SUSAG Student Handbook

2020-2021

Sustainable Agriculture
Interdepartmental Graduate Program

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

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Welcome

Welcome to the Sustainable Agriculture Interdepartmental Graduate Program. You have joined a unique and dynamic program that will provide you with outstanding opportunities to develop your understanding of sustainable agricultural systems. This handbook is intended to provide you with guidelines and information to enhance the quality of your experience in the program.

As program and university policies are subject to revision, this document cannot fully and finally address all issues. Program administrators and the Graduate College will keep you advised of new developments, however we urge you to actively seek advice and direction from the individuals and units listed below to ensure all required steps towards completion of your graduate degree are fulfilled.

Contact Information

Program Policies

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137 Bessey Hall
515.294.1191
camelot@iastate.edu

J. Arbuckle, Chair
303C East Hall
515.294.1497
arbuckle@iastate.edu

Mary Wiedenhoeft, Director of Graduate Education
1126D Agronomy
515.294.3274
mwiedenh@iastate.edu

Graduate College Policies and Deadlines

Graduate College
1137 Pearson Hall
515.294.4531
grad_college@iastate.edu
http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/

Registration and Tuition

Office of the Registrar
214 Alumni Hall
515.294.1840
registrar@iastate.edu
http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/contacts.html

Key Relationships

The quality of your experience as a student will be strongly affected by your relationships with the faculty members and students with whom you work and the university offices and units that supervise and sponsor your work. It is important that you learn about these relationships as soon as possible so that your studies proceed smoothly and productively. Improving your knowledge of these relationships can put more of the university's resources at your disposal.

Graduate College

The Graduate College admits graduate students to the university, oversees their studies, and awards degrees. The Graduate College's rules, services, and expectations of students are described in the Graduate College Handbook.

Home College

The home college of each student is determined by their major professor's primary college affiliation. Faculty members in the program are distributed among five different colleges:

- Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS)
- Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS)
- Design
- Engineering
- Veterinary Medicine

Under the present university budget, academic colleges manage the allocation of graduate tuition scholarships associated with assistantship appointments. Some colleges offer special scholarship programs and support for professional development. It is helpful to know your college affiliation and learn which of these special services may be available to you. The program coordinator can assist you in finding this information.

Home Department

The home department of students in the program is determined by their major professor's primary departmental affiliation. The home department provides office space, payroll support, and other services. The available resources, policies, and cultures of cooperating departments differ, sometimes significantly. Some departments have considerable experience with students in interdepartmental majors; others have little experience. Students are responsible for learning their department's policies and developing a respectful working relationship with the staff there.

Major Professor

The major professor provides supervision of research work, guidance in course selection, and a wide range of other academic and professional functions. The major professor is frequently the source of graduate assistantship support. All students must be matched with a major professor at the time they are admitted.

Faculty-supervised projects are required for degree completion; therefore, it is not possible to major in Sustainable Agriculture without a major professor. To maintain good standing and to earn a degree in Sustainable Agriculture, students must have a Sustainable Agriculture faculty member serving as a major professor or co-major professor.

A major professor may choose to resign their position by notifying the student and the program chair in writing. Any student so affected must identify a new major professor within three months of the date

upon which the program chair was notified of the resignation. If the student cannot obtain a commitment from another Sustainable Agriculture faculty member, the student will be required to withdraw from the program. Program administrators will assist the student in their search for a new major professor.

A student may elect to change their major professor. To do so, the student should discuss the change with their current major professor, the potential new major professor, the program chair, and the program director of graduate education (DOGE). Before the change may be approved, the new major professor must indicate in writing to the chair and DOGE that they are willing to accept the student, and the current major professor must indicate in writing to the chair and DOGE their recognition of the pending change. The chair and DOGE will jointly decide approval/disapproval of the requested change.

Please be advised that assistantship funding does not necessarily transfer from one major professor relationship to another. The individual student bears responsibility to research the full effects of any such change.

Admissions

The program requires submission of a complete graduate application, along with a nomination from a faculty member who will serve as the major professor. The Admissions Committee will review applicants once they have been nominated. The complete application process is outlined on the program website.

MS applicants must have, or be in the process of completing, a bachelor's degree and demonstrate a strong record of achievement in one of the natural, social, or engineering sciences.

PhD applicants must have, or be in the process of completing, a master's degree and have an undergraduate or graduate degree in an agriculture and life science program. This policy is based on the premise that a student's academic and professional development require a combination of mentorship, research experience, formal course work, and maturation through stages by which the student

- Acquires basic skills for conducting research,
- Gains familiarity with the major research questions in the discipline, and
- Applies those research skills and an informed perspective to develop innovative knowledge within the discipline.

Financial Support

Students are funded through a variety of mechanisms, including Sustainable Agriculture Fellowships in the form of research assistantships, departmental assistantships, university fellowships and scholarships, and extramural grants obtained by faculty members. Levels of financial support vary among sources, as do expectations for the amount of work for which a student is responsible. Sustainable Agriculture Fellowships are only available to students in their first year in the program.

Provisions for work-related equipment (e.g., computers) and office space also differ among funding sources. You should discuss issues related to financial support, work responsibilities, equipment, and office space with your major professor.

English Placement Test

The English Placement Test for Non-Native Speakers of English (EPT) is required for all incoming students whose first language is not English, and if they are (a) graduates from non-U.S. high schools or (b) graduates from U.S. high schools with an ACT-E below 16 or SAT-V below 410. For additional information, visit the English Placement Test website at https://apling.engl.iastate.edu/english-placement-test/.

International Students

Within the first few weeks of arriving in the US, and before classes begin, international students must sign up for and attend an International Graduate Student Orientation. The sign-up for orientation is on the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) website at https://www.isso.iastate.edu/.

The ISSO is obligated under US federal law to report the following information about international students to the US government through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

- Confirmation that a student has enrolled within 30 days, or notification of failure to enroll.
- All changes of legal name, address, email address, or phone number.
- Graduation prior to the end date listed on the I-20 or DS-2019.
- Academic or disciplinary actions taken due to criminal conviction.
- A student's drop below a full course of study without prior authorization.
- Dismissal or withdrawal date, and reason for dismissal or withdrawal.
- Procedures such as program extensions, school transfers, changes in level of study, employment authorizations, and reinstatement.
- Any student who fails to maintain status or complete her/his program for any reason.

It is essential that you report to the ISSO any change in your status as a student. If you have questions about your reporting obligations, please contact the ISSO directly at the telephone number or e-mail address listed above.

Students who fail to report changes in their status may lose the privilege to study in the US and may have to leave the US. Specific consequences may include denial of re-entry to the US, denial of requests for work authorization, denial of requests to change visa status, and possible denial of future visa applications.

Co-Majors, Transfers, and PhD-track Requests

Graduate students who have already been admitted to a graduate program at Iowa State may request to co-major in Sustainable Agriculture or transfer to the program. Similarly, current students who will be completing their MS degree and wish to continue as a PhD student may request PhD-track status. Co-major, transfer, and PhD-track requests are reviewed by the Admissions Committee. The complete application process is outlined on the program's Internal Applicants webpage.

Academics

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate
- An ability to frame problems and ask critical questions concerning agricultural sustainability.
- Knowledge of biophysical as well as socioeconomic aspects of agricultural sustainability.
- An expertise in sustainable agriculture that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

- An appreciation of the intellectual history of efforts to improve agricultural sustainability.
- An ability to work interdependently and collaboratively.
- The capacity to address complex agricultural problems by using systems thinking and other approaches.
- An ability to critique different problem-solving methods and approaches, and recognize and display visionary leadership with moral and ethical integrity.

Degree Requirements

Master of Science

The MS degree (thesis and non-thesis option) requires successful completion of at least 36 graduate credits, of which at least 22 credits, including all thesis research credits, must be earned at Iowa State. Graduate credits earned at another institution may be transferred and applied to the program of study, subject to the approval of the student's POS committee, the DOGE, and the Graduate College. There is no foreign language requirement for the MS degree. However, given the international character of many of the issues involved in agriculture, competence in one or more languages in addition to English is highly recommended. The expected time-to-degree is three years or less.

Doctor of Philosophy

The PhD degree requires successful completion of at least 77 graduate credits, of which at least 36 credits, including all dissertation research credits, must be earned at Iowa State. Graduate credits earned at another institution or at Iowa State as a master's student may be applied to the program of study, subject to the approval of the student's POS committee, the DOGE, and the Graduate College. There is no foreign language requirement for the MS degree. However, given the international character of many of the issues involved in agriculture, competence in one or more languages in addition to English is highly recommended. The expected time-to-degree is five years or less.

Curriculum Requirements

Students majoring in Sustainable Agriculture are expected to develop an expertise in the design, implementation, and evaluation of sustainable agricultural systems. A key objective of the curriculum is to foster interdisciplinary and systems-level thinking. With this goal in mind, the curriculum integrates multiple disciplines, and students are expected to complement their previous education by selecting courses and experiential training from areas outside their previous academic concentration.

To provide academic rigor and breadth, as well as integrative thinking and learning, the program requires a minimum number of core courses and allows students the flexibility to tailor the curriculum to meet their specific needs and interests.

Master of Science
- Agroecosystems Analysis (SUSAG 509) – 4 credits
- Sustainable Agriculture Colloquium (SUSAG 600) – 4 credits
- Foundations of Sustainable Agriculture (SUSAG 610) – 3 credits
- Statistical Methods for Research Workers (STAT 587)* – 4 credits
- Cross-disciplinary courses –6 credits
- Electives – 9 credits
- Research/Creative Component – 6 credits

Doctor of Philosophy
- Agroecosystems Analysis (SUSAG 509) – 4 credits
- Sustainable Agriculture Colloquium (SUSAG 600) – 6 credits
- Foundations of Sustainable Agriculture (SUSAG 610) – 3 credits
- Statistical Methods for Research Workers (STAT 587)* – 4 credits
- Cross-disciplinary courses – 12 credits
- Electives – 30 credits
- Research – 18 credits

The following tables summarize the MS and PhD curriculum requirements.

Master of Science		Doctor of Philosophy	
Courses	**Credits**	**Courses**	**Credits**
SUSAG 509*	4	SUSAG 509*	4
SUSAG 600 (x4)	4	SUSAG 600 (x6)	6
SUSAG 610	3	SUSAG 610	3
STAT 587[†]	≥ 4	STAT 587[†]	≥ 4
Cross-disciplinary courses	6	Cross-disciplinary courses	12
SUSAG 599/699	6	SUSAG 699	18
Subtotal	**≥ 27**	**Subtotal**	**≥ 47**
Electives	9	Electives	30
TOTAL	**≥ 36**	**TOTAL**	**≥ 77**

*SUSAG 509 is offered each year as a fall semester course; however, it includes a field component that meets the week prior to the official start of the fall semester. New students should plan to take SUSAG 509 their first fall semester as it is a prerequisite for all other SUSAG courses and serves as an important orientation to the program and to fundamental concepts in sustainability studies.

[†]Any 400-level or higher, 3-4 credit statistics course, including transfer credits, may be applied towards the statistics requirement with prior approval from a student's Program of Study Committee.

Minor

A minor in Sustainable Agriculture requires 12-13 credits.

- Agroecosystems Analysis (SUSAG 509) - 4 credits **OR**
- Foundations of Sustainable Agriculture (SUSAG 610) - 3 credits
- Sustainable Agriculture Colloquium (SUSAG 600) - 3 credits
- Cross-disciplinary courses - 6 credits

Double Degree Program (MS/MCRP)

Students interested in a multi-disciplinary, systems-level approach to agricultural planning may pursue the Master of Science/Master of Community and Regional Planning (MS/MCRP) double degree in partnership with the Department of Community and Regional Planning in the College of Design. The MS/MCRP double degree requires 54 credits. Students completing a double degree must meet the MS degree and curriculum requirements.

Cross-disciplinary Requirement

The cross-disciplinary (CD) requirement is intended to enhance a student's understanding of critical issues in the study of agricultural sustainability, as well as their ability to succeed professionally in interdisciplinary contexts. Prior to taking any cross-disciplinary courses, students will identify their core discipline category – *Natural Sciences and Engineering* or *Human Dimensions* – with assistance from their major professor. Students that identify natural sciences and engineering as their core discipline are required to take courses from the Human Dimensions category. Students that identify human dimensions as their core discipline are required to take courses from the Natural Sciences and Engineering category. Students will be allowed to take courses from their home department and co-major program as long as the course is outside their core discipline category. Students will identify their core discipline on the Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) form, allowing POS Committees and the DOGE to easily identify allowable courses. For category learning outcomes and pre-approved courses, see the program website at https://susag.iastate.edu/academics/#cd-req.

Students and faculty can request exceptions to category listings. Requests for category listing exceptions must be submitted to the DOGE for review and approval prior to taking the course and submitting a POSC. Independent study cannot be applied towards the cross-disciplinary requirement; requests for exception will not be considered.

For PhD students, up to 6 credits can be transferred from an MS degree program at Iowa State University or at another institution if the previous course is equivalent to an ISU course that meets the CD requirement. The student must first present a request to their POS committee. If the committee agrees, the student and committee should draft a memorandum to formally request the acceptance of the transfer credit and forward it to the DOGE. The memorandum should include documentation (i.e., a course syllabus for the transfer course and a course syllabus for the ISU course that it is replacing) and be signed by the student and all committee members or, if a POS Committee has not yet been formed, by the student's major professor. Decisions concerning curriculum exemptions will be made within one month of submission. In reviewing the request, the DOGE will consult with the course instructor(s) and may consult with the program chair, the associate chair, and the student's major professor.

Courses

Core courses
- SUSAG 509 – Agroecosystems Analysis*
- SUSAG 600 – Sustainable Agriculture Colloquium
- SUSAG 610 – Foundations of Sustainable Agriculture

Topical courses
- SUSAG 515 – Integrated Crop and Livestock Production Systems
- SUSAG 530 – Ecologically Based Pest Management Strategies
- SUSAG 546 – Organizational Strategies for Diversified Farming Systems
- SUSAG 571 – Agroforestry Systems
- SUSAG 584 – Organic Agriculture: Theory and Practice
- SUSAG 590 – Special Topics

Progress Towards Degree

Deadlines

Students are responsible for meeting deadlines set by both the program and the Graduate College. Program deadlines are outlined in the sections below. For Graduate College deadlines, see the Degree Deadline Summary at https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/calendar/.

Individual Curriculum Plan

Students should start their Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP) before the end of their first semester (excluding summer semester). The ICP serves to document the student's core disciplinary area and cross-disciplinary courses, as well as ensuring that the student understands the curriculum requirements. The ICP form is available on the Sustainable Agriculture website at https://susag.iastate.edu/academics/#icp. Students must upload the completed ICP to their program of study and committee (POSC) form. POSCs that do not have an ICP attached will not be reviewed/approved by the DOGE.

Program of Study and Committee

Students should submit a program of study and committee (POSC) form before the end of their second semester (excluding summer semester). The POSC form is submitted through AccessPlus for approval by the major professor, POS committee members, DOGE, and the Graduate College. For instructions on submitting the POSC, see the Graduate College website at https://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/posc/.

Program of Study Committee

It is recommended that students begin forming their program of study (POS) committee by the end of their first semester (excluding summer semester). The POS committee provides oversight, advice, mentoring, and access to information and facilities. Regular meetings between a student and their POS committee are strongly recommended as one of the key steps in making progress towards a degree. The committee is composed of faculty invited by the student to supervise their progress towards degree. The student's major professor chairs the committee. The remaining members are drawn from departments and/or programs relevant to the student's disciplinary and research focus.

MS committees must have at least three members, with no less than two SUSAG faculty members (including the major professor). PhD committees must have at least five members, with no less than

three SUSAG faculty members (including the major professor). One faculty member must be from outside the student's field of emphasis to ensure diversity of perspective. The faculty member serving as the outside representative may be a SUSAG faculty member. For additional information regarding POS committee composition, see the Graduate College Handbook, chapter 6.

Program of Study

Students should begin developing their program of study (POS) during their second semester (excluding summer semester). The POS is an agreement between the student and the Graduate College. The student and the major professor develop the POS with the consultation and approval of the POS committee. The POS should be designed to correct deficiencies in academic preparation, allow study of subject matter that most interests the student, and avoid repetition in areas where the student is well prepared. The POS committee assures that program requirements are met before approving the POSC form. For additional information, see the Graduate College Handbook, chapter 6.

Preliminary Examination

The preliminary examination rigorously tests a student's knowledge of major, minor, and supporting subject areas as well as the student's ability to analyze, organize, and present subject matter relevant to the field. POS committees are responsible for the administration of preliminary examinations for PhD students. Preliminary examinations must include both written and oral components. The POS committee will determine the format for both components. Examinations for co-majors and minors must cover material, as appropriate, from both majors and the minor.

Final Projects

POS committees are responsible for quality control and approval or denial of MS theses/creative components and PhD dissertations. Each of these types of final projects involves a large amount of work. Adequate time should be budgeted to draft, edit, revise, and refine them. Students pursuing a co-major or double degree must integrate subject areas from both programs.

Application for Graduation

Application for graduation should be made by the end of the third week of the semester in which the student expects to receive the degree. To apply for graduation, students must submit an electronic Application for Graduation form through AccessPlus.

Final Oral Examination

All students must pass a final oral examination, which is delivered by the student before their POS committee and any other faculty who wish to attend. This examination comprehensively reviews a student's knowledge and the research presented in the thesis/creative component or dissertation. Examinations for co-majors, double degrees, and minors must cover material, as appropriate, from both majors or degrees and the minor. For information on request forms, committee participation, and reporting results, see the Graduate College Handbook, chapter 7.1.2.

Annual Performance Evaluations

The annual performance evaluation process is designed to insure that students are making satisfactory progress in order to maintain their academic standing in the program. This process includes regular meetings with the student's advisor, annual meetings with their POS committee, and completing an annual performance evaluation. The purpose of the annual performance evaluation is to help the student, their advisor, and the Director of Graduate Education (DOGE) review the student's progress.

Evaluation form. In January of each year, students (both MS and PhD) will be notified to complete an online self-evaluation form for the previous calendar year. The student and major professor will receive a copy of the completed evaluation form. Students will be asked to indicate their progress towards completing the following expectations:

- Form their POS committee within their first 12 months
- Have their POS approved by the end of their first 12 months
- Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Successfully complete their preliminary oral exam (PhD students only)
- Complete their degree within the required years (3 years or less for MS; 5 years or less for PhD)

Evaluation meeting and approval. After completing the form, students should schedule a meeting with their major professor to discuss their progress. During the meeting the student and major professor should discuss progress towards degree completion. If any problems or delays are identified, both the student and major professor should develop a plan for resolution. Any discrepancy based on inaccurate or incomplete information should be brought up by the student and major professor so that it can be resolved during this meeting. At the end of the meeting, the major professor will inform the student whether these accomplishments and future plans indicate satisfactory progress. The major professor will then submit an evaluation approval form. Students will receive a copy of the evaluation approval form after the major professor has submitted it. The major professor may elect to submit confidential remarks to the program coordinator for DOGE consideration.

DOGE review. The DOGE will conduct a review of all active students, applying the performance indices listed above. The review will be based on the evaluation form submitted by the student and the evaluation approval form submitted by the major professor. In cases where deficiencies are noted, the student and their major professor will be advised in writing of the results of the review. The student will be allowed two semesters to correct the noted deficiencies. At the end of this period, an additional status review will be conducted. If no action has been taken or if the resolution is insufficient, the DOGE will advise the student and major professor of the program's final evaluation and, barring any evidence of mitigating circumstances, will initiate action to dismiss the student from the program.

The definition and application of the performance indices noted above does not preclude major professors from establishing separate standards of performance and milestones for progress related to specific work and research assignments made to a given student, e.g., standards for performing duties assigned through an assistantship appointment.

Absence of satisfactory progress is grounds for dismissal from the program. A student may be recommended for dismissal by their major professor, the POS Committee, or the Graduate College. Students may appeal a recommendation for dismissal. The procedures for doing so are described in the Graduate College Handbook, chapter 9.

Policy Exceptions

Required Course Substitutions

Exemptions from standard curriculum requirements, including course substitutions and waivers, may be requested if conditions warrant. The student must first present such a request to their POS committee. If the committee agrees, the student and committee should draft a memorandum to formally request the exemption, include a completed ICP, and submit it to the DOGE for a decision. The memo should be signed by the student and all committee members or, if a POS committee has not yet been formed, by the student's major professor.

The memo should clearly describe the justification for the course waiver and/or substitution and should include discussion and documentation of at least one of the following circumstances:

- The student has taken the equivalent of the required course(s) through another university.
- The student has taken or will take another ISU course that is substantially equivalent to the required course.
- The student is unable to take the required course due to an irresolvable scheduling conflict that involves fulfilling other curriculum requirements.

Decisions concerning curriculum exemptions will be made within one month of submission. In reviewing the request, the DOGE will consult with the course instructor(s) and may consult with the program chair, the associate chair, and the student's major professor.

Direct-PhD Petition

Students are normally expected to earn an MS degree before pursuing a PhD degree. In rare instances, an MS student, with guidance from their POS committee, may petition to bypass the MS degree in pursuit of a PhD degree. *Note: This option is only available to students who have been admitted to the MS program.*

Petition materials should be submitted as PDF files to the program coordinator who will submit to the Admissions Committee with a copy to the DOGE. The petition must include the following:

1. A draft PhD Individual Curriculum Plan (ICP).
2. A draft PhD Program of Study (POS).
3. A memorandum (10-12 pages maximum), written and signed by the student, in consultation with their POS committee, describing how the student will acquire the skills and depth of perspective, within a specified period of time, that are commensurate with earning a PhD in Sustainable Agriculture. The memorandum should address the following points:
   a. How the student will develop doctoral-level competence in inquiry and the generation of new knowledge, including research techniques.
   b. How the student will develop doctoral-level competence in the discipline of sustainability studies.
   c. How the student's proposed coursework and POS extend beyond levels used for the MS degree and suits the student's personal needs beyond the minimum standards and requirements established by the program.
   d. How the student's proposed research extends beyond levels used for the MS degree and leads to original and novel contributions to the field of sustainability studies.

e. A contingency plan for earning an MS in the event that doctoral-level activities are discontinued or unattainable. Such a plan should specify either a thesis or non-thesis MS in Sustainable Agriculture, or an alternative option at ISU.
4. A memorandum written and signed by all of the student's POS committee members*, specifying their recommendations concerning the petition. The memorandum should provide:
    a. Evidence of the student's doctoral-level competence in inquiry and new knowledge generation, including research techniques pertinent to the prospective dissertation topic.
    b. Evidence of the student's comprehension of the discipline of sustainability studies.
    c. Evidence of the student's potential for original and novel contributions to the field of sustainability studies.
    d. A strategy to ensure the student has adequate financial support until their PhD degree is completed.

*If the members of the POS committee are not in unanimous support of the petition, a dissenting minority report should also be submitted.

Decision Process

Decisions concerning direct-PhD petitions are the responsibility of the Admissions Committee. In making such decisions, the committee will consult with the student's POS committee members and the DOGE.

It is recommended that ambiguous and/or contentious issues associated with petitions be addressed at face-to-face meetings that include, as appropriate, members of the Admissions Committee, the DOGE, members of the student's POS committee, and the student.

The decision of the Admissions Committee will be based on a majority vote of a quorum of the committee. It will be provided in writing within one month of petition submission. It will come from the Admissions Committee chair and will summarize the factors underlying the decision and, as appropriate, other substantive issues.

Once denied, the same petition may not be resubmitted; however, a new petition on behalf of the same student may be submitted at a future date if it differs in substance from the first.

Graduate Assistantships

Students are supported through graduate assistantships that contribute significantly to their graduate education. Students holding assistantships are considered to be in training, and the graduate assistantship is a form of student aid that combines training with income.

Appointments

The types of assistantships available are research, teaching, and administrative assistantships. A research assistant (RA) conducts research with projects fostering originality, imagination, judgment, and patience—the traits of an independent scholar. Many times an assigned research project leads to a thesis or dissertation topic. A teaching assistant (TA) shares the faculty's responsibility for undergraduate teaching. Responsibilities may include instruction, grading, course development, and proctoring exams. An administrative assistant (AA) performs duties that contribute indirectly to a student's education. Duties vary widely and will generally not lead to a thesis or dissertation.

The standard appointment is 1/2-time and the official university guideline suggests 20 hours per week should be spent on assistantship duties, but this expectation varies depending on the nature of the assistantship. The specific nature of the graduate assistant's responsibilities, requirements concerning

office hours and staff meetings, particular conditions for re-appointment, benefits, and pertinent requirements are established at the beginning of the appointment by the supporting department or unit.

Stipend

Assistantship appointments are made by term. All assistantship appointments are subject to the continuing availability of funds. Assistantships provide a monthly stipend which is sufficient to cover modest living expenses. Stipend rates are determined by the Graduate College and the supporting department (or unit) ,following the minimum and maximum monthly stipend rate established by the university. Stipends are distributed on the last working day of the month through direct deposit to a chosen banking institution. Stipends are subject to income tax withholding. For information on withholdings, contact the Payroll Office.

Benefits

Benefits in addition to stipend support accrue to the graduate assistant during the appointment period. For benefit information, including health and dental insurance, dependents, leave, and worker's compensation, see the Graduate College Handbook, chapter 3.2.5.

Professional and Personal Conduct

The program promotes the highest ethical standards in the work of its students. The use of ideas and words from other people should always be accompanied by open and complete acknowledgement of where those ideas and words originated. Students should clearly understand that plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are entirely unacceptable and can result in dismissal from the program and university.

Iowa State University and its constituent units observe explicit policies relating to professional and personal conduct. The links below provide further reference. Additional information is available in the [ISU Policy Library](#).

- [Academic Dishonesty](#)
- [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Assault, and Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Intellectual Property](#)

Professional Development

Graduate Student Organization

The Sustainable Agriculture Student Association (SASA) is a student lead organization that works towards promoting sustainable agriculture, consumer education and outreach, and improvement of the current agricultural paradigm. Activities and events are a way for students and friends of the program to build community and learn more about sustainable agriculture outside the classroom. Recurring activities include volunteering with the Food at First garden and meals. Special events have included a bicycle tour of local gardens, a trip to the Minnesota State Fair to learn about sustainability initiatives in Minnesota, and working with other organizations to bring speakers to campus. To learn more and getting involved, visit the SASA website at https://www.stuorg.iastate.edu/site/966/information.

Graduate and Professional Student Senate

The Graduate and Professional Student Senate is an elected body through which graduate and professional students express their concern for the welfare of graduate and professional students at

Iowa State University, develop and disseminate ideas for the improvement of graduate and professional education, and contribute to the formation of relevant University policies. Additional information is available on the GPSS website at http://www.gpss.iastate.edu/.

Professional Development Grants

SUSAG Professional Development Grants (PDG) are available to students directly participating in a professional development activity. Priority consideration will be given to those presenting at a conference. Students can request up to $600 per fiscal year. Requests must be submitted at least one month prior to the event. Submission details are available on the SUSAG website at https://susag.iastate.edu/academics/pd-grants/.

Professional Advancement Grants

GPSS Professional Advancement Grants (PAG) are provided to graduate and professional students to help defray expenses related to professional meeting and conference travel. Details are available on the GPSS website at http://www.gpss.iastate.edu/professional-advancement-grants.

Miscellaneous

Student Contact Information

Update your contact information on your Workday dashboard under the Personal Information worklet. This will ensure that you receive important announcements and tax documents issued by the university.

Email Lists

The program maintains email lists to facilitate easy communication within the program. These lists are not public. Contact the program coordinator for list information.