

Graduate Handbook

Department of

Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology

Auburn University

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Introduction

Auburn is a Land Grant university about 110 miles southwest of Atlanta and 55 miles northeast of Montgomery. The city of Auburn has a population of over 50,000 and together with Opelika well over 100,000. The campus includes almost 2,000 acres and over 80 academic and administrative buildings. Academic programs at Auburn University are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Auburn is committed to research, extension, and instruction of over 24,000 students. Faculty and curricula at the main campus are organized into a Graduate School and Colleges. There are doctorates available in 38 fields. Research activity is supported through federal and state contracts and grants as well as private organizations, business, and industry.

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology offers graduate programs leading to a PhD in Applied Economics, Master of Science in Agricultural Business and Economics, Master of Science in Sociology, Master of Agriculture, and specialized Master of Business Administration. The PhD, MS Rural Sociology, and MBA are interdepartmental.

The broad range of experience, training, research, and extension interests among faculty provide a flexible graduate program. Concentration areas of the faculty include natural resources, market analysis, international economics, production, biotechnology, finance, development, social organization, environmental economics, nonmarket valuation, welfare, and aquacultural economics. Other areas such as applied statistics, forestry economics, computer science, agricultural production science, or social sciences can be emphasized with courses in other departments.

Excellent computer and internet facilities are available. Students are encouraged to bring laptops with wireless internet capability. The Draughon Library across the street was elected in 1992 as a member of the Association of Research Libraries.

Application

Application is online through the Graduate School. This Handbook covers only some of the Graduate School requirements, and applicants are responsible for meeting all Graduate School requirements. Admission to the Graduate School requires a Baccalaureate Degree from an accredited college or university with a minimum GPA of 3.0 for the last two years (60 semester hours). Minimum Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores less than 5 years old are in Table 1.

Table 1. TOEFL and GRE Requirements

Graduate Programs	Minimum Scores			
	TOEFL ¹	GRE(V)	GRE(Q)	GRE(T)
MS in Agricultural Economics	550	450	450	900
MS in Rural Sociology	550	450	450	900
PhD in Applied Economics	550	400	600	1000
M Ag in Agricultural Economics	550	400	400	800
M Ag in Rural Sociology	550	400	400	800
MBA in Agribusiness ²	550	--	--	--
MBA in Nat Res & Env Mgmt ²	550	--	--	--

¹ International students, 213 computer. ² Apply through the College of Business.

Applicants should have completed a minimum of coursework in economics (or sociology) as determined by the Graduate Committee. Students without sufficient undergraduate background may be required to complete undergraduate courses. International applicants from non-English speaking countries must submit a minimum score of 550 (213 computer) on the Test of English as a Foreign Language TOEFL. Applicants with verbal GRE scores below 400 will be required to complete specified English courses.

Two letters of recommendation should be mailed to the Graduate Program Officer. Letters should address ability to undertake rigorous quantitative research and intellectual commitment to the discipline. Students applying for financial aid must submit the Graduate Assistantship Application Form in the Appendix.

Admission involves (1) application to the Graduate School, (2) review by the Graduate Program Committee, and (3) decision by the Graduate School.

Financial Assistance

Several levels of Graduate Research (GRA), Graduate Extension (GEA), and Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA) are shown in Table 2. Stipends vary based on hours and academic status. Receipt of an assistantship is a privilege and students holding appointments are expected to be productive and make progress toward their degree.

Students falling below 3.0 GPA have one semester of probation with the Graduate School to return their GPA to 3.0. Students failing to reach 3.0 the following semester are suspended by the Graduate School. The Department does not typically support Plans of Remediation for suspended students, implying termination from the program.

If the GPA falls below 2.5 funding is cut the following semester regardless of its source. If the student then achieves a GPA of 3.00 funding may be re-established.

Students on assistantships must be enrolled every semester (including summer) to receive pay. The enrollment requirement can be met by registering for one hour of Thesis and Research (AGEC7990 or 8990/ RSOC 7990).

Table 2. Approximate Graduate Student Stipends

Level	\$/yr	% Base
I	9,800	25
II	13,000	33
III	15,000	39
IV	17,000	44
V	19,500	50

Present base salary is \$39,000 for a 100% appointment (40-hour work week).

Advancement is based on recommendation by the major professor to the Graduate Program Coordinating Committee and Department Chair. Requests must be made at least 45 days prior to the beginning of a semester. Changes are not made during the semester. Advancement is always subject to availability of funds.

PhD Student Funding

The maximum length of financial assistance is 5 semesters plus 2 summers. Extension for one semester is based on written request by the major professor and approval of the Graduate Program Coordinating Committee subject to funding availability. Tuition waivers are granted with all assistantships. PhD students may be able to teach as GTAs at Auburn or AUM. Local colleges (Southern Union Community College, Columbus State University, and Chattahoochee Valley Community College) also hire instructors with the equivalent of a Masters degree. Graduates seeking jobs in academics typically want to have teaching experience.

Levels of support for PhD assistantships are:

Level I Students who meet admission requirements without MS degrees

<i>Level II</i>	Students with MS degrees but lacking requirements for full admission
<i>Level III</i>	Typical entry level for PhD students
<i>Level IV</i>	Students who have met the PhD Research Paper requirement with one or no courses left in their Plan of Study. Students cannot remain at Level IV for more than 2 semesters plus 1 summer
<i>Level V</i>	Students who meet Level IV criteria and teach a course

MS Student Funding

The maximum term for financial assistance is 3 semesters plus 1 summer. Extension for one semester is based on a written request by the major professor and approval of the Graduate Program Coordinating Committee subject to funding availability. Tuition waivers are granted to all students on assistantships.

Levels of support for MS assistantships are:

<i>Level I</i>	Entry level for students with qualifying admission requirements
<i>Level II</i>	Typical entry level for MS students
<i>Level III</i>	Students with an accepted Plan of Study and thesis proposal plus a high GPA and exceptional progress toward degree

Course and Work Load

Students on assistantships are subject to the course loads and work expectations in Table 3. An MS (PhD) student on the “standard” Level II (III) assistantship can take up to 12 credit hours of course work per semester. Most students enroll for 9 to 12 credit hours of credit. PhD students in general should not take more than 9 credit hours of graded course work per semester to provide time to develop and complete the Research Paper. Students on assistantship must enroll for at least 1 hour during every semester including Summer.

In cases where graduate assistantships are not available, hourly work arrangements as Graduate Research Aides may be possible on a case by case basis, but do not include tuition waiver.

Table 3. Course Load Limits and Work Expectations

	Minimum Work Hours	Typical Course Hours
MS		
Level I	10	12
Level II (standard)	13	12
Level III	16	6
PhD		
Level I	10	9
Level II	13	9
Level III (standard)	16	9
Level IV	17	6
Level V	20	3

Based on percentages in Table 2 and a 40-hour work week.

PhD in Applied Economics

The PhD in Applied Economics offered by the faculty in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology involves faculty in the Department of Economics and the School of Forestry in course offerings and on Dissertation Committees. The economics faculty in the School of Forestry also offers the PhD in Applied Economics with different requirements.

Course Requirements

The PhD requires a minimum of 60 semester hours of graded courses beyond a Bachelors degree and 48 credit hours of graded course work beyond a masters degree plus a minimum of 10 hours of AGECE 8990 Research and Dissertation. Tuition waivers for students on assistantships cover required hours plus an additional 20 hours.

Each student should complete a Plan of Study with their major professor by the end of the second year. Graduate School forms are available online. A residency form should be filed with the Graduate School during the first semester. The residency requirement is satisfied with 18 semester

hours during two consecutive (not counting summer) semesters.

Course Sequence

Required and elective PhD courses are listed below. Second and third year courses are offered every other year and may vary. Electives others than those listed may be offered according to student demand and faculty interest. Other graduate level courses at Auburn can count as electives with consent of the major professor.

	First Year Required Core	
Fall	ECON 7110	Microeconomics I
	AGEC 7590	Introduction to Econometrics
	ECON 7130	Mathematical Economics
	AGEC 7970	Special Topics
Spring	ECON 7120	Microeconomics II
	AGEC 7690	Microeconometrics I
	AGEC 7700	Research Methods

A preliminary exam is given during the second week in August before the second year. The prelim is a four hour exam integrating core courses. Students with a GPA above 3.49 and no grade below B in any core course are exempt from the prelim but must turn in a research paper by July 31 as described below.

Second & Third Year Required Courses

AGEC 7080	Production I
AGEC 7090	Resource Economics II
AGEC 7110	Economic Development
AGEC 8080	Production II
AGEC 8090	Food and Agricultural Policy
AGEC 8060	Applied Market Analysis
AGEC 8690	Microeconometrics II
ECON 7210 or 20	Macroeconomics I or II
ECON 7310 or 20	Econometrics I or II

Electives

AGEC 7100	Operations Research Methods
AGEC 7200/50	Aquacultural Economics

AGEC 8890	Topics in Microeconometrics
ECON 7310/20	Econometrics
ECON 8710	International Trade
ECON 8720	Open Economy Macroeconomics
FORY 7450/60/80	Forest Economics
FINC 7960	Advanced Financial Systems
RSOC 7630	Political Economy of Development

PhD Research Paper Requirement

A publishable research paper is required during the first two years of the PhD program. Students are assumed to have earned a Masters degree at the start of the program. For students entering with a Bachelors degree, the paper requirement is deferred until the equivalent of a Masters degree is earned, typically after two years of classes. For students who must take the preliminary exam, the first draft is due October 31 following the first year of course work; for all other students the first draft is due July 31. Details are provided in appendix A.

General Oral Examination and Dissertation Proposal

After successful completion of the core and paper, the student takes a general Oral Examination with their advisory committee. The Oral Exam typically is taken during the third year, and requires approval by the Graduate School at least one week prior. The Oral Examination covers the Dissertation proposal as well as general economic theory and quantitative methods.

Unanimous support of the advisory committee is required for passing the Oral Examination. If it is failed, a re-examination may be given on recommendation of the committee and approval by the Graduate Dean. Further examinations require exceptional circumstances and approval by the Graduate Council.

Upon successful completion of the Oral Examination, the student becomes a candidate for the PhD degree and has four calendar years to complete remaining requirements. See the *Guide to the Preparation and Submission of Theses and Dissertations* on the Graduate School webpage.

Econometrics and Statistics

Students are encouraged to pursue a Field in Econometrics that requires 4 courses in econometrics beyond the first year core with a minimum grade of B in each course. Up to two courses in Statistics at the 7000 level or above may be substituted for econometrics courses upon consent of the major professor.

Students may also pursue a Graduate Minor in statistics. To qualify students must use statistics in their dissertation; complete 12 hours of course work in statistics, and have a member of the

Statistics Department faculty on their graduate committee. Students may also pursue a Masters degree in Statistics. For details, see the Department of Statistics web page.

Master of Science Programs

The MS degrees are in agricultural economics or rural sociology. The Agricultural Economics program has existed since 1938, while the Rural Sociology program administered jointly with the Department of Sociology in the College of Liberal Arts has existed since 1972. Consideration for admission to these programs requires that an applicant satisfy the minimum admission requirements of the Graduate School, generally have a minimum GPA of 3.0 on the last 60 semester hours completed as an undergraduate, and meet the Departmental minimum test score requirements in Table 1.

Agricultural Business and Economics

The minimum requirements for the master's degree in agricultural business and economics can be satisfied in three academic semesters plus a summer (fall, spring, summer, fall). In practice many students require four academic semesters. Students not on an assistantship who work off-campus or those with scholastic deficiencies may not meet all requirements in the time indicated. Research is unpredictable and frequently requires more time than anticipated.

Students must earn a minimum of 30 semester hours, of which at least 24 semester hours are course work including Special Problems or Special Topics classes. At least one-half of all credit hours toward the minimum degree requirement must be earned in 7000- and 8000-level courses for graduate students only. The remainder may be in 6000-level courses. If a student has not met all undergraduate pre-requisites in any field chosen for major or minor work, these should be scheduled as soon as possible, preferably before graduate work begins.

The student conducts the research and prepares the thesis under the direction of the major professor. The student must register for a minimum of six (6) credit hours of Research and Thesis (AGEC 7990) but may register for as many hours as desired. No more than six hours may be counted toward meeting degree requirements. The student may register for one or more hours at a time. AGEC 7990 credits count against the maximum covered by tuition waivers, which is 40 for the MS. Thus, students on such waivers in general should limit their AGEC 7990 credits to 6, especially if they are planning to continue on for the PhD. (A Tuition waiver for the PhD covers 78 credits minus credits used as a MS student. Thus, if a student on waiver takes 30 credits in the MS program, only 48 credits will be covered as a PhD student. Since the PhD requires 10 credits of Research and

Dissertation (AGEC 8999), this leaves just 38 hours of graded coursework that can be covered by the waiver.)

The *Electronic Thesis - Dissertation Guide* contains information about requirements for the thesis, and is available on the web at http://www.grad.auburn.edu/etd_guide.html. Submission of a thesis is defined as the time at which the first complete draft of such is submitted to the major professor for review. The Graduate School accepts only theses prepared according to the *Guide*. The Graduate School Calendar in *The Bulletin* lists the deadline for acceptance of final copies of theses by the Graduate School each semester. "Final copies" means that the thesis is perfected and ready for binding. A format check may be obtained at the Thesis and Dissertation Office in the Graduate School. If final copies are found to need corrections, the student's graduation may be delayed at least one semester.

Required Courses

Microeconomics (ECON 6020 or ECON 7110), Mathematical Economics (ECON 7130), Introduction to Econometrics (AGEC 7590), and Research Methods (AGEC 7700) are required of all MS students. This is a total of 12 hours of required courses in a program of 24 course hours of graded coursework. The remaining elective courses can be filled with any 6000, 7000 or 8000 level courses approved by the major professor and thesis committee. At least one-half of all credit hours toward the minimum degree requirement must be earned in 7000 and 8000-level courses and the remainder may be in 6000-level courses. Individual schedules should be constructed in consultation with the major advisor.

Plan of Study

Early in the graduate program, each student should confer with his/her academic adviser or major professor to select courses and discuss research interests. Then a Plan of Study should be prepared and submitted to the Graduate School. The Plan of Study form is available on the web at <http://graduate.auburn.edu/gspoststudent/main.aspx>. For full-time students, the Plan of Study must be submitted no later than the end of the first semester in Graduate School. For part-time students, the Plan of Study must be submitted before registration for the fourth course taken in Graduate School. Notification of all changes must be provided before the beginning of the final semester. One to three changes may be made by using the simplified "Change in Existing Plan of Study Form" available from the Graduate School or on the web. Four or more changes require a new Plan of Study. The student is responsible for carrying out the planned program and for asking the major professor to

make necessary changes. No student will be permitted to graduate who fails to submit a Plan of Study and a graduation check to the Graduate School prior to the semester of expected graduation.

Graduation day is the official last day of each semester and, therefore, is the deadline for submitting Plans of Study and graduation checks for graduation the following semester.

Residency Requirement

All candidates for the MS degree must spend a minimum of one semester (15-week term) on campus as a full-time student. This will require that the student register for a minimum of 10 credit hours, which may involve formal course work, research, seminar or a combination of the three. This requirement concerns academic residency only; it has nothing to do with residency for fee purposes.

Time Limit

All graduate work toward a master's degree must be completed within a period of five calendar years.

Thesis Requirements

All MS candidates must pass a comprehensive examination covering the major field, as well as the research and thesis. This usually is a two-hour oral examination upon completion of coursework and the Thesis, but the student's advisory committee also may require a written examination.

Members of the Graduate Faculty not on the advisory committee may attend and participate in any oral examination as visitors. The major professor will schedule the oral examination not later than the deadline indicated in the Graduate School Calendar. Successful completion requires the unanimous support of all members of the advisory committee. If a student fails the examination, one re-examination may be given on recommendation of the advisory committee and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. Further examinations will be allowed only under exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Graduate Council.

Interdepartmental Program in Sociology

The Masters degree in Sociology is offered as a cooperative Interdepartmental Program between the Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Social Work (College of Liberal Arts, AU), the Department of Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology (College of Agriculture, AU), and the Department of Sociology (AUM).

Both thesis and non-thesis options are available. These two degree options are designed to serve the needs of differing types of students. The thesis option is recommended for students who might be interested in pursuing advanced graduate work and who are interested in gaining research

experience. The non-thesis option is designed for individuals who are in mid-career, who wish to learn new skills in order to be more productive professionally, and have no intent on pursuing a more advanced graduate degree.

Admissions Requirements

The Graduate School at Auburn University and our Interdepartmental Program in Sociology welcome applications from serious students. Auburn University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer/equal opportunity educational institution.

Admission to our Program involves two steps: (1) application to the AU Graduate School, and (2) review of the application by the Interdepartmental Coordinating Committee. Once a completed application has been received by the AU Graduate School, the application is reviewed by faculty representing each participating department. The final decision on admission to the Graduate School is made by the Dean of the AU Graduate School.

In some cases, students applying to the Interdepartmental Program have had limited undergraduate course work in Sociology. When this is so, students may be required to take certain undergraduate courses. The Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Sociology is particularly concerned that students have appropriate grounding in our three core areas: Statistics, Methods of Social Research, and Social Theory.

Degree Requirements – Thesis Option

1. Graduate students are required to earn a minimum of 30 graduate-level semester hours, up to 6 of which may be thesis credits.
2. There are three required core courses for all graduate students in the Interdepartmental Program: SOCY 7000 (Advanced Sociological Theory), SOCY 7100 (Statistical Applications in Sociological Research), and RSOC 7700 (Research Methods in Sociology). The remaining course work is selected by the individual student in consultation with the student's Graduate Advisory Committee.
3. A grade of B or better must be earned in each of the core courses listed above.
4. If a prospective student has not had one or more of these courses as an undergraduate (or appropriate equivalents as determined by the co-chairs of the Interdepartmental Program) they will be required to pass corresponding undergraduate course work with a grade of at least a B before being allowed to take graduate courses in any core area.
5. Undergraduate back-up courses in the three core areas do not count for graduate course credit.

6. No more than 6 credit hours of directed readings, including SOCY 7900 (Independent Study) and RSOC 7800 (Special Problems in Rural Sociology), or comparable courses in other departments, will be accepted to meet the required minimum of course hours earned.
7. Graduate students are required to develop a research proposal for their thesis research and to present this to their advisory Committee for review and approval. Research proposals typically include a statement of the problem, a set of clear research objectives, a preliminary review of the relevant literature, and a discussion of the proposed research methodology. Only when the proposal has been approved by the advisory Committee will the graduate student be considered ready to begin thesis research.
8. Graduate students are encouraged to present their proposals as part of periodically scheduled program colloquia where several students discuss their proposed research projects.
9. Once the thesis is complete and Committee members have had an opportunity to review and comment on its contents, a thesis defense is scheduled which is open to any interested person. After passing the thesis defense, final changes required by the Committee are made and the thesis is turned into the Graduate School. It is the responsibility of graduate students to meet format and other requirements of the Graduate School with regard to the final version of the thesis.
10. Graduate students are guided through their program by an advisory Committee consisting of at least four faculty members. Selection of this Committee, including the Committee Chair, is the student's responsibility. Students are strongly encouraged to form Committees which have faculty representation from at least two of the three participating departments.
11. Graduate students are strongly encouraged to form their Advisory Committee and identify a plan of study for course work by the end of their first semester of course work. Revisions to the plan of study and/or to the composition of the Advisory Committee are possible should the need arise.

Degree Requirements – Non-Thesis Option

1. Non-thesis students will be guided in their program by an Advisory Committee made up of graduate faculty from at least two of the component units of the Interdepartmental Program. The Advisory Committee is to be chosen by the student, with one member designated as the Chair. This Advisory Committee will be responsible for overseeing development of a plan of study and monitor the academic progress of the student.

2. Non-thesis students will be required to earn a total of 36 hours of graduate credit. Normally, at least 24 of these hours would be 7000-level or above courses offered in one of the three constituent departments in our program. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the co-Directors of the Interdepartmental Program.
3. The choice of courses taken will be made in consultation with the Advisory Committee, who will indicate their approval through signing a Plan of Study filed with the Graduate School by the end of the first semester in residence or before completion of 12 graduate-level semester hours.
4. Non-thesis students will be required to take the same three core courses in theory, methods, and statistics as students pursuing the thesis option.
5. No more than 6 hours of course work can be in the form of directed readings or independent studies.
6. In lieu of a thesis, non-thesis students will prepare a substantive research paper which will be presented and defended at a meeting of the Advisory Committee. This research paper could take a number of different forms, including a policy review, a program evaluation, or a paper suitable for presentation at an academic conference. The intent is for the student to provide the Advisory Committee a piece of work that reflects the students' interests and abilities to integrate elements of what they have learned in the graduate program.
7. Funding decisions are made by individual departments within the program. That said, it is the firm intent of all participating departments that students pursuing a non-thesis option are not eligible for graduate teaching assistantships and graduate research assistantships. The non-thesis option is being created primarily to serve the needs of potential graduate students who already are embarked on their professional careers and who see our program as an opportunity to expand their personal and professional horizons.
8. Students admitted into the Interdepartmental Graduate Program must declare whether they intend to follow a thesis or non-thesis option. A student who declares a thesis option may not subsequently change to a non-thesis option unless unusual and extenuating circumstances justify this change, and this change is supported by the student's Advisory Committee and approved by a majority vote of the Coordinating Committee of the Interdepartmental Graduate Program. In the event of a tie vote, the Dean of the Graduate School at Auburn University, or designee of the Dean, shall cast the deciding vote.

Deciding on a Thesis or Non-thesis option

The Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Sociology now offers students a choice between a thesis or non-thesis degree. Both degrees will carry an MA or MS designation (choice of student), but it will be indicated on the student's transcript if a non-thesis degree.

The non-thesis option is designed primarily for students who are employed full-time and need a master's degree certification to either retain their positions or make them eligible or competitive for promotions. This degree option will normally be used by students who know that they will not be going on for a higher degree.

There are several things for a student to consider when making a decision about whether to pursue the thesis or the non-thesis option:

1. The non-thesis option requires a total of 36 hours of course work, in addition to a major paper which will be defended in the presence of one's advisory committee. The thesis option requires 30 hours, 6 of which are thesis credits, in addition to writing a major thesis. The thesis normally involves primary research and analysis by the thesis candidate.
2. A non-thesis degree is generally considered a less rigorous degree than the thesis option, despite the fact that there are more course hours involved. This is because the thesis is a much more rigorous research endeavor than is the major paper required for the non-thesis option.
3. Because the non-thesis degree is considered less rigorous, most PhD programs throughout the country will not consider a candidate with a non-thesis master's degree. Typically, such a candidate would either be rejected for admission or admitted on the master's level.
4. Non-thesis candidates will normally not be considered for funding by any of the three departments in the Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Sociology. There are several reasons for this:
 - a. The non-thesis option is specifically intended for students who are already working full time; hence, it would be working at cross purposes to have a policy that provided funding to non-thesis students;
 - b. We reserve our assistantships for what we consider the most competitive students. Given that the thesis option is the more rigorous of the two options, priority in funding will obviously go to thesis candidates;
 - c. We regard the assistantship as part of an academic socialization process to prepare students to teach and/or do research in preparation for advancing to the PhD degree. This is also the purpose of requiring students to write a thesis. Thus, the assistantship is intrinsically linked in purpose with the writing of the thesis.
 - d. In some cases, especially in the Rural Sociology department, the assistantship is designated

as a GRA (Graduate *Research* Assistantship), and a research thesis is considered part of the contract for the assistantship.

We encourage you to think about these factors very carefully in deciding on which option that you want to take. Normally, any student who is not seeking this degree as a necessary certification for conditions of employment is urged to pursue the thesis option. There may be very good reasons for students who do not fit this category to pursue a non-thesis option; however, and we encourage you to talk with your faculty advisor and/or one of co-Directors of the Interdepartmental Program in Sociology before making such a decision.

Master of Agriculture

The Master of Agriculture is a non-thesis option that provides a broad graduate training in Agriculture, Agricultural Economics, or Rural Sociology. A minimum of 32 hours of course work is required with at least 20 hours of this in the agricultural sciences. No comprehensive written exam is required. However, 3 credit hours of AGECE 7960 or RSOC 7960, Special Problems, must be included in the Plan of Study. The special problem will involve the development of a research paper which must be submitted to the Graduate Committee and will serve as the focus of the final oral examination. Admission requirements for the Master of Agriculture are equivalent to those for the Master of Science degrees outlined on pages 9 and 10. Students pursuing the Master of Agriculture are not eligible for hard-dollar assistantship funding. However, soft-dollar funding (from grants) may be available in some instances at the election of the principal investigator.

Master of Business Administration

An MBA degree with special options in agricultural economics was added in 1990. Specialties in either Agribusiness or Natural Resources and Environmental Management may be pursued. Application for admission to either specialty should be made through the College of Business.

Requirements include 36 graduate credit hours, 24 in business and 12 in agricultural economics or a closely related field. Because this is a non-research degree, MBA students are not eligible for Graduate Research Assistantships. However, the Department does have one or two Graduate Teaching Assistantships for which the MBA student may be considered. Also, hourly

research work as a Graduate Research Aid is sometimes available.

Appendix A: PhD Research Paper Requirement¹

The writing of a publishable paper is required during the first two years of the PhD program.² The paper must be sole-authored and worthy of submission to an economics or related journal with a Google Scholar h-index of 25 or above. Examples of journals meeting this standard are given in the Attachment. Students are encouraged to begin development of research ideas immediately upon entering the graduate program. Initial ideas for the paper (consisting of a concise research question, a sketch of a framework for investigation, and verification of available data) must be submitted to the Paper Committee by January 31 of the first year as part of the Special Topics course (described later).

Based on the paper idea and student nominations, the Paper Committee assigns a Paper Advisor to each student. Thereafter, students report to and interact frequently with their Paper Advisor. Students are also encouraged to seek advice or reactions to drafts from faculty throughout the development of their paper, just as a faculty member might seek advice from a colleague. But the paper must be solely the student's work, which excludes work done jointly with faculty here or elsewhere (such as a professor in prior undergraduate/graduate work). Plagiarism standards of the journals apply, and violations could result in expulsion from the university (see Student Academic Honesty Code www.auburn.edu/academic/provost/ahc.html.)

The student's progress is evaluated by the Paper Committee together with the Paper Advisor. To assist the student in meeting the paper requirement, the Paper Committee will teach a 3-hour course on the basics of writing for journals. In this course, which is offered Fall Semester, students submit a formal Paper Prospectus and make an oral presentation on the development of their paper ideas. Attendance is required.

The student's paper must be submitted to the Paper Committee by July 31 following the first year of course work. The only exception to this deadline is for students taking the written prelims in August, who will have until October 31 to submit their paper. After soliciting a thorough review of the paper by the Paper Advisor and two independent reviewers selected from the faculty, the Paper Committee classifies the paper into one of three categories: (i) the paper meets the standard as is, (ii) the paper could meet the standard with minor revision, or (iii) the paper needs substantial work. Students with papers in the first category are finished with the paper requirement. Students with papers in the second and third categories are given careful advice on how to bring their papers up to journal quality, and continue to work with their Paper Advisors (which subsequently includes the independent faculty reviewers).

The revised paper must be submitted by January 31 of the second year (March 31 for those taking the prelim), when a similar evaluation process occurs. If the revised paper fails to meet the standard, a second revision will be due May 31 (June 30 for those taking the prelim). If the paper at that point does not meet the standard, or could not do so with straightforward revisions, the student will not be allowed to continue with the PhD program. These students have the option of changing to a terminal

¹ Appreciation is expressed to the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland, for permission to use their web material in developing this description, some of which is verbatim.

² Students are assumed to have earned a MS degree or equivalent at the start of the program. For students entering with a BS degree, the paper requirement will be deferred until the equivalent of a MS degree is earned, which typically occurs after two years of classes.

MS program, or leaving the PhD program. The chair of the Paper Committee conveys the committee's final evaluation for each student in writing to the Graduate Program Officer, who, in turn, provides written notification of the final decision to the student and the Department Chair.

Appeals of decisions made by the Paper Committee must be tendered to the Department Chair within one month of the decision. The appeal must be in writing, and state clearly the reasons for the appeal. The Department Chair will appoint an *ad hoc* committee consisting of three faculty members who hold Level 2 Graduate Faculty status to consider the appeal. At least one of these members must be from outside the department (e.g., Economics or Forest Economics). The *ad hoc* committee will inform the Graduate Program Officer of its decision, who will then notify the student. In filing the appeal, the student is entitled to the due process procedures described in *The Tiger Cub*, which is available online at <http://www.auburn.edu/tigercub/>.

Year of PhD Study	Initial Paper Idea Submitted to Paper Committee	First Draft Submitted to Paper Committee	Review Returned to Student	Revision Submitted to Committee	2 nd Review Returned to Student	Final Draft Submitted to Committee	Final Decision to Student
1	January 31	July 31	August 31				
		Oct. 31*	Nov. 30*				
2				January 31	February 28	May 31	June 30
				March 31*	April 30*	June 30*	July 31*

*Dates for students taking the written prelim exam.

Tips on Producing a Successful Paper

- 1) Select a topic that contributes to the Department's research program. Most faculty have research projects funded by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, or outside contracts and grants. Familiarize yourself with these research projects, with the aim of developing a researchable idea that contributes to the research objectives. This will align your interest with faculty expertise, and thus result in higher quality feedback as the writing process unfolds.
- 2) Do a thorough review of the literature with the aim of identifying gaps, problems, or puzzles that your work could address. Focus on work published in the better journals, i.e., those with a GS h-index higher than 25. Avoid unpublished work, and work published in "popular" outlets, i.e., those intended for a non-scientific audience. And be sure that the review is up to date, i.e., includes the most recent work on the topic. A good place to find relevant articles is *EconLit*, the electronic data base maintained by the American Economics Association.
- 3) Assemble a data base early in the research process, ideally by the end of the first semester of classes. This will give you an opportunity to explore alternative hypotheses, apply econometric techniques learned in class, and develop a realistic understanding of what can be accomplished given data limitations and time constraints.

Policy on Late Papers

Consistent with university policies laid out in *The Tiger Cub*, paper deadlines will be strictly enforced. A student who misses a deadline without the prior approval of the Paper Committee will be

terminated from the program. Requests for deadline extension must be received at least one month before due date.

ATTACHMENT: Examples of Journals that meet minimum standard for the PhD Research Paper

Impact Factors of Selected Journals Source: Harzing's Publish or Perish http://www.harzing.com/resources.htm accessed 5 October 2009	h-index
<i>Agribusiness: An International Journal</i>	35
<i>Agricultural Economics</i>	55
<i>Agricultural and Resource Economics Review</i>	26
<i>American Journal of Agricultural Economics</i>	119
<i>Agricultural Systems</i>	54
<i>Applied Economics</i>	70
<i>Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resources Economics</i>	34
<i>Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics</i>	31
<i>Coastal Management</i>	32
<i>Education Economics</i>	33
<i>Empirical Economics</i>	52
<i>Energy Economics</i>	51
<i>European Review of Agricultural Economics</i>	52
<i>Food Policy</i>	52
<i>Growth and Change</i>	39
<i>Journal of Agricultural Economics</i>	50
<i>Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics</i>	30
<i>Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics</i>	44
<i>Journal of Consumer Affairs</i>	43
<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	184
<i>Journal of Development Economics</i>	116
<i>Journal of Environmental Economics and Management</i>	118
<i>Journal of Housing Economics</i>	37
<i>Land Economics</i>	93
<i>Marine Resource Economics</i>	35
<i>Papers in Regional Science</i>	61
<i>Review of Agricultural Economics</i>	38
<i>Regional Science and Urban Economics</i>	70
<i>Southern Economic Journal</i>	72
<i>The Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics</i>	51
<i>World Development</i>	146

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP APPLICATION FORM
Auburn University

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Telephone No. _____

Email _____ Sex M () F ()

Citizenship: United States () Other _____

Have you ever been discharged or forced to resign from any position? Yes () No ()

If so, explain fully.

Proposed Agricultural Economics Area of Interest for Graduate Study

Scholastic honors, membership in honor societies and participation in other college activities:

RECORD OF EMPLOYMENT

Organization

Title or Position

Dates

References (List two giving Names, Addresses and Position)

Date _____

Signed _____

Applying for (circle all that apply): GRA/GEA GTA ALL

RETURN TO: Graduate Program Officer, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural
Sociology, 202 Comer Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849-5406 USA