

# Graduate Student Handbook

Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



**College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental  
Sciences**

**The Grainger College of Engineering**

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Student Health Insurance	<a href="http://www.si.illinois.edu">www.si.illinois.edu</a>	217-333-0165
Financial Services – Cashier Office	<a href="mailto:ufscohelp@uillinois.edu">ufscohelp@uillinois.edu</a>	217-333-1280
University Policy Department	<a href="mailto:dpscomments@illinois.edu">dpscomments@illinois.edu</a>	217-333-1216 (911 for emergencies)
Counseling Center	<a href="http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu">www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu</a>	217-333-3704
Office of Admission & Records	<a href="http://www.registrar.illinois.edu">www.registrar.illinois.edu</a>	217-333-0210

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# Overview

Purpose of Graduate Student Handbook  
Mission Statement  
Graduate Students' Responsibilities  
Importance of Excellent Communication Skills

## Purpose of Graduate Student Handbook

- The purpose of this handbook is to provide pertinent information and to identify sources of information to assist graduate students in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering (including both programs in Agricultural and Biological Engineering or ABE and Technical Systems Management or TSM). This handbook provides program expectations and procedural information for obtaining a graduate degree and serves as a reference for advisors of graduate students in the ABE Department.

Graduate education is central to our identity as a world-class research university. As an integral part of your studies, you collaborate with professors on research and creative projects that contribute to the body of scholarly and scientific knowledge, and solve important problems in agriculture, engineering, technology, and society.

We seek graduate students with the highest credentials. All students must be able to communicate effectively and contribute meaningfully to teaching and research. We treat our graduate students as professionals and are ever mindful that our graduate students of today are our peers of tomorrow. Ethics and professionalism are extremely important aspects of our graduate education and training. Our department's legacy lies in the hands of our graduates.

## Mission Statement

"We integrate engineering, technology and life sciences for enhancement of complex living systems in global agriculture, food, energy, water and environment." (*Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Vision 2020, 2016*)

The ABE faculty are internationally recognized as measured by productivity in peer-reviewed publications, national and international awards, grants and contracts, and by their creative teaching, research, and outreach programs. Each year, faculty and their graduate students contribute to the literature base by publishing high quality peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, books, and invited papers, and are awarded several million dollars in research grants. Faculty in our department are in demand for speaking, consulting, editorships, editorial-board memberships, offices in professional organizations, and membership on national review panels and committees.

The ABE Department is an integral component of the University of Illinois. The ABE Department is part of two colleges at the University of Illinois: the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES), and The Grainger College of Engineering (GCOE). Departmental faculty interact with numerous other faculty in GCOE, College of ACES, College of Veterinary Medicine, and other colleges.

The policies and procedures described herein will pertain to all students entering the ABE Graduate Program in Fall 2019 and beyond. Students already enrolled at that time may follow the requirements in this publication or those in effect when they entered the Graduate Program.

## Graduate Students' Responsibilities

As a graduate student in the ABE department, you are ultimately responsible for decisions affecting your academic progress. You are responsible for fulfilling all the requirements for your graduate degree as outlined by the ABE department, while complying with the regulations of the Graduate College. You should seek guidance from your faculty advisor, ABE graduate academic staff, and the Graduate College to help you successfully reach your educational goals in a timely fashion.

Refer to the Graduate College Handbook (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook>) regarding Graduate College policies and this Handbook regarding departmental policies and procedures. All graduate programs in the university must follow Graduate College policies and procedures. Each college may implement additional requirements for its graduate students beyond those of the Graduate College. Similarly, each department in a college may implement additional requirements for its graduate students beyond those of the college. Therefore, it is very important for you to be aware of the policies in ABE as well as the college, in addition to those of the Graduate College.

Note that the graduate programs in ABE are formally administered in the GCOE, while the M.S. program in TSM and Professional Science Master's (PSM) program are formally administered in the College of ACES.

## Importance of Excellent Communication Skills

Communication is an essential part of graduate engineering programs. Students have opportunities to communicate in courses, group projects and presentations, during seminars, while attending conferences (poster sessions, presentations on research), at job interviews, and during their M.S. and Ph.D. exams. The ability of a researcher to communicate well is as important as developing research results. Students need to learn how to effectively communicate the value of their research with various audiences, persuade them of the value of their work by keeping the attention of the audience, arguing effectively, and explaining complex concepts clearly.

Communication can be divided into oral and written forms. One of the most important forms of written communication in connection with graduate programs is an article published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal or conference proceeding. Students need to develop good technical writing techniques, which can be

learned by working closely with their advisor and other faculty, reading many research articles, obtaining feedback from fellow students, and by seeking outside help.

Several opportunities exist to develop good oral communication skills. Students should observe and evaluate presentation styles by attending research seminars in the ABE Department and around the university. Students have opportunities to give presentations or seminars as part of research group meetings or colloquia within the department.

While participating in conferences, workshops, and other research meetings, students need to learn how to network and express ideas effectively. Most experienced researchers can give an impromptu explanation of their research in any time length (1, 5, or 10 minutes), while even customizing it for a particular audience. Networking may also have positive implications to students' career opportunities. Hiring committees are much more enthusiastic when some of their members know the candidate. It often takes years to build a good social network, so students should start early.

Teaching experience is another way to develop good communication skills. Teaching is a valuable art that can serve Ph.D. students well if mastered before taking a position in academia, a federal lab, or industry. For students who seek careers in academia, acquiring good teaching experiences—with the responsibility for an entire course or at least the development and delivery of a substantial number of lectures for the course—is highly recommended.

For some students, development of oral communication and social skills may appear daunting. It is critical to seek advice and feedback on presentations. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to socialize with other students with different cultures to help improve communication skills and obtain a broader cultural perspective.

# Graduate Degree Programs

Summary of Degree Options

Areas of Study

Admission Requirements

Types of Graduate Status

Professional Science Master's Programs

Thesis-based Master's Programs

Non-thesis Option

Doctoral Program

Graduate Student Annual Evaluation Process

Finding a Thesis Advisor

## Summary of Degree Options

Table 1 lists the graduate programs in the ABE department. These are described briefly below.

- Professional Science Master's Degree – A Professional Science Master's (PSM) degree program is a non-thesis, professionally-oriented program of study that is usually completed in 16 months (three semesters and one summer term). Students complete coursework and, typically, a professional development activity.
- Thesis-based Master's Degree – A thesis-based Master's degree program is a research-oriented program of study that is usually completed in two years. Students complete coursework, research, and a thesis.
  - \*\*non-thesis is an option if approved by the department (advisor, director of graduate studies and department head)
- Ph.D. Degree – A Ph.D. degree program is a research-oriented program of study that is usually completed within 3 to 5 years. Students complete coursework, research, and a dissertation.



**Table 1. Graduate Degree Programs in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering**

Program	Degree	Thesis	Non-thesis option
Agricultural and Biological Engineering	Master of Science (M.S.)	Yes	Yes
Agricultural and Biological Engineering	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)	Yes	No
Technical Systems Management	Master of Science (M.S.)	Yes	Yes
Technical Systems Management	Professional Science Master's (MS-PSM)	No	Not applicable
Bioprocessing and Bioenergy	Professional Science Master's (MS-PSM)	No	Not applicable

## Areas of Study

Students in the M.S. (thesis-based) or Ph.D. programs are expected to conduct research in ABE. The ABE faculty conduct research to address some of the greatest challenges related to food, agriculture, and the environment. Current research include the following:

- agricultural and industrial safety and health (e.g., agricultural injury causation and effective injury and illness risk reduction measures, stress and mental health);
- bioenvironmental engineering (e.g., controlled environment systems, precision livestock farming applications, energy efficiency and sustainability, air quality improvement, handling and treating biowaste, diesel engine emissions, building energy efficiency, animal welfare);
- biological engineering (e.g., renewable energy, biological nanotechnology, sustainability, and synthetic biology);
- food and bioprocess engineering (e.g., production of fuels and chemicals from cereal grains/biomass, novel biomass fractionation processes for recovery of food, nutraceutical and industrial products);
- off-road equipment engineering (e.g., machine learning, autonomous decision making and control, machine vision systems, unmanned aerial systems, precision agriculture, appropriate scale mechanization);
- soil and water resources engineering (e.g., water drainage, erosion and sediment control, watershed ecosystem dynamics, pathogen, nutrient and chemical transport).

## Admission Requirements

### **B.S. Degree and GPA**

College graduates must have an undergraduate B.S. degree in Agricultural and Biological Engineering or related engineering field, with a grade-point average (GPA) of 3.00/4.00 (A=4.00) on the last 60 hours of

undergraduate coursework, and three supporting letters of recommendation to be considered for admission. TSM applicants must have an undergraduate B.S. degree in TSM, or a related agricultural, science or business field.

## **GRE**

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is required for all candidates. No minimum GRE score is required for admission. Graduate Record Examination information is available at: <https://www.ets.org/gre>.

## **TOEFL**

All applicants whose native language is not English must take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Applicants should make testing arrangements with ETS at <https://www.ets.org/toefl>. An applicant may be exempt from the TOEFL test if they have completed at least two years of full-time study in a country where English is the primary language and in a school where English is the primary language of instruction. While the University requires a minimum score of 79 on the TOEFL iBT® (internet-based test), the ABE Graduate Program requires a minimum score of 88 iBT® to be considered for admission. A TOEFL score of 88 iBT® or higher is required to be considered for assistantship support if the applicant has not previously received a degree from a U.S. institution. A student whose native language is not English must achieve a minimum TOEFL score of 102 iBT® or the English Placement Test is required. The English Placement Test is given on campus by the Department of English and determines the remedial English as a Second Language (ESL) course(s) that may be required. Upon successful completion of the recommended ESL courses, the student will have met the TOEFL requirement and will be eligible to be taken off Limited Status. Students cannot receive a degree while on Limited Status.

# Types of Graduate Status

## **Full Standing**

Full standing is the status which all graduate students must attain in order to graduate from their degree program at the University of Illinois.

## **Limited Status**

Candidates with a GPA less than 3.00/4.00 (A=4.00) from the last 60 hours of coursework, but with superior academic records or special backgrounds, abilities, and interests may be admitted on limited status.

In some cases, a candidate with a B.S. engineering degree may be admitted on limited status because some additional undergraduate courses are needed in order for the B.S. degree to be considered as an “equivalent” engineering degree to the agricultural and biological engineering degree. In this case, an agreement to take the additional courses would be prescribed by the Director of Graduate Studies as a condition of admission. These course deficiencies must be passed with a grade of B or better within the first two semesters of enrollment.

In some rare cases non-native English speaking candidates who are lacking a current TOEFL score, but otherwise have superior academic records or special backgrounds, abilities, and interests may be admitted on limited status. Limited status can be removed by attaining a TOEFL over 102 iBT® or by completion of the recommended ESL courses.

It is the student’s responsibility to inform their advisor when all limited status requirements have been met and to show such verification to the Director of Graduate Studies. Then a departmental request for full standing will be sent to the Graduate College.

## Non-degree Status

Non-degree status provides an opportunity for a highly motivated student to obtain a graduate degree in ABE. Non-degree status situations usually arise when a candidate is very strong academically but has a B.S. degree in a non-engineering discipline. In this case, the Graduate Program Director prescribes a list of courses that would provide “B.S. Agricultural and Biological Engineering degree equivalency.” These equivalency courses would be taken under Non-degree Status. A candidate considering this option should review the Non-degree Status section in the Handbook for Graduate Students and Advisers to be aware of some important registration limitations as well (<https://grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/2/chapter2/student-status#topic2>).

## Professional Science Master’s Programs

Professional Science Master’s (PSM) programs are designed to allow students to gain the advanced skills they will need for an industry position. PSM programs require students to complete business courses to help round out their technical skills and prepare them for management-level positions. Skills gained in the program help graduates compete for higher salaries and leadership positions with greater responsibility and recognition. PSM programs are non-thesis, non-research, coursework-based programs designed for students who do *not* plan to pursue a Ph.D.

The requirements are summarized in Table 2 and in the Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/graduate-majors/ag-biol-engin/ms-technical-systems-management-psm-concentration/>). A student in the PSM program must develop a plan, in consultation with their adviser, to ensure all degree requirements will be completed within three semesters. It is important for students to determine when courses are offered — either fall, spring, or summer term — and build a schedule from there. Course offerings can be found at <http://catalog.illinois.edu/courses-of-instruction/>. Students should work closely with their advisers and the coordinator of Graduate Programs in the ABE department to ensure they are completing all degree requirements allowing them to graduate in a timely fashion.

**Table 2. Degree requirements for Professional Science Master’s programs**

<b>Business courses prescribed by the Illinois PSM program</b>		<b>10</b>
<u>PSM 501</u>	PSM Industry Seminar I	0
<u>PSM 502</u>	PSM Industry Seminar II	0
<u>PSM 503</u>	PSM Industry Seminar III	0
<u>PSM 555</u>	PSM Internship	0
<u>TSM 594</u>	Graduate Seminar (0 hours registration every term while in residence every fall term for the PSM concentration)	0
One course in statistics from an approved list		3-5
One course in research methods including experimental design in consultation with advisor		3-5
One 500-level elective course chosen in consultation with advisor		3-5
Elective courses – chosen in consultation with advisor (subject to Other Requirements and Conditions below)		17-23
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>42</b>

**Other Requirements**

The PSM concentration is required.

A minimum of 12 500-level credit hours applied toward the degree.

The minimum program GPA is 2.75.

## Thesis-based Master’s Programs

Thesis-based Master’s programs are designed to allow students to gain the advanced technical and research skills they will need for a research and development type industry position or to pursue a Ph.D. degree. The skills gained in the program help graduates compete for higher salaries and leadership positions with greater responsibility and recognition within industry or government labs. Alternatively, the experience provides an opportunity to explore interest in pursuing a Ph.D. degree.

**Requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Agricultural & Biological Engineering:**

The degree requirements for M.S. in ABE are summarized in Table 3 and in the Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/graduate-majors/ag-biol-engin/ms-ag-biol-engin/#degreerequirementstext>). A total of 32 hours of course credit, consisting of a minimum of 24 hours of formal course credit and 8 hours of research course credit (ABE 599) are normally required. As part of the

minimum 24 hours of formal course credit, the following coursework will normally be required for the degree in the Agricultural and Biological Engineering program. Credit will not be applied for a course satisfying more than one requirement. Graduate students should submit a petition to the coordinator of Graduate Programs in the ABE department for course transfers and for credits of courses already taken. The Director of Graduate Studies will review the petition and make a final decision.

**Table 3. Degree requirements for MS in ABE**

Code	Title	Hours
<u>ABE 599</u>	Thesis Research	8
<u>ABE 594</u>	Graduate Seminar (Registration of 0 hours required for minimum 2 semesters while in residence)	0
<u>ABE 501</u>	Graduate Research I	1
<u>One MATH course beyond differential equations from an approved list (at least 3 hr)</u>		3-4
<u>One course in statistical design and analysis from an approved list (at least 3 hr)</u>		3-5
<u>One course in instrumentation and measurement from an approved list (at least 3 hr)</u>		3-5
One 500-level course (taken for at least 3 credit hours) in an area of specialization – chosen in consultation with advisor (normally not a Special Problem; no Independent Study is allowed).		3-5
Elective courses – chosen in consultation with advisor (subject to Other Requirements and Conditions below)		4-11
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>32</b>

**Other Requirements and Conditions**

	A maximum of 4 hours of <u>ABE 597</u> (or other independent study) may be applied toward the elective course work requirement.
Minimum GPA	3.0

**Requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Technical Systems Management:**

The degree requirements for M.S. in TSM are summarized in Table 4 and in the Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/graduate-majors/ag-biol-engin/ms-tech-systems-mgmt/>). A total of 32 hours of course credit, consisting of a minimum of 24 hours of formal course credit and 8 hours of research course credit (TSM 599) will normally be required. As part of the minimum 24 hours of formal course credit, the following coursework will normally be required for the degree in Technical Systems Management program unless previously taken. No course shall be double counted for more than one requirement.

**Table 4. Degree requirements for MS in TSM**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Hours</b>
<u>TSM 599</u>	Thesis Research	8
<u>TSM 594</u>	Graduate Seminar (Registration of 0 hours required for minimum 2 semesters while in residence)	0
<u>TSM 501</u>	Graduate Research I	1
	One course in statistics from an approved list (at least 3 hr)	3-5
	One course in research methods including experimental design in consultation with advisor	3-5
	One 500-level elective course (at least 3 hr) chosen in consultation with advisor	3-5
	Elective courses – chosen in consultation with advisor (subject to Other Requirements and Conditions below)	8-14
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>32</b>

**Other Requirements and Conditions**

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Minimum GPA: 2.75

**Importance of Academic Planning**

Thesis-based Master’s programs require a total of 32 credit hours, through a combination of coursework and thesis research. The average time to complete a thesis-based Master’s degree in ABE is two years. Students complete research under the direction of a thesis advisor and must submit a master’s thesis in order to earn their degree.

**Examining committee**

An examining committee for M.S. thesis consisting of three to five members, including the thesis advisor, will be appointed by the department to judge whether:

- a. the progress of the student has been satisfactory;
- b. the thesis is acceptable;
- c. the student has the proper concept of the profession;
- d. the extent to which the graduate study has contributed to his/her professional consciousness and development.

The examining committee may include, in addition to faculty from various subject matter areas of the University, individuals from outside the University who have a particular interest and competence in the area of the thesis research. The committee is appointed by the Department Head in response to a request from the thesis advisor. The chair and at least one additional members of the examining committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. A suggested procedure for activating the committee includes:

- a. Consultation between student and advisor regarding appropriate committee membership.

- b. Informal contact with those selected, by either student or advisor, to ascertain willingness to serve.
- c. Proposal of committee membership to Department Head by the advisor.
- d. Notification of appointment to chair and committee members by Department.
- e. Scheduling, convening, and reporting of the results of the examination by the chair.

## Non-thesis Option

In special circumstances, students may be allowed to pursue the M.S. degree – non-thesis option. Students must submit an internal petition for non-thesis option. Such petition must be made to the Department Graduate Committee. No special forms are required for the petition but complete supporting documentation must be provided. The Director of Graduate Studies will review the petition and make a final decision. Tables 5 and 6 list the requirements for the M.S. – non thesis option in ABE and TSM, respectively. They are also presented in the Graduate Catalog (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/graduate-majors/ag-biol-engin/ms-tech-systems-mgmt>).

**Table 5. Degree requirements for Non-Thesis Master’s Option in Agricultural & Biological Engineering**

Code	Title	Hours
<u>ABE 594</u>	Graduate Seminar (Registration of 0 hours required for minimum 2 semesters while in residence)	0
<u>ABE 501</u>	Graduate Research I	1
One MATH course beyond differential equations from an approved list (at least 3 hr)		3-4
One course in statistical design and analysis from an approved list (at least 3 hr)		3-5
One course in instrumentation and measurement from an approved list (at least 3 hr)		3-5
One 500-level course (taken for at least 3 credit hours) in an area of specialization – chosen in consultation with advisor (normally not a Special Problem; no Independent Study is allowed).		3-5
Elective courses – chosen in consultation with advisor (subject to Other Requirements and Conditions below)		16-23
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>36</b>

### Other Requirements and Conditions

A maximum of 4 hours of ABE 597 (or other independent study) may be applied toward the elective course work requirement.

A minimum of 12 500-level credit hours applied toward the degree.

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Minimum GPA: 3.0

**Table 6. Degree requirements for Non-Thesis Option in Technical Systems Management:**

Code	Title	Hours
<u>TSM 594</u>	Graduate Seminar (Registration of 0 hours required for minimum 2 semesters while in residence)	0
<u>TSM 501</u>	Graduate Research I	1
	One course in statistics from an approved list (at least 3 hr)	3-5
	One course in research methods including experimental design in consultation with advisor	3-5
	One 500-level elective course chosen in consultation with advisor (at least 3 hr)	3-5
	Elective courses – chosen in consultation with advisor (subject to Other Requirements and Conditions below)	20-26
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>36</b>

**Other Requirements and Conditions**

A minimum of 12 500-level credit hours applied toward the degree.

Minimum GPA: 2.75

## Doctoral Program

Ph.D. programs are designed to guide students through the process of becoming an independent researcher and educator. The goals of Ph.D. students are as follows:

- 1) Become scholars by absorbing large bodies of research literature and critically analyzing the state-of-the-art, including its shortcomings;
- 2) Become effective communicators by learning how to express ideas clearly in writing, individual meetings, and public seminars; and
- 3) Become innovators by creating new theories, technologies, or paradigms that advance the state-of-the-art.

By the end of the Ph.D. program, students are expected to become experts in a research field and intellectual peers of the faculty. Successful students are driven by a passion to develop creative ideas and make an impact through their intellectual contributions.

The general requirements for a Ph.D. degree may be divided into three stages as shown in Figure 1:

- a. **Stage I** is the Master of Science or its equivalent (a minimum of 32 semester hours, of acceptable graduate work at this or another university). When Stage I is completed at another university, its suitability is evaluated at the time when the prospective graduate student is considered for admission.



- b. **Stage II** involves one or more additional years devoted to course work and research in preparation for the preliminary examination. Additional course work (a minimum of 32 hours beyond the M.S.) must be completed to provide a comprehensive background for the intended research. A detailed dissertation proposal must be prepared before the preliminary examination may be scheduled. The proposal should demonstrate knowledge of the field by the candidate, state a concise objective, include a review of the pertinent literature, and outline in some detail the proposed procedure and form of the anticipated results. Passing the preliminary examination marks the end of Stage II.
  
- c. **Stage III** involves mainly research culminating in an approved dissertation and final oral examination. In some cases further formal course work may be taken during Stage III. This stage requires a minimum of 32 hours of research, and a minimum 6-month time period after passing the preliminary exam. It is completed when the final examination is passed and the approved dissertation is deposited with the Graduate College

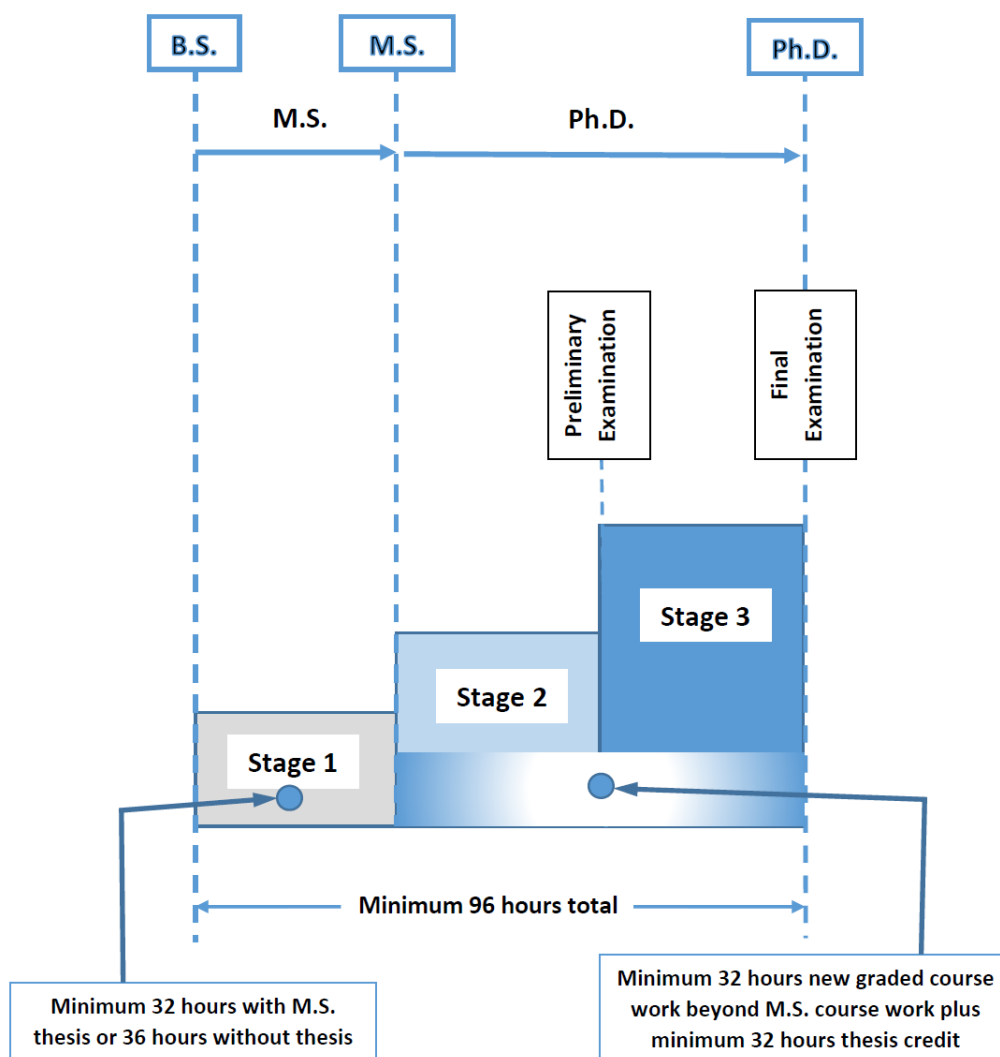


Figure 1. Stages of Ph.D. Program in ABE

The degree requirements for a Ph.D. in ABE are summarized in Table 7 and in the Graduate Catalog ([http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/phd\\_abe/#degreerequirementstext](http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/phd_abe/#degreerequirementstext)).

**Table 7. Degree requirements for Ph.D. in ABE**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Hours</b>
<u>ABE 501</u>	Graduate Research I	1
<u>ABE 594</u>	Graduate Seminar (minimum 4 semesters)	0
<u>One MATH course beyond differential equations from an approved list</u> (at least 3 hr)		3-4
<u>One course in statistical design and analysis from an approved list</u> (at least 3 hr)		3-5
<u>One course in instrumentation and measurement from an approved list</u> (at least 3 hr)		3-5
If the student has already taken the above courses during their Master’s program, the student can instead take two courses from any of the three areas (math, stats, or instrumentation) above.		
One 500-level course (taken for at least 3 credit hours) in an area of specialization – chosen in consultation with advisor (Normally not a Special Problem; no Independent Study is allowed).		3-5
Elective courses – chosen in consultation with advisor (subject to other requirements and conditions below)		12-19
<u>ABE 599</u>	Thesis Research	32
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>64</b>

**Other Requirements and Conditions**

A maximum of 4 hours of ABE 597 (or other independent study) may be applied toward the elective course work requirement.

Teaching experience determined in consultation with advisor with guidance provided by the department's Graduate Handbook.

Minimum GPA: 3.0

**Academic Planning**

The average time to complete a Ph.D. degree in ABE is 3 to 5 years. Students who enter the program with

- an approved Master’s degree should plan to complete all Ph.D. degree requirements within 4 years;
- a Bachelor’s degree should plan to complete all Ph.D. degree requirements within 5 years.

Individual variations in the time to degree may be due to many factors, such as prior experience, career goals, and type of research. Students who are interested in a faculty position may take longer because of the substantial time required to develop a solid publication record and become known by others in the research community.

### Ph.D. Milestones

The following table lists the significant steps that a student must complete during their Ph.D. program. A time schedule is also included so that students can assess their rate of progress in the program. The maximum time limits are to ensure that students do not take an excessively long time to complete their degree. It is recognized that there are special circumstances, particularly with inter-disciplinary research, which may cause students to need some additional time. “Normal Progress” would apply to a student with a fellowship or 50% research assistantship.

**Table 8. Milestones and Schedule for Making Progress in the Ph.D. Program**

Milestone	Normal Progress	Limit
Select Research Advisor	End of 1st Semester	End of 2nd Semester
Complete Key Coursework Required by the Department	4th Semester	5th Semester
Establish a Ph.D. Committee	4th - 5th Semester	5th Semester
Preliminary Exam	4th - 5th Semester	<b>6th Semester<sup>1</sup></b>
Final Examination	8th Semester	6 Years <sup>2</sup>
Thesis Deposit	8th Semester	6 Years <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This 3.0 year limit is strictly enforced by the department. In exceptional cases, a six month extension can be granted with approval from the student’s advisor and the director of graduate studies.

<sup>2</sup> See the Graduate College Handbook (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/2/chapter6/time-limits>) for details. Students earning the M.S. here have a limit of 5 years, and students earning the M.S. at another institution have a limit of 6 years. Students who are making adequate progress can petition for a time extension.

#### Establishing a Ph.D. Committee

The role of the Ph.D. committee is to provide frequent feedback and advice to the student. The committee shares the responsibility of guiding the student’s research to successful completion. Ph.D. students should not view the committee members as obstacles, but rather as additional mentors and possible promoters of their thesis research. When applying for jobs, committee members are often the first choice for seeking recommendation letters. It is expected that the Ph.D. advisor work closely with the student in determining the most appropriate committee members. The minimum guidelines that must be met when establishing a Ph.D. committee are available on the Graduate College website

(<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/forms/appointdec.htm>).

The examining committee will normally consist of four or five faculty members, at least one of which must be from outside of the department. The committee is appointed by the Graduate College in response to a request from the Department Head. The chair and at least two additional members of the examining committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. At least two committee members must be tenured faculty. The committee may include, in addition to faculty from various subject matter areas of the University, individuals from outside the University who have a particular interest and competence in the area of the dissertation research. A suggested procedure for activating the committee includes the following:

- a. Consultation between student and advisor regarding appropriate committee membership.
- b. Informal contact with those selected by either student or advisor to ascertain willingness to serve.
- c. Proposal of committee membership to Department Head by the advisor on appropriate Graduate College form (at least 3 weeks prior to exam date).
- d. Submission of committee appointment request by Department Head to the Graduate College.
- e. Notification of appointment to chair and committee members by Graduate College.
- f. Scheduling, convening, and reporting (to the Department Head and the Graduate College) of the result of the examination by the chair.

The committee for the final examination may be the same as for the preliminary examination or there may be some changes in membership. The procedures for appointing and activating the committee are similar to those discussed earlier for the preliminary examination committee.

### Preliminary Exam

The preliminary exam is viewed as an important milestone that helps students develop the skill of writing research proposals. Ph.D. students write a proposal for their dissertation research that is submitted to their Ph.D. committee prior to the exam. Writing a good research proposal is an important part of being a successful researcher. The preliminary exam presentation gives the Ph.D. committee a formal opportunity to evaluate the research progress and goals of the student. Thus, the two main purposes of the preliminary exam are to develop proposal-writing skills and to obtain feedback on the dissertation research plan from the Ph.D. committee. The Graduate College requires students to be registered in the semester they complete their preliminary exam.

There are several possible outcomes of the preliminary examination. A pass decision must be unanimous. The possible decisions and actions which may follow are:

- a. **Pass.** The candidate is allowed to go on to Stage III. Additional course work may be specified at the discretion of the Committee.
- b. **Fail without an opportunity to retake the examination.** This results in elimination from the program.
- c. **Fail with an opportunity to retake one time, normally, after satisfying some specific conditions.** These conditions may involve such things as taking some additional course work, additional work on the dissertation proposal, or correction of a language or writing deficiency. This result will normally be used if completion of the specific conditions is likely to take longer than six months.
- d. **Adjournment for a period of not longer than six months.** During this period the candidate will have specific actions to take before the completion of the examination is scheduled.

## Final Exam

The final examination is scheduled after all other aspects of the Doctoral program are completed. It is oral and partially public. The primary purpose is to require the student to defend his/her dissertation research. The examination will normally be scheduled for a three hour period and the student will usually be asked to begin the examination with a 30 to 45 minute oral presentation of the research. Committee members will be provided with a copy of the dissertation at least one week prior to the examination.

The final exam represents the last significant opportunity for the Ph.D. committee to ask questions and provide comments on the dissertation research. It also serves to disseminate the work to the public (including faculty, students, colleagues, friends, and family). In many ways, it represents a celebration of the completion of the work. Unlike the preliminary exam, which is closed, the final exam is open to the public and announced along with other public seminars. Students *must* be registered in the semester they complete their final exam. The Graduate College requires the exam to be completed by the end of a student's 6<sup>th</sup> year if entering the program with an approved Master's degree or 7<sup>th</sup> year if entering with a Bachelor's degree.

### Guidance on How to Prepare for the Final Exam

- A student should work closely with their thesis advisor to develop a plan to complete the dissertation by the department's and Graduate College's deadlines. The scheduling of the exam should be determined in consultation with the thesis advisor and the Ph.D. committee.
- It is common for the committee to suggest some minor improvements or corrections to the dissertation; however, it is usually not the case that substantial new work is expected. If there is any risk of the committee requesting further work, take this into account when scheduling the final exam and be prepared to allot the time necessary to make the recommended changes or enhancements to the dissertation. Students should consult with their thesis advisor on this point.
- It is important to attend the public portion of other defenses to understand the whole Ph.D. process and to learn valuable skills from other students' final exams.

## Graduate Student Annual Evaluation Process

All graduate students in a degree-seeking program who remain enrolled for longer than one academic year must have an annual evaluation administered by the ABE department. Students should complete a self-evaluation first, which is then used by the advisor to complete their evaluation of their overall degree progress. The ABE department provides detailed written feedback to students on strengths and weaknesses in either electronic or paper format based on the evaluations by their advisors. In addition, students have an opportunity to discuss their review in person with their advisor and/or administrators in the department.

In the event that a student does not receive a satisfactory review, the ABE department will develop, in consultation with the student and advisor, an academic plan to help gauge progress over the next six months toward timely degree completion. This plan will also address possible outcomes if progress is not made within the outlined timeframe.

## Finding a Thesis Advisor

Choosing a thesis advisor is one of the most critical decisions for a graduate student in a thesis-based Master's or Ph.D. program. The advisor-student relationship is fundamental to the success of both student and advisor. The thesis advisor has great influence not only on the research direction, but also on promoting the career of the student. Often, the student-thesis advisor relationship is one that will last a lifetime. It is important for students to find a thesis advisor that matches their research interests, work style, career goals, and even personality. Some students may find a thesis advisor within the first few weeks, while others may carefully explore and evaluate multiple options over the first year.

Your academic/ thesis advisor will help you select courses, develop a research project, and understand Departmental and University requirements. A student's interest area has usually been identified in consultation with a faculty member prior to the time of admission to our department and students are initially assigned to an advisor with that particular research interest. If research interests change or the advisor-student relationship is not good, graduate students can seek to change thesis advisor. This is more common for graduate students in a Ph.D. program, and is a reasonable response to changing circumstances. If you should choose to change faculty advisors, such change can usually be accommodated with mutual agreement of the advisors involved. You should then notify the Main Office, 338 Agricultural Engineering Sciences Building (AESB) of the change.

In addition to your academic advisor, you may consult with and seek advice from any member of the faculty. Students often consult with several faculty members, especially the members of committees selected by the student and the academic advisor to oversee thesis or dissertation projects.

Although your advisor can assist you in many instances, it must be emphasized that you ultimately are responsible for decisions affecting your academic progress. You should expect to rely largely on your own effort rather than expecting others to take responsibility for your success. Admission into the graduate program does not convey an obligation on the part of your advisor, the Department, or the University to ensure that you successfully complete the requirements for a graduate degree.

# Fellowships and Scholarships

## Fellowships

A fellowship is defined as an award that provides students with a stipend for living expenses and demands no services or other obligations in return. Fellowship awards count against student loan eligibility. Fellowship stipends may be subject to income tax. For U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and foreign national resident aliens, the IRS has ruled that the university is not responsible for withholding or reporting income taxes on fellowship payments. Taxability of fellowship payments is a matter between the Fellow and the IRS. The award period for an academic year fellowship is August 16 through May 15. The standard award period for a Fall fellowship is August 16 through December 15, and for a Spring fellowship the period is January 16 through May 15.

Graduate students who are on a fellowship *must* sign the Graduate College Form for Fellowships, Traineeships and Courtesy Waivers (known as the Rating Form), to be subsequently submitted to the Graduate College by their home department. This form allows the Fellow to receive the monthly stipend and any applicable tuition waiver. Fellowship rating forms *must* be submitted before the start of the semester.

A Fellow *must* be registered as a full-time student during the semester(s) of the fellowship. Some fellowships require students to register as full-time students also during the summer term.

Visit the Graduate College Fellowship Policies and Tuition Coverage website (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship/fellows>) to learn more. Email the Graduate College Fellowship Office at [GradFellowships@illinois.edu](mailto:GradFellowships@illinois.edu) with any questions.

Many types of Fellowships are available to students in our department. Most require U.S. citizenship and GRE scores with a percentile as shown in the table below. The Jonathan Baldwin Turner Fellowship requires an undergraduate GPA and GRE score as shown below:

**Table 9. JBT Fellowship Requirement for GPA and GRE**

GPA/ 4.0 on last 60 hours <sup>1</sup>	GRE minimum average percentile <sup>2</sup>
3.65	60
3.60	65
3.55	70
3.50	75
3.45	80

<sup>1</sup> The last 60 undergraduate hours are used for M.S. applicants; while the last 60 hours including M.S. work are used for Ph.D. applicants.

<sup>2</sup> Average of the percentiles for Verbal, Quantitative and Writing.

To continue the JBT Fellowship, the awardee must maintain a GPA above 3.5/4.0. The USDA National Needs Fellowship requires an undergraduate GPA of 3.5/4.0 and maintaining a graduate GPA above 3.5/4.0. SURGE Fellowships are available for underrepresented students and minorities. There are also NSF, Carver and many other types of fellowships available through the University of Illinois.

## **Scholarships**

A scholarship is defined as an award given to a student to help with their educational expenses. Scholarships may have requirements that students must complete in order to initially obtain or continue to receive the scholarship funding. A scholarship recipient must be registered as a full-time student during the semester(s) the scholarship is awarded.

## **Application Process**

Graduate students must work through their home department to submit an application. For each nominee, departments must submit the following application materials to The Grainger Engineering Office of Graduate, Professional and Online Programs:

- Application Form completed by student.
- Student's unofficial transcript.
- Student's resume/CV.
- Letter of recommendation from thesis advisor.
- Letter of support from department's Director of Graduate Study.

## **Graduate College Fellowships**

The Graduate College offers fellowships for incoming and current graduate students. For incoming graduate students, departments usually submit the fellowship application on behalf of the student. Application deadlines usually occur in January and February. Current graduate students should work directly with the Graduate College and their home department to submit an application. To learn more about fellowships for engineering students offered through the Graduate College, visit <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship>.

In addition to internal fellowships, there are several external fellowship opportunities for engineering graduate students (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/extfellowships>). The Graduate College Fellowship Office is available to assist students with exploring these opportunities and providing guidance through the application process. Email the Graduate College Fellowship Office at [GradFellowships@illinois.edu](mailto:GradFellowships@illinois.edu) to learn more.



# Graduate Employment

Funding Overview by Program

Employment at Illinois

Graduate Assistantship Assignments

Graduate Hourly Employment

Graduate Assistantship Benefit Overview

Student Health Insurance

## Funding Overview by Program

### **Professional Science Master's Programs (Non-Thesis) – On Campus**

Professional Master's programs in Agricultural and Biological Engineering are generally designated as *self-funded*, which means students are responsible for paying their tuition and fees. Students in a self-funded program are not eligible for Board of Trustee (BOT) tuition-waiver-generating assistantships at the University of Illinois but are eligible for graduate hourly positions on campus. This means that students in these programs may hold an assistantship on campus and that their home department may seek tuition reimbursement from the hiring department. Please be sure to visit with your home department to learn more about possible forms of financial assistance.

### **Thesis-based Master's Programs**

Graduate students in a Thesis-based Master's program are usually not guaranteed financial assistance. Students who wish to be considered for a research or teaching assistantship should contact the department to learn more about assistantship opportunities.

### **Doctoral Programs**

Many Ph.D. students will receive financial assistance at the time of admission in the following forms: fellowship, research assistantship, or teaching assistantship. The number of financial aid offers depends on the department's available financial resources. Given such resources, financial aid is awarded on a competitive basis. In most cases, renewal of an assistantship or fellowship is based on the academic progress of the student, work performance of the student, and obligation by the department as determined by the original letter of admission recommendation. If students change degree program or transfer to another department, the original funding in the letter of admission recommendation is no longer in effect and funding under the new degree program is not guaranteed. Please visit with the relevant departments to learn more.

## Employment at Illinois

### **Form I-9 and E-Verify Compliance**

Graduate students may seek various employment opportunities at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Departments must comply with all federal and state laws regarding employment eligibility verification, including completion of the I-9 Form and, in relevant cases, the E-Verify process.

There are no exceptions to these processes. Students must also contact the HR office PRIOR to working to complete the I-9 Form. Per University policy, employees are also required to present their Social Security Number (SSN) Card to the HR official for name verification and IRS purposes. The name entered into the system must match that which is printed on the SSN card.

Both students and hiring managers who fail to contact HR to complete these procedures may cause delays in start dates and paychecks, as well as risk fines and penalties against the University.

## Graduate Assistantship Assignments

There are four types of graduate assistantship opportunities per the Illinois Human Resources (IHR) website (<http://humanresources.illinois.edu/hr-professionals/hiring-employees/index.html>).

### **Research Assistant (RA)**

The duties of a Graduate Research Assistant (RA) primarily involve applying and mastering research concepts, practices, or methods of scholarship. Examples of typical responsibilities include: Conducting Experiments, Organizing or Analyzing Data; Presenting Findings in a Publication or Dissertation, Collaborating with Faculty in Preparing Publications, Overseeing Work of Other RA's, Other Research Activities.

Faculty members are responsible for confirming RA appointments with their appropriate HR office. Graduate students must contact faculty directly to inquire about any RA opportunities available to them.

### **Pre-Professional Graduate Assistant (PGA)**

Pre-Professional Graduate Assistants (PGA) are appointed to non-TA/non-RA assistantship positions, in which they primarily gain experience, practice, or guidance that is significantly connected to their fields of study and career preparation. Graduate students must contact the Business Office in their department to inquire about PGA opportunities.

### **Teaching Assistant (TA)**

The duties of a Graduate Teaching Assistant (TA) primarily involve the support of instruction and include responsibilities such as: teaching classes, grading student assignments, leading lab or discussion groups in a course setting, developing academic instructional materials, , proctoring exams, overseeing/coordinating the work of other TAs, holding office hours, tutoring students. Teaching assistant positions are covered by a collective bargaining agreement with the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO).

TA appointments are made at the discretion of each academic department in The Grainger College of Engineering. Graduate students must contact the department's Academic or Business Office to inquire about

available teaching assistantships. The College is committed to maintaining a high level of quality in the TA appointments. Students have to meet the following requirements in order to be eligible for a TA appointment:

- Must have a passing SPEAK score: 24+ TOEFL iBT; 8+ IELTS; 5+ on EPI (University's SPEAK Exam).
- Must be in good academic standing in their graduate program.
- Strong past work performance in applicable circumstances.

All first-time TAs at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign *must complete* the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL) TA Orientation the week prior to start of the semester. Visit CITL's website (<http://citl.illinois.edu/>) for more information on this training, including dates.

### **Graduate Assistant (Administrative) (GA)**

The duties of a Graduate Assistant (GA) are primarily in support of administrative functions and include such general functions and typical duties as providing technical/support services, advising students, etc. Graduate Assistants (Administrative) are covered by a collective bargaining agreement with the Graduate Employees Organization (GEO).

These positions are considered non-exempt per the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and must record actual hours worked via timesheets. Graduate students must contact the Business Office in their department to inquire about GA opportunities.

### **Graduate Assistantships in the ABE Department**

Graduate students in GCOE are most commonly offered research or teaching assistantships through individual departments and research institutes or centers. These appointments are typically awarded on a semester-by-semester basis with standard appointment dates of August 16-December 31 (Fall semester) and January 1-May 15 (Spring semester). Contingent upon the degree program in which a student is enrolled, students must be appointed between 25% and 67% full-time equivalent (FTE) for at least 91 days during the semester to receive a tuition waiver. All graduate assistants must have an accepted offer letter on file.

The acceptance of an appointment requires students to be present and available to their supervisor during the appointment dates outlined in the accepted offer letter. If students must be away from their responsibilities, they must receive prior approval from their supervisor and their home department. Failure to report to work may result in disciplinary action, termination, and/or non-reappointment of an assistantship. Additional information regarding the Graduate College and University guidelines on graduate assistantships is available at <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/2/chapter8/assistantships>.

For International Students Only: Prior to international students securing a social security number (SSN), the university-issued Temporary Control Number (TCN) will be needed to process the assistantship or graduate hourly appointments. International students who are on a fellowship will just need the TCN number to process their paperwork. They can secure their TCN number at the ID Production Office at the Illini Union Bookstore.

## Graduate Hourly Employment

Graduate students may also seek Graduate Hourly appointments. These positions are appointed on an hourly basis for temporary, special projects. The positions do not carry tuition waivers and may not be used as substitutions for waiver-generating assistantships. The hours are typically sporadic in nature and less than ten hours/week. Students must be registered in the Graduate College for the semester(s) of the hourly appointment.

## Graduate Assistant Benefit Overview

Below is a high-level overview of the types of benefits available to graduate assistants. Applicable University benefits for graduate assistants are outlined in the “Summary of Benefits by Employment Category” on the Illinois Human Resources (IHR) website (<http://humanresources.illinois.edu/employees/new-hires/benefits.html>).

### Insurance and Health Care

Students on an assistantship are eligible to participate in the University Graduate Student health insurance plan. The university provides services at McKinley Health Center and Counseling Center. To review the student insurance policy and premiums, visit <http://www.si.illinois.edu/> or call 333-0165.

### Tuition and Fee Waiver

Students who hold an assistantship appointment between 25% and 67% time for at least three-fourths of a term are eligible for a tuition and fee waiver. Students must be enrolled and in good academic standing during their appointment. For questions regarding this benefit, contact the department’s HR office. For questions regarding a student’s bill, contact OBFS at 217-265-6363.

### Child Care Resources

Child Care resources are available to graduate students through a website currently accessible at <https://www.odos.illinois.edu/student-parents/>.

### University Holidays

The university holiday schedule is posted here: <https://www.hr.illinois.edu/leave/holidays>. Students on an assistantship or hourly appointment are not required to work on these days.

## Student Health Insurance

All graduate students at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are required to carry health insurance coverage. This health insurance coverage is meant to assist with costs of health care whenever a student needs medical attention through a medical facility other than McKinley Health Center on campus. To learn more about the health insurance offered to students through the university, please visit <http://www.uhcsr.com/illinois>. International students should visit the ISSS website ([https://iss.illinois.edu/publications/student\\_insurance/healthinsurance.html](https://iss.illinois.edu/publications/student_insurance/healthinsurance.html)) for help on establishing health insurance.

The Health Service Fee that graduate students pay each semester allows them to use the McKinley Health Center for office visits with doctors, nurse practitioners, mental health therapists and health educators, as well as for most x-rays and laboratory tests at no additional out-of-pocket expense. However, this fee does not pay for any care received outside the McKinley Health Center, immunizations required by law prior for entrance to the university, travel immunizations, referrals, etc. To learn more about the coverage of the Health Service Fee, please visit McKinley's website (<http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu/>).

The Health Care and Wellness website (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/current/health>) is an excellent resource for students to get answers to their health and wellness related questions.

### **Summer Health Coverage**

It is very important for graduate students who are not registered during the summer term to ensure that they have health coverage from mid-May to mid-August. When a student is not enrolled or does not hold an assistantship in the summer, their health insurance and access to McKinley is not active. To learn more about summer health insurance, please visit <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship/healthins>.

# International Students

## SPEAK Requirement

### Limited Status

## Curricular & Optional Practical Training Process

### SPEAK Requirement

For Ph.D. students whose native language is not English, most engineering departments will require a passing SPEAK score before graduation, even if the student is a permanent resident of the United States (green card holder). Some departments will require this before completion of the qualifying exam. It is important to check with the department regarding their policies. In addition, any graduate student (Master's or Ph.D.) must have a passing SPEAK score to hold a TA appointment. Check <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/admissions/apply/exemptcountries> for exemptions from this requirement based on country of citizenship.

Students who do not have a passing SPEAK score on the TOEFL iBT (24 or higher) or IELTS (8 or higher) must complete the University of Illinois EPI exam or retake the TOEFL iBT or IELTS SPEAK exam. The University of Illinois EPI exam is administered by the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning (CITL) per the following general guidelines:

- Students are allowed only three chances to pass (score of 5 or higher) the exam. The exam cannot be taken twice in the same semester.
- Students must register for the EPI exam through their home department. Students cannot register for this exam on their own. If students do not show up for their scheduled appointment, this counts as one of their three chances to pass this exam.
- For any incoming student who have a TOEFL iBT speaking section score below 22 or an IELTS speaking section score below 6, CITL highly recommends that the student, prior to taking the exam, complete either 1) 10 hours of approved tutoring sessions or 2) ESL 504, 506, or 510.
- For any student who fails the first attempt at the EPI exam, he/she must complete either 1) 10 hours of approved tutoring sessions or 2) ESL 504, 506, or 510 before they will be eligible to take the EPI a second time.
- For students who receive a "Conditional Pass" on the EPI exam, they must complete ESL 508 and receive a passing grade "S" in the course to earn a passing EPI score.

### EPI Exam Procedure

The EPI is an English oral proficiency interview. The format is conversational and not exam-like. The interviewer will ask questions on topics of interest to the student and/or related to university life in general. In

addition, the student will be asked to explain or define some terms that are common in freshman level courses in their department.

### EPI Scoring Process

The EPI assesses test takers’ speaking ability in terms of five features: Fluency, Linguistic Accuracy, Discourse Management, Question Handling and Listening, and Listener Effort.

- Fluency: smoothness in delivery and amount of hesitations and re-starts.
- Linguistic Accuracy: includes clear pronunciation, grammar without noticeable errors and sophisticated vocabulary.
- Discourse Management: the ability to develop ideas, rhetorical organization, and quantity of disclosure.
- Question Handling and Listening: the ability to give appropriate answers and negotiation skills for communication.
- Listener Effort: the ease or difficulty in understanding the test taker’s speech.

**Table 10. Description of Scoring Levels**

Level	Description	Result
6	Communication is always effective; speaker has sophisticated language skills appropriate for a teaching context.	Pass; student is permitted to be a TA with no restrictions.
5	Communication is generally effective; speaker has satisfactory language skills at ranges appropriate for a teaching context.	
4CP	Communication is generally effective; however, due to isolated weakness, communication is occasionally difficult. Further ESL coursework is required before the first semester of teaching in order to refine the speaker’s language skills for a teaching context. (They can teach concurrently while taking the ESL course)	Conditional Pass; student is required to successfully complete ESL 508 before they can hold a TA appointment.
4	Communication is somewhat effective. Inconsistent performance indicates speaker is not ready to be a classroom instructor.	Non-passing; student is NOT permitted to be a TA and must retake the exam.
3	Communication is somewhat effective. Inconsistent performance indicates speaker is not ready to be a classroom instructor.	
2	Communication is marginally effective; speaker has limited language skills for a teaching context.	
1	Communication is generally not effective; speaker has unsatisfactory language for teaching context.	

For scores of 2, 3, 4, and 4CP (conditional pass): The raters determined that the following aspect(s) of the student’s oral English proficiency were of critical concern.

- Fluency (flow and smoothness of speech)

- Language form accuracy ✓ Pronunciation ✓ Grammar ✓ Vocabulary
- Idea development and organization
- Question handling and listening skills
- All of the above factors were salient in the decision.

Visit the EPI exam website (<http://citl.illinois.edu/services/for-instructors/english-proficiency-interview>) for more information. Visit the SPEAK policy for TAs website (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/admissions/taengprof.htm>) for additional information.

## Limited Status

An international student who does not meet one or more of the Graduate College or home department's admission requirements may be approved for admission with "Limited Status". Some of the most common reasons for limited status are

- course deficiencies, as determined by the department,
- low undergraduate GPA (below a 3.0),
- no comparable bachelor's degree, or
- a lack of demonstrated English language proficiencies.

Students admitted with limited status must address deficiencies usually within the first year in the program in order to continue.

### English Deficiency

International students who have English deficiency may be placed on "Limited Status" by the Graduate College at the time of admission. International students who are on limited status are required to take the ESL Placement Test (EPT) when they arrive on campus. The Department of Linguistics administers the test. The results of the EPT will determine whether the student will be required to enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL) course(s), which may reduce the number of academic courses for that given term. Enrollment in an ESL course can only take place after the results of the EPT are received. Students must meet all conditions of their limited status, including passing all ESL coursework, within the first year of their graduate studies. Students are required to complete these requirements in order to earn a degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Please note that online students cannot be admitted on "Limited Status" for English deficiency.

Check out the EPT Test policy (<https://linguistics.illinois.edu/languages/english-placement-test>) for more information and the test schedule (<http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/placement/grreg.html>) to learn about the testing dates. Visit the ESL Courses website (<http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/esl/>) to learn more about the courses offered.

## Curricular & Optional Practical Training Process

All international graduate students must follow the rules and regulations outlined by the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). This includes I-20 extensions, requests for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT), employment during the academic year, registration, etc. It is recommended that international students work with the Graduate Programs Office in



their home department to ensure all policies are followed. If an international student violates any of the policies or regulations, he/she may be asked to leave the country.

### **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is for international graduate students

- who are on an F-1 visa,
- have completed one year of academic coursework, and
- for whom temporary off-campus employment during the course of their university enrollment is directly related to their major field of study and an integral or important part of their program of study.

Part-time CPT is 20 hours a week or less, while full-time CPT is more than 20 hours per week. Full-time CPT during the fall or spring term is approved in exceptional cases. For more information on CPT rules and regulations, visit <http://www.iss.illinois.edu/students/employment/f1cpt.html>.

In order to pursue CPT, international students are required to complete the CPT application, and have it approved at each level – department, college\*, and ISSS (\*international students only need college approval if registering for ENG 510). International students cannot formally accept an internship without having their CPT approved at each level. In addition, international students are required to register for the appropriate CPT course. Per federal policy, failure to register for the course by the stated deadline may result in the student's F-1 visa being terminated.

- Professional and Non-thesis Master's students pursuing CPT must register for ENG 510.
- Thesis-based Master's and Ph.D. students pursuing full- or part-time CPT during the summer term or part-time CPT during the fall or spring term may register for thesis research, 599, or ENG 510. These students pursuing fulltime CPT during the fall or spring term must register for ENG 510. Please note that students pursuing part-time CPT are limited to 20 hours per week of work authorization, including on campus (assistantships or hourly) employment.

NOTE: Students who register for thesis credits must have their thesis topic and/or title on the CPT application form and must include an explanation for why the CPT training is necessary for their research. In addition, students must work with their home department regarding their registration policies for 599 credit hours being used for CPT.

In addition, the following policies are enforced with CPT.

- CPT cannot be backdated and cannot start until all approvals at each level are granted and course registration is completed.
- Students can only work on CPT for the dates listed on their new I-20 and cannot start their employment without having the I-20 in hand. The employment must also end on the date specified on the CPT I-20.
- Students cannot change employers without completing a new CPT application form.
- CPT authorization can only be given for one year at a time. Students who complete more than 12 months of fulltime CPT will not be eligible for OPT.

### ENG 510 Course Policies

Students must seek approval from The Grainger Engineering Office of Graduate, Professional and Online Programs to register for ENG 510 for their CPT by completing the ENG 510 Registration Request Form

(<https://illinois.edu/fb/sec/6852663>) and uploading the offer letter, including start and end dates. Students who are approved to register for ENG 510 must adhere to the course policies below. No exceptions will be given.

- CPT must be directly related to their major field of study and an integral or important part of their program of study.
- Fall/Spring full-time CPT must be at least 10weeks at more than 20 hours per week.
- Students who complete a part-time CPT during the fall and spring term need to be located within the Champaign-Urbana area and be registered as a full-time student (on top of registration in ENG 510).
- ENG 510 approval will only be given one semester at a time.
- No full-time CPT will be approved for ENG 510 in the student’s last semester. Exceptions will be made for programs with an internship/practicum option for their professional development degree requirement.
- Internship dates must fall within the dates of the given semester as outlined below.
  - Fall term – August 16 through December 31
  - Spring term – January 1 through May 15
  - Summer term – May 16 (or the first day of summer term) through August 15
- Students approved for part-time CPT during the fall or spring term must remain in Champaign-Urbana and must use their local address on ENG 510 Request form.
- Students who fail to register prior to the start of the semester will be charged all on-campus fees for the semester. Students located in the Champaign-Urbana area will be charged on-campus fees for the semester.
- Students must be approved and registered prior to 10th day of term for fall and spring term. Students must be approved and registered prior to July 1 for summer term.
- Students must check their Illinois email account on a regular basis for any course announcements. In addition, students must complete one required assignment by “Reading Day” of the semester. Failure to complete the assignment by the deadline will result in an unsatisfactory (U) grade.

**Step-by-Step CPT Checklist**

Below is a step-by-step checklist for pursuing and completing CPT. Students must complete the steps in the indicated order.

**Table 11. A step-by-step checklist for pursuing and completing CPT in Summer Term**

Step	Yes	No
1. On an F-1 Visa.		
2. Completed one year of academic coursework.		
3. Off-campus employment during the summer term is directly related to major field of study and an integral or important part of program of study.		
If the answer is “Yes” to all three steps, please continue. If any step is “No”, then CPT is not an option.		
Master’s or Ph.D. Student registering for ENG 510		

1. Approval from department graduate program director by discussing CPT opportunity with advisor.		
2. Approval from Grainger College of Engineering Office of Graduate, Professional and Online Programs to register for ENG 510. Complete ENG 510 Registration Request form ( <a href="https://illinois.edu/fb/sec/6852663">https://illinois.edu/fb/sec/6852663</a> ) and upload the offer letter including start and end dates. Reminder: CPT dates must fall within the required dates for ENG 510.		
3. Approval from the Department and ISSS. Submit CPT application to ISSS through i-Start.		
4. Registration for ENG 510 is completed prior to start of semester. Failure to complete this step before the start of semester will result in being charged all on-campus fees.		
5. ENG 510 required assignment is completed by "Reading Day". Failure to complete this step will result in student receiving an unsatisfactory grade.		
Note: No extensions will be given to ENG 510 students to lengthen their CPT training.		
Thesis-based Master's or Ph.D. Student registering for 599 Thesis Credit		
1. Approval from department by discuss CPT opportunity with advisor.		
2. Approval from the Department and ISSS. Submit CPT application to ISSS through i-Start.		
3. Registration for 599 thesis credits.		

**Table 12. A step-by-step checklist for pursuing and completing CPT in Fall / Spring Term**

Step	Yes	No
1. On an F-1 Visa.		
2. Completed one year of academic coursework.		
3. Off-campus employment during the fall or spring term is directly related to major field of study and an integral or important part of program of study.		
If the answer is "Yes" to all three steps, please continue. If any step is "No", then CPT is not an option.		
Master's or Ph.D. Students		
1. Approval from department by discussion of CPT opportunity with advisor.		
2. Approval from The Grainger Engineering Office of Graduate, Professional and Online Programs to register for ENG 510. Complete ENG 510 Registration Request form ( <a href="https://illinois.edu/fb/sec/6852663">https://illinois.edu/fb/sec/6852663</a> ) and upload the offer letter including start and end dates. Reminder: CPT dates must fall within the required dates for ENG 510.		
3. Approval from the Department and ISSS. Submit CPT application to ISSS through i-Start.		
4. Part-time CPT: Professional and Non-thesis Master's student – registration for ENG 510 is completed prior to the start of the semester. Thesis-based Master's or Ph.D. student – registration for ENG 510 or thesis credit, 599, is completed prior to the start of the semester. Students will remain in the Champaign-Urbana area for part-time CPT and must use their local address for CPT.		

5. Full-time CPT: Registration for ENG 510 is completed prior to start of semester. Failure to complete this step before the start of semester will result in being charged all on-campus fees.		
6. ENG 510 required assignment is completed by "Reading Day." Failure to complete this step will result in student receiving an unsatisfactory grade.		

Note: Failure to register for the required CPT course by the deadline to add a course for the semester may result in the student's F-1 visa being terminated.

**Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

International students who are ready to graduate may apply for Optional Practical Training, which allows them to work in the U.S. up to one year after graduation. STEM students also have the opportunity to apply for an OPT STEM extension, which allows students more time on OPT ([http://iss.illinois.edu/students/employment/f1\\_optext.html](http://iss.illinois.edu/students/employment/f1_optext.html)). To apply, students must attend one of ISSS's workshops or meet with one of ISSS advisors. Students must meet the following conditions to be eligible for OPT:

- Completed their degree.
- Completed at least two semesters at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus.
- Current F-1 visa status.
- Complied with all registration requirements for previous CPT(s).
- Valid passport.

For more information and to attend a workshop, visit OPT Requirements and Application Process website (<http://iss.illinois.edu/students/employment/f1opt.html>).

# Resources

## Student Directory Information

### Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES)

### Counseling Services

### Important Websites

#### Student Directory Information

Graduate students are automatically added to the University Student/Staff Directory. Students who wish to include their personal webpage should visit the Technology Services at Illinois (TSI) Electronic Directory Editor (<http://illinois.edu/ds/search>) to enter their personal homepage URL in the WWW field. Graduate students may opt to withhold their home address and phone number from the University Student/Staff Directory. To suppress this information and learn more about the directory system, visit the Technology Services website (<https://techservices.illinois.edu>). For additional information, contact Technology Services Helpdesk ([consult@illinois.edu](mailto:consult@illinois.edu)) or call 333-7500.

#### Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES)

Students who have a medically documented disability may obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids through the Disability Resource and Educational Services (DRES). Students are responsible for contacting their course instructors and providing them with a letter from DRES to receive academic adjustments. To contact DRES, visit <http://www.disability.illinois.edu>, or their office on 1207 S. Oak Street in Champaign, call 3334603, or email [disability@illinois.edu](mailto:disability@illinois.edu).

#### Counseling Services

All students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign have access to the Counseling Center to assist them with achieving a balanced Illinois experience. Services range from various forms of counseling, educational programming initiatives, training programs, outreach and consultation activities, and self-help materials. Counseling Center staff has extensive training and experience with assisting graduate students. Visits with a counselor are confidential and are not shared with the student's home department or faculty advisor. To learn more about the Counseling Center's services, visit <http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/> or call (217) 333-3704.

#### Important Websites

- Illinois Human Resources (IHR) (<http://www.humanresources.illinois.edu>)

- Assistantship Clearinghouse (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/clearinghouse>)
- Campus Police (<https://police.illinois.edu/>)
- Campus Registered Student Organizations (<https://union.illinois.edu/get-involved/office-of-registeredorganizations>)
- Campus Recreation (ARC) (<http://campusrec.illinois.edu/facilities/arc>)
- Campus Technology Services (<https://techservices.illinois.edu>)
- Center for Teaching Excellence (CITL) (<http://citl.illinois.edu/>)
- Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to All Students (<http://studentcode.illinois.edu>)
- Counseling Center (<https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu>)
- Course Catalog/Course Offerings (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/courses-of-instruction/>)
- Disability Resource and Educational Services (DRES) (<http://www.disability.illinois.edu>)
- English Placement Test (EPT) (<http://www.linguistics.illinois.edu/students/placement>)
- Getting Started-Graduate College Quick Guide (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/quick-guide>)
- Graduate College (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/>)
- Graduate College Career Services (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/careerdevelopment>)
- Graduate College Exam and Committee Policies (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/exams-committees>)
- Graduate College Fellowship Office (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship>)
- Graduate College Handbook (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook>)
- Graduate College Student Advisory Committee (SAGE) (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/committees/sage>)
- Graduate College Thesis Office (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/thesis>)
- Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) (<http://humanresources.illinois.edu/employees/currentemployees/graduate-employees/graduate-assistant/index.html>)
- Graduate Programs Catalog (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/graduate/>)
- Graduate Student Petitions and Instructions (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/academic-support>)
- Graduate Student Senate (<https://isg.illinois.edu/view/7038>)
- Grainger Engineering Administration Directory (<https://grainger.illinois.edu/about/administration>)
- Grainger Engineering Career Services (<http://ecs.engineering.illinois.edu>)
- Grainger Engineering Convocation (<http://grainger.illinois.edu/graduation>)
- Grainger Engineering Mavis Fellows Program (<http://publish.illinois.edu/engr-mavis>)
- Grievance Policies (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/2/chapter9/academic-conflict>)
- Housing Information (<http://www.housing.illinois.edu>)
- Illinois' Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentcode.illinois.edu>)
- International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) (<http://www.iss.illinois.edu/>)
- Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (<https://krannertcenter.com/>)
- McKinley Health Center (<http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu>)
- NESSIE (University HR Employee Website) (<https://nessie.uihr.uillinois.edu/cf/index.cfm>)
- Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (<http://diversity.illinois.edu>)
- Office of Minority Student Affairs (<http://www.omsa.illinois.edu>)

- Office of Student Financial Aid (<http://osfa.illinois.edu>)
- Office of Student Health Insurance (<http://si.illinois.edu>)
- Office of the Registrar (<http://www.registrar.illinois.edu/>)
- Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (<http://research.illinois.edu>)
- Thesis Handbook (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/thesis>)
- The Office of Student Conflict Resolution (<http://www.osja.illinois.edu>)
- University of Illinois main website (<http://www.illinois.edu/>)
- University of Illinois Career Center (<http://www.careercenter.illinois.edu/>)
- University of Illinois Convocation (<http://commencement.illinois.edu>)

# Academic Policies and Procedures

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## Code of Conduct Policy

The ABE Department requires all students to act in a professional manner. This includes all written and verbal communications with faculty, staff, students, outside vendors, or research partners. Harassment of any kind is prohibited. No messages with derogatory or inflammatory remarks about an individual's or group's race, religion, national origin, physical attributes, or sexual preferences are permitted. In addition, students are held accountable to the University of Illinois Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentcode.illinois.edu>). Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal from the University.



Students who are accused of a violation have 8 days to appeal to their home department's Grievance Committee. Failure to appeal within this time frame or denial of appeal means that charges will stand and disciplinary action will be enforced.

## Student Ethics

The Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering is strict about enforcing student ethics and will not tolerate cheating in a course or plagiarism on course related papers, published papers, or theses. The College uses section 1-402

([http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1\\_part4\\_1-402.html](http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-402.html)) of the Student Code to define cheating/plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to carefully read through this section. Students who are accused of such a violation may face some or all of the following consequences: receive a grade of zero on the assignment or exam, receive a failing grade for the course, or dismissal from their program.

### Steps to Follow Per University Student Code

1. Given a suspected infraction, an instructor may ask to speak to the student(s) either separately or together, explain his/her concerns, and hear the student(s) justification. The instructor may find that there wasn't really a breach of academic integrity and choose not to penalize the student(s) or may conclude that something more serious has occurred.
2. If the instructor concludes that something serious has occurred in step 1, they should indicate to the student that the student will be receiving an \*allegation\* through the FAIR (faculty academic integrity reporting) system and that all responses should be sent via that system. In particular, if the student wants to include anything said to the instructor in step 1, they should document this through the FAIR system. The FAIR system is the definitive record of student responses to allegations. If the instructor does not complete step 1, they can simply make the allegation through the FAIR system and the first contact with the student about the allegation will be through the FAIR portal. The allegation usually is something like "Based on x, y, z, I believe you may have copied/plagiarized.... on homework / exam / your paper / etc." The allegation is formatted into a letter, which includes information about the student code, how /when the student should respond, etc.
3. After the student has had a chance to respond through the portal, or after the time to do so has expired, the instructor will be prompted to make a finding. If the finding is that an infraction has occurred, the instructor will select one or more penalties. One of the available penalties is "warning only", which is still recorded as a breach of academic integrity. The infraction is part of the student's record for six years after graduation. However, no one will have access to that information unless via a court order, or if the student voluntarily releases the information (as might be required on an application to law school or for government security clearance).
4. The student has an opportunity to appeal, and the appeal is heard via a departmental committee if the penalty was less than a failing grade, or at the college level if the penalty was a failing grade.

For more details, visit [http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1\\_part4\\_1-401.html](http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-401.html).

## Registration

Registration begins in late October for the spring term and early April for the summer and fall terms. Students can find their earliest registration time at the Office of the Registrar's website (<http://www.registrar.illinois.edu/>). Graduate students begin registering after several other student groups (e.g., graduating seniors, honors students, and band members have first priority registration times). The UI Integrate Self-Service is used for registration and for any modifications to course schedules through the 10<sup>th</sup> day of instruction. Students can also use this system to print an unofficial transcript or add their name to the appropriate graduation list.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** All graduate students must be REGISTERED for fall and spring term BY THE 10<sup>th</sup> DAY of classes. Failure to do so may result in late fees, loss of valid visa status for international students, loss of assistantship, and unapproved leave of absence. All graduate students, except those on an approved leave of absence, must be registered for each fall and spring term until they graduate.

### Full-time Status

- Graduate students with no assistantship need to register for a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours to be considered full-time students for fall and spring semesters. Students on an assistantship of 25% or more need to register for a minimum of 8 graduate credit hours to be considered full-time. Students with outstanding student loans may be required to be registered full-time to avoid having the loan called.
- All students awarded fellowships and/or tuition and fee waivers not associated with an assistantship are required to be registered for a minimum of 12 graduate credit hours.
- During fall and spring term, students can register for no more than 20 credit hours. For summer term, the maximum is 12 credit hours. Any overloads require submission and approval of a Graduate College petition.
- Students are not required to register for summer term unless they are on CPT or a fellowship that continues into the summer term. Summer registration for students on a fellowship is 4 graduate hours in an 8-week course. Students who hold a 25% or more assistantship need to register for 4 credit hours to be considered full-time.
- Students who have less than 12 hours left to complete their degree program only need to register for the number of hours required to graduate. However, students with undergraduate loans in deferment are strongly encouraged to consult with the Office of Registrar to determine whether or not their enrollment constitutes fulltime status for the purpose of keeping their loans from going into repayment. International students will need to complete a reduced course load form and have it approved in order to be below full-time status.
- Credit hours can be in the form of traditional coursework, independent study (under supervision of a faculty member), thesis research, or seminars.
- International students must register as full-time students no later than 10 calendar days into the semester. ISSS monitors all international students' registration to ensure they are registered as full-time students. ISSS is obligated by law to terminate the F-1 or J-1 immigration status for all students who are not registered.

- Graduate students on an assistantship that provides a tuition waiver need to be registered by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the term or they may lose their assistantship.

### **Late Registration**

Late registration begins at 5 p.m. of the first day of the semester. Students who are not registered by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of class lose the ability to register themselves and must use the Late Registration and Late Course Change form (<https://grad.illinois.edu/forms>). The student's advisor and home department must approve such a request prior to final approval by the Graduate College. There is a penalty fee for late registration, which will be added to the student's bill.

### **Adding/Dropping Courses**

- Each semester has add/drop course deadlines for registered students. Students can find these deadlines by checking the OAR website (<http://www.registrar.illinois.edu/>).
- The Late Registration and Late Course Change form (<https://grad.illinois.edu/forms>) is required to add or drop a course past the deadline. The Instructor, advisor, and home department must approve the request prior to submission of the form to the Graduate College. NOTE: Students must maintain full-time status throughout the semester.
- Courses cannot be dropped after a final exam has been completed.

### **Class Attendance**

Regular class attendance is expected of all students at the university. The authority for an excused absence rests with the course instructor, subject to the requirement to reasonably accommodate class absence as described in the Student Code of Conduct section 1.501. Students who are absent due to a medical or family emergency need to follow the policy and procedure set forth in 1.501 of the Student Code of Conduct ([http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1\\_part5\\_1-501.html](http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part5_1-501.html)).

### **Withdrawing**

Students should make sure they completely understand their home department's policy and any consequences of withdrawing from the university prior to completing this process. The UI Integrate Self-Service system will not allow students to drop all courses, as this constitutes a withdrawal. Students must complete the Withdrawal-Cancellation form (<https://grad.illinois.edu/forms>) to do a complete withdrawal from the semester. International students must have approval from the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) to withdraw.

## **Summer Registration**

Students are not required to register during the summer in order to hold an assistantship. However, students should check with their department about departmental policies and with their thesis advisor. International students must register during the summer if it's their first semester, last semester, or if they are on Curricular Practical Training (CPT). To learn more, visit the ISSS website on registration policies (<http://www.iss.illinois.edu/students/f1j1/>).

Some students may need to register full-time due to student loans, fellowships, etc. If a graduate student holds a 25-67% grad assistantship, 4 graduate-credit hours is considered full-time. If a student holds a less than 25% assistantship, 6 graduate-credit hours is considered full-time. A summer tuition and fee waiver will cover the following fees: service fee, half of the health insurance fee, health service fee, AFMFA fee (if assessed), and half of the Library/IT fee (if assessed). Students who held a waiver-generating appointment during the spring term are eligible to receive a summer tuition waiver if they enroll in the summer term (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/2/chapter7/tuition-waivers>).

Summer registration affects a student’s ability to use campus services. If a student does not register for summer term or registers for less than 3 hours, this affects the following benefits:

- Student Health Insurance (see the “Student Health Insurance” section of handbook for more information).
- McKinley Health Center (<http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu>) will require students to pay a fee to use McKinley.
- Campus Recreation Facilities (<https://campusrec.illinois.edu/member-services/member-eligibility/>) will require students to pay a fee to use their facilities.
- Additional taxes of 5.65% (Medicare – 1.45% and Social Security – 4.2%) will be charged to a student working on campus.

## Graduate Programs Grading System

The grading system at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is listed below. The chart outlines the points associated with a course grade, which is used in the computation of grade point averages for the semester and overall GPA.

**Table 13. The grading system at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

A+	4.00	C-	1.67
A	4.00	D+	1.33
A-	3.67	D	1.00
B+	3.33	D-	.67
B	3.00	F	0.00
B-	2.67	F by Rule	0.00
C+	2.33	ABS	0.00
C	2.00		

The Graduate College will allow any grade of D or higher to be counted as a passing grade for all graduate program degree requirements. Departments may require graduate students to earn a higher grade in their coursework for it to count towards their degree. Students must consult with their home department to learn about the grade policy for their degree program.

When a graduate student repeats a course, all hours and grades count toward the cumulative graduate GPA. There is no mechanism for grade replacement at the graduate level.

### Credit/No-Credit

Electing credit/no-credit registration allows students to enroll in a course for a simple pass/fail grade, rather than the conventional letter grade. If a C- or higher is earned, the grade that is entered on the transcript is “S” (satisfactory). Graduate students must consult with their home department about any department policy on allowing credit/no-credit courses to count toward degree requirements.

## Special Grades (I, DFR, ABS, NR)

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- “DFR” (Deferred) grades are issued at the end of the term only for thesis credit (599). “DFR” grades will only be changed to an “S” grade once the thesis is deposited. The Graduate Programs Office in each department usually completes the grade changes for the 599 credit hours once the thesis is deposited.
- “I” (Incomplete) grades are issued at the end of the term when students have not completed the required work for the course. The time limit for students to complete the work is no later than the last day of instruction for the term following the issuance of an “I” grade;
- The last day of fall term for an “I” grade issued in either spring or summer.
- The last day of spring term for an “I” grade issued in fall.  
After the deadline, the Graduate College will automatically change an “I” grade to an “F by Rule”. This failing grade will be reflected in the student’s GPA until the instructor changes it.
- If a student fails to appear for the final exam in a course, the instructor must issue an “ABS” (Absent) grade, no matter how well or poorly the student has done in the course. An “ABS” grade is a failing grade. In some cases, as approved by the instructor, the student may be allowed to take a special exam and the “ABS” grade can then be changed.
- “NR” (no record) is the automatically assigned grade if an instructor enters no grade before the grade submission deadline.

## Web-based Degree Audits

Agricultural and Biological Engineering graduate students can check their coursework progress for their degree program through the Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS). Students can access this system using their NetID and password at

[https://uachieve.apps.uillinois.edu/uachieve\\_uiuc/general/selectinstitution.html?src=institutionrequired](https://uachieve.apps.uillinois.edu/uachieve_uiuc/general/selectinstitution.html?src=institutionrequired).

DARS audits are unofficial degree audits to help guide students with their coursework progress. For an official degree audit, students must contact their home department’s Graduate Programs Office. Students who have questions about their DARS audit should contact the coordinator of graduate program in the ABE Department (Heather Crump at [hcrump@illinois.edu](mailto:hcrump@illinois.edu)).

## Academic Standing

### Probation Due to GPA

A minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA), corresponding to a grade of B, must be maintained to remain in all graduate programs and to graduate, unless a department has made a special arrangement with the Graduate College. Students whose GPA (overall and term) falls below 3.0 will be placed on probation and will receive a warning letter from the Graduate College stating that unless the GPA is raised to 3.0 after the subsequent semester, they will not be permitted to continue in the program. All courses taken while at University of Illinois as a graduate student affect the graduate GPA. Students who are on probation will need to complete a Graduate College petition to hold an assistantship during that semester.

### Probation Due to Exceeded Time Limit

The Graduate College can also place students on probation for exceeding time limits within their degree program.

For M.S. students, all degree requirements must be completed in 5 years. Students who reach this time limit may petition for a maximum of a one-year time extension to complete the degree requirements. All petitions must have an Academic Plan attached. If the petition is approved by the Graduate College, the student will be required to achieve the milestones in their Academic Plan by the stated deadlines or they will not be permitted to continue in the program. In addition, beginning in Fall 2020, students will be placed on probation for the duration of the time extension.

For Ph.D. students matriculating Spring 2019 or later, Stage II of the doctoral degree must be completed by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> year if entering with an approved M.S. or 5<sup>th</sup> year if an approved M.S. has not been obtained at the time of admission. Ph.D. students who are placed on probation for not meeting this deadline must complete this requirement by the subsequent semester, fall or spring, or they will not be permitted to continue in the program.

For all Stage II Ph.D. students who are within one semester of the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> year if entering with an approved M.S. or 5<sup>th</sup> year if an approved M.S. has not been obtained at the time of admission, Grainger Engineering requires an Academic Plan. Students must achieve all milestones in their Academic Plan by the stated deadlines or they will not be permitted to continue in the program.

Ph.D. students must complete all degree requirements by the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> year if they entered with an approved M.S. or 7<sup>th</sup> year if an approved M.S. has not been obtained at the time of admission. Students who reach this time limit may petition for a time extension. All petitions must have an Academic Plan attached. If the petition is approved by the Graduate College, the student will be required to achieve the milestones in their Academic Plan by the stated deadlines or they will not be permitted to continue in the program. In addition, beginning in Fall 2020, students will be placed on probation for the duration of the time extension.

### Academic Plan

An Academic Plan provides clear communication on the milestones that must be achieved during a set time period to help students move toward the completion of their degree. The Grainger Engineering Office of

Graduate, Professional and Online Programs works with the Associate Head for Graduate Programs in the student's home department, the student's advisor, and the student to develop and implement the plan and monitor the student's progress. A typical Academic Plan takes roughly a week to develop.

## Transfer of Coursework

### Transfer of Courses Between Illinois Graduate Programs

Students are allowed to transfer graduate credit from one graduate degree to another graduate degree within the Graduate College at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Graduate College does not set a maximum on the number of credit hours that can be transferred between the two programs. However, each department can set a maximum number of credit hours that it allows to be transferred into their graduate programs. Therefore, it is important for students to check with the department to understand their policy on internal transfer of graduate credit hours.

### Transfer of Courses Outside of Illinois Graduate Programs

A graduate student may wish to transfer graduate credit completed at another accredited institution. A maximum of 12 credit hours of graduate coursework completed outside the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign may be counted toward a graduate degree. Coursework completed outside the University of Illinois Graduate College that can be transferred includes these three types:

1. Graduate level work taken as an undergraduate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, but not used toward a degree.
2. Graduate level work taken at another accredited institution, but not used toward a degree.
3. Graduate level work done while enrolled as a non-degree student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Up to 12 credit hours of graduate coursework taken while enrolled as a non-degree student, as described in point 3 above, may be petitioned to apply toward a student's graduate degree, in addition to 12 hours of credit taken at another institution as described in point 2. Please note that transfer credit may only be applied to a master's degree or Stage I of a direct Ph.D. program. Stage II (before the prelim) and Stage III (after the prelim) of the Ph.D. degree requires 64 hours of resident credit on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus. Therefore, credit from outside the Graduate College may not be transferred to count toward Stage II or Stage III of a Ph.D. program. For more information, please see the Student Code ([http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3\\_part8\\_3-801.html](http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3_part8_3-801.html)) and the Graduate College website (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/>).

Transfer coursework must be less than 5 years old, equivalent to courses offered by the student's home department at Illinois, received a grade of B or higher, and not be applied to another degree. Students must complete a Graduate College Petition to request courses to be transferred and must submit an official transcript (which can be sent to the student's home department's Graduate Coordinator) as well as a letter from the appropriate authority at the previous institution stating that the credit hours have not been used towards a prior degree. Students must complete one semester (at least 8 hours) at Illinois in their graduate program before requesting to transfer coursework from another institution or program. Students can request to transfer non-degree, graduate level courses completed at Illinois at the start of their program.

NOTE: All transfer of graduate credit is subject to the approval of the home department and the Graduate College.

## Academic Leave & Re-Entry into a Graduate Program

For complete details, visit the Graduate College's Academic Leave Policy (<https://grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/2/chapter2/registration#LeaveofAbsence>).

Graduate students in degree-seeking programs are entitled to a total of 2 terms (fall and/or spring term) of academic leave in the course of a single degree program. Students must document their request for a leave and meet the eligibility requirements. All leave requests must be made and approved prior to the start of the semester by the student's home department and the Graduate College by completing the Request for Academic Leave of Absence form (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/leaveofabsence-form.pdf>). Students who are enrolled in summer only programs must apply for a Leave of Absence before taking a summer term off. There are two categories of Academic Leave of Absence.

1. Personal Academic Leave of Absence may be requested for a variety of reasons such as health reasons, personal reasons, active military service, or for taking care of dependents or family members. Students who are on an approved Personal Academic Leave of Absence should use the leave for personal reasons and not to make progress on the degree. In addition, students on Personal Academic Leave of Absence should not expect faculty to provide feedback on academic work, including proposals or drafts of a thesis.
2. Academic Progress Leave of Absence may be requested for instances of academic activity such as Study Abroad when the student registers at another institution or for fieldwork when the student is not using university resources including faculty time, nor receiving financial support paid through the university. Students who are on an approved Academic Progress Leave of Absence use it to make progress toward completion of the degree but must not use campus resources. Expectations of progress to be made during the leave should be documented in the student's academic file.

A student's status does not change during the period of an approved leave of absence. The standing that is in place at the time of leave will not change when the student returns. Students are responsible for knowing the potential consequences of taking an approved academic leave of absence on benefits and services that require enrollment. For example, a student's NetID will be deactivated and the student will not have access to university email or the university library. Other examples include loss of health insurance, loss of graduate assistantships, potential fellowships, and loss of loan deferment, etc. Lastly, degree time limits are not automatically extended for students who are on an approved leave of absence.

### Procedures to Request an Academic Leave

Students must request a formal leave of absence by completing the process below. All requests must be approved by the department and then by the Graduate College prior to the start of the term.

- Complete the written Request for Academic Leave of Absence form (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/leaveofabsence-form.pdf>).
- If necessary, complete a petition to request an extension of time to degree.
- International students must meet with an ISSS advisor and obtain a signature on the Request for Academic Leave of Absence form.



- Submit the written Request for Academic Leave of Absence form to student's home department. It is important to meet with your thesis advisor to review the request before turning the form into your home department's Graduate Programs Office.

The department reviews the Request for Academic Leave of Absence form and completes the following steps:

- Review and document the student's current academic progress in the program by recording the academic requirements that have been completed as well as the student's academic status.
- Document the student's remaining requirements for degree completion upon return.
- Document the length of the approved period of non-enrollment to be not more than 2 terms (spring or fall) during a student's degree program. These may be consecutive terms or single terms approved individually.
- Document the potential financial support that may be available to the student upon return to the degree program, including current department policies on financial support that exist at the time the leave is approved.
- Place the original approved Request for Academic Leave of Absence form in student's academic file and give the student a copy.
- An advising hold is placed on the student's record until he/she returns from approved academic leave.
- A copy of the approved form is forwarded to the Graduate College for inclusion in the student's academic record within the Graduate College.

## **Return from approved Academic Leave of Absence**

### Domestic Students

Domestic students must notify their home department of their intent to return so the department may review and confirm their academic status at the time of return. The department should remove any advising holds from the student's record. If a domestic student has not been enrolled for three consecutive terms including summer, the student must complete the Application for Re-Entry form (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/reentry.pdf>) and receive approval from the Graduate College. The Approved Academic Leave of Absence form must be attached to the Application for Re-entry form to document the approved leave terms and for the return to enrolled student status.

### International Students

International students must notify their home department of their intent to return so the department may review and confirm their academic status at the time of return. The department should remove any advising holds from the student's record. In addition, all international students must submit the International Student Verification form (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/intlveriform.pdf>) and the Declaration & Certification of Finances Form (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/certoffinances.pdf>) or a letter from the department confirming any funding by the department. The Approved Academic Leave of Absence form must be attached to the Application for Re-entry form to document the approved leave terms and for the return to enrolled student status. International students should begin the re-entry process at least 3 months in advance to allow the time required to process all visa documentation.

## Non-Approved Leave of Absence

Graduate students in a degree-seeking program that do not request a formal leave of absence (fall and spring terms, not summer unless they are in a summer only program) may be subject to potentially negative consequences for failing to request a formal Academic Leave of Absence. Students who do not enroll and do not meet with their home department to document their status with an approved Academic Leave of Absence before the start of a term are considered Absent without Leave. The department will place an advising hold on the student's record. A student who is Absent without Leave may be prevented from re-enrolling, may have additional degree requirements to complete if allowed to return, or may be subject to new degree requirements.

## Graduate Petitions

To request exceptions to the Graduate College policies or deadlines, students are required to complete a Graduate Student Request form (<http://www.grad.illinois.edu/gsas/gradpetition>). Below are some examples of when students would request an exception.

- Transfer of credit
- A time extension
- In absentia registration
- A curriculum change

Graduate students should complete the online form at the link above after seeking advice from either their thesis advisor, academic advisor, or home department's Graduate Programs Office. A Graduate College petition requires a minimum of two signatures (usually an advisor and authorized signatory in the student's home department's Graduate Programs Office). Sometimes certain petitions, like a change in curriculum, may require more signatures if the request involves units other than the student's home department. Petitions are sent to the Graduate College by the student's home department for final review. The student and the department are notified via email of the Graduate College's final decision on the petition. Petitions can take up to 3 weeks once received by the Graduate College. It is important to note that just because the department has approved the exception, this does not mean that it will automatically be approved by the Graduate College.

## Grievance & Policy Procedural Appeals

The faculty, staff, and students in GCOE are a diverse community and from time to time conflicts or problems may arise. Most of these conflicts or problems can be resolved informally between the two parties. However, there may be times that these conflicts cannot be resolved in this way. In these cases, students can either elect to file a formal grievance with the department or directly with the Graduate College. Consult the Graduate College's process for more information:

<https://grad.illinois.edu/gradhandbook/2/chapter9/academic-conflict>.

## Thesis Deposit

Thesis deposits are required for the MS thesis and Ph.D. dissertation. It is important for students to understand the Graduate College thesis requirements to prepare their document in the correct format. In addition, students need to be aware and follow the thesis deposit process to help ensure that everything is completed in the necessary order and all the correct forms are signed and submitted before the deadline. Please note that it is the student's, not the department, responsibility to ensure all required forms are completed and signed.

Each semester has a hard deadline by which all thesis deposits must be made to the Graduate College. This means that the Graduate College Thesis Office must receive all corrections and all required deposit materials by 5 p.m. on the day of the deadline. If the deadline is missed, then graduation will be delayed until the next graduation date. Therefore, it is highly recommended that all students begin the electronic deposit of their thesis at least three days prior to the Thesis Office deadline. Students who wait until the last minute to deposit their thesis may not make the deadline. A thesis submitted electronically to the Thesis Office database is placed in a queue and will be processed in the order received. Any theses that are still in the queue at 5 p.m. on the day of the deadline or need additional changes will not be accepted for deposit. Students will then need to add their name to the next semester's degree conferral list. For more information, please visit the Graduate College Thesis Office website, <http://www.grad.illinois.edu/thesis>.

## Graduation Process & Convocation

Students who are ready to receive their degree must place their name on the degree conferral list using the UI Integrate Self-Service before the deadline for that term. This alerts the student's home department and the Graduate College that the student plans to graduate that semester. Students who fail to add their name by the deadline will have to wait until the next semester to graduate.

All graduate students are invited to participate in College of ACES, GCOE and University convocations upon completion of their graduate degree. It is important that students sign up before the deadlines. To learn more and to sign up, visit Grainger Engineering Convocation website (<https://grainger.illinois.edu/graduation>), ACES Convocation website (<https://graduation.aces.illinois.edu>) and the University's Convocation website (<http://commencement.illinois.edu>).

REMINDER: Ph.D. students must be registered for the term in which they complete their final exam. International Master's students on an F-1 visa must be registered for the term in which they deposit their thesis if they have a valid I-20. In addition, Master's students with 8 hours or less to complete in the summer term may choose to participate in the May Commencement. However, their name will not appear in the printed commencement program.