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Graduate Studies in Agricultural Economics

Introduction

The Department offers a number of degree opportunities, both within the agricultural economics discipline as well as in a number of interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary areas. Some of the latter are offered jointly with other units on campus. The Department plays contributing roles in still others.

The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) and Master of Science (M.S.) are the two agricultural economics discipline programs offered directly in the Department. Thesis and non-thesis options for the M.S. are available (option I and III, respectively).

Department faculty also collaborate with, and teach courses in a number of other interdisciplinary graduate programs on campus, including the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (IDEA) Community Development program offered through the Master of Agriculture degree. For this program see http://online.unl.edu/GPIdea. Another program with this interdisciplinary character is the Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Specialization within the M.S. and Ph.D. programs of the School of Natural Resources. For this program see http://snr.unl.edu/gradstudent/special/human/. Another interdisciplinary program is that represented in Water Resource Planning and Management. Graduate students in the M.S. and Ph.D. programs of the Department also have the opportunity to take courses, and otherwise interact with students and faculty in these interdisciplinary programs.

The following rules and procedures reflect Departmental and Graduate College policies and every effort will be made to keep them current. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Graduate Studies Bulletin (http://bulletin.unl.edu), and the Graduate Studies web page dealing with Graduate College requirements and procedures (http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current).

Aside from Departmental and College requirements, the structuring and supervision of each student's academic and research programs are the primary responsibility of the student, the advisor and the supervisory committee. Students are expected to work closely with their advisor and supervisory committee, particularly in the conduct of research.
Admission Policies

We seek students of high ability and commitment from a diverse array of cultural and academic backgrounds.

**Master of Science (M.S.)**

Students admitted for graduate study leading to the M.S. must have completed the following courses or their equivalents

MATH 104 or 106  Calculus for Managerial and Social Sciences (3 semester hours) or Analytic Geometry and Calculus I (5 semester hours)
STAT 218  Introduction to Statistics (3 semester hours)
ECON 311  Intermediate Macroeconomics (3 semester hours)
ECON 312  Intermediate Microeconomics (3 semester hours)

Official verification of English proficiency is required for students whose native language is not English. Exemptions are granted for non-native speakers who have received a bachelor’s or more advanced degree from a university at which English is the official language of instruction. Additional information on English proficiency requirements and exemptions can be found at: [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/international#english](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/international#english)

The GRE exam is not required, but is recommended for students requesting financial assistance. To be fully considered for financial assistance, all application materials should be submitted by January 15th.

**Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**

Students must have completed or complete after admission the equivalent of the core requirements for the Master’s degree in agricultural economics, and the following courses or their equivalent

MATH 107 and 208  Analytic Geometry and Calculus (9 semester hours)
AECN/ECON 815  Analytical Methods in Economics and Business (1 semester hour)
ECON 874  Macroeconomic Models and Applications (3 semester hours)

Official verification of English proficiency is required for students whose native language is not English. Exemptions are granted for non-native speakers who have received a bachelor’s or more advanced degree from a university at which English is the official language of instruction. Additional information on English proficiency requirements and exemptions can be found at: [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/international#english](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/prospective/international#english)

The GRE exam is strongly suggested for financial assistance consideration and for admission in most circumstances. To be fully considered for financial assistance, all application materials should be submitted by January 15th.
Master of Science Program

M.S. Options

The M.S. can be either thesis (option I) or non-thesis option (option III). The thesis option requires 30 hours of graduate credit including the thesis, the non-thesis 36. Additional detail is found in the Graduate Studies Bulletin (http://bulletin.unl.edu).

M.S. Core Requirements

The following courses or their equivalents are required of all M.S. students:
- STAT 880  (3 semester hours)
- AECN 821  Orientation to Research in Agricultural Economics (1 semester hour)
- AECN/ECON 873 Microeconomic Models and Applications (3 semester hours)

Graduate College requirements vary by option and consist of a minimum number of credit hours in courses open only to graduate students. Thesis credit will be granted only on a Pass/No Pass basis. Students registering for thesis credit should so register.

Forms and deadlines for the M.S. degree are at: http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/masters

M.S. Supervisory Committee

A supervisory committee for M.S. students is optional. If so elected, the committee consists of three graduate faculty members. The committee approves and oversees the student's program and conducts the final exam. A form for establishing the committee is included at the end of this handbook. If a committee is not elected, the student's major advisor, identified in the Memorandum of Courses, approves and oversees the student's program and thesis. In this case a final exam committee of three graduate faculty is proposed later when the final exam report form is submitted.

Memorandum of Courses

The Memorandum of Courses should be filed by the student prior to completion of half of the program. This is the first Graduate Studies form that identifies the student's advisor and program. It is available at http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees/masters

M.S. Candidacy

Following the removal of deficiencies and the filing of the Memorandum of Courses, an M. S. student is admitted to candidacy.
Application for Degree

Applications instruction can be found here: http://registrar.unl.edu/graduation-application. The completed application and $25 payment should be filed with Graduation Services before the deadline date for the expected graduation term (usually the end of the second week of that term).

Master’s Thesis

A master’s thesis and abstract in preliminary form must be approved by the adviser prior to applying for the final oral examination, at least four weeks prior to the final oral examination date (http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/bulletin/masters-thesis).

Final Oral Examination Report Form

The Final Examination Report Form should be submitted to Graduate Studies at least four weeks prior to the proposed date of the oral exam or by the date specified on the calendar of deadlines. This form requests approval to hold the exam on a specific date and identifies the members of the examining committee. Download the form at http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Masters-FinalExam.pdf.

Master’s Final Oral Examination

A student whose program includes a minor in another department may be required to take a comprehensive examination in his/her minor field. Comprehensive examinations in a minor field may be waived subject to the approval of both the major and minor departments providing all grades in the minor are "B" or higher. Each student should arrange with his/her advisor and/or supervisory committee for taking minor comprehensive exams or for having them waived. The minor department determines the nature of comprehensive exams, if any are required.
A final oral examination is required by the Department. It is administered by the examining committee. (http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/bulletin/examinations)

Time Limits

The work required for a masters degree must be completed within 10 consecutive years. Course work exceeding 10 years will not apply toward the partial fulfillment of the degree requirements for masters degrees at UNL.
Doctor of Philosophy Program

Ph. D. core requirements

The Ph.D. program approved by the student's supervisory committee must include the following core courses or their equivalents:

- ECON 917 and 918 Econometrics I & II (6 credit hours)
- ECON 912A and 912B Advanced Microeconomics I & II (6 credit hours)
- ECON 911A Advanced Macroeconomics I (3 credit hours)
- Two courses from the AECN 901 block (6 credit hours)
- Two courses from the AECN 902 block (6-credit hours)
- Any M.S. core program not previously taken

A minimum of 90 semester hours of graduate credit, including the dissertation, is required. Not fewer than 45 semester hours must be completed at the University of Nebraska. Dissertation credit will be granted only on a Pass/No Pass basis. Students registering for dissertation credit should register for the credit hours as Pass/No Pass.

Students should study the Graduate Studies Bulletin [http://bulletin.unl.edu](http://bulletin.unl.edu) and be familiar with procedures and deadlines described at [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees#doctoral](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees#doctoral).

Forms

The following forms with associated deadlines are required for candidacy and completion of a Doctoral degree. They can be accessed at [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees#doctoral](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees#doctoral).

1. Appointment of the Supervisory Committee

   A student must first select a supervisory committee chair, then identify members of the supervisory committee. The supervisory committee must consist of at least four graduate faculty, including and NU graduate faculty member from outside the Department. The relevant form, [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-SupCommittee.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-SupCommittee.pdf), must be submitted with a minimum of 45 hours of credit remaining to be taken.

2. Program of Studies

   At its initial meeting, the supervisory committee approves the student’s program of studies and the general area of research for the dissertation. The Program of Studies form [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-Program.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-Program.pdf) must be completed and submitted to the Graduate Studies office within the same semester that the Supervisory Committee is approved.

3. Application for Admission to Candidacy

   Once the student has completed a substantial number of the credits on his or her Program of Studies and passed
the written comprehensive exams are passed, the student is eligible to apply for doctoral candidacy using this form: [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-Candidacy.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-Candidacy.pdf). The form must be filed seven months prior to the student's final oral examination. Once candidacy is achieved, registration for at least one credit hour is required each academic semester (Fall and Spring) until the student graduates. This requirement stands even if all credit hours, including dissertation, have already been taken. *Failure to register will result in a termination of the program of study.*

### 4. Application for Degree

The application for degree, [http://www.unl.edu/regrec/resources/forms/DEGRAPPNEW.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/regrec/resources/forms/DEGRAPPNEW.pdf), must be filed early in the semester in which graduation is anticipated (the deadline is normally about the end of the second week of classes).

### 5. Application for Final Oral Examination

Once the dissertation is written, approved by the student's committee chair and the two designated readers, the student is eligible to apply for the final oral examination. The form, [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-FinalOral.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Doctoral-FinalOral.pdf), must be filed at least **three weeks** prior to the scheduled final oral exam (dissertation defense). This form is used by the examination committee to report the results of the exam.

### 6. Final Steps

Upon receipt of the Application for Final Oral Exam, final instructions will be provided to the student by Graduate Studies. To ensure that these final steps go smoothly, instructions at [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees#doctoral](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/degrees#doctoral) should be read with care.

### Qualifying Examinations

The Ph.D. qualifying examination shall consist of two exams: 1) a **microeconomic theory** exam based on the content of ECON 912A and ECON 912B, and 2) an **economic analysis and application** exam designed to test students' ability to use economic theory to analyze important agri-food system issues.

The microeconomic theory exam will be administered jointly by the Departments of Agricultural Economics and Economics twice each year (August and January). Once students have completed the two microeconomic theory courses, they should take the exam the next time it is offered, usually in August. If a second attempt is necessary, it must take place when the next microeconomic theory exam is offered, usually in January.

The economic analysis and application exam should be taken by students after their program of studies has been substantially completed, normally following the fourth semester in the Ph.D. program. The exam will be administered by the Department of Agricultural Economics in August. If a second attempt is necessary, a retake exam will be offered no later than the end of September. The economic analysis and application exam may also be used as a Departmental written comprehensive exam, at the discretion of the student's supervisory committee. If an exam is not passed after two attempts, then the student cannot continue study for the Ph.D. degree. No
additional exams are given. The inability, unwillingness or failure of a student to complete the examination at the appropriate times will be considered a lack of normal progress in pursuing the degree, and could result in termination from graduate study for the Ph.D. in agricultural economics.

**Comprehensive examination**

Students must pass a written comprehensive examination after their program of studies has been substantially completed, as mandated by the Graduate College (http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/bulletin/requirements-phd). The examination is administered by the student’s Supervisory Committee and may include an oral exam at the discretion of the Supervisory Committee. If the student has a minor, the minor department normally administers a comprehensive exam in its field. The student’s Supervisory Committee may elect the Qualifying Examinations as the written component of the student's comprehensive exam.

**Final oral examination (Dissertation Defense)**

The student's supervisory committee conducts the final oral examination, which normally consists of a Dissertation Defense. It is open to members of the University and the public, while at the end of the public hearing there will be a closed questioning portion of the exam (http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/bulletin/requirements-phd)

**Progress reports**

All students are required to file progress reports each year, normally in February. These reports will include courses taken, grades received, a summary of research, teaching and extension activities, and a status report regarding whether or not various milestones have been achieved, such as: selection of major professor, appointment of supervisory committee, filing of memorandum of courses, qualifying exams completed, and comprehensive exams/admission to candidacy status. This information must be submitted by the student through their advisor, who is responsible for forwarding it on to the Departmental Graduate Committee.
**Assistantships**

Graduate Research Assistantships (GRA) are awarded to full-time students, normally on an annual basis, either from departmental funds which include Agricultural Research Division (ARD) funds or funds obtained by individual faculty from grants or other sources. GRAs require students to work for a specified number of assistantship hours per week, and may or may not entail tuition remission.

All GRAs are assigned a research advisor by the Graduate Committee and Department Head. The research advisor assigns and supervises their research responsibilities, and may also advise on academic issues. Students may choose a major advisor or supervisory committee chair different from their current research advisor. GRAs report on their assistantship activities in their annual report to the Graduate Committee. Reports from those students receiving ARD funds are forwarded to the Department Head, who is responsible for monitoring the use of ARD resources.

At the end of each semester, students generally have the option of switching to other research advisors, and the research advisors have the option of switching to other students. Students interested in changing to a different advisor are encouraged to visit with the Graduate Committee Chair. The Committee Graduate Chair will work with each student and his/her advisors to implement the change, subject to the approval of the advisor to whom the student wishes to transfer.

Assistantship responsibilities may or may not relate directly to the desired topic of thesis or dissertation research. Masters students are expected to choose a major advisor prior to or at the completion of half of the Masters program and work closely with the major professor to prepare the thesis proposal. Ph.D. students are expected to choose a supervisory committee chair prior to or at the completion of more than half of the post-bachelor’s program of study (including transfer credits) and work with the major professor to prepare the dissertation proposal.

Once a thesis or dissertation proposal is approved, assistantship efforts are typically credited for the thesis or dissertation research. Guidelines for graduate assistantships are updated by the Office of Graduate Studies annually. See current guidelines at [http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/funding](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/funding).

**Evaluation, Reappointment, and Reassignment of GRAs**

The Graduate Committee will consider reappointment of graduate assistants during spring semester, with results announced by the end of the semester. Reappointments will be based on the student’s academic record, progress reports, and an evaluation of the research assistant by the research supervisor. M.S. students on ARD funds will automatically considered for a renewal for a second and final year subject to funding and satisfactory performance. Ph.D. students on ARD funds will automatically considered for renewal up to a maximum of a third year, subject to funding and satisfactory performance. In principle, students on grant-funded GRAs will be eligible for ARD assistantships if they were recommended by the graduate committee for assistantships upon admission. Each year of grant support will count ½ year toward the maximum period of eligibility for ARD funding described above. Normally, renewal of grant-funded RAs is at the discretion of the faculty member who obtained the grant.
Thesis Policies

Each student must provide a final copy of the thesis to the Department (unbound) and another to the advisor. Two additional copies must be deposited in Love Library as prescribed in the Graduate Bulletin (http://bulletin.unl.edu/).

Agricultural Research Division funds are provided for the conduct of research on approved agricultural economics research projects. These funds can be used to defray expenses incurred in the planning, collection and analysis of data. Students are expected to type their own thesis and to pay the cost of making the necessary copies.

Leave

Military leave of up to two weeks per year with pay is granted. If the duration of the leave is more than two weeks, the additional leave is granted as leave without pay. The student is responsible for scheduling any make-up work with his/her advisor.

Students should inform their advisors in advance of their leave intentions. Their advisor must approve annual leave for students on assistantship in advance. Failure to do so may result in leave without pay.

Scholastic Guidelines

The graduate program in this Department is designed to help students to further their understanding about the science and philosophy of economics, as well as its practical applications. Students are expected to read widely in the scholarly literature, including journal papers, books and other material, during the course of the program. The graduate program is largely about self-study on the part of each student, which is helped by courses that also draw on this same scholarly literature. In terms of specific courses, the goal is to improve student understanding of the science behind each particular course, as reflected in materials referenced and otherwise made available to students during the course. One indicator of student progress in this quest is given by the grades earned in each course and the overall grade point average (GPA) maintained throughout the program.

The Graduate Committee will assess progress in annual reviews of grades and research accomplishment. Students are expected to maintain a GPA of 3.0 for all graduate courses taken. Even if the GPA is 3.0 or better, however, if grades of less than B are earned in core courses, the student is expected to study these materials on their own, and perhaps even go through such courses a second time, in order to develop the proficiency needed in these key areas.

All students will be placed on probation the first semester the overall GPA falls below 3.0. After a second consecutive semester with a GPA below 3.0, a student will generally be dismissed from the program after review by the Graduate Committee. The student who is on a Graduate Research Assistantship or other funding source will also generally lose financial support at this time. Any student who has been dropped from the program may apply to the Graduate Committee for reinstatement. Reinstatement requires evidence of potential for satisfactory performance. The recommendation of the student's advisor will be a major consideration.
Department of Agricultural Economics
Appointment of Supervisory Committee for the MS Degree

Student Name ____________________________________________

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Thesis Topic ____________________________________________

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Signature of thesis advisor(s) Date