

# GRADUATE PROGRAM AND DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURES

**Department of Sustainable Bioproducts (DSB)  
College of Forest Resources  
Mississippi State University**

**The DSB administration office is located in 205 Franklin Center at the Sustainable  
Bioproducts complex, adjacent to the MSU campus, at  
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*2024 Update*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook has been prepared to familiarize graduate students who have majors or minors in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts (DSB) with the academic and operating procedures of the DSB. A part of Mississippi State University (MSU), the College of Forest Resources (CFR) consists of three academic departments, with the research conducted through the Forest and Wildlife Research Center (FWRC) and service disseminated through the MSU Extension Service.

Students are responsible for being familiar with the procedures specified in both:

- the MSU Graduate Catalog found on the Office of the Graduate School's (OGS) website here: <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate> and
- this document (DSB Graduate Handbook) found here: [https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad_handbook.pdf)

For procedures not addressed in the DSB Graduate Handbook, student should follow the procedures outlined in the MSU Graduate Catalog.

Supplemental information can also be found:

[https://www.grad.msstate.edu/sites/www.grad.msstate.edu/files/2023-07/GRADUATE%20ASSISTANT%20HANDBOOK\\_FALL%202023.pdf](https://www.grad.msstate.edu/sites/www.grad.msstate.edu/files/2023-07/GRADUATE%20ASSISTANT%20HANDBOOK_FALL%202023.pdf)

The DSB offers the following degree programs:

Degree Program		Majors	Concentration Area	Campus
Master's of Science	Thesis Option	Sustainable Bioproducts	NA	1
Master's of Science	Non-Thesis Option	Sustainable Bioproducts	NA	1
Master's of Science	Non-Thesis Option	Sustainable Bioproducts	NA	5
PHD	Dissertation Required	Forest Resources	Sustainable Bioproducts	1

Campus 1 = Face-to-Face; in-person; Starkville Campus

Campus 5 = Online; Distance Education

- For a PHD, the dissertation is intended to advance science and provide students with the challenge and opportunity to demonstrate their ability to conduct independent research in a selected or assigned area. Under the guidance of the major advisor along with the review and approval by the student's graduate committee, PHD students are expected to conduct research projects with little direct supervision from their major advisor with a dissertation document required.
- In contrast, the Master's of Science (MS) thesis option is normally considered to be an introductory research degree, with close supervision and guidance from the student's major advisor and graduate committee with a written thesis document required.
- The Master's of Science (MS) Non-thesis option is also considered an introductory research degree, conducted under close supervision by the student's major advisor and graduate committee with a written research paper required.

## **ADMISSION**

### **Admission Requirements**

Refer to MSU Graduate Catalog: <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information/>  
Applicants for a MS or a PHD should hold a bachelor's degree from a fully recognized four-year institution of higher learning.

Prior academic performance, as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA), is a primary factor used in determining admission categories. This information can be found at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information/admissionstatus/#overviewtext>.

International students who have earned prior degrees in the United States or come from countries where English is the official language are not required to submit English-Language Test Scores. The list of TOEFL/IELTS Exempt Countries is found at the following link <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/admissions-information/application-process/#applicationtext>.

International students who do not meet this exemption must provide test results from either the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exams. The Department **does not** accept Medium of Instruction letters as a substitute for TOEFL or IELTS test scores. To be considered for a DSB Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA), the following scores are required:

IELTS Score	TOEFL Score		
	Paper Based (PBT)	Computer Based (CBT)	Internet Based (IBT)
6.5	550	213	79

### **Acceptance and Onboarding**

Upon arriving at MSU, all new students are required to report to their major advisor by email and in-person.

### **Domestic Students**

The student is required to make an appointment with DSB Admin office located in the Franklin Center, Bldg 11, Room 205 to begin the new hire orientation onboarding process. At that time, additional instructions as to the documents required for the new hire orientation onboarding process will be provided. This process should be completed as soon as possible by the student.

Student should then determine the “holds” in their Banner record. To address ‘holds’:

- Work with MSU Health Center (662-325-7539 <https://www.healthcenter.msstate.edu/>) Immunization records will be required. Work with MSU OGS (662-325-7400) Final transcripts must be sent directly to MSU OGS by Parchment or National Clearinghouse
- It is the responsibility of the student to pay any fees associated with “holds”.

As soon as “holds” are cleared, consult with your major advisor and get registered for classes. Students will be financially responsible for activity and/or special fees, which are assessed each

semester and must be paid before the student will be allowed to register for classes for the upcoming semester.

Go to the MSU Campus Card office located in 108 Allen Hall to obtain your MSU ID card.


Parking permits are required on the DSB complex. Permits for a Graduate Assistant must be purchased in-person at the Office of Parking Services. The student must take his/her MSU ID and assistantship offer letter. See <http://www.transportation.msstate.edu/parking/permits>

## **International Students**

Upon arrival at MSU's Starkville, MS campus, international students are required to "check in" online at MSU's International Services Office (ISO):

<https://www.international.msstate.edu/offices/international-services-office/newly-admitted-international-students/orientation>.

Select and follow the instructions. On the web page listed above, please select the button that looks like this:



Click Here for Request Portal ↗

This is how the student's SEVIS record is activated. Student must have a local address and emergency contact to update in this portal.

Immediately, students must determine what existing "holds" are in their Banner record.

- Work with MSU Health Center (662-325-7539 <https://www.healthcenter.msstate.edu/>). Immunization records will be required.
- Work with MSU OGS (662-325-7400) Final transcripts must be sent directly to MSU OGS by Parchment or National Clearinghouse.
- It is the responsibility of the student to pay any fees associated with "holds"

As soon as "holds" are cleared, consult with your major advisor and get registered for classes.

Students will be financially responsible for activity and/or special fees, which are assessed each semester and must be paid before the student will be allowed to register for classes for the upcoming semester.

Go to the MSU Campus Card office located in 108 Allen Hall to obtain your MSU ID card.

Apply for a social security card as soon as the SEVIS record is active. Retain the receipt of an application for a social security card.

With this receipt in hand, make an appointment with DSB Admin to begin the new hire orientation onboarding process. At that time, additional instructions as to the documents required

for the new hire orientation onboarding process will be provided. This process should be completed as soon as possible by the student.

As soon as the original social security card is received in the mail, make a 2nd appointment with DSB Admin to complete the new hire orientation onboarding process.

More information for international students can be found by visiting <https://www.international.msstate.edu/offices/international-services-office/newly-admitted-international-students>

Parking permits are required on the DSB complex. Permits for a Graduate Assistant must be purchased in-person at the Office of Parking Services. The student must take his/her MSU ID and assistantship offer letter. See <http://www.transportation.msstate.edu/parking/permits>

### Valid Forms of Identification

All domestic and international students must maintain a valid form of identification.

For international students the following apply:

Type	Description	Requirement	Ways to Renew	Dept Process
Passport	government-issued document that verifies your identity and nationality for international travel.	Must be valid at all times.	With the permission of your major professor, schedule time to be absent to go to locations within US to renew.	Major professor will submit a justification for absence with dates specified to DSB Grad Coordinator/DSB Admin.
Visa	an endorsement placed within a passport that grants the holder official permission to enter, leave or stay in a country for a specified time period.	Expiration date is usually just a few months after arriving at MSU.  Does NOT have to be valid at all times.  Do NOT leave the US if visa is expired.	At the end of the student's program, student must return to home country to renew.	For special exceptions, major professor will submit a justification REQUESTING time for absence with dates specified to DSB Grad Coordinator/DSB Admin.
I-20	Issued by MSU; proves that the student is legally enrolled in a program of study here at MSU.	MSU International Services Office (ISO) issues for a period of 4 years at the beginning of a student's program.	An Extension of time may be requested. See ISO website.	Major professor will submit justification for permission to request extension of time.
<b>During the student's program, the student is required to keep passports current. Student's should NOT LEAVE the United States for any reason without obtaining permissions outlined above as well as a "Travel Signature" from the ISO.</b>				

## Graduate Research Assistantships

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA) are available in the DSB. They are competitive.

Academic responsibilities: Students on GRA must be full-time students as defined in the Graduate Catalog <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/enrollment-requirements/#fulltimetext>. The DSB requires the following academic course load per semester. The required full-time status must be maintained throughout the entire semester.

Academic Term	Credit Hours Required by DSB
Fall Semester	13
Spring Semester	13
Summer Semester	6

An assistantship will continue throughout the student's program provided that funding remains stable. Assistantships are:

- Two years for a MS and three years for a PHD
- Contingent on funding continuation and satisfactory academic performance (i.e., greater than a 3.0 GPA)
- Contingent on satisfactory progress on the student's research and/or professional paper/project, thesis, or dissertation.

A student's major advisor will assign a grade of satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) at the end of each semester. One U grade will result in the revocation of a student's assistantship funding, while two consecutive U grades will result in the student's dismissal.

Work Responsibilities: Students who receive a GRA are expected to work the time stipulated as outlined in their DSB offer letter.

Assistantships typically represent half-time positions based upon a 40-hour week. Each week:

- Students will attend academic classes and labs, as outlined on their program of study  
AND
- Students will be present at the DSB for a minimum of 20 hours per week for research work. These 20 hours represent the credit hours and grade earned in SBP 9000  
AND
- Students will draft, format, and edit their thesis/dissertation documents and manuscripts in addition to the above requirements

The student's major advisor has the discretion of deciding how the work hours will be assigned. The assigned work (i.e., research, teaching, service) may or may not be directly related to the student's specific research or professional project.

Students receiving assistantships do not earn leave time, personal or medical.

Students on assistantship are allowed to take holidays as specified here <https://www.hrm.msstate.edu/benefits/employee-holidays> .

As a general rule, students on assistantship are not permitted to have additional employment beyond the assistantship.

Requests for time extensions for students on assistantships require a written justification from the student and must be co-signed by their major advisor with the funding source identified. All requests must be approved by the DSB Graduate Coordinator and/or Department Head.

Additional information on GRA procedures can be found online from the MSU OGS <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/graduate-assistantships/>.

### **Student Health Benefits**

Graduate students (domestic and international) are eligible to participate in the University's Student Injury and Sickness Insurance Plan. Details of this plan can be found on the MSU Student Health Center's website <https://www.healthcenter.msstate.edu/insurance> . International graduate students are required to maintain valid health insurance while attending MSU. All international students will be enrolled in the student health insurance program at the time of registration, unless proof of comparable coverage is furnished to the Administrator at the MSU Student Health Center. Graduate students receiving a GRA are eligible to be reimbursed by the DSB for their health benefit premiums. To be reimbursed, students must provide a copy of their MSU Banner account after the "Last Day to drop a class (36<sup>th</sup> class day)" to the DSB Admin.

### **Workflow: Master's of Science (MS), Thesis Option**

While the MSU OGS Catalog has stated MS degree requirements here <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/>, the DSB has additional requirements stated below that must be met. A DSB MS Graduate Checklist will be provided to each student. [See Appendix 1.](#)

#### **Program of Graduate Study, MS Thesis Option**

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Program of Study (POS) form found here:

[https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate\\_program\\_of\\_study\\_cfr.pdf](https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf)

The POS must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

All students are required to take:

SBP Graduate-level coursework (minimum of 12 at the 8000 level)		12
<a href="#">SBP 8111</a>	Research Seminar I	1
<a href="#">SBP 8121</a>	Research Seminar II	1
SBP 8013*	Advanced Wood Science & Technology	3

SBP 9000	Research in Sustainable Bioproducts	6
Graduate-level electives can be 8000 or 6000; can be from departments other than SBP		7
<u>SBP 7000</u> Direct Individual Study (no more than 6 hours total) may be used to satisfy 8000-level course requirements		
LIB 9010 in the student's last semester is mandatory to meet the MSU OGS requirements for graduation.		
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>30</b>

\* Unless review of transcript shows wood science educational background or equivalent experience.

A student is expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA across all courses.

### **Committee Request, MS Thesis Option**

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Committee Request Form found here:

<https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/forms> The committee must meet the requirements stated in the MSU Graduate Catalog <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/graduate-committee/> The Committee Request form must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

### **Thesis Research Proposal/Working Plan, MS Thesis Option**

The major advisor will determine with the student their research topic for the Research Proposal/Working Plan based on available project(s) suitable for their thesis research and funding source.

Purpose: To assure that the research work is within the student's capabilities, the experimental design is scientifically sound, and the work is appropriate to meet degree requirements. Serves as a guideline for the student's program to assist with time management and ensure the student's accountability for completing the research. See [Appendix 2](#) for the format for this document.

Student is Required to:

Present to their committee within their 2nd semester of enrollment.

Committees should be allowed at least 1 week to review before the student's presentation.

Plan should be approved and signed by the committee members by the end of the student's 2nd semester.

A signed, approved copy will be filed with the DSB Admin Office for processing.

### **Time Limit, MS Thesis Option**

Eight years is the time limit for completion of a master's degree.

<https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/#timelimittext>

## Thesis Defense, MS

The thesis defense must take place no later than the "last day for thesis/dissertation defense" as published in the Graduate Academic Calendar <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/graduate-school-calendar> of the MSU OGS. DSB Admin requires a minimum of 3 weeks' notice prior to scheduling the student's date of defense. An email invitation will be sent from the DSB Admin. Guidelines for the defense can be found here: <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/#thesistext>

## Thesis Document, MS

MS students should refer to the section "Thesis/Dissertation Preparation and Defense" for specific information.

## **Workflow: Master's of Science (MS), Non-Thesis Option (Campus 1)**

While the MSU OGS Catalog has stated MS degree requirements here <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/>, the DSB has additional requirements stated below that must be met.

## Program of Graduate Study, Non-Thesis Option (Campus 1)

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Program of Study (POS) form found here:

[https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate\\_program\\_of\\_study\\_cfr.pdf](https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf)

The POS must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

All students are required to take:

SBP Graduate-level coursework (minimum of 12 at the 8000 level)		12
<a href="#">SBP 8111</a>	Research Seminar I	1
<a href="#">SBP 8121</a>	Research Seminar II	1
SBP 8013*	Advanced Wood Science & Technology	3
Graduate-level electives can be 8000 or 6000; can be from departments other than SBP		13
<a href="#">SBP 7000</a> Direct Individual Study (no more than 6 hours total) may be used to satisfy 8000-level course requirements		
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>30</b>

\* Unless review of transcript shows wood science educational background or equivalent experience

A student is expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA across all courses. A comprehensive exam is required in the student's final semester.

### **Committee Request, Non-Thesis Option (Campus 1)**

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Committee Request Form found here:

<https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/forms>. The committee must meet the requirements stated in the MSU Graduate Catalog <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/graduate-committee/> The Committee Request form must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

### **Comprehensive Exam, Non-Thesis Option (Campus 1)**

A comprehensive exam is required in the student's final semester. The exam must take place no later than the "last day for non-thesis comprehensive exam" as published in the Graduate Academic Calendar <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/graduate-school-calendar> of the MSU OGS, with a prior notice sent to the DSB admin by the major advisor. The major advisor will guide the student to determine a topic, prepare a written document and a presentation. Committees should be allowed at least 1 week to review the written document before the student's presentation. A signed, approved copy of the student's written document and presentation will be filed with the DSB Admin Office. The written document, presentation, and report of exam results must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion and signature by all committee members for processing.

### **Workflow: Master's of Science (MS), Non-Thesis Option (Campus 5)**

Basic information about the Campus 5 option can be found here

<https://www.online.msstate.edu/sbp>

While the MSU OGS Catalog has stated MS degree requirements here

<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/>, the DSB has additional requirements stated below that must be met.

### **Program of Graduate Study, Non-Thesis Option (Campus 5)**

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Program of Study (POS) form found here:

[https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate\\_program\\_of\\_study\\_cfr.pdf](https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf)

The POS must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

All students are required to take:

SBP Graduate-level coursework (minimum of 12 at the 8000 level)		12
<a href="#"><u>SBP 8023</u></a>	Professional Practices in Wood Products Industry	3
<a href="#"><u>SBP 8203</u></a>	Graduate Capstone Seminar	3
SBP 8013*	Advanced Wood Science & Technology	3
Graduate-level electives can be 8000 or 6000; can be from departments other than SBP		9

<u>SBP 7000</u> Direct Individual Study (no more than 6 hours total) may be used to satisfy 8000-level course requirements	
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>30</b>

\* Unless review of transcript shows wood science educational background or equivalent experience.

A student is expected to maintain a 3.0 GPA across all courses. A comprehensive exam is required in the student's final semester.

### **Committee Request, Non-Thesis Option (Campus 5)**

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Committee Request Form found here:

<https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/forms> The committee must meet the requirements stated in the MSU Graduate Catalog <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/graduate-committee/> The Committee Request form must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

### **Comprehensive Exam, Non-Thesis Option (Campus 5)**

A comprehensive exam is required in the student's final semester. The exam must take place no later than the "Last day for non-thesis comprehensive exam" as published in the Graduate Academic Calendar <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/graduate-school-calendar> of the MSU OGS, with a prior notice sent to the DSB admin by the major advisor. The SBP 8203 Graduate Capstone Instructor in collaboration with the major advisor will guide the student to determine a topic, prepare a written document and a presentation. Committees should be allowed at least 1 week to review the written document before the student's presentation. A signed, approved copy of the student's written document and presentation will be filed with the DSB Admin Office. The written document, presentation, and report of exam results must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion and signature by all committee members for processing.

### **Workflow: Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) Option**

While the MSU OGS Catalog has stated PHD degree requirements here <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/>, the DSB has additional requirements stated below that must be met. A DSB PHD Graduate Checklist will be provided to each student. [See Appendix 3.](#)

### **Program of Graduate Study, PHD**

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Program of Study (POS) form found here:

[https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate\\_program\\_of\\_study\\_cfr.pdf](https://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf)

The POS must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

All students are required to take two graduate seminar courses, SBP 8111 and SBP 8121. PHD students without a wood science background or wood science experience will also be required to

take SBP 8013 Advanced Wood Science & Technology. The student's "official" transcript must be reviewed for that determination to be made. In total, PHD students must take at least 12 credit hours of SBP courses. The courses selected should be approved by the student's committee. In the student's final semester, enrollment in LIB 9010 is mandatory to meet the MSU OGS requirements for graduation.

The program shall generally consist of three academic years beyond the bachelor's degree as a full-time student. The total number of course credit hours required must be consistent with the requirements as stated in the MSU Graduate Catalog

<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/#programofstudytext>

DSB requires that doctoral students earn at least 54 credit hours of graduate credit beyond the bachelor's level, which includes a required 20 credit hours of SBP 9000 Research in SBP. Of the 54 credit hours, at least 24 must be from GPA-graded graduate coursework with a minimum of 12 credit hours at the 8000 level or higher. The remaining 10 credit hours can be earned with coursework credit hours, SBP 9000 credit hours, or a combination of both.

Additionally, with the approval of student's major advisor and committee, the DSB allows

- up to 9 graduate credit hours to be shared *from* a previous graduate program *to* a subsequent program at the doctoral level at MSU. At the doctoral level, transfer credits cannot exceed one-half of the coursework requirements.
- up to 12 graduate credit hours to be transferred from other domestic or international universities

The allowance of shared credits or transfer credits is not guaranteed. The discussion to request shared or transferred credits must first take place between the student and the major advisor. Together the student and major advisor will work with the DSB Admin Coordinator to prepare/process the request to the OGS.

A cumulative grade point average of a 3.0 or better is required in all coursework.

### **Committee Request, PHD**

Within the first semester of a student's program, the DSB requires students and their major advisor to complete the Committee Request Form found here:

<https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/forms> The committee must meet the requirements stated in the MSU Graduate Catalog <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/graduate-committee/> The Committee Request form must be submitted to the DSB Admin upon completion for review and processing.

### **Dissertation Research Proposal/Working Plan, PHD**

The major advisor will determine with the student their research topic for the Research Proposal/Working Plan based on available project(s) suitable for their dissertation research and funding source.

Purpose: To assure that the research work is within the student's capabilities, the experimental design is scientifically sound, and the work is appropriate to meet degree requirements. Serves as a guideline for the student's program to assist with time management and ensure the student's accountability for completing the research. See [Appendix 4](#) for the format for this document.

Student is Required to:

Present to their committee within their 2nd semester of enrollment.

Committees should be allowed at least 1 week to review before the student's presentation.

Plan should be approved and signed by the committee members by the end of the student's 2nd semester.

A signed, approved copy will be filed with the DSB Admin Office for processing.

### **Preliminary Examination, PHD**

The DSB requires all PHD students to write one research proposal on a subject that the student has conceived and is subsequently approved by their major advisor and committee. MSU OGS mandates that PHD students schedule preliminary exams when they are within 6 credit hours of academic coursework completion. The DSB highly recommends that the preliminary exam be completed within the first half of the student's 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

See [Appendix 5](#) for the required format for this proposal. This proposal should not be related to the dissertation research topic. After approval of the preliminary examination proposal topic by the major advisor and committee, the student must have a minimum of 4 weeks to complete the proposal documents and submit the final version to their committee. The committee will be allowed at least 2 weeks to review the submitted documents. Following this, the preliminary exam presentation will be scheduled as soon as it can be arranged. This preliminary examination will involve the student and his or her committee members only. To pass the preliminary exam, there can be no more than one dissenting vote by the graduate student's committee. A Report of Examination Result form must be completed by the major advisor and submitted to the DSB Admin for submission to the MSU OGS. Additionally, a signature page signed by all committee members including the chair, and the graduate coordinator, should be used as the front sheet to the proposal and submitted to DSB Admin with a copy of the approved proposal. See [Appendix 6](#).

A student who fails this preliminary examination for the first time cannot apply to take the examination again until at least three months have elapsed from the date of the original examination. According to MSU OGS policy, two failures will result in the student's dismissal from the degree program <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/#examinationtext>.

The preliminary exam will qualify the PHD student for admission to the PHD candidacy. DSB requires students to complete and pass the preliminary examination by:

- June 1 to graduate in December
- November 1 to graduate in May
- February 1 to graduate in August

## **Admission to Candidacy, PHD**

Admission to PHD candidacy information can be found at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/#admissiontocandidacytext>.

## **Time Limit, PHD**

A doctoral student must complete the degree program within five years after passing the preliminary examination. <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/#timelimittext>

## **Dissertation Defense, PHD**

After admission to candidacy, the dissertation defense must take place no later than the "last day for thesis/dissertation defense" as published in the Graduate Academic Calendar <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/graduate-school-calendar> of the MSU OGS. DSB Admin requires a minimum of 3 weeks' notice prior to scheduling the student's date of defense. An email invitation will be sent from the DSB Admin. Guidelines for the defense can be found here: <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/#dissertationtext>

## **Dissertation Document, PHD**

PHD students should refer to the section "Thesis/Dissertation Preparation and Defense" for specific information.

## **THESIS/DISSERTATION PREPARATION AND DEFENSE**

"Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. These rules make it clear that a student's submitted work must be their own. This principle includes content created by generative artificial intelligence (GAI) tools without authorization from the instructor. In the absence of a stated policy in a course syllabus, students must assume that the inclusion of GAI-generated content in course activities, assignments, or examinations is not permitted and will be considered a violation of the university Honor Code."

Working Group on AI Report, MSU Provost's Office Working Group, November 8, 2023

<https://www.provost.msstate.edu/sites/www.provost.msstate.edu/files/2023-11/AI%20Working%20Group%20Report.pdf>

The preparation of the thesis/dissertation document is a time-consuming endeavor which can be expedited by careful attention to the following details: (1) the thesis/dissertation document will usually require several rewrites both before and after submission to your major advisor and graduate committee; (2) during the initial stages of writing the thesis/dissertation document, the student should consult with his/her major advisor to see that the material is properly organized, correctly stated, interpreted and written in an acceptable style with proper grammar. It is the responsibility of the student, with the assistance of the major advisor, to ensure that the thesis/dissertation document is properly written and formatted. Format templates are available at

the MSU Library's Graduate Student Theses and Dissertations website.

<https://www.library.msstate.edu/thesis>

### **Defense of Thesis/Dissertation Document**

After completion of the first draft, it is the major advisor's and graduate student's responsibility to review the thesis/dissertation document to ensure that it is satisfactory for submission to the student's committee for their review; it must be at the stage where only minor corrections and/or grammar edits are needed. However, the student's committee may be very helpful with comments and suggestions on this draft.

When the major advisor is satisfied that the thesis/dissertation document is ready for formal review, the document will be sent to each committee member and the graduate coordinator at least two weeks prior to the defense.

Students must generate the *Committee Acceptance Form* from LIB 9010 and have it ready for each committee member to sign at the defense. In the space for the Dean's printed name, type it as Dr. L. Wes Burger.

During the defense,

- Students will be expected to answer questions concerning the student's knowledge of his/her field of study.
- The student's graduate committee will evaluate content of the completed thesis/dissertation.
- One negative vote will not constitute failure for a student on a thesis/dissertation defense. Two negative votes will constitute failure for a student on a thesis/dissertation defense.
  - MS reference: <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/masters-requirements/#thesistext>
  - PHD reference: <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/#dissertationtext>

### **Submission of Final Thesis/Dissertation Document**

Following the defense,

- The document must be edited based on the committee's comments.
- A Word document and .pdf version along with the fully signed *Committee Acceptance Form* generated from LIB 9010 must be submitted to the DSB Admin office.
- The DSB Admin Coordinator will
  - obtain signatures of Graduate Coordinator and Department Head
  - route the document to the CFR Dean's Office for review and signature

Once the CFR Dean's Office signs, the document is returned to the student. The student submits the document through LIB 9010 to Mitchell Memorial Library.

<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/phd-requirements/#dissertationtext>

Once the library has approved a final version of the document must be submitted to the DSB Admin office.

## **Publication and Presentation of Research**

Students must read and understand:

<https://www.policies.msstate.edu/sites/www.policies.msstate.edu/files/7601.pdf> particularly section 6.2. As a graduate assistant, any data collected are the property of Mississippi State University and must be left with the department when you leave. Students are not at liberty to dispose of or alter data in anyway.

No research project is complete until the results are disseminated and available for public and other user groups. Students are expected to prepare technical and scientific manuscripts based on their research promptly on completion of field work or concurrently with writing of their thesis/dissertation. Publication should be in cooperation with the major advisor(s). Authorship is normally at the discretion of the major advisor. A major advisor(s) should always be coauthor(s) and, in some instances, senior author(s) in recognition of the faculty members direction of the research. Graduate committee members or other faculty/staff/students who make significant contributions may also be included provided they have contributed at least two of the following: a) project conception; b) data collection and analysis; and c) a significant writing contribution. Graduate students are expected to submit publications from their research; if no papers are submitted within a year following graduation, the major advisor may write up their work and be listed as senior author.

If funds are available, each graduate student is encouraged to attend a national meeting of a professional or scientific organization. When possible, the student is also expected to present a paper/poster on their research. Authorship of presentations will follow the same guidelines as publications.

## **INTERRUPTION OF PROGRAM DUE TO EMPLOYMENT**

The MSU OGS maintains a strict policy concerning enrollment especially when on a graduate research assistantship. <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/enrollment-requirements/#text>

If employment causes the student to leave campus, the student is still obligated to meet all requirements for completing their degree.

A graduate student who has completed all coursework and/or has been admitted into candidacy and/or lacks only the completion of the thesis/dissertation document and defense must remain continuously enrolled. Continuous enrollment is defined as enrollment in two of three semester terms (Fall, Spring, or Summer). This is accomplished by registering for GRD 9011 <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/enrollment-requirements/#grd9011text>

This includes:

1. PHD students who have completed their coursework, passed their preliminary examinations, defended their dissertation and submitted the document, completing the process through LIB 9010.

2. MS students who have completed all their coursework, defended their thesis, and submitted the document, completing the process through LIB 9010.
3. Self-funded MS students who have completed their coursework but have not taken or passed their final examination.

## **GENERAL DSB INFORMATION**

### **Communications Skills**

Communication skills are important to DSB students. Good communication is needed for homework problem assignments, laboratory reports, seminars, and extracurricular activities while in school and for letters, memoranda, technical reports, e-mail, and oral reporting to superiors, subordinates, and peer groups in professional/industrial situations. All graduate students are expected to develop satisfactory writing and oral communication skills prior to graduation. It is recommended that the student considers additional training in computer, writing, and public speaking skills.

### **General Duties**

Graduate students are expected and encouraged to participate in scientific, educational, and professional organizations such as the MSU's Forest Products Society (FPS) and Society of Wood Science and Technology (SWST) Student Chapter. Additionally, students should realize that professional development is not limited to coursework and research activities and major advisors may require readings from established lists or other activities to enhance the students' education. Students are expected to be aware of and participate in research endeavors of other graduate students and faculty within the Department. Some graduate students may also be asked to broaden their experience by assisting with undergraduate courses and research programs by their major advisors.

Graduate students are expected to assist in the maintenance and operation of equipment in their area of specialization, pending appropriate training. Work areas and offices should be kept clean and neat and all equipment should be properly stored after use. Students must obtain permission and training before using equipment or laboratory space of other faculty or staff or before using any departmental equipment.

Graduate students will conduct themselves as professionals, including ethical behavior, at all times. Unethical research conduct, including plagiarism, may result in termination from the program, or if the student has already graduated, their graduate degree may be revoked by MSU. The honor code may be found at the University webpage. <https://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/>

Graduate students should keep in mind that research endeavors often involve developing new procedures or methods and may require many experiments before satisfactory and/or reproducible results are obtained – and sometimes experiments cannot be completed for unanticipated reasons. Although frustrating, this is a normal part of research which all scientists endure. In addition, safety is to be the student's first consideration. Training in Laboratory Safety, Hazardous Waste Management, Chemical Safety, Shop Safety, and others will be required of the student as the major advisor deems necessary.

## **Research Progress Report**

Major advisors require students to write research reports/research summaries. Often specific templates are provided. Acknowledgement statements based on funding source must be included. The research reports/research summaries are to be submitted to the major advisor for review and approval. Deadlines are to be met or assistantship funding could be revoked. Research reports/research summaries will be submitted to DSB Admin by the major advisor.

## **Equipment Use**

### **Use of Laboratory Equipment**

Use of any computers, copiers, or any lab equipment in research areas under the responsibility of any advisor or staff member requires permission from the responsible advisor/staff member. The student must follow safe and proper use of equipment. Ongoing laboratory work normally takes precedence over students' use of any laboratory equipment. Use of any laboratory equipment is considered to be a privilege granted by an advisor or laboratory staff and should be considered as such. Graduate students must be trained before operating any equipment at the Department and before access to space is granted. Lab Training Verification forms must be completed and approved by the appropriate staff member(s), major advisor and/or Department Head. The original Lab Training Verification forms must be filed with the DSB Admin office.

### **Use of MSU-owned Vehicles**

State-owned vehicles are only to be driven by MSU personnel with a valid motor vehicle driver's license issued in Mississippi or any US state. Prior signed approval by the Department must be granted yearly. Furthermore, state-owned vehicles are not to be used for local, personal errands, such as: driving to a local restaurant for lunch, driving home for the evening or weekend, or driving to a local store to purchase an item for personal use.

# APPENDIX 1. Masters Graduate Checklist

## Masters Graduate Checklist

### OGS/DSB Required Forms & Deadlines

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Professor: \_\_\_\_\_

1<sup>st</sup> Enrolled: \_\_\_\_\_

Planned Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

For description of all graduate student responsibilities, follow the links below.

<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/> [https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad_handbook.pdf) Read and understand: <https://www.policies.msstate.edu/sites/www.policies.msstate.edu/files/7601.pdf> particularly section 6.2. As a graduate assistant, any data collected are the property of Mississippi State University and must be left with the department when you leave. Graduate Assistants are not at liberty to dispose of or alter data in anyway.

Make contact and become familiar with the:

MSU Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review: <https://www.library.msstate.edu/thesis>

MSU Writing Center: <https://www.writingcenter.msstate.edu/>

FORM	DUE TO DSB Admin	Where to Find Forms	Due	Done
Committee Request	By end of 1st Semester of Enrollment	DSB Admin prepares from OGS Website as directed by the student/major professor	???	
Request for Change of Committee	As change is made	DSB Admin prepares from OGS Website as directed by the student/major professor		
Program of Study (POS) (required by the DSB)	By end of 1st Semester of Enrollment	<a href="http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf">http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf</a>	???	
Change to POS (required by the DSB)	As change is made	<a href="http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/change_to_graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf">http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/change_to_graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf</a>		
Thesis Research Proposal/Working Plan (required by the DSB)	By the end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	To find requirements, follow the link below <a href="https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad_handbook.pdf">https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad_handbook.pdf</a>	???	
Directed Individual Study	As course is taken	<a href="http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/directed_ind_study_form.pdf">http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/directed_ind_study_form.pdf</a>	As Needed	
<b>The deadline for Thesis to the Dean's Office is 2 weeks before the deadline for submission to the Library. Defenses should be planned far enough in advance of that date to allow the student to make any necessary revisions and for the Graduate Coordinator to review and sign off on the document before submission to the Dean's Office.</b>				
Declaration of Exam/Thesis Defense	Required 3 weeks before Thesis Defense	Consult DSB Admin. Set committee mtg. Send email of invite.		
Report of Examination Results	Immediately following Thesis Defense	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures to OGS	Target ???	
DEGREE WORKS Evaluation (required by the DSB)	Immediately following Thesis Defense	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures		
Declaration of Grad Degree Completion	Immediately following Thesis Defense	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures to OGS		
Departmental Exit Report/Interview	Before end of assistantship appointment (bring copy of Thesis)	DSB Admin prepares form DSB Admin sets meeting between student and Dept Head		

Student Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Professor Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 2. Thesis Research Proposal/Working Plan, MS Thesis Option**

### **FORMAT FOR THESIS RESEARCH PROPOSAL STUDY PLAN**

**Cover Page** – Title, Name of Student, Degree seeking, Signatures (shown on next page)

**Project Summary** - Brief outline of the research.

**Project Description** - Background and objectives.

**Rationale and Significance**

**Literature Review**

**Materials and Methods:**

1. Data collection - a complete description of materials and techniques to be used.
2. Methods of analysis - an outline of the statistical methods to be used.

**Note: The total length of the above sections should not exceed 15 pages.**

**References**

**Budget**

**Timeline of completion**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL STUDY PLAN**  
**THESIS WORKING PLAN FOR**  
**NAME OF STUDENT**  
**PROGRAM: MASTER OF SCIENCE**

**TITLE:**

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**Major Professor**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Graduate Coordinator**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Department Head**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Student**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

## APPENDIX 3. PhD Graduate Checklist

### PhD Graduate Checklist OGS/DSB Required Forms & Deadlines

**Student's Name:**

**Major Professor:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Enrolled:**

**Planned Graduation:**

For description of all graduate student responsibilities, follow the links below.

<http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate> [https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad\\_handbook.pdf](https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad_handbook.pdf)

Read and understand: <https://www.policies.msstate.edu/sites/www.policies.msstate.edu/files/7601.pdf> particularly section 6.2. As a graduate assistant, any data collected are the property of Mississippi State University and must be left with the department when you leave. Graduate Assistants are not at liberty to dispose of or alter data in anyway.

Make contact and become familiar with the:

MSU Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review: <https://www.library.msstate.edu/thesis>

MSU Writing Center: <https://www.writingcenter.msstate.edu/>

FORM	DUE TO DSB Admin	Where to Find Forms	Due	DONE
Transfer Approval	When official transfer transcript becomes available	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures by major advisor & Dept Head to OGS		
Committee Request	By end of 1st Semester of Enrollment	DSB Admin prepares from OGS Website as directed by the student/major professor	???	
Request for Change of Committee	As change is made	DSB Admin prepares from OGS Website as directed by the student/major professor		
Program of Study (POS) (required by the DSB)	By end of 1st Semester of Enrollment	<a href="http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf">http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf</a>	???	
Change to POS (required by the DSB)	As change is made	<a href="http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/change_to_graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf">http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/change_to_graduate_program_of_study_cfr.pdf</a>		
Dissertation Research Proposal/Working Plan (required by the DSB)	By the end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester/End of 1 <sup>st</sup> year	To find requirements, follow the link below <a href="https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad_handbook.pdf">https://www.bioproducts.msstate.edu/students/grad_handbook.pdf</a>	???	
Directed Individual Study	As course is taken	<a href="http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/directed_ind_study_form.pdf">http://www.cfr.msstate.edu/docs/students/forms/directed_ind_study_form.pdf</a>	As needed	
Declaration of Preliminary Examination	Required 3 weeks before Preliminary Exam	No form. Consult DSB Admin. Set committee meeting. Send email of invite.		
Report of Examination Results/Candidacy Form (For Written Preliminary and Oral Comprehensive)	Immediately following written prelim/oral comp (within 6 hours of academic course work completion)	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures to OGS	Target ????	
Preliminary DEGREE WORKS Eval (required by the DSB)	Immediately following written prelim/oral comp	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures to OGS		
<b>The deadline for Dissertations to the Dean's Office is 2 weeks before the deadline for submission to the Library. Defenses should be planned far enough in advance of that date to allow the student to make any necessary revisions and for the Graduate Coordinator to review and sign off on the document before submission to the Dean's Office.</b>				
Declaration of Exam/Dissertation Defense	Required 3 weeks before Dissertation Defense	No form. Consult DSB Admin. Set committee meeting. Send email of invite.		
Report of Examination Results	Immediately following Dissertation Defense	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures to OGS	Target ????	
DEGREE WORKS Evaluation (required by the DSB)	Immediately following Dissertation Defense	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures		
Declaration of Grad Degree Completion	Immediately following Thesis Defense	DSB Admin prepares and processes after signatures to OGS		
Departmental Exit Report/Interview	Before end of assistantship appointment (bring copy of Dissertation)	DSB Admin prepares form DSB Admin sets meeting between student and Dept Head		

Student Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Major Professor Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 4. Dissertation Research Proposal/Working Plan, PHD**

### **FORMAT FOR DISSERTATION RESEARCH PROPOSAL STUDY PLAN**

**Cover Page** – Title, Name of Student, Degree seeking, Signatures (shown on next page)

**Project Summary** - Brief outline of the research.

**Project Description** - Background and objectives.

**Rationale and Significance**

**Literature Review**

**Materials and Methods:**

1. Data collection - a complete description of materials and techniques to be used.
2. Methods of analysis - an outline of the statistical methods to be used.

**Note:** The total length of the above sections should not exceed 15 pages.

**References**

**Budget**

**Timeline of completion**

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL STUDY PLAN**  
**DISSERTATION WORKING PLAN FOR**  
**NAME OF STUDENT**  
**PROGRAM: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**TITLE:**

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**Major Professor**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Graduate Coordinator**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Department Head**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Student**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

## **APPENDIX 5. Preliminary Examination, PHD Proposal Outline**

**The proposal should not exceed fifteen (15) pages, excluding literature cited. The student will have at least four weeks to write this proposal. If a Request For Proposal (RFP) from a specific agency is used as the model, then the student should abide by the requirements presented in that RFP, to include page limits, font size, and all required content. If no specific RFP exists, the student is required to follow the outline shown here.**

### **RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORMAT FOR Ph.D. STUDENTS' PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION**

#### **TITLE OF PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT**

**GRANT AGENCY INFORMATION** (if a specific grant proposal RFP is being used as a model)

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**PROJECT SUMMARY** (The project summary itself must be approximately 250 words).

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

- **Introduction** - A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project should be included.
- **Background and Literature Review**
- **Rational and Significance**
- **Research Methods** - The hypotheses or objectives and the methodology being applied to the proposed project should be stated explicitly.

#### **LITERATURE CITED**

**FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT** - Request a copy of list from Mrs. Karen Williams or Ms. Kay Davidson

**VITAE AND PUBLICATION LIST** - The vitae should be no more than two pages excluding publications listings and the publication list should be a chronological list of all publications during the past five years.

#### **BUDGET**

#### **BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

## APPENDIX 6. Preliminary Examination, PHD Signature Page

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION for

NAME OF STUDENT

CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**TITLE:**

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**Major Professor**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Committee Member**

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**Committee Member**

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**Graduate Coordinator**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Department Head**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

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**Student**

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**Signature**

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**Date**