



**GRADUATE STUDENT  
HANDBOOK**

August 2007

# GRADUATE STUDENT PROCEDURES

## Department of Forestry

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these materials is to familiarize graduate students with operating procedures and requirements in the [Department of Forestry](#). Forestry is one of four departments in the [College of Natural Resources](#). The college is one of the nine colleges comprising the university. Graduate programs throughout the university operate under the aegis of the [Graduate School](#). General policies and procedures promulgated by the Graduate School will not be repeated here; they are available via the online [Graduate Catalog](#). Likewise, college-wide procedures are well documented in the *Graduate Program Procedures for the College of Natural Resources*. These pages are intended to highlight certain important requirements and to specify procedures that are unique to the Department of Forestry or deserve greater emphasis than provided in other materials.

### CHECKING IN

Upon arrival, graduate students should

- a. check in with their faculty advisors
- b. report to the departmental secretary, Sue Snow (Room 313 Cheatham Hall), for payroll forms (applies to those on graduate assistantships). International graduate students on assistantship must also check in with the University Payroll Office (Southgate Center).

See college procedures ("Orientation") for additional detail.

### FACILITIES

#### Cheatham Hall

The Department of Forestry is primarily located in Cheatham Hall, which also houses the [Department of Wood Science and Forest Products](#) and the [Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences](#). The fourth department, [Geography](#), is located in Major Williams Hall. Forestry faculty, staff, and graduate students are also housed in Latham Hall. Faculty in the Forestry Department are generally located in separate office areas according to their disciplines. Forest Biology and Forest Operations faculty are in Room 228, Biometrics in Room 319, Forest Management/Economics/Policy in Room 310, and Natural Resources Recreation/Human Dimensions in Room 304. Building directories are posted on the first floor.

Cheatham Hall also contains classrooms, laboratories, and graduate student offices. A few departmental graduate students have offices in Litton-Reaves Hall across West Campus Drive.

#### Computing and Computer Laboratories

[Information Systems & Computing](#) (IS&C) provides the university community with information technology and support to complement its teaching, learning, research, and outreach programs as well as to serve administrative operations. A vast array of services is available at a comprehensive website ([computing.vt.edu](http://computing.vt.edu)) maintained by IS&C. There are several facilities across campus that contain numerous software packages for both Macintosh and personal computers. For locations, operating hours, and information on individual lab equipment and software, check the [Computing Lab](#) website. In Cheatham Hall (Rooms 217 and 220), computer facilities are readily available during business hours except when classes are being conducted.

### **FTP, E-mail, and Website**

All the computers in Rooms 217 and 220 Cheatham Hall are networked and have FTP software installed on them. Every entering student should obtain a user access number, locally known as a PID or personal identification number, to enable electronic communication on campus and via the Internet. Increasingly, homework assignments are provided via e-mail, so acquiring a PID is very important. The department maintains a website at [www.cnr.vt.edu/forestry/](http://www.cnr.vt.edu/forestry/). It contains a wealth of information about course offerings and descriptions and faculty profiles. An electronic directory of all graduate students is maintained, with optional listings of phone numbers and addresses.

### **Graduate Student Listserv**

Students are encouraged to subscribe to the Department of Forestry's graduate student listserv. The departmental office frequently uses this means to communicate with and provide important, timely information to graduate students. Graduate students and others may also post announcements and other information. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to: [listserv@listserv.vt.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.vt.edu). The contents of your message should be: `subscribe forestry_grads firstname lastname` (with your first and last names replacing *firstname lastname*). Users may unsubscribe at any time. Send announcements to the listserve at [forestry\\_grads@listserv.vt.edu](mailto:forestry_grads@listserv.vt.edu).

### **Forestry Graduate Student Association**

The [Forestry Graduate Student Association](#) (FGSA) has been established to enrich forestry graduate students' formal education through extracurricular activities promoting the exchange of information, ideas, and experience, as well as to welcome new graduate students into the Virginia Tech community and to serve in promoting forestry education to the university community at large.

### **Motor Pool**

The [Motor Pool](#) is an on-campus facility located behind Lane Stadium. State cars are available for official business and may be reserved. Normally, reservations should be made at least one week in advance of your trip. To reserve a car, it is necessary that you obtain prior approval from your committee chairperson and the department head and have a valid operator's permit. The Department of Forestry also has pickup trucks and multi-purpose four-wheel-drive vehicles. These departmental vehicles may be reserved through your committee chairperson. All travel requires special prior authorization; see your faculty advisor's secretary to obtain the necessary forms. Relevant travel forms are also shown in Appendix A.

### **Learning Technologies**

[Learning Technologies](#) is an on-campus unit providing media collections, classroom support, production services, testing and measurement, and educational technologies. These services may be accessed by your committee chairperson.

### **Newman Library and University Bookstore**

The [Newman Library](#) and [University Bookstore](#) are adjacent to each other on the east (town) side of campus. Parking near these facilities is very limited, but they are a short five-minute walk from Cheatham Hall. Textbooks for courses may be purchased at the University Bookstore or at its branch store, Volume II, located at University Mall on University City Boulevard. Both stores stock computers, supplies, gifts, and Virginia Tech memorabilia.

## **College Forests**

College forests play an integral role in the teaching and research missions of the department. The [Fishburn Forest](#) is a 1,300-acre tract five miles to the west of campus on Price Mountain. Permission to use the Fishburn for research or teaching purposes is obtained from the department head.

The [Reynolds Homestead Forest Resources Research Center](#) (RHFRR) is a departmental facility located at Critz, Virginia, a two-hour drive from Blacksburg. The center consists of 710 acres. On-site facilities include greenhouses, superintendent's residence, and a dorm for overnight use by faculty and graduate students conducting research at the center. Permission to use the center may be obtained from either Dr. Shepard Zedaker (228 Cheatham Hall; 231-4855; zedaker@vt.edu) or Mr. Kyle Peer, RHFRR Superintendent (276-694-4135; kpeer@vt.edu). Guidelines for use of the Reynolds Homestead facilities are available from the Superintendent.

## **Keys**

Keys may be obtained from Peggy Quarterman (324 Cheatham Hall) after obtaining authorization from your committee chairperson and the department head. A \$5.00 deposit is required for each key. Deposits must be paid by personal check made payable to "Virginia Tech Treasurer." Upon return of keys to Ms. Quarterman, a request for reimbursement will be processed. Graduate students are not authorized to possess master floor keys. Should you lose a key, please report it immediately to Ms. Quarterman.

For information on after-hours access to the college's computer facilities via the card reader entry system, contact Lon Weber (216 Cheatham Hall; 231-3277; laweber@vt.edu).

## **Building Security**

After normal business hours, it is extremely important to maintain building security. The loading dock should be secured by locking the sliding door following after-hours use. When leaving the building at night, care should be taken to see that lights and equipment are shut off and that doors to rooms you have used are locked.

## **Desks**

Desk and laboratory space will be provided for graduate students IF and WHEN such space is available. Desk space is usually allocated in August, but some reallocations may be made during the school year.

## **Mail**

Boxes for incoming U.S. and campus mail are organized within each section. To determine where your mail pickup is located, see your committee chairperson.

## **Photocopying**

Any copying for official business must be handled by your committee chairperson. Please see your committee chairperson for procedures.

## **Phones**

Restricted phone lines for student use may be available in your section. Please see your committee chairperson. Secretarial phones are not to be used without written permission of your committee chairperson and the secretary. Faculty office phones are not to be used without specific permission of your committee chairperson.

## Typing

Typing related to official business should be given to your committee chairperson who will convey it to the appropriate secretary. All travel vouchers, purchase orders, etc. should also be conveyed to your committee chairperson for approvals and typing. Secretarial typewriters and computers are not to be used except with written permission of your committee chairperson and the secretary.

## Audio-Visual Equipment

A-V equipment, laptop computers, and computer projectors for teaching and research presentations are available from several areas of Cheatham Hall. Your committee chairperson will be glad to acquaint you with the equipment storage areas and check-out procedures. The [New Media Center](#) (1140 Torgerson Hall) makes available for loan equipment such as digital and video cameras, QTVR equipment, tripods, etc.

## Bicycles

The bike rack located outside Cheatham Hall is for bike storage. University policy does not permit storage of bicycles inside offices, stairwells, or corridors. Bikes should be registered with [Parking Services](#).

## Dogs

University policy does not permit dogs in Cheatham Hall at any time.

## Parking

Your vehicle and bicycle are to be registered if they are to be operated on campus. Registration is handled at the [Parking Services](#) office on Tech Center Drive. The parking lot adjacent to Cheatham Hall is a faculty-staff lot during normal business hours. Maps delineating student parking lots are issued when you register your vehicle.

TA parking passes are available for use on those days when graduate students are actually teaching classes. A regular purchased parking pass is required in addition to the TA pass, and parking is limited to specially reserved TA parking areas. Contact Sue Snow in room 313 for additional information.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM

### General

This outline describes the specific requirements of the Department of Forestry for graduate study leading to the Master of Forestry (M.F.), Master of Science (M.S.), and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees and formulates procedures for evaluating progress of graduate students. These requirements supplement the more general requirements established by the Graduate School and the College of Natural Resources. Committee chairpersons and advisory committees may establish additional requirements. **Students bear personal responsibility for meeting requirements of the Graduate School, College of Natural Resources, Department of Forestry, and their individual committee chairperson and graduate committee.** The Graduate Student Progress Sheet has been developed to assist students in meeting these requirements (see Appendix B).

### Graduate Degrees

The department offers three degrees: Master of Forestry, Master of Science in Forestry and Forest Products, and a Ph.D. in Forestry and Forest Products. The M.S. and Ph.D. degrees require students to prepare a thesis or dissertation, and considerable time spent working for these degrees is devoted to research. The M.F. degree is a professional non-research-oriented degree.

### **Committee Chairperson**

At the time of acceptance into the graduate program, the faculty, in consultation with the department head, assigns each applicant a committee chairperson. This assignment is made on the basis of student interests and professor expertise and workload. Upon arrival on campus students may change the committee chairperson assignment, but this must be done in consultation with the initial committee chairperson, the new committee chairperson, and the department head. A change in committee chairperson may also affect the student's assistantship status.

### **Diagnostic Interview**

Before initial registration, each student will meet with his/her committee chairperson and perhaps with additional faculty members from the appropriate section. This interview will evaluate the student's past course work, current academic interests, and future goals. The faculty will recommend first- and second-semester course schedules and suggest other areas which should be covered in the student's program of study.

### **Advisory Committee**

Each student must form an advisory committee consisting of at least three faculty members for the M.S. and M.F. degrees and four for the Ph.D. It is appropriate but not required that the committee includes at least one faculty member from outside the student's major department. Each student should consult with his/her committee chairperson and prospective committee members in the selection of an advisory committee, and committee membership is subject to approval by the department head and the Graduate School.

### **Evaluation of Student Progress**

The university requires that the progress of graduate students be formally evaluated at least once a year. Results of these evaluations are placed in the student's permanent folder. A [Graduate Student Evaluation Form](#) has been developed by the Department of Forestry (Appendix C). Following each committee meeting, the completed evaluation form is to be signed by the student and advisory committee and submitted to the department head.

**It is the student's responsibility to arrange committee meetings in consultation with his/her advisor.**

### **Program of Study**

Each student must submit a program of study to the Graduate School for his/her course work program approved by the committee chairperson, committee members, and department head **prior to completing 15 hours of study**. Requirements on course distribution and any curriculum changes are described in the [Graduate Catalog](#). An example of the format to be used for submission of graduate programs of study is provided in Appendix D.

### **Research Working Plan**

M.S. and Ph.D. students must complete a research working plan by the end of the first year of residence. Guidelines for the preparation and submittal of the plan are listed in the CNR *Graduate Program Procedures*.

Each M.F. student must prepare a degree paper. The subject and outline must be approved by the student's committee and department head.

## **Extracurricular Exams**

### Master of Forestry

The M.F. student must pass a comprehensive oral examination covering his/her course work and the degree paper. At least three members of the student's advisory committee must be present at the final exam. Affirmative votes by all but one member are required to pass.

### Master of Science

All M.S. students must pass a final exam. Procedures and requirements for the exam are listed in the [Graduate Catalog](#). The examination will be a defense of the thesis and an assessment of the student's understanding of appropriate forestry-related subjects.

### Ph.D.

Ph.D. students in the Department of Forestry must take a qualifying exam (see CNR *Graduate Program Procedures* and the [Graduate Catalog](#)). The exact nature of the exam is determined by faculty within the student's chosen discipline. The purposes of this examination or assessment are to (1) evaluate the student's comprehensive knowledge in his/her major field of study, (2) identify any deficiencies in the student's background and recommend supplementary course work or self-study improvements, and (3) evaluate the student's ability to successfully complete the doctoral degree. The committee must provide a written evaluation and recommendation to be placed in the student's departmental record. All Ph.D. students must demonstrate minimum competency in statistics (see CNR *Graduate Program Procedures* for requirements). They must also pass a preliminary exam and a final exam. Procedures and requirements for completing these exams are contained in the CNR *Graduate Program Procedures* and the [Graduate Catalog](#).

The preliminary exam, oral and/or written, is conducted by the student's advisory committee. It is comprehensive in nature and is intended to test a student's ability to integrate, synthesize, and apply concepts, facts, and techniques in

solving new and complex problems associated with forest management and use. The student may be tested on any aspect of forest science, the philosophy of science, and research methodology. It is recommended that the student meet with his/her advisory committee prior to preparing for the exam to discuss the nature of the exam and evaluation procedures.

The final exam is primarily a defense of the dissertation, but other areas of science may be included.

## **Seminar**

Graduate students are expected to attend special seminars arranged by the department and are required to include at least one semester of seminar (5004) for credit in their programs of study.

## **Teaching**

All graduate students in the department are expected to assist with teaching activities of the department as part of their graduate education. Specific assignments will be handled through the office of the department head in consultation with faculty in the student's section. All graduate students should read the [Virginia Tech GTA Handbook](#) and attend the Graduate School's GTA Workshop held annually in August. Students for whom English is not their native language are required to receive Graduate School certification for classroom teaching.

## **Assistantship Duties**

Specific assistantship duties are assigned by the committee chairperson and/or project leader of the project funding the student's assistantship.

### **Leave**

Leave *per se* is not earned on graduate assistantships but should be arranged in advance through your committee chairperson.

### **Publication**

Students should proceed promptly with publication of their research. Typically, the committee chairperson is included as a co-author in recognition of the faculty contribution to the overall direction of the research. If the student does not proceed with publication within one year of completion of the thesis or dissertation, the committee chairperson can take the initiative and submit the work for publication.

### **THESIS AND DISSERTATION**

Since 1997 there has been a move from paper theses and dissertations to electronic format, which is now a requirement for graduation. A website for [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\)](#) is maintained by the Graduate School, and an [ETD Workshop](#) is now available as a PDF file. Additional information on the preparation of dissertations, theses, and major papers is available in [Appendix I](#) of the *Graduate Catalog*.

The department also requires one high-quality printed copy of each thesis or dissertation, which will be bound at no cost to the student and kept in the department's thesis library. This copy must be printed on 8½ x 11-inch, 20-pound bond paper with a minimum rag or fiber content of 50 percent.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information can be obtained from the college document *Graduate Program Procedures* and the Graduate School's [Graduate Catalog](#). If questions remain, consult with your committee chairperson or the department head.

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