing human and fiscal resources within the framework of the university policy.)

- Complies with policies and procedures, demonstrates safe practices, and adheres to safety rules (0-5 points)
- Makes sound, informed and logical decisions in problem solving and job duties; generates recommendations or conclusions when required (0-5 points)

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**OVERALL RATING TOTAL POINT SCORE**

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**Staff Performance Review Comments**

**Employee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Goals and objectives have been developed and discussed with employee?			
2. Job duties and performance expectations have been discussed with employee?			
3. Appropriate corrective action has been discussed with employee?			
4. Please include any comments in the space provided below or attach additional supporting documentation.			

**Supervisor's Comments: (This section may be used as documentation for the Consistently Exceeds and/or Rarely Meets Expectation rating or use attachments.)**

**Employee's Comments: (Employees may provide additional comments to be retained with this document in the personnel file.)**

By Signing below, I acknowledge that I have participated in the review process and have received a copy of the review.

(1) \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's Signature                      Date

(2) \_\_\_\_\_  
Dept. Head/Director's Signature Date  
(To be reviewed prior to  
Students Signature)

(3) \_\_\_\_\_