



Student Handbook

2023 – 2024

This handbook contains information from the [ISU Graduate College Handbook](#) as it pertains to MS Agronomy students.

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Contact Information

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ISU Solution Center: (515.294.4000, solution@iastate.edu); Net-ID, e-mail, AccessPlus

ISU Accounts Receivable: (515.594.7388, U-Bill@iastate.edu); U-Bill

ISU Financial Aid: (515.294.2223, financialaid@iastate.edu); Scholarships, FAFSA

ISU Graduate College: (515.294.4531, grad_college@iastate.edu)

ISU Admissions: (515.294.5836; 800.262.3810, Grad_admissions@iastate.edu)

ISU Registrar: (515.294.1840, registrar@iastate.edu);

Extension numbers:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1: Order transcripts | 6: VA Educational Benefits |
| 3: Class schedule and Tuition | 7: Enrollment verification |
| 4: Graduation and Commencement | 8: Financial Aid |
| 5: Academic Records | 9: Accounts Receivable |

Student Handbook: Student Accounts

University ID Number (UID) & ISU Card

You are assigned a 9-digit student ID number as soon as you are admitted. Your ID number is incorporated into your [ISU Card number](#) (see below), which has 17 digits.

Where can you find your ID number? In AccessPlus (A+) (see page 3).

- After you log in, click the A+ Home tab.
- On the left menu, click ISU IDs.
- Your Net-ID, University ID (UID), and ISUCard number are located there.

ID numbers on an ISU Card

1. The first group of six numbers is the University code. It is the same for everyone.
2. **The second group of 9 is your University ID number (UID).** This is unique to you. All of your student records are linked to this 9-digit number, including transcripts, class registration, class schedule, and U-Bill.
3. The last two numbers are a security code.



The ISU Card number and UID are used for:

1. [AccessPlus](#): Using your UID is one of the login methods.
 - You can also log into A+ from the Okta dashboard, using your Net-ID (see page 2).
2. [ISU library](#): You will need the last 11 digits of your ISU card number (UID and security code).
3. If you need to resolve issues with on-campus offices (Graduate College, Accounts Receivable, Registrar), the first thing they will ask for is your UID.

Can you get a card as a distance student? Yes! In one of two ways:

- On campus: The [ISU Card Office](#) is located in 0530 Beardshear Hall. You need to fill out an ISUCard application and get your picture taken. They require a state or federal issued photo ID.
- Off Campus: You can also request a card by e-mail (this will not have a picture). E-mail distance@iastate.edu
 - Include your name, full mailing address, UID and the department and course number of the course(s) for which you are currently registered (for verification purposes).
 - You get your card in the mail after 7-10 days.

Student Handbook: Student Accounts

Network ID (Net-ID)

Your Net-ID (and password) is used for logging in to all protected networks at ISU: [Net-ID Registration Link](#) You will need it to gain access to the Okta Application Dashboard (see below).

Your Net-ID becomes the first half of your ISU e-mail account address. It will be Net-ID@iastate.edu.

Okta Application Dashboard

1. Okta is a single sign-in application, which means that once you log into Okta, you will have access to all ISU systems.
2. In the dashboard, you can add URLs for the systems you will use – some suggestions:
 - Canvas - Learning Management System
 - AccessPlus
 - [MS Agronomy Website](#)
3. You will be required to set up [multifactor authentication](#) to access secure sites.
 - Go to login.iastate.edu and sign in with your Net-ID and password
 - Click on the **Activate Multifactor Authentication** tile, read the information, and click **Activate** at the bottom of the screen. This will log you out.
 - Log back in and follow the prompts to set up your preferred verification method(s).
 - Details about Okta are available at <https://www.it.iastate.edu/resources/students> or https://iastate.service-now.com/it?id=kb_article&sys_id=201ce6fadb81c590577d30cc299619fc
4. Adding URLs to the Okta Dashboard:
 - On the left side, click the Add Apps link
 - You can search for an app managed by ISU in the search bar or by scrolling. Click the Add button and it will be added to your dashboard.

ISU E-mail:

Once you are admitted and have your Net-ID, all communication from ISU offices will go ONLY to your ISU e-mail. These offices include Admissions, Accounts Receivable, Financial Aid, Graduate College, Registrar's office, etc. **You are responsible for the information that is sent to you** via your Outlook account, so it is important to check it regularly.

Communication from the MS Agronomy office is a bit different. The MS Agronomy database system contains personal and/or work e-mail addresses – those you used when you submitted your pre-application. Messages sent from the MS Agronomy office may be sent to all e-mail addresses for you listed in our database.

It is extremely important that you either use or check your ISU e-mail account regularly.

Student Handbook: Student Accounts

AccessPlus (A+)

This system contains all of your personal and private student information. The easiest way to log into AccessPlus is with the Okta Dashboard (see page 2).

On the left menu, items most relevant to MS Agronomy students include:

1. **Account/U-Bill:** ISU does not send paper tuition bills. Students must manage payments from this menu.
2. **Address Change:** Make sure your contact information is up-to-date. Note! The MS in Agronomy Office database is not linked to AccessPlus. If you need to update contact information, you will need to let the MS Agronomy office know AND update A+.
3. **Class Registration:** Search for courses and follow the prompts to register from this menu.
 - [Help Video](#) – This video was recorded in 2014, but the scheduling process is still accurate.
 - Be sure you know in advance what courses in which you want to enroll (see page 9).
4. **Class Schedule:** This is the only official record of your registration.
 - Do not look for your registration by checking your U-Bill or Canvas.
5. **Current Student Info:** Shows contact information, Major Professor, and Major.
 - During active registration periods, your assigned registration access date and time is available here.
6. **Enrollment Certification:** This provides a link to a clearinghouse for an Enrollment Verification Certificate. Students use this mainly for proof of enrollment to their employers or for funding support.
7. **Financial Aid:** This will contain your financial aid award information, if relevant.
8. **Grad Student Status: VERY IMPORTANT!** This is a snapshot of your graduate progress as tracked by the Grad College. Items highlighted in Green mean you are on track with Grad College policies and no need to take action. Items highlighted in Orange need attention at some point. Below is an explanation of different sections:
 - If earning both Certificate and MS, use the “Next Degree” button at the top right to toggle between Grad Student Status for your Certificate and MS screens
 - Required to Apply for Graduation (upper left block)
 - Status: Active or Inactive (see page 6)
 - Admission type: Full or Nondegree
 - GPA: Will stay green if 3.0 or above (see page 16)
 - Met English Requirement: This is determined at the time of Admission (see page 5)
 - POSC Approved: (see page 11)
 - Graduation Application submitted: Shows the term a student has applied for graduation.
 - Alerts (upper right block)
 - Will list either Grad College (GPA or Inactive) or Accounts Receivable (U-Bill) holds (see page 16)
 - Department, Major, and Minor Information (middle right block)
 - Major: Agronomy
 - Department: Agronomy
 - Degree Currently Sought: Certificate or Master of Science
 - Thesis: Not required
 - Credits Earned in Graduate Status: Your cumulative credits completed so far
 - First Registered: The semester you registered for your first class
 - Last Term Registered: The semester most recently registered (whether or not a class was completed)

Student Handbook: Student Accounts

AccessPlus, continued...

- Required to take Final Exam (middle left block)
 - GPA of at least 3.0 – You cannot graduate with a GPA below 3.0
 - Currently Registered: Yes/no
 - Incompletes, Non-Reports, or Fs on transcript: Yes/no
 - C or above on POSC: Yes/no – go to POSC
 - Completed or Enrolled in POSC courses: Yes/No – go to POSC
 - No Overage Courses on POSC: OK/no
 - POSC approved: Will list month/year
 - Final Oral Exam Scheduled: Scheduled month/year or passed month/year
- POSC: Program of Study Committee (bottom right block)
 - My POSC form: This is the official list of your committee members and program courses (see page 11)
 - My Program Audit: Each course in your POSC is given a status and highlighted according to your course progress according to your POSC.
- Committee Members
 - After your POSC has been completed and approved, your major professor and committee member are listed here.

9. Grades/Transcripts:

- Grade report from your most recent term
- Full unofficial transcripts
- Order official transcripts

10. **Graduation:** When ready to defend, this is the link to [apply for graduation](#) and [Grad College Graduation Deadlines](#)

11. **Tax Info (1098):** Some students submit their tuition for tax purposes. The 1098-T (Tuition) statement information is located [here](#).

Student Handbook: ISU Offices

MS Agronomy Program students are ISU graduate students and must abide by ISU policies. Students may have contact with these offices at some point during their time in the program.

Office of Admissions

100 Enrollment Services Center Phone:

515.294.5836; 800.262.3810

Fax: 515.294.2592

Grad_admissions@iastate.edu

Program Contact: Academic Advisor, 515.294.2999; msagron@iastate.edu

During the Admissions process, the selection committee determined that you could be admitted.

ISU English Requirements

The university has several English placement requirements for students whose native language is not English. These requirements are reviewed during admission. The [ISU Graduate Admission Application instructions](#) state: *For the purpose of applying to Iowa State, English may be considered your primary language if you have been raised in an environment where English is the only official language of your locality and nation, and English is the language used in your home.*

For students whose primary language is not English, to fulfil Admissions and Grad College policy, each requirement must be completed in the progression listed below:

1. English examinations: These tests measure a student's understanding of the English language. The Admissions and the Graduate College requires a **minimum** score of one the following to qualify for Admission (within 2 years of application), based on the [International Grad Student Application](#):
 - [Internet-based TOEFL \(iBT\)](#) = 79
 - [Paper-Based TOEFL \(PBT\)](#) = 550
 - [IELTS](#) = 6.5
 - [Pearson Test of English](#) = 53
 - Duolingo (approved through spring 2023) = 105
2. [English Placement Test \(EPT\)](#) is required for students who meet the minimum score for admission, but fall short of the high score necessary to fulfill the English requirement. The EPT is a test of a student's ability to communicate (write and speak) using the English language.

EPT Exemptions:

1. Student has received a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree from a U.S. college or university
2. Student has received a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree from an English-speaking university outside of the U.S. As of 2016, countries outside of the U.S. that ISU considers "English-speaking" are Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, or Australia.
3. Students who meet or exceed the following TOEFL or IELTS scores will fulfil ISU English placement requirements and are exempt from taking the EPT:
 - Internet-based TOEFL (iBT) = 100 (and above)
 - Paper-based TOEFL (PBT) = 600 (and above)
 - IELTS = 7.5 (and above)
 - Pearson Test of English = 72 (and above)

Student Handbook: ISU Offices

If EPT is required: The Graduate College requires students to take the EPT at the beginning of their first semester of enrollment (Grad College Handbook, [Section 4.4.3](#)).

- If the EPT is not taken before the end of the first semester, the Grad College will place a registration hold on a student's account.

Distance students can take the EPT online. Instructions from [FAQ](#) page:

- E-mail ept@iastate.edu with your name, 9-digit ISU number, and Net-ID (e-mail address).
- You will receive an e-mail from the EPT office confirming your request to take the online EPT exam. Further instructions will be provided about taking the test and receiving your results online.
- The EPT is scored by staff in the English department and is pass/fail.

EPT Results: Results are available in AccessPlus 2-5 days after exam has been completed.

- On the left menu, click "Current Student Information"

Graduate College (GC)

1137 Pearson Hall

E-mail: grad_college@iastate.edu

Phone: 515.294.4531

Program Contact: Academic Advisor, 515.294.2999; msagron@iastate.edu

MS Agronomy students must abide by GC policy during the Program.

The main expectation is that students will maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0 (B). The most common issues handled by the GC are as follows:

1. GPA holds: If a student's GPA falls below 3.0, the GC will put a hold on registration (See page 16)
2. Graduation Holds: If a student's GPA is below 3.0 at the end of the program, then the GC will not allow that student to graduate. Courses may be retaken to improve GPA.
3. POSC Approval: The online POSC form is used to formally identify a major professor and form the graduate committee. It is also the program of study - a list of all courses and projected timeline in which classes will be completed. The POSC system is managed by the GC.
4. Reinstatement to Active Status: If a student has not taken courses for 2 years or more (4 consecutive semesters, not including summer), the GC flags this student as inactive. To resume coursework, follow the instructions on the [Inactive to Active Graduate Status](#) page.
5. Application for Graduation: Submitted before the beginning of the semester a student intends to defend and graduate. In AccessPlus, on the left menu is the Graduation link.
6. Request for Final Oral Examination form: Submitted as soon as student and committee set a defense date, it must be a minimum of 3 weeks in advance of the chosen date.
7. Report of Final Oral Examination form: Submitted online by major professor after Final Oral Exam.
8. Graduate Student Approval form: Submitted after the defense presentation and final copy of CC have been submitted to the MS Agronomy office.

Student Handbook: ISU Offices

Online and Distance Learning

10 Enrollment Services Center

E-mail: iowastateonline@iastate.edu

Phone: 515.294.2331

Tuition and fees: Costs are a combination of tuition and technology fees and are subject to change. Use the [Tuition and Fees](#) page for the most accurate information. Select the Details link for Experiential Learning-Based Majors on the Graduate Students table. ISU distance graduate students are assessed resident tuition, regardless of location. As a Distance Student, you are not required to pay the Activity, Services, Building and Recreation, Health Facility, or the Health fees. You are required to pay the Technology fee.

1. Tuition fee
 - \$716/credit (as of Fall 2023)
2. ISU technology fee (depends on number of credits/semester)
 - 4 credits or less = \$78.50
 - 4.5 – 8 credits = \$117.75

Sample U-Bills:

	<u>One 3-cr. course</u>	<u>Two 3-cr. courses</u>
Tuition	\$2148.00	\$4296.00
Tech Fee	78.50	117.75
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$2226.50</u>	<u>\$4413.75</u>

Fees do not include textbooks or any travel or lodging expenses for the AGRON 594 (Practicum).

Financial Aid

0210 Beardshear Hall

E-mail address: financialaid@iastate.edu

Phone number: 515.294.2223

Information about College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Department of Agronomy sponsored scholarships is found here: <https://www.agron.iastate.edu/future-students/graduate-students/>. The Financial Aid office offers tuition assistance at [Financial Aid Office Scholarship List](#). [FastWeb](#) is a free scholarship search engine. See the [Scholarship Guide](#) on the MS Agronomy Website for other scholarship opportunities.

NOTE: Financial aid sources have different requirements for enrollment.

Accounts Receivable (AR)

0880 Beardshear Hall

E-mail: U-Bill@iastate.edu

Phone: 515.294.7388

The MS Agronomy office cannot access or process your financial information. Please contact the AR office for the following matters:

1. Accounts Receivable hold: Your U-Bill has not been paid, so you will not be able to register for classes.
2. Graduation hold: Your official transcripts or diploma is not available until all fees and/or tuition is paid.
3. [Payment Options](#)
4. [Employer Reimbursement Deferment Plan](#): Fee payment is deferred until 30 days after grades are posted for \$35/term. The benefit certification form must be submitted at the start of summer and renewed annually.
5. Itemized tuition billing statement: Some employers require an itemized billing statement, which the AR office provides upon request.

Student Handbook: Course Lists and Registration

Course Progression

All of the MS in Agronomy courses are required for graduation. It is not a matter of what courses to take, but when to take them. The following list contains program courses, their prerequisites, and availability.

Course #	Course Name	Prerequisite	Semester offered
501	Crop Growth and Development	Program admission	Fall & Spring
502	Chemistry, Physics and Biology of Soils	Program admission	Fall & (Spring in odd years)
503	Climate and Crop Growth	Program admission	Summer
511	Crop Improvement	Program admission	Fall & Spring
512	Soil-Plant Environment	Agron 502, Recommended: 501	Spring
513	Quantitative Methods for Agronomy	Program admission	Fall & Spring
514	Integrated Pest Management	Agron 501	
531	Crop Management and Ecology	Agron 501, 502, 503; Recommended: 512, 514	Fall
532	Soil Management	Agron 501, 503, 512; Recommended: 513	Fall
533	Crop Protection	Agron 514	
544	Host-Pest Interaction		Fall, Spring
591	Agronomic Systems Analysis	Agron 511, 513, 531, 532, 533	Spring
592	Current Issues in Agronomy	Agron 501, 503, 511, 512, 513, 514	Spring
594	Agronomy MS Practicum	Agron 501, 502, 503, 514; Recommended: 511, 512, 513	Summer; 1 week on-campus in mid-July
599M Seminar	Creative Component Seminar	Must have workable topic idea, preferably soon after 2 nd or 3 rd term	Fall & Spring 1 credit
599M Defense	Creative Component, Defense of CC	Permission by major professor	Fall, Spring, & Summer 2 credits

Semester Course Offerings

Course Searches – checking availability

1. [Catalog: A-Z](#)
2. Registrar's Office [Schedule of Classes](#)
 - a. Be sure the semester you want is in the Term field.
 - b. In the Subject field, choose Agronomy from the drop-down list.
 - c. Course number field: You can enter a specific course number, or
 - d. Select a Level field: You can select 500-Level
 - e. Click Search. You will find course details listed here, including a link to the University Bookstore.

Student Handbook: Student Situations

Buying Textbooks

Text information is listed on the websites where class registration information is posted. You may purchase textbooks from a retailer of your choosing, including the [University Bookstore](#).

The University Bookstore has a price comparison tool that can be accessed from the University Bookstore website or by clicking on the Textbook Information link in the [Schedule of Classes](#).

Registering for a Class

You can always find out when the registration period starts by looking at the [Academic Calendar](#), Details link. General rules of thumb:

- Registration for spring semester starts approximately October 20th
- Registration for summer and fall starts approximately March 20th

The MS Agron Academic Advisor will send out an announcement before the registration period begins. Be sure to register as soon as the registration period begins.

1. Registration is in [AccessPlus](#). Click **Class Registration** on the left menu; follow the prompts. [Help video](#)
2. Newer students may need to enter a Registration Access Number (RAN) with a specific time/date in which they can access the system (RAN and start date/time is found in the Current Student Info in A+).

Drop schedule/Critical Dates for Fees

The registration announcement includes critical drop dates. Keep this information in case you need to consider dropping a class. If you are considering the need to drop a class, start by talking to your instructor to determine what other options you may have.

If you must drop a class once the semester has started, **IMMEDIATELY** do so in one of the following ways:

- AccessPlus (can only be used until the end of the first week of class)
- Complete a Schedule Change form in AccessPlus – Click on Registrar Forms on the left menu on the Student tab. – Use your class schedule to enter the correct information into the form.
- Contact the MS Agronomy office by phone 515-294-2999 or e-mail msagron@iastate.edu with questions.
- Note: The official date of the drop or withdrawal can be the last date that you enter the Canvas course, submit the drop form, or contact the instructor or academic advisor to discuss the drop.
- If you only have one class on your schedule and drop it, you must also complete a Withdrawal form.

INFORMING YOUR INSTRUCTOR OF YOUR WISH TO DROP A COURSE IS NOT SUFFICIENT; DROPS MUST BE PROCESSED THROUGH THE REGISTRAR'S OFFICE.

Failure to actively participate in a course (submitting assignments, reflections, and discussions) or failure to pay tuition does not constitute a drop.

Drop fee assessment/reimbursement schedule:

Your U-Bill is posted in AccessPlus the beginning of the month the semester starts. The ISU [Academic calendar](#), **Details** link, shows fee postings, billing dates, drop dates, etc.

1. Fee payment due dates for [deferred billing](#). Students can either pay in full or in installments.
 - a. First Payment: 20th of the 1st month of semester (January, May, or August)
 - b. Second Payment: 20th of the 2nd month of class (February, June, or September)
 - c. Third/Final Payment: 20th of the 3rd month of class (March, July, or October)

Student Handbook: Student Situations

2. Dropping one course of multiple (reduction in credits): This applies if you drop a class, but still remain in at least one other class.
 - a. If you drop before the 10th day of the term, you will be refunded 100% of your tuition and fees for the dropped credits.
 - b. After the 10th day of the term, you will forfeit any reimbursement and ISU retains 100% of your payment for the dropped class.
3. Dropping all or your only class: This is a withdrawal from the semester. **You are responsible for tuition even if you drop the first day of class.** In general (specific dates are determined each semester), tuition and fee reimbursement is as follows, according to the [Tuition Adjustment Webpage](#):

Drop Date:	You are reimbursed:	You are responsible for:
During week 1	90%	10%
During week 2	75%	25%
During week 3	50%	50%
During week 4	25%	75%
After week 4	0%	100%

Preparing for Online Coursework:

[Technology Requirements](#)

Learning Management System

All course materials are hosted in the CANVAS Learning Management System. Course access will be granted to students shortly before the start of the term. Access Canvas on the Okta dashboard (see page 2).

Canvas, has a number of support sources:

- [Canvas Chat](#)
- ISU Solution Center Canvas 24/7 [Help Request](#)
- Self Help [Canvas Guides](#)
- [My Canvas Student](#) learning guide

Generally, Canvas is used to host course content:

1. Lessons are organized in modules.
2. Students submit assignments, reflections, and participate in discussions in Canvas.
3. Instructors grade student work and enter scores in the grade center.
4. The grade center lists grades for individual student submissions and calculated fields tally a total score.

Academic Advisor vs Major Professor

The academic advisor advises all students as they progress through the program and is the main contact person for questions related to course availability, developing course plans, registration, interpretation of Grad College rules, defense planning, graduation requirements, etc.

A student's major professor provides guidance on the creative component. The sooner the major professor is involved in the creative component process the better.

Agronomy 594

Students are encouraged to attend AGRON 594 (Agronomy MS Practicum in) when they have completed six classes (18 credits), the halfway point in the program. The following courses are prerequisites: AGRON 501, 502, 503, and 514. It is recommended, but not required, also to have completed AGRON 511, 512, and 513.

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AGRON 594 is a one-time on-campus requirement held in mid-July (Tues-Thurs). Students register for this course via AccessPlus using a Registration Reference number provided by the MS Agronomy office.

It is not recommended to wait until you have completed all other courses before attending 594, if possible. The practicum experience is important to reinforce coursework completed in the beginning of the program and gives a second wind to complete the rest of the program.

NOTE: Priority registration for AGRON 594 is given to those students who are furthest along in the program (completed the most credits). After the priority list is created, students will be contacted about the process for enrollment.

Program of Study Committee (POSC) Form

The POSC contains two parts:

1. Graduate Committee: A major professor is a faculty member who specializes in or has an interest in your topic and has agreed to help you complete the Creative Component.
 - The Grad College requires one committee member, the major professor.
 - The Agronomy Department requires a committee of two members, the major professor and one faculty committee member. If your major professor is outside the Agronomy department, an Agronomy faculty member is co-Major Professor with that person.
 - You are welcome to choose a work supervisor as an unofficial (non-voting) 3rd committee member if your creative component is work related.
2. Program of Study: A list of your courses and the schedule for completing them.

Submit the POSC when the graduate committee is formed. The Grad College has a [Webpage](#) with guides to completing and submitting your POSC form.

Generally, students submit the POSC during the Agronomy 599M Creative Component Seminar (see page 12).

Creative Component (CC) – getting started

The creative component is an essential part of getting your MS in Agronomy degree. It is highly recommended to start a project by the time you have completed four courses. Unlike the other classes, this is an independent project on the student's own timeline.

Creative component projects show student creativity and independence; are well written documentation of your project; demonstrate your agronomic understanding of your project; are approved by a Program of Study Committee; and are defensible to your Program of Study Committee.

Idea generation

- Can you apply MS Agronomy coursework to address issues faced in your everyday work?
- Is there an issue discovered in your coursework you would like to pursue?
- Is your topic relevant to your career interests?
- Do you have an area of specialization you want to expand upon?
- Is there a project you have at your job that you can also use for a creative component?
- Are you experiencing an issue on your home farm?
- Make sure your topic is interesting to you.
- Make sure the project is manageable (a major professor can help with this).

Student Handbook: Student Situations

Types of projects (ideas are **not** limited to this list)

- Field and/or laboratory research projects
- Instructional modules for teaching or training purposes
- New techniques to provide agronomic information (example: field guides)
- Case study analysis
- Extensive literature reviews

Additional requirements for the CC

- The project must show independence and creativity.
- A written report about the project must be developed. The project must demonstrate understanding of agronomic principles in the context of the project topic. Templates for different projects are available [online](#).
- The project must be approved by the 599M seminar instructor, then by the major professor.
- The results of the creative component must be defensible in terms of its findings, conclusions, or recommendations to the POS Committee.
- Results will be made public. The student must be able to present their information during the public final oral exam. The CC will be archived through the ISU Library and the MS Agronomy [creative component archive](#).
- If a student is conducting a research project for their company that is handling proprietary information, be sure to obtain permission from the work supervisor and corporate legal department to avoid legal issues with using company data, due to intellectual property rights. The MS Agronomy Program does not enter into confidentiality agreements.

AGRON 599M – Creative Component Credits

MS Agronomy students are required to take three credits of 599M: Creative Component. These credits are divided between the Agronomy 599M Seminar (1 credit) and the creative component defense/Final Oral Exam (2 credits).

Agronomy 599M Seminar, 1st credit

The intent of the seminar is to guide students through the first stages of the creative component process. Keep these things in mind:

- Students should have a topic in mind when registering for the seminar.
- The seminar has exercises and discussions geared towards creative component development.
- Students will write a proposal.
- Students will search for a major professor, with guidance from the seminar instructor.
- After identifying the major professor and committee, complete the POSC form in AccessPlus.
- Students should be ready to commit to the writing and organization necessary to begin their project, and keep it going while finishing coursework.
- AGRON 513 may be useful for designing a research project.

The Agronomy 599M Creative Component Seminar is offered fall and spring semesters. Registration is by permission only. Please e-mail msagron@iastate.edu or call 515.294.2999.

Some students like to see what others have done before committing to their project. The MS Agronomy [creative component archive](#) is a compilation of all the creative components completed by MS Agronomy graduates.

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Creative Component Progress

Once the AGRON 599M seminar semester is over, students continue to work on their projects and writing without registering for additional credits 599M until the end of the program. It is the student's responsibility maintain communication with their major professor during this time by providing updates and sending written drafts for review and editing.

Planning a Defense (Final Oral Exam)

The Grad College has a [list of deadlines](#), the main items on this list are ***Application for Graduation*** and ***Last Date for Final Oral Examination***.

The MS Agronomy office handles defenses as follows:

1. Program deadline: Full draft of CC due the first day of the semester a student plans to defend
2. The major professor reviews the CC and makes a decision before the Application for Graduation deadline. **The major professor must give the OK to defend.** No plans are made without major professor approval.
3. When **the major professor** approves scheduling the defense, the following actions take place:
 - Complete the graduation application. Log into AccessPlus and click **Graduation** on the left menu. Follow the prompts.
 - The major professor must confirm to the academic advisor that the CC has progressed well enough to expect that it can be defended that term. The academic advisor will then provide a Registration Reference number that the student may use to register for AGRON 599M. Registration after the first week of class will be by a Schedule Change form in AccessPlus.
 - Set a defense date. You and your committee need to agree on a date and time. When determined, let the academic advisor know
 - Date
 - Time
 - Title of your CC
 - Zoom link if being held virtually.
 - Your CC is due 2 weeks before your defense for committee review.
4. The academic advisor assists with the following details:
 - AGRON 599M registration
 - Announcements to other students and faculty.

Defense Day: What to Expect

1. Seminar Presentation
 - Currently, CC presentations can be completed in-person or virtually. Discuss with your major professor about the best format to use.
 - Most CC presentations are about 30-45 minutes long, but discuss with your major professor to determine the proper length.
 - For in-person presentations, a computer will not always be available; it is recommended for you to bring your own laptop.
 - It will be up to you whether you want the audience to ask questions during or after your presentation.
 - Your graduate committee, M.S. Agronomy faculty/staff/students, Department of Agronomy faculty/students are invited to your seminar.
 - You are welcome to invite any family, friends, or coworkers to attend your seminar.
 - Regardless if you present in-person or virtually, Zoom may be used to live stream and record your presentation.

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2. Committee Meeting/Discussion
 - Visitors leave at the end of the seminar. You and your committee discuss your project.
 - The committee will then ask you to step outside the conference room to discuss your graduation status in private.
 - When the committee is done, they will finalize the exam with you and discuss any corrections/edits to your written document. Your major professor submits the Report of Final Oral Exam form electronically.
3. Exit Interview
 - The MS Agronomy Program conducts a formal exit interview, in-person or virtually, in addition to an online survey. These are part of the ongoing evaluation of the Program.

Post-Defense and Graduation

1. Students should complete any edits recommended by the graduate committee within two weeks or by the deposit deadline.
2. The Graduate Student Approval Form (GSAF) is submitted when the major professor approves the final copy of the CC. The MS Agronomy Program requires a copy of the final CC and the PowerPoint presentation, which can be submitted as an e-mail attachment to msagron@iastate.edu
3. Upload the creative component to the [ISU Digital Repository](#) (follow the directions on the Grad College [website](#)).
4. The [Graduation website](#) has information about graduation and commencement ceremonies.
5. Students must pay all tuition and graduation fees prior to graduation and receiving their diploma.

Earning the Graduate Certificate in Agronomy

The [Graduate Certificate in Agronomy](#) program was launched Spring 2015. It consists of six MS Agronomy courses: AGRON 501, 502, 503, 511, 512, and 544. MS Agronomy students can earn the Certificate when these courses have been completed as they work toward the full master's degree.

Masters candidates interested in earning the Certificate in addition to the MS, must complete:

- [Request to Pursue a Certificate in Addition to a Graduate Degree](#)
- [Certificate Program of Study \(CPOS\)](#)
- [Certificate Completion form](#)

Students in the Certificate program who decide to continue by earning the MS in addition to the Certificate, must complete:

- [Request to Pursue a Graduate Degree in Addition to a Certificate](#)

Students usually start the Program with a definite plan in mind to complete their degree. However, life, work, and family responsibilities can sidetrack these plans. Examples include busy seasons at work, changing jobs, being deployed, getting married or divorced, illnesses, having babies, traveling, etc.

Please communicate with the course instructor if you have any impediment to course completion and the academic advisor if you have any impediment to program progress. You should never feel like you have to handle a situation on your own. The following are common situations students find themselves in and how they can be handled.

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Active Duty Military & Civil Service Deployment

Students called to active duty, and who will not be able to either/or

- 1) Cancel registration before classes start
- 2) Complete a class already in progress, need to contact the MS Agronomy office as soon as they know their situation. Please contact the Academic Advisor if documentation is needed from the Program regarding your student status.

The [Veterans Center](#) is a resource for you and your family, including information if you are recalled to active duty ([Active Duty procedures](#)).

Interruptions in coursework during a semester: Drop vs Incomplete

Situations arise when students fall behind or when an issue beyond their control forces them to stop participating in a class. If a student cannot complete a course (or catch up) in a timely manner, they have two choices:

1. Drop: Students who are failing a class, or do not know when they will be able to continue coursework, should drop. Dropping all courses is considered a withdrawal, and is subject to [tuition adjustments](#) depending on time of drop. See page 9 for detailed explanation.
2. Incomplete: Students who are experiencing extenuating circumstances and are passing the class at the time of interruption can use this option.
 - By taking an incomplete, the instructor will give the student an “I” when submitting grades. Once the “I” grade is submitted, the student has one calendar year to finish the class. It is NOT recommended to take much time to complete the class.
 - An [I-Contract](#) will be completed. This form is an agreement between student and instructor. A copy should be submitted to the Program Academic Advisor. To complete this form the student and the instructor must identify the work the student has yet to finish and a date upon which all must be complete. Both student and instructor must agree upon this.
 - The student has two options for an Incomplete depending on how much of the semester has passed.
 1. If it is early in the semester, then the student should plan on participating in the class from start to finish the next time it is offered.
 2. If just a few requirements are left to submit, then agreeing upon a deadline to submit those after the class has ended will suffice.
 - The instructor can adjust the settings so the Canvas course remains open for the student to submit the necessary work.
 - If the year does go by without completing the class, the “I” grade will turn into an “F” automatically.
 - For graduating students, all incompletes must be resolved prior to completing the Graduate Student Approval Form.

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Holds on Registration or Graduation

Accounts Receivable Hold: Students who are delinquent on their U-Bill will not be able to register for classes and will not receive a diploma if they have graduated. Please see “Accounts Receivable” section, page 7.

GPA Hold: The Graduate College expects that a graduate student will maintain a 3.0 GPA. If a student’s GPA falls below 3.0, this is what will happen:

1. New students (1st semester) will get a one-semester grace period to bring the GPA above 3.0. More advanced students do not receive this grace period.
2. The Grad College informs a student if he/she has been placed on Academic Probation for a GPA under 3.0. A hold is placed on registration for future semesters.
3. To remove the registration hold, please complete a [Permit to Register - Probation](#) form and attach it in an e-mail to msagron@iastate.edu to request the Grad College remove the registration hold.
4. A request to remove the hold will be required for every semester the student’s GPA is under 3.0.

C Grades vs Cumulative GPA

The most common confusion for students is how C grades relate to cumulative GPA. The Program follows all Grad College policies - this is addressed in [Chapter 5, Section 2 - Grading of](#) the ISU Graduate College Student Handbook.

In a nutshell: 3.0 GPA IS MANDATORY

- All ISU graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.
- A grade of “C” is OK only if you still have a GPA of 3.0 or better.
- Any courses with “C” grades must be repeated if GPA is below 3.0. You must show you can succeed before moving on to other courses. This is a Program policy.
- Any courses with grades of “C-“ or lower must be repeated; they are not allowed on the POSC. This is a Grad College policy.

Time off from Program

Situations arise when students cannot manage coursework in addition to other commitments. A semester or two away from the Program will likely not affect program progression. If that time extends beyond a semester, this triggers some changes in accounts and status:

- After 6 months, a student’s Net-ID is suspended. It reactivates the next time a student registers for and starts a course.
- Library access is suspended; however, it will resume when a student registers for a class.
- A student may request to keep their Net-ID access available after coursework is completed.
- If a student does not register for classes for two years (four consecutive semesters), the graduate college will flag a student’s records as Inactive. To continue the Program, the Graduate College will require the [Reinstatement to Active Status](#) form.

Degree Completion Timeline/7-Year rule

A number of factors determines the length of time students have to complete the MS Agronomy program. The Graduate College has a seven-year policy to complete an MS degree at ISU. However, this policy states that the Graduate College may accept up to six course credits that are 8-10 years old. This is explained in-detail in the [Graduate Student Handbook Section 6.3.4](#).

- If you transferred in a course from another institution, this course may not count towards graduation if it were taken more than seven years prior to your graduation semester.
- The 7-year rule commences when the first class is completed.