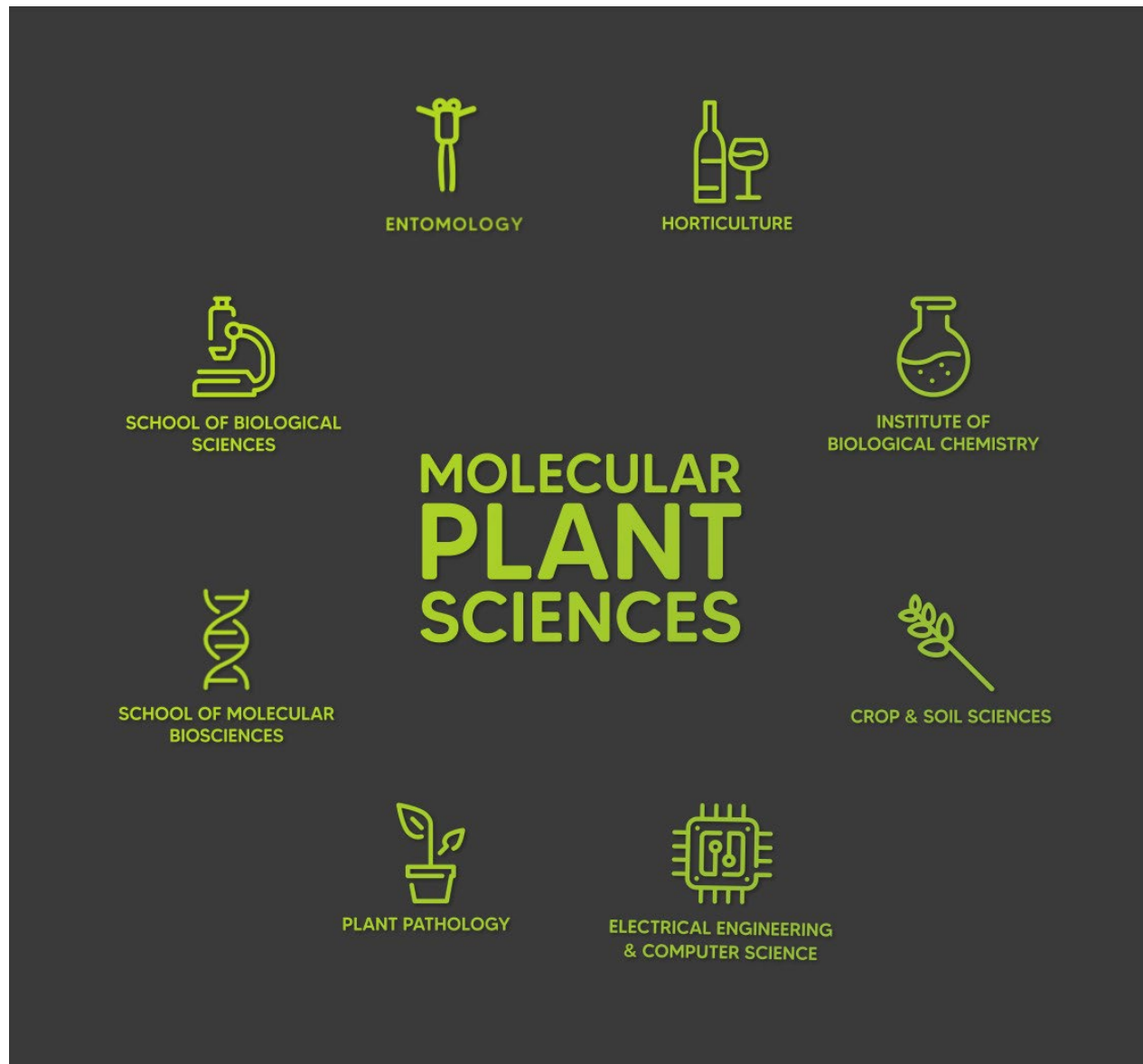


2026-2027



PHD PROGRAM

MOLECULAR PLANT SCIENCES
<https://mps.wsu.edu/>



Molecular Plant Sciences Graduate Program



2026-2027

Graduate Student Handbook

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PROGRAM DIRECTORY

Washington State University
Molecular Plant Sciences Graduate Program
P.O. Box 641030
Pullman, WA 99164-1030
Campus Mail Code: 1030

Molecular Plant Sciences Graduate Program

Contacts	Roles
Tiffany Boswell MPS Academic Coordinator French Administration Building 324 509-335-7619 tiffany_boswell@wsu.edu molecular.plants@wsu.edu	Orientation, academic matters (scheduling, changes, errors, deadlines, advising), seminar series, all things MPS
Laura Bartley MPS Director IBC, Plant Sciences Building 273 509-335-7211 laura.bartley@wsu.edu	Orientation, first-semester class scheduling, rotations, academic matters, all things MPS
David Crowder MPS Assistant Director FSHN 364 509-335-7965 dcrowder@wsu.edu	Orientation, first-semester class scheduling, rotations, academic matters, all things MPS
Graduate School Fiscal Team French Administration Building 324 509-335-6424 gs.finance@wsu.edu	Financial assistance
Tammy Barry French Administration Building 324 tammy.barry@wsu.edu	Dean of the Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Education Professor, Dept. of Psychology
Your Temporary Advisor	Classes, proposals, program of study, research, safety
Your Advisory Committee	Proposals, program of study, scheduling exams

MPS DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACTS

Department of Crop and Soil Sciences

Deb Marsh Academic Coordinator Hulbert Hall 213 509-335-2615 marshdj@wsu.edu	Tammy Cunningham Administrative Manager Clark Hall RM 377 509-335-0584 t.cunningham@wsu.edu
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Department of Entomology

Deb Marsh Academic Coordinator Hulbert Hall 213	Sophia Letz Finance/Budget Manager FHSN 106
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509-335-2615 marshdj@wsu.edu	509-335-5425 sophia.letz@wsu.edu
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Department of Horticulture

Deb Marsh Academic Coordinator Hulbert Hall 213 509-335-2615 marshdj@wsu.edu	Cheryl Rajcich Student Services Finance/Budget Coordinator Clark Hall 509-335-5903 cherylr@wsu.edu
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Institute of Biological Chemistry

Jacqueline McCabe Administrative Manager Plant Sciences Building 101D 509-335-8383 jacquem@wsu.edu	Teresa Beckvold Principal Assistant Plant Sciences Building 101B 509-335-8382 teresa.beckvold@wsu.edu
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Department of Plant Pathology

Deb Marsh Academic Coordinator Hulbert Hall 213 509-335-2615 marshdj@wsu.edu	Melissa Bills Administrative Manager ITB 3039 509-335-4852 melissa.bills@wsu.edu
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School of Biological Sciences

Leah Mickelson Graduate Coordinator Abelson Hall 301 509-335-3553 leah.mickelson@wsu.edu	Landon Kirk Business Services Manager Abelson Hall 305A 509-335-3554 landon.kirk@wsu.edu
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School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences

Smitha Bose Graduate Coordinator/Advisor EME 303 509-335-6636 smitha.Bose@wsu.edu	Gwen Miller Administrative Manager EME 102E 509-335-6604 gwen.miller@wsu.edu
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School of Molecular Biosciences

Robin Durfee Academic Coordinator BLS 102 509-335-4318 robin.durfee@wsu.edu	Laurilee Kramer Administrative Manager BLS 202E 509-335-1553 lkramer@wsu.edu
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FACULTY RESEARCHERS

Because Molecular Plant Sciences is an interdisciplinary program, all faculty members are part of one or more of the following departments – currently: Crop and Soil Sciences (CSS), Entomology, Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences (EECS), Horticulture and Landscape Architecture (Hort), the Institute of Biological Chemistry (IBC), Plant Pathology (PI Path), the School of Molecular Biosciences (SMB), and the School of Biological Sciences (SBS).

Visit <https://mps.wsu.edu/academics/researchers/> for a complete list of MPS faculty.

ORIENTATION & TO-DO LIST

We highly recommend arriving in Pullman at least a week before classes begin in August so that you can attend several orientations and have enough time to settle in before the semester begins. The following is a list of important items to do once you arrive on campus.

- Participate in orientations, including:
 - Graduate School Orientation: All orientation materials will be available online to complete prior to the first day of instruction. Topics include payroll and benefits services, health insurance, university resources, RA/TA workshops. A link will be provided via email.
 - New Graduate Student Meet and Greet: meet Graduate School staff and learn about important resources. Information will be provided via email.
 - Office of International Programs will have a hybrid online/in- person International Graduate Student Tutorial. New students will receive a link to the International Graduate Student Tutorial hosted on Canvas. Please check your WSU email for an email. If you cannot find the email, please call this number; 1-509-335-4508 or email: ip.interservices@wsu.edu. The Online International Graduate Student Tutorial will include immigration regulations, cultural adjustment, plagiarism/academic integrity rules, and more. New international graduate students will also be expected to attend the in-person portion of the International Graduate Student Tutorial. Times and locations will be sent to you later in the summer. Find more information on their website <https://ip.wsu.edu/on-campus/new-graduate-students/>
Please note: All new International Graduate Students are **required** to go through Orientation
 - Molecular Plant Sciences Graduate Program Orientation – (first year coursework, lab rotations, and other important program information) Meet and Greet with current students and faculty-
 - The orientation for the department where you TA, if applicable
- Fill out personnel paperwork
 - U.S. students: bring acceptable documents to the Graduate School offices (324 French Administration Building) and fill out the I-9 forms (<https://hrs.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Acceptable-Doc-I-9-Form-08.01.23.pdf>), Personnel Action Form, and which are necessary for processing tuition waivers, stipend, insurance, etc.
 - International students: bring your passport, I-94, I-20, and social security card to the Graduate School Offices (324 French Administration Building) to fill out the necessary forms. If you do not have a social security card, you will be able to apply for one during the International Programs Orientation.
- Obtain a WSU ID card
 - Take your WSU ID number and at least one photo ID to the Cougar Card Center, which is located in the Compton Union Building (CUB), room 60, to obtain your WSU ID.
- Obtain a parking permit, if needed
 - Bring your WSU ID number to the Parking and Transportation Building on the corner of Colorado St. and D. St.
 - Or sign-up online at: <https://parking.wsu.edu/>
- Obtain keys
 - Please see your first rotation faculty host/advisor to obtain keys for the labs you work in.
- Update contact information
 - Once you have established a local mailing address and phone number, please update your contact

information in My.WSU and Workday. This will update your address with the Graduate School, payroll, benefits services, etc.

- Order any textbooks at the Bookie
 - You can order online here: <https://wsubookie.bncollege.com/>
 - The Bookie is in the Compton Union Building (CUB) on campus
- Review the Graduate Student Bill of Rights
 - <https://gpsa.wsu.edu/about-gpsa/governing-documents/student-bill-of-rights/>
 - This document outlines your rights as a WSU Graduate Student

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

There are many forms and helpful information available on the International Programs website, <http://ip.wsu.edu/global-services>, including a pre-arrival information request form, information on obtaining a visa, a welcome packet, and the orientation registration form. The office can also put you in contact with other students from your home country that may be able to help you find housing. You'll want to bookmark their web page: <https://ip.wsu.edu/future-students/graduate-students/>

A hybrid online/in-person International Graduate Student Tutorial (<https://ip.wsu.edu/iss/international-student-tutorial/>) will be made available. **New Students will receive a link to the International Graduate Student Tutorial hosted on Canvas.** Please check your WSU email for an email with the subject line "Attend International Student Tutorial!" If you cannot find the email, please email ip.intlservices@wsu.edu. The online International Graduate Student Tutorial will include immigration regulations, cultural adjustment, plagiarism/academic integrity rules, and more. **The Tutorial has 2 required parts:** a virtual Canvas course and in person. Times and locations will be sent to you later in the summer. All international graduate students will be charged a **nonrefundable \$50 international student tutorial fee** after course registration. The fee will be charged to your WSU account and can be paid along with your tuition through myWSU.

The Cougar Food Pantry is a fully stocked pantry that provides free food to Pullman students experiencing food insecurity. The pantry stocks non-perishable pantry staples that let students create nutritious, filling meals and snacks. The food pantry is open to current Pullman students (undergraduate and graduate) who are experiencing food insecurity, **including international students.** Use of the Cougar Food Pantry does not qualify as aid and will not impact a future green card application. The food pantry is located on the ground floor of the Compton Union Building near Washington State Employees Credit Union (WSECU) and the entrance to Terrell Library. Students in need can stop by any time the pantry is open to shop for food. Please bring your Cougar Card for entry. Visit <https://cce.wsu.edu/resources/student-resources/cougar-food-pantry/> for hours of operation.

TRAININGS

Mandatory training on the Responsible Conduct of Research is required of all WSU graduate students. The training is web-based and is located at <https://myresearch.wsu.edu> (the training module is addressed to Principal Investigators but is the same for everyone). Alternatively, the required CITI training can be found here: <https://irb.wsu.edu/training/>. We recommend that you take the "Biomedical" option. Every new MPS student should complete the training as soon as possible but no later than the end of the first semester. If you have any questions, contact the Academic Coordinator.

Graduate students will not be eligible for employment until the training is completed, but a grace period of one semester is allowed.

Incoming students can take the training once a WSU network ID (the first part of your email before the '@') and password are created. We recommend that this is done before arriving on campus. Questions about the subject matter should be directed to your faculty advisor.

Under Executive Policy 15 (EP-15), all WSU Employees are required to take **an annual training requirement for discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct prevention**. To access this course, log in to your [online learning account](https://hrs.wsu.edu/training/skillsoft-percipro/). (<https://hrs.wsu.edu/training/skillsoft-percipro/>) The course is automatically assigned as a required course to your personal account.

Other required employee trainings may be implemented during your time here. Please be sure to take them in a timely manner.

Your research group(s) are likely to also require you to take Laboratory, Greenhouse, and other Safety Trainings. Please be safe and complete these trainings.

ESTABLISHING WASHINGTON RESIDENCY

This section applies **only to U.S. citizens and permanent residents**; international students will receive out-of-state tuition waivers for each semester of study provided they continue to be funded on an assistantship. International students are still expected to live in Washington.

For the first year that you are enrolled in the MPS Program at WSU, you will receive a special waiver that allows you to pay in-state tuition if your place of residence is not Washington State. However, for this to continue, you **MUST** be a legal Washington resident at the beginning of your second year of study or you will be charged out-of-state tuition. The MPS program will not cover the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition.

Information about the process can be found at the following web site: <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/establishing-residency/>. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your residency status, please contact Jenny Saligumba-Graham, saligum@wsu.edu at the Graduate School.

UNION AFFILIATION/COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

Unless otherwise noted, when employed as a Graduate Research Assistant (such as by MPS or from a research grant) or when employed as a Teaching Assistant, WSU academic student employees (ASEs) are represented and governed by a [collective bargaining agreement](#) as written or amended between Washington State University and the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America ([UAW](#)). Please reference this agreement for details on all ASE benefits, including, but not limited to, Vacation, Holidays, and Sick Leave. Information is provided here for your convenience. Please contact HRS (hres.labor@wsu.edu) or your union representatives with questions about the contract.

SCOPE OF OVERLAP BETWEEN ASE RA DUTIES AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH/TRAINING

Research Assistant (RA) duties: As a 0.5 FTE Academic Student Employee (ASE), RAs are expected to devote an average of 20 hours per week to the duties outlined in their appointment letter, which may include tasks such as programming, data collection and analysis, lab maintenance, attending meetings, writing papers, and more, as defined by their supervisor.

At least two weeks prior to the commencement of each semester, RAs will be given a job description (or changes to a job description for reappointment). The job description must adhere to the specifics outlined in the [WSU/UAW Contract Article 11.4](#).

RA overlap with academic research and training: In many cases, the 20 hours per week of paid RA work will align with and contribute to the student's academic research and training. In this case, the RA appointment is intended to provide financial support for time spent on activities that simultaneously fulfill the student's employment obligations and advance their academic progress. However, like Teaching Assistant duties, RA duties may not directly relate to the student's academic research and training. Regardless, the expectation is that these duties will be outlined in writing by the onset of each semester.

Academic research and training (outside of an RA-ship): Students are expected to dedicate substantial additional time beyond the 20 hours of weekly RA duties to make timely progress on their academic research and training (including but not limited to their thesis or dissertation). This research and training is required for their academic progress as measured by MPS700 (Master's Research) or MPS800 (Doctoral research) credits each term. Typically, academic progress is also expected during the summer term when enrollment and tuition payments are not required. Summer academic progress

facilitates students making continuous progress towards their degree and timely graduation.

Separate assessment of academic performance and employment duties: The student's academic research performance in PREFIX 700 or 800 will be assessed independently from their performance of assigned RA duties.

- Each year, the student's academic progress will be evaluated by their advisory committee based on factors such as academic milestones, quality of work, and overall progress toward completion of the thesis or dissertation.
- The student's performance as an ASE will be assessed separately by their assistantship supervisor, focusing on fulfilling assigned duties, quality of work, professionalism, and other relevant factors outlined in the appointment letter.
- These two assessments will be conducted independently to ensure that the student's academic progress is not conflated with their employment performance and vice versa.

Communication and oversight: Regular communication between the student, RA supervisor, major professor/advisor (if different than RA supervisor), and graduate program leadership is crucial to ensure an appropriate balance between employment duties and academic progress. Communication is the responsibility of both the student and of the supervisor. Students should raise any concerns about distinguishing between their RA duties and their academic research and training (including but not limited to their thesis or dissertation) to their supervisor or program director. Supervisors and program directors should periodically review the RA's responsibilities and adjust as needed to optimize the student's overall academic and professional development. It is recommended that the student and advisor agree on milestones for academic success at the beginning of each semester and the summer term. (Likewise, a separate list of RA employment goals should be delineated.)

Summary: Whereas an RA appointment at 50% FTE will support a student's academic research and training, often relating to their own independent research project, it is understood that some RA tasks may not directly align with the student's specific independent research topic. Likewise, to fulfill their academic obligations, students are expected to devote substantial additional time to academic research and training beyond their RA duties. The student's academic research performance and employment duties will be assigned and assessed separately each year to ensure a fair evaluation of both components of their position. Open communication and regular check-ins between all parties are essential to balance and support the students' success in their dual roles as researchers in training and as employees.

INSURANCE AND PAYROLL

Graduate Student Insurance

Refer to Article 20 – Health Insurance, [WSU/UAW Contract 2024 – 2026 – Human Resource Services, Washington State University](#).

Washington State University automatically pays health and dental insurance for students who have assistantships and provides the Cougar Health Services (CHS) clinic on campus. Cougar Health services are offered for free or at a reduced cost to WSU students. CHS provides medical, minor surgical, urgent care, mental health, and wellness programs for students who have paid the university's health and wellness fee (but not their dependents). Basic visits to the clinic are free, although you may be charged for x-ray, laboratory, and physical therapy services, and for filled prescriptions. For a complete description of CHS services, the graduate student assistant medical and dental plans, and family coverage costs go to .

Pay Checks, Deductions, and Graduate Fees

Payroll

If you are going to be an Academic Student Employee (ASE, not an NIH Trainee), pay days at WSU are semi-monthly, lagged pay cycle. Payday is normally the 10th and 25th of each month. Visit <https://payroll.wsu.edu/paydays/> for more information. (NIH Trainees will be paid monthly.)

For ASE's, direct deposit is highly recommended. This can be set up as a in "Payment Elections" through Workday. Directions for changing Direct Deposit information can be found through this link: [Directions for Changing Direct Deposit in Workday](#). (*Please note: There are multiple areas at WSU that use direct deposit, and they all must be set-up individually.)

Mandatory WSU-Pullman **fees are roughly \$1,100 per semester (see for an updated cost:**

<https://gradschool.wsu.edu/2024-2025-fee-estimates/>). These can be paid through payroll deduction or in a lump sum.

Those on an assistantship must sign-up for payroll deduction in Workday before your first paycheck (Aug 25th). This is an optional service provided at a fee of \$8 per semester. If you elect to not enroll in payroll deduction, your fees must be paid in full on the day that tuition is due. The instructions to sign-up for payroll deduction in Workday can be found here:

<https://jira.esg.wsu.edu/servicedesk/customer/kb/view/160373535>. See <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/student-finance-page/> for more details.

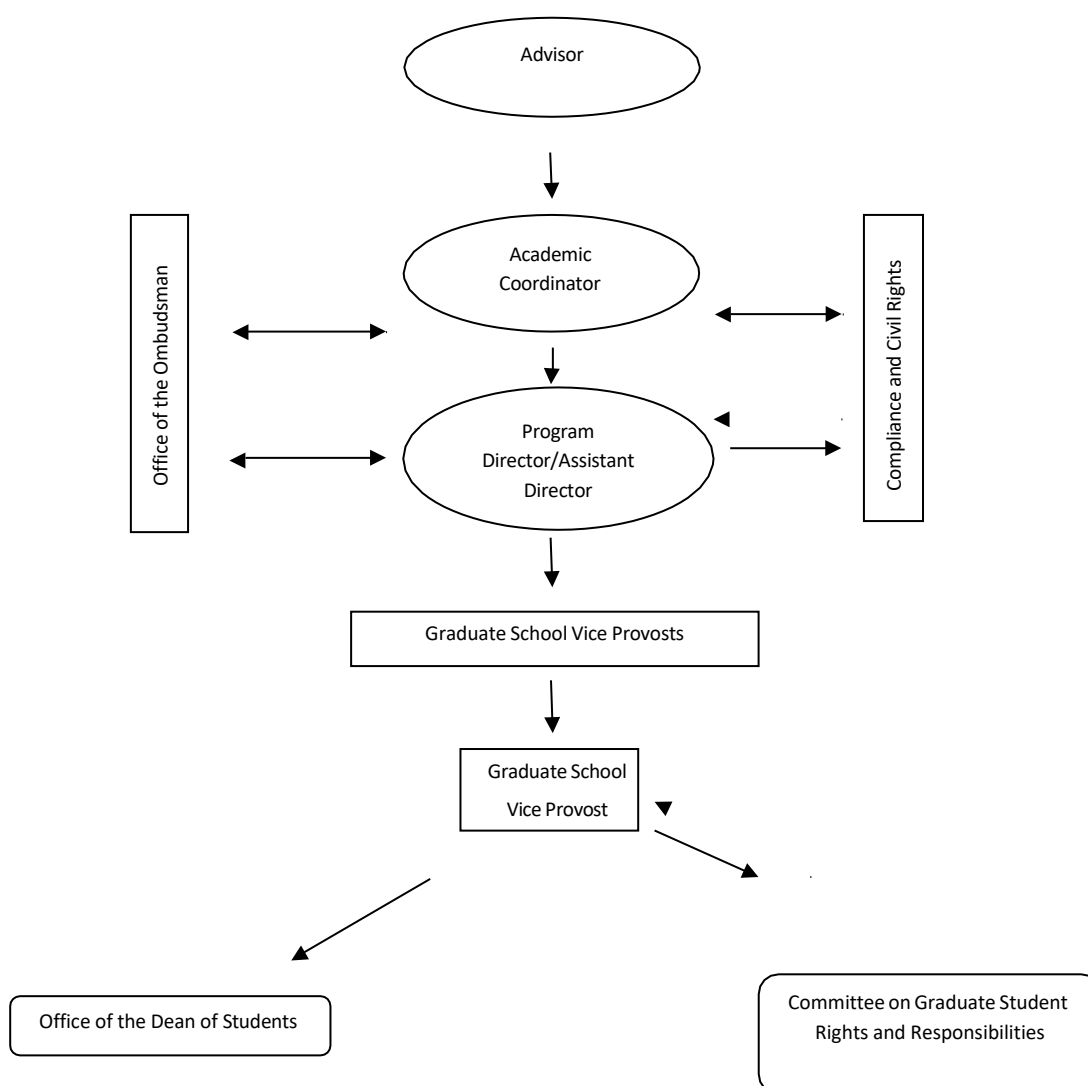
LEAVE & VACATION

ASE have rights to various paid and unpaid time off. For information about your rights to vacation and leaves, please refer to the UAW contract Articles 28 – vacation, 29 – Holidays, and 30 – Leaves here: <https://hrs.wsu.edu/employees/labor-relations/collective-bargaining/ws-uaw/ws-uaw-contract-2024-2026/> Please note that ASEs should request an agreed amount, typically 4 hours a day, of Time Off in writing and enter this into Workday for leave between August 16th and May 15th, except for all-university paid holidays.

GRADUATE SCHOOL & MPS PROGRAM SUPPORT RESOURCES

The MPS program recognizes that excellence in research is enhanced by a diversity of views, life experiences, identities, and cultures. We aim to cultivate an environment that enables all researchers to feel respected and celebrated. WSU and the MPS program are committed to maintaining a social and academic environment conducive to the education mission of the institution. While it is hoped that each student's experiences at WSU will be positive, difficulties can occasionally arise. If concerns arise, graduate students have many options available for support and are encouraged to pursue a resolution.

The chart below contains a summary of how student concerns are normally handled at WSU. Students typically seek resolution at the lowest level with one's advisor, one's doctoral committee members, the academic coordinator, the program director or program assistant director. If a student is unable to remedy the situation through these means, or if there is a reason why these individuals cannot be approached, problems can be taken directly to another appropriate office.



In addition to the leadership team and other university resources, the MPS program has a Wellness and Advocacy committee composed of MPS graduate students and faculty members that can be contacted with student concerns and questions about resolving conflicts.

The purpose of the Molecular Plant Science (MPS) Wellness and Advocacy Committee (WAC) is to:

- Act as a neutral third party that can be accessed by MPS students to ensure all members of the MPS student body, regardless of background, are welcomed and celebrated for their unique experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives.
- Give graduate students a voice on issues related to community, wellness, and advocacy while protecting their privacy.
- Direct students to the resources available to them when facing concerns related to academic, interpersonal, or structural issues
- Help foster a respectful and supportive community among students and faculty, and to facilitate a productive and creative working environment
- Identify systemic departmental concerns, potential barriers to student success, and work towards alleviating these challenges.

Graduate School Student Support. Academic issues brought before the Graduate School are typically handled by the Associate Deans of the Graduate School. Appeals of college or unit level decisions are handled by the Vice Provost of Graduate Education in consultation with the Associate Deans. Graduate students' appeals process involves several steps: adjudication at the unit level, adjudication at the college level with, if necessary and appropriate, a final appeal to the Vice Provost of Graduate Education. Unusual academic matters and some combinations of conduct and academic matters may be referred to the Committee on Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (CGSRR). In the case of strictly academic matters, the CGSRR consists of graduate faculty only. In matters consisting of both academic and conduct issues, the CGSRR is composed of graduate faculty and graduate students recommended by the Graduate Studies Committee. The CGSRR will operate with due respect to the rights of graduate students and graduate faculty, including the conduct of confidential interviews, the rights of all parties to review and address allegations, and rights to a fair hearing. Once allegations are brought to the Graduate School in writing, the CGSRR will be formed within 30 days and will deliberate and render a recommendation to the Vice Provost of Graduate Education within 60 days. This recommendation will be acted upon by the Vice Provost of Graduate Education in consultation with the Provost and the Attorney General. The final outcome of this process may be appealed to the Vice Provost of the Graduate School, who will then follow the procedures outlined above.

Appeals can be brought before the Vice Provost. The Vice Provost will consider appeals based on procedural irregularity and will not reopen cases only for the purpose of re-investigating the grievance.

In all instances, the University seeks fair and expeditious action on academic and conduct issues. Resolutions must uphold the highest standards of academic freedom and integrity, while honoring the rights and dignity of all individuals in the University community.

For more information on the Graduate Student Bill of Rights, see <https://gpsa.wsu.edu/about-gpsa/governing-documents/student-bill-of-rights/>.

ADDITIONAL UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Cougar Health – Clinic, WSU Pharmacy, Access Center, Vision Clinic, and Counseling and Psychological Services

Located at: 1125 NE Washington St, Pullman, WA 99164.

Medical Clinic: 509-335-3575
Pharmacy: 509-335-5742
Access Center: 509-335-3417 or email access.testing@wsu.edu .

Vision Clinic: 509-335-0360
Counseling and Psychological Services: 509-335-4511
Student Health Insurance: 509-335-3575 or email student.insurance@wsu.edu

Office of the Dean of Students (509-335-5757) <https://deanofstudents.wsu.edu/>

The WSU Office of the Dean of Students connects students with the services, opportunities, and resources to foster their success at WSU and after graduation. By working with university and community partners, we advise students about services, resources, and options that support their success and provide guidance and assistance during times of challenge, crisis, complexity or emergency. Located at:

Compliance and Civil Rights (509-335-8288) <https://ccr.wsu.edu/>

WSU's compliance program promotes a culture of knowledge of, and compliance with, regulatory and legal requirements. Through the work of the Chief Compliance Officer, Compliance & Civil Rights, the WSU Compliance Committee, and partners throughout the WSU system, the compliance program provides education, advice, and pragmatic solution building for complex compliance issues. Our team is committed to holistically promoting and supporting WSU's strategic goals and values through thoughtful, equitable, and ethical conduct.

Office of the University Ombudsman (509-335-1195), <https://ombudsman.wsu.edu/>

The primary purpose of the office is to protect the interests, rights, and privileges of students, staff, and faculty at all levels of university operations and programs. The Ombuds office is designated by the university to function as an impartial and neutral resource to assist all members of the university community. The Ombuds office provides information relating to university policies and procedures and facilitates the resolution of problems and grievances through informal investigation and mediation. The office does not replace or supersede other university grievances, complaint or appeal procedures.

Office of Veterans Affairs (509-335-1234), [WSU Military Affiliated Students](#)

For all veterans related questions. Email: veterans@wsu.edu or visit the office in Holland Library, Room 120BA (Pullman campus).

Women's Resource Center (509-335-6849), <https://women.wsu.edu/womenstars-center/>

Our mission is to engage with the multi-dimensional experiences of women, to challenge patterns of injustice for people of all genders, and to provide a welcoming and inclusive space. We elevate all marginalized voices while prioritizing prerogatives to learn, organize, and support one another as peers and mentors. We foster a community dynamic both within and beyond the Women*s Center that is collaborative, creative, and inclusive. Email: womens.center@wsu.edu. Located at: Wilson-Short Hall, Room 8, Ground Floor

Gender Identity/Expression and Sexual Orientation Resource Center (509-335-8841) <https://thecenter.wsu.edu/>

The Gender Identity/Expression and Sexual Orientation Resource Center serves and supports LGBTQ+ students, faculty, staff, and alumnx throughout the Washington State University system by providing resources, fostering community building, and relevant initiatives. Additionally, we promote academic and personal growth, learning, and development for students. Location: Compton Union Building, Room 401. Email: sa.lgbtq.center@wsu.edu

Access Center (509-335-3417)

The WSU Access Center serves the WSU community as part of the Division of Student Affairs. We provide accommodations and services to incoming and current WSU students registered with the campuses of Pullman, Global, Everett, Puyallup and Bremerton. The Access Center supports social justice for students with disabilities and chronic

medical conditions by: Removing barriers to the living and learning environment through the interactive accommodation process, collaborating with campus partners to identify and remove systemic barriers, attitudinal barriers and social exclusions in the learning and living environment at WSU, advocating for accessible and equitable learning and living environments for all students, enhancing equity and inclusion through Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning principles, collaborating with the Community, Equity and Social Justice pillar of Student Affairs to bring issues of disability to the campus community through system-wide awareness programming. Email: access.center@wsu.edu, Phone: (509) 335 – 3417, Located at: 217 Washington Building

Office of International Programs (509-335-4508), <https://ip.wsu.edu/future-students/graduate-students/>

Assists international students and visiting faculty with immigration, naturalization, international taxes, non-academic, and social adjustments. Email: ip.globalservices@wsu.edu, Located at: Bryan Hall 108

Intensive American Language Center (509-335-6675), <https://ip.wsu.edu/learn-english/>

Learn English from highly qualified, experienced instructors and enjoy U.S. culture in a safe, student-friendly environment. Email: ialc@wsu.edu, Located in Kruegel Hall

The Office of Multicultural Student Services (509-335-7852), <https://communities.wsu.edu/multicultural-student-services/>

The Office of Multicultural Student Services (MSS) seeks to facilitate the best undergraduate experience for multicultural, first generation, and other underrepresented students through the provision of culturally relevant services to enhance their learning and development and foster their successful transition, adjustment, persistence, achievement, and graduation. Email: mss@wsu.edu

- African American Student Center: 509-335-2626
- Asian/Pacific American Student Center: 509 - 335-1986
- Chicana/o Latina/o Student Center: 509-335-2617
- Native American Student Center: 509-335-5849

SAFETY

Washington State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its faculty, staff, and students. Safety is a priority in which the university invests significant time and resources. We have emergency plans and procedures that are reviewed regularly and that can be implemented quickly in a crisis or emergency. Our focus over the past few years on expanding communication resources and practices has enhanced our ability to effectively maintain our campus safety.

Safety is not the exclusive responsibility of any one individual, department or office. Every member of the campus community should recognize that it is a shared responsibility and that each of us has a personal role in campus safety. Leaders at all levels including Vice-Provosts, deans, directors, chairpersons, and department heads must take an active role in working with faculty, staff and students to foster an environment of safety awareness by providing necessary training and by setting an example for others to follow. Individual faculty, staff, and students should know the appropriate actions to take when an emergency arises. Their understanding of university safety and security procedures will help emergency personnel fulfill their responsibilities when emergencies do arise.

We ask that all faculty, staff, and students to visit the University emergency management web site at <http://oem.wsu.edu> to become familiar with the student and classroom emergency information provided. Everyone should also become familiar with the WSU ALERT site, <http://alert.wsu.edu>, where information about emergencies and other issues affecting WSU can be found. This site also provides information on the communication resources WSU will use to provide warning and notification during emergencies. For example, you can opt to have alerts sent via email and/or text message to your cell phone.

WSU is fully committed to keeping the community informed of public safety issues and emergency procedures as well as providing protection, education, and other services that enhance your safety and well-being. Please stay informed of the services and information available and always remain vigilant and aware of your circumstances so that we can work together to ensure a safe working and learning environment.

For additional information about campus safety, visit the Office of Emergency Management web site at <http://oem.wsu.edu>.

This is also addressed in the Academic Student Employee contract (<https://hrs.wsu.edu/employees/labor-relations/collective-bargaining/ws-uaw/ws-uaw-contract-2024-2026/>).

LIVING IN PULLMAN

List of Helpful Businesses and Services

City of Pullman (events, water/sewer) 190 SE Crestview St http://www.pullman-wa.gov/	Pullman Regional Hospital 835 S.E. Bishop Blvd. (509) 332-2541 http://www.pullmanregional.org/
Brelsford WSU Visitors Center 150 E. Spring Street (509) 335-4636 http://visitor.wsu.edu/	WSU Student Recreation Center ¹ (509) 335-8732 http://urec.wsu.edu/
Department of Licensing (driver's license, license plates, tabs, car registration, etc.) 980 S. Grand Ave. (509) 334-2510 http://www.dol.wa.gov	Avista Utilities (electricity, gas) (800) 227-9187 http://www.avistautilities.com
Washington Secretary of State Voter Registration Phone: (360) 902-4180 https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/register.aspx	Pullman Disposal (waste disposal) (509) 334-1914 http://www.pullmandisposal.com/
Neill Public Library (books, DVDs, ebooks, audiobooks, etc.) 210 N. Grand Ave. 509-334-3595 https://www.pullman-wa.gov/government/departments/neill_public_library	

Housing

It is important to start looking for housing early because houses and apartments rent very quickly in Pullman. Many units become available for lease in March for the upcoming school year. Since you need to establish and maintain residency in Washington within a year of arrival, **you cannot live in Idaho**. Also, while it is sometimes cheaper to live in Colfax, WA, note that there is no public transportation between Colfax and Pullman.

University accommodations are available, including single and married student apartments. A graduate student resident hall containing single rooms is located near the center of campus. Information on University housing can be found at <http://housing.wsu.edu/>.

Many students live in off-campus housing within walking distance of the University. A good source of information about off-campus housing is <http://offcampusliving.wsu.edu/>.

¹ Graduate Students are not allowed to use the Chinook. If you want to use the Chinook, you will need to purchase a membership.

Transportation & Parking

Many students at WSU own cars, but it is not necessary. There are many apartments within walking distance of campus. Also, your student fees allow you to ride Pullman Transit for free after showing your WSU Cougar Card (go to <http://www.pullmantransit.com/> for route and schedule information). If you would like to purchase a parking pass, use the following link: <https://parking.wsu.edu/>.

Travel to and from Pullman

The Pullman-Moscow Airport (PUW) is nearby but has limited flight selection. If you have a car (or a friend willing to drive you), it may be easier to fly in and out of Spokane International Airport (GEG), which is about 80 miles north of Pullman. The Greyhound bus travels to and from Spokane about twice per day. There is also the Lewiston Regional Airport (LWS) about 30 miles south. Wheatland Express offers limited shuttle service from Pullman to the Spokane Airport <http://www.wheatlandexpress.com/>.

Child Care and Public School

If you have children, the WSU Children Center (509) 335-8847 or <http://childrenscenter.wsu.edu/>, is one option for day and evening care. Please contact them early as childcare waitlists in the U.S. can be long.

Information about Pullman Public Schools can be found at <http://www.psd267.org> or call (509) 332-3581.

General information on ASE-supported childcare can be found under Article 21 [here](#).

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MOLECULAR PLANT SCIENCES PH.D. GRADUATE PROGRAM

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Graduate School and MPS course requirements for a Doctoral Degree:

- Maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA at all times and hold a 3.0 cumulative GPA and 3.0 GPA among courses listed on the Program of Study (will be explained below, but in principle contains all classes a graduate student plans to attend to gain 15 graded credits) in order to graduate.
- No graded courses of "B-" or below may be dropped from a Program of Study nor can a course be repeated for a higher grade if the final grade is "C" or higher.
- Any course listed on the Program of Study for which a grade of "C-" or below is earned **must** be repeated for a letter grade, not on a Pass/Fail basis.
- The core of the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) requirements in MPS and the Graduate School are a minimum of 15 hours of core graded coursework required on the Program of Study.
 - Seminar courses numbered 500 or above that *are graded* on a scale of A-F may be used as part of the student's core program. Courses graded S/F, and audited courses, may not be applied towards the graded core.
- In addition to the course requirements, the program shall include research and additional studies. This includes Independent Study (600) and Doctoral Research (800 – minimum of 20 hours), and any additional graded or S/F courses taken at WSU. Credit in this category, plus that in the core program, must total at least 72 hours. Note: Graduate School Policies state that the student is expected to earn an S grade for all 800 research credits. One U (Unsatisfactory) grade for research credits indicates that the student is not making satisfactory progress. The student will be subject to dismissal from the program if a U grade is earned for research credit for two terms (summer term included). Research credits for which a U has been earned do not count toward degree requirements.

In brief:

- 72 hours minimum total credits
 - 15 hours minimum graded course work (21 graded credits are recommended)
 - 20 hours minimum 800-level research credits
 - 2 credits MPS570
 - 2 credits MPS515
- NOTE: Audited courses cannot be applied.
- NOTE: Though 15 credits are the minimum, **we highly recommend that students take 21 credits of graded courses.**

Molecular Plant Sciences graded course work requirements for a Doctoral Degree:

Currently the course requirements for the MPS program are:

Required (Pass/Fail):	Title	Credits
MPS 515	Seminar in Molecular Plant Sciences	2 (1 credit course taken twice)
MPS 570	Advance Topics in MPS (aka. MPS Journal Club)	2 (1 credit course taken twice)
Graded Course Work:		
MPS 525	Plant Molecular Genetics	3 (offered in Fall semesters)

Other courses for the 15-credit minimum of 500-level coursework should be selected in consultation with and approval of your Graduate Advisory Committee.

NOTE: Taking a statistics course(s) is **strongly** recommended. Discuss with your advisor and/or committee to decide which one best fits your level of need and topic of study. STATS511 is a good course for students with some but not extensive stats experience. This class teaches R, as well.

Please note that though only 15 graded credits are required, 21 graded credits are highly recommended.

MPS Seminar (MPS515)

Whether you are enrolled or not, attendance is required weekly in the MPS 515 seminar. Attendance is expected throughout the course of your program of study. Failure to attend when you are enrolled for the semester may result in a U grade. Regular events (such as lab meetings) should not be scheduled during the time of the MPS 515 seminar. MPS students are **required** to present two seminars while enrolled in the program. We recommend that these be marked by enrollment in seminar. When a student presents at the seminar, their advisor and committee should attend. Students must ensure their committee is aware of their seminar presentations.

MPS Journal Club (MPS570)

Journal Club provides a training opportunity to students to present, discuss, and critically analyze scientific papers and approaches with faculty and fellow graduate students.

Students are encouraged to enroll in journal club during their first semester and to complete the requirement before the start of their third year.

Plant Molecular Genetics (MPS 525)

This required course is meant as a cohort building class for newly incoming graduate students that provides a broader understanding of molecular approaches in plant biology.

NOTE: A list of available graded courses offered that are recommended for reaching the graded credit requirement is available online here: <https://mps.wsu.edu/recommended-courses/>. You can also contact the MPS Academic Coordinator, Tiffany Boswell at: 509-335-7619 or tiffany_boswell@wsu.edu or molecular.plants@wsu.edu.

NOTE: Coursework options need to be discussed with and approved by the graduate student's advisory committee and will depend on the student's interest/research areas.

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MOLECULAR PLANT SCIENCES PH.D. GRADUATE PROGRAM SUGGESTED TIMELINE WITH MILESTONES:

- Year 1**
- Summer: Choose courses for fall; contact research or rotation advisors
 - Fall: Course work, Research
- ↓
- Spring: Course work, Research, Establish an advisory committee related to your likely dissertation project, Have a 1st committee meeting & discuss recommended courses and training, Annual evaluation and goal setting
- Summer: Research
-
- Year 2**
- Fall: course work, research, committee meeting, File a Program of Study
 - Spring: Wrap-up course work, Research, Advisory Committee Meeting and discuss research proposal plans, Annual evaluation and goal setting
 - Summer: Research; Outline and background reading for 1st proposal; Submit Research Manuscript, if possible, Present at a scientific conference
- ↓
-
- Year 3**
- Fall: 1st proposal defense, Research
 - Spring: Research, Advisory Committee meeting, Enroll in and Present at MPS Seminar, Annual evaluation and goal setting
 - Summer: Research, Plan for Preliminary Exam (= 2nd proposal)
- ↓
-
- Year 4**
- Fall: Preliminary exam; discuss graduation timeline with advisory committee; research
 - Spring: Enroll in and Present at MPS Seminar, Advisory Committee Meeting, Annual evaluation and goal setting
- ↓
-
- Year 5**
- Subsequent semesters: Research, at least Annual Advisory Committee Meetings (more can be helpful at this stage), Annual evaluation and goal setting
 - Networking at meetings & post-grad job search
 - Write dissertation, prepare for final oral exam
- GRADUATION!!

The above is a typical timeline. Faster progress is *encouraged*. Conducting the preliminary exam later than the end of the fourth year is discouraged. The preliminary exam and final exam cannot be taken in the same

GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- 1) The purpose of an Advisory Committee is to both support and evaluate a student's progress towards satisfactory completion of the MPS degree requirements.
- 2) The initial selection, and subsequent changes, of a graduate student's committee should be determined jointly by the student and the student's primary advisor.
- 3) The advisory committee of each student shall have a minimum of four members for Ph.D, but can be reduced to three members if a student decides to leave the MPS program with an MS degree. A majority of committee members shall be active MPS Graduate Faculty members. (e.g., 3 of 4 members)
- 4) Faculty members that are granted Emeritus status may continue their participation in existing graduate student committees, but cannot serve on any new committees.
- 5) Advisory committees should be formed toward the end of the first year of the program.
- 6) The Program of Study makes the advisory committee official. There is also a form for changing committee members.
- 7) As part of maintaining good standing in the program, students are expected to meet with their Advisory Committee at least once a year. The meeting date will be reported on the academic annual evaluation. Additional meetings with advisory committee members are encouraged.

FIRST PROPOSAL

The first proposal is an MPS internal requirement that consists of written proposal and an oral defense that typically occurs around the 5th semester of a graduate student's participation in the MPS program. The proposal covers the candidate's thesis project and should be developed with support of the primary advisor, the student's Advisory Committee, and other community members as needed. The proposal should follow NSF guidelines (e.g., 15-pages; for details see Appendix 1). A defensible proposal should be submitted to the Advisory Committee at least 2 weeks before the proposal defense day, but an exact proposal submission date can be discussed and agreed on with the Advisory Committee. The defense has a Pass/Fail outcome. If a student fails, the first proposal may be retaken once at the discretion of the Advisory Committee to address specific deficiencies within 3-months of the first defense day. Upon a second failure, the committee may recommend transfer to the Master's degree program or dismissal.

PRELIMINARY EXAM GUIDELINES

- 1) The MPS Preliminary Exam is a proposal on a topic outside of the student's dissertation research. The specific topic is selected by the student's Advisory Committee from among three abstracts with different topics that the student prepares.
- 2) It is recommended that the exam occurs no later than the beginning of the 4th year of the student's graduate career. In most cases, this would be during the fall semester of the student's fourth year in the program. The committee can, however, recommend a different date for the preliminary exam depending on the student's research progress.
- 3) The Preliminary Exam proposal (also known as the 2nd proposal) is to be written independently of the graduate student's advisor (and co-advisor, if applicable) although anyone else inside or outside WSU can be consulted. Note: the student is encouraged to reach out to their committee members to discuss ideas and

progress during the entire Preliminary Exam process.

This is a formal Ph.D. exam and must be scheduled through the MPS Academic Coordinator at least 10 working days prior to the exam date. See Graduate School Forms: <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/documents/2018/01/exam-scheduling.pdf>. Note that preliminary exams cannot be scheduled during the week of final exams or prior to a Program of Study being approved (as emphasized above, approval of a Program of Study can take **several months**, so make sure to have this submitted **at least 1 semester before** you plan to take your preliminary exam!). Note: When filling out the exam scheduling form, only choose the "Doctoral Preliminary Oral Exam." The preliminary exam must adhere to the following schedule that covers ~7 weeks (see timeline below). Failure to adhere to the MPS proscribed 7-week Preliminary Exam timeline may be grounds for failure of the exam, at the discretion of the Advisory Committee.

- 4) The student submits three abstracts that describe potential topics for a **2nd research** proposal approximately **2 weeks prior to committee approval**. This approval can be determined either during a meeting with the committee members or via email, as mutually agreed. These abstracts must be judged to be sufficiently different than the student's current research. The student may rank the abstracts based on their preference. However, the committee is not bound to follow that ranking. If the advisory committee considers any abstracts to be too close to the student's or the student's advisor's current research, or not acceptable for other reasons, the committee may request an additional abstract or abstracts. To avoid this possibility, the student is encouraged to discuss the topics of the abstracts with their committee prior to developing the abstract.
- 5) It is recommended that the examination presentation day is scheduled when abstracts are handed to the advisory committee as from that moment, the 7-week clock is running. Make sure that it has been clarified with the advisory committee that all members are available for the exam, 7 weeks later! If the committee requires additional abstracts, then the start date for the 7-week clock should be delayed.
- 6) Once three abstracts are approved, the advisory committee assigns the topic for the 2nd proposal selected from among the approved abstracts. The committee will notify the student of the assigned topic **five weeks before the scheduled exam date**.
- 7) The written Preliminary Exam proposal should be no more than 7 single-spaced pages, excluding references, but including figures and following the basic NSF grant format ([NSF guidelines](#); except that NSF allows 15 pages). A Project Summary must be included in the 7-pages of the proposal. The proposal must be the student's original work. WSU's plagiarism policies apply to the Preliminary Exam ([Academic Integrity Policy](#)). **Note: the student is encouraged to reach out to their committee members (but not their advisor) to discuss ideas during the entire Preliminary Exam process.** Some committee members consider discussion of preliminary exam ideas to be a requirement for successful exam completion.
- 8) The proposal is due to the committee within **four weeks** following topic approval and 1 week before the oral component of the preliminary exam.
- 9) **One week** following the distribution of the 2nd proposal to the committee, students will give a 20- to 30-minute presentation to their Advisory Committee summarizing the 2nd proposal. This presentation will be followed by an oral examination by the advisory committee related to the proposal and general knowledge relevant to the MPS program and the student's research. There is no time limit for the examination, but students should reserve at least 2 hours for the exam.
- 10) As soon as possible and no later than five business days following the exam, the Advisory Committee members must submit all exam ballots and the ballot memo electronically to the Graduate School in the "Graduate Exams" tile on their myWSU homepage. Students are advised to remind faculty of this requirement.
- 11) After successful completion of the Preliminary Exam, a student and their Advisor may be eligible for an ABD (all but dissertation) tuition waiver, though this is applied for on a case-by-case basis.
- 12) Examination Failure: If the first attempt of the Preliminary Examination is failed, the student may

attempt a second examination. The topic of the second Preliminary Examination will be the same as for the first attempt, taking feedback of the student's committee into account. The Graduate School's examination procedures must be followed to schedule the second examination. The Graduate School will send an official representative from the Graduate Mentor Academy to preside over the second attempt of the Preliminary Examination to protect the student, faculty, and program and to ensure that the appropriate procedures are followed for the second attempt at the Preliminary Examination. Once the required waiting period has passed, it is recommended that the student restart the 5-week timeline for preparation of the written portion of the exam in 4 weeks, followed by 1-week for preparation of the oral presentation, culminating in the second Preliminary Exam attempt. If the student fails the Preliminary Examination a second time, the student will be dismissed from the Graduate School. The student may appeal the decision by filing a formal grievance with the Graduate School. Please refer to the policies and procedures PDF document found here: <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/policies-procedures/>

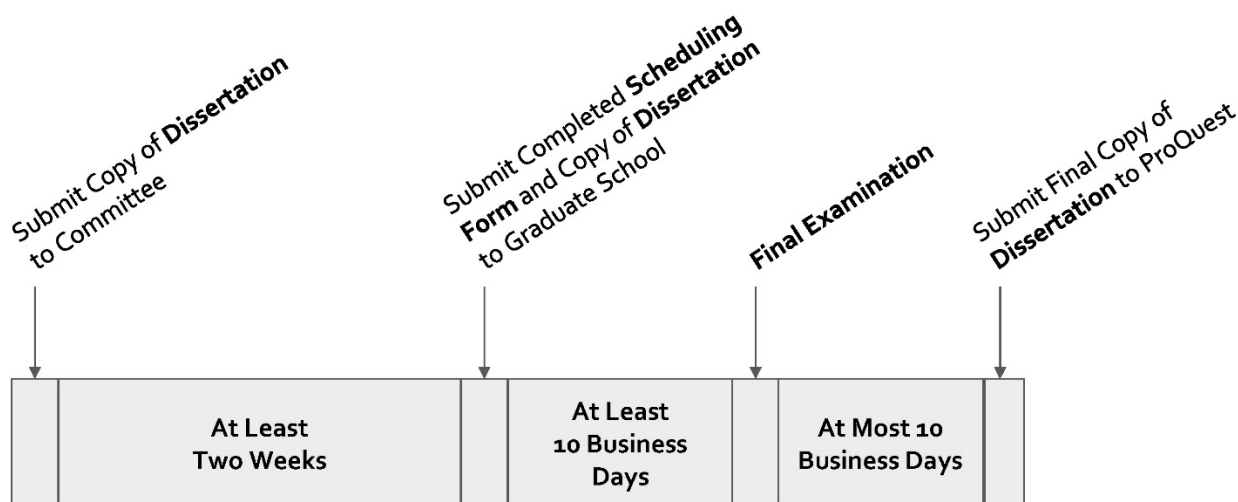
- 13) **NOTE:** after having successfully passed the preliminary exam, you have up to four years to graduate from the program! There is a petition process described in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures for extending this timeline.

SUMMARY of the 7-week MPS Preliminary Exam timeline in summary:

- **2 weeks before** starting to write, submit 3 abstracts to Advisory Committee.
- Committee decides within the 2-week window which topic will be covered.
- The student has **4 weeks to write** a 7-page proposal.
- The finished proposal needs to be submitted to the committee **1 week before** the preliminary exam.

PhD DISSERTATION AND FINAL EXAMINATION GUIDELINES

- 1) Have a committee meeting around 6 months prior to the anticipated defense date to get approval from the Advisory Committee that the student's research work is defensible and sufficient for graduation. It is generally expected that a PhD thesis will consist of at least five chapters including (a) an introduction that puts the work in a broader context and summarizes the main results and (b) three additional research chapters that are considered publishable pieces of work based on the student's original research conducted at WSU. A short final chapter to conclude the Dissertation and reflect on lessons learned is often included.
- 2) Apply for Graduation in My.WSU: <http://gradschool.wsu.edu/CurrentStudents/index1.html>
 - a. Submit a graduation application the semester that your final exam/dissertation defense is scheduled. The MPS Academic Coordinator and the Graduate School will notify you of any final requirements.
- 3) Please refer to the following figure for the timeline of completing the dissertation requirements.



- 4) Submit your dissertation to your committee AT LEAST **two weeks prior to scheduling your final exam**. This is to ensure that your committee has enough time to read the entire document, as scheduling the oral portion of the Final Exam, requires that the written portion is essentially approved and will only receive minor edits. Students should communicate with their committee members to ensure that two weeks is sufficient for the required review.
- 5) Schedule your Final Examination (i.e., dissertation defense) with the Graduate School:
- Submit the final examination scheduling form to the MPS Academic Coordinator at least 10 working days (~2-weeks) prior to the exam date.** When scheduling the exam, make sure all committee members are available (either in person or via reliable video conference). **Note: Scheduling the Final Exam requires that the written Dissertation is in an acceptable form to defend orally.** Committee members should and will not sign the form if not enough time was given to them to read the dissertation work!
 - The student must upload a draft of their dissertation to ProQuest at <http://dissertations.wsu.edu>. The Scheduling Examination form will not be processed until the Graduate School has received the dissertation draft.
 - The dissertation must be available for public inspection in the graduate program's office at least five business days prior to the final examination.
 - The oral portion of your Dissertation Defense is a public event.
- 6) Complete your Final Examination (=dissertation defense).
- The dissertation defense is usually a public seminar of about 50 minutes. Please reserve a room of sufficient size and send a flier to molecular.plants@wsu.edu to announce your seminar to the community.
 - Following the defense and public questions, the committee will have an opportunity to ask further questions and make additional minor requests for revision of the written dissertation.
 - The oral Final Exam is not scheduled without general approval of the advisory committee and thus failures are extremely rare. However, if the initial attempt of the Final Examination is failed, the exam may be reattempted after a period of three months and a member of the Graduate Mentor Academy will be appointed to attend the second exam.
- 7) Following your successful defense, you have 10 business days to submit the following documents to the Graduate School:
- Hold Harmless/Copyright Acknowledgment form.
 - Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) online completion certificate.
 - Thesis/Dissertation Approval form uploaded into myWSU immediately following the exam, approved within myWSU by your committee chair, and sent to the Graduate School.
 - Electronic copy of your final dissertation (including all changes requested by your committee and the Graduate School), in PDF format, uploaded to your original ProQuest submission.
- Submit final revisions of your dissertation to ProQuest 5 business days after your exam date. Information on how to do this can be found here: <http://dissertations.wsu.edu/>
 - Make sure to list a Diploma Mailing Address in My.WSU
 - Continue to check your WSU email. Any updates regarding your degree completion will be communicated through your WSU email address.
 - Submit a copy of your dissertation to your advisor and to the academic coordinator
 - Commencement
- The Bookie begins accepting orders about two months before commencement for your cap and gown. <https://commencement.wsu.edu/>

g. Update mailing address with Graduate School

Diplomas will be mailed approximately eight weeks after commencement.

- NOTE: Please alert the MPS Academic Coordinator of your post-graduation plans. These are posted on the MPS website and increase your digital footprint. This is very helpful to you when on the job market and to MPS for recruiting and fund raising.

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MOLECULAR PLANT SCIENCES – MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE OPTION

This degree is optional. It is meant as an alternative for the graduate student to leave the program earlier in case the student and their advisory committee agree that accomplishing a thesis-based MS degree is of greater benefit for the student than pursuing a Ph.D. degree. It requires approval from the MPS Director.

Graduate School Requirements - a minimum of **21 graded credits** are required for the thesis degree program (<https://gradschool.wsu.edu/academic-regulations/>); specifically, the Graduate School requires:

- 30 hours minimum of total credits
- 21 hours minimum of graded course work (15 hours of graded course work at the 500 level; 6 hours maximum of non-graduate (300-400) graded course work)
- 4 hours minimum of 700-level credit in major, 2 of which must be taken in the semester of the final exam and/or thesis completion. Timelines and deadlines for the thesis MS degree program can be found here: <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/students/>

The Molecular Plant Sciences graded course work requirements for a Master's Degree are the same as listed for PhD requirements with the exception that up to 6 graded credits of course work can be gained from 300-400 level (undergraduate) course work, as per the guidelines from the Graduate School. The graduate student needs to discuss this with their Advisory Committee. Students must file a Plan and Degree Level Change form in addition to an updated Program of Study to the graduate school after their Committee's approval to change to the MS degree program. Note that these forms must typically be filed at least 6-months prior to the M.S. Thesis examination. The forms can be found here: <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/facultystaff-resources/18-2/>

General MS Thesis Guidelines - It is generally expected that a MS thesis consists of at least two chapters: 1) an introduction that puts the work in a broader context ; and, 2) a second chapter that is structured as a publishable manuscript based on the student's original research conducted at WSU. Though a formal proposal process is not required at this time, a process of planning and advisory committee review is recommended.

GOOD STANDING AND MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD YOUR DEGREE

To be considered “in good standing” (i.e. making progress toward your degree), an MPS graduate student should fulfill the following expectations.

1. Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or above. Please note that the GPA of formal coursework (not including supplementary English courses, PE courses, etc.) must also be 3.0 or above.
2. Be accepted into the laboratory of an MPS faculty member by the end of the second semester of the first year.
3. Form a graduate doctoral committee by the end of your first year.
4. Submit all required paperwork (Program of Study, exam scheduling forms, etc.) to the Graduate School in a timely manner.
5. Meet with their research advisor on a regular basis. Agree in writing to expectations for satisfactory progress on research (MPS700 or MPS800 credit) before the beginning of each semester and the summer term.
6. Meet with their doctoral committee **at least** once a year. Consider arranging extra meetings with their doctoral committee, individually or altogether, should problems arise.
7. Complete an annual review with their advisor every year at the end of spring semester.
8. Attend MPS seminar at least 2/3rds of the time.
9. Avoid receiving a 'U' (Unsatisfactory) 800 research credit grade. Two 'U' grades results in dismissal from the program.
10. Meet the expectations of the Center of Community Standards: <https://www.handbook.wsu.edu/handbook-home/>

Failure to remain in good standing may result in loss of financial support and termination from the program. Requests for an exception to policy should be submitted, in writing, to the MPS director by the doctoral advisor. Documented approval from your committee members may be required. After the appropriate approvals have been acquired, the MPS director may write an exception to policy letter to the Vice Provost of Graduate Education.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

What happens if...

...I haven't been trained to handle hazardous materials?

When you begin your first lab rotation, the lab coordinator or another member of the Safety Committee will provide Safety and Hazardous Materials Handling training. Additional specialized training will be required for students who use radioactive substances. We also recommend looking at WSU's Safety Policies and Procedures manual (SPPM) at <http://public.wsu.edu/~forms/manuals.html> and consulting the Environmental health & Safety website at <http://ehs.wsu.edu/>.

...I'm a TA in the School of Biological Sciences, the School of Molecular Biology, or another department?

Departments typically do not assign TAs for courses until the week before school begins. You will be contacted by the SBS (or other department) academic coordinator (**NOT** the MPS Academic Coordinator) with details about TA training, at which time you will be asked for your schedule and teaching preferences. TAing is governed by the ASE collective bargaining agreement. Departments will provide guidance on expectations for employment as a TA, which includes ~20 hours per week of duties throughout the term. The Graduate School Orientation offers tips and sessions about TAing. Any international student pursuing a TA must take the International Teaching Assistant Evaluation Exam through the Intensive American Language Center and receive a score of 1. For more information visit <https://ip.wsu.edu/learn-english/teaching-assistant-evaluations/>

...I have graduate-level courses that I would like to transfer?

You can transfer graduate-level credits that are appropriate to your Program of Study if a grade of B or higher was earned. Your advisor and committee must approve the courses that you want to transfer. The number of courses you can transfer is limited to no more than half of the total graded course credits (7 for the MPS Program). Extension courses, special problems, research and thesis credits, workshops, and correspondence courses cannot be transferred. Transfer credit is formally requested by listing the courses on your Program of Study, but you can request preliminary determination from the Graduate School. It is not possible to transfer undergraduate (300 or 400 level) courses.

...I need approval from my advisor before I have an advisor?

Temporary advisors can sign off and approve items, if needed.

...I can't find a laboratory?

To be considered "making adequate progress towards your degree," you must find a lab by the end of your second semester. Under exceptional circumstances the MPS Program Director may allow the summer or a third semester for rotations, if funds are available and that there is a reasonable chance of success.

...My GPA falls below a 3.0?

The Graduate School requires that you maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA, and the MPS Program requires in addition that you maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA in your core courses. If your cumulative GPA falls below 2.75 after one semester, you will be issued a letter from the Graduate School stating that your status is under review. To be reinstated, the MPS Program Director must write a letter to the Vice Provost of Graduate Education. If, after two semesters, your GPA is still between 2.75 and 2.99, the MPS Program Director can write another letter recommending reinstatement. However, a student who cannot maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA by the end of their third semester will be dropped from the Graduate School. Students whose cumulative GPA is below 2.75 after two semesters are not eligible for reinstatement.

...I get a C in a class?

If you receive a C, you do not need to repeat the course (and cannot). Any course listed in your Program of Study in which you earn a grade of C- or below must be repeated for a grade. No course with a grade of B- or below may be removed from your program of study.

...I fail my first proposal?

At the discretion of the committee, the first proposal may be retaken once to address specific deficiencies. Upon a second failure, the committee may recommend transfer to the Master's degree program or dismissal.

...I fail my second proposal twice (preliminary exam).

A second failing will result in dismissal from the program. See the description above and in the Graduate School Policy and Procedure Manual regarding failure of the first attempt of the Preliminary Exam (i.e., 2nd proposal).

...One of my committee members leaves or for other reasons I wish to change my committee?

You may add or change a committee member with the permission of your advisor. A Committee Change form must be submitted to the Graduate School: <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/facultystaff-resources/18-2/>

...my advisor or I run out of research funds?

Talk to your advisor and the MPS leadership about options for alternate funding, including teaching assistantships. It is the program's intention to facilitate funding all students who are making adequate progress towards their degree. Contact the MPS academic coordinator immediately if funding is lost.

If you have a question/problem that is not addressed here, please see the Graduate School web site, <http://www.gradschool.wsu.edu/>, or contact the MPS director or the academic coordinator, Tiffany Boswell at: 509-335-7619 or tiffany_boswell@wsu.edu or molecular.plants@wsu.edu.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: MPS Guidelines for Proposals

1. Length:

Both the first proposal and the second proposal should include a one-page project summary with an overview of the proposed experiments as well as statements of the Intellectual Merits and Broader Impacts of the proposed project. For the first proposal, this is in addition to the 15-page body of the proposal. For the 2nd proposal, this is part of the 7-pages. The body of the first proposal should be no more than 15 pages long (single-spaced with 1" margins), including figures and tables. The body of the second proposal should be no more than 7 pages long (single-spaced with 1 inch margins), including figures and tables. Times New Roman (11 pt), or a similar font size, is recommended for both proposals. Do not make your font too small. References, in full citation format, are to be added to the end of the proposal and are in addition to the recommended length.

2. Format:

Your proposals should be based on the National Science Foundation (NSF) format available online at http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf10_1/gpg_2.jsp#IIB . Follow guidelines for the research description section of the proposal. All other documents (i.e. Facilities and Equipment, Budget, Biosketch, etc.) are not required.

3. Content:

The subject of the first proposal should be the candidate's PhD research/dissertation, formulated in collaboration with the student's advisor. Guidelines for format and content should follow NSF guidelines, available at https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg20_1/pappg_2.jsp Follow the guidelines for proposal content given here: https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg20_1/nsf20_1.pdf Chapter 2, B. Format of the proposal

Appendix 2: Structure of One Page Project Summary (Both Proposals)

For your first proposal (Research Proposal), this section will be in addition to the 15-page limit.

For your second proposal (Qualifying Exam), this section is a part of the 7-page limit.

Overview:

Note- this one-page summary is a stand-alone that would be the reviewer's first exposure to the project. It should give a brief background on the subject matter, the outstanding questions and overarching hypothesis for the proposal. It should also include a description of each of the specific aims with the hypotheses being tested in each. Each aim should not be dependent on other aims.

Intellectual Merit:

Note- this section should clearly state the intellectual merit of the proposal and how the results will impact the relevant field of interest as well as plant biology, biology and scientific studies in general.

Broader Impacts:

Note- this section should discuss training opportunities as well as how this work will benefit society as a whole.

Stanford has some excellent advice on how to write a one-page summary (with more detail than above). The web link is: <https://grantwriting.stanford.edu/project-summary/>

Appendix 3: Structure of a Research Proposal (First Proposal)

Note- 15-page limit, including figures, but excluding references and the one-page project summary described above.

This proposal SHOULD be written WITH your advisor's support.

PROJECT TITLE AND NAME/AFFILIATION OF RESEARCHER

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Overview. Note- This should also be about one page and expand on the "Overview" in your one-page project summary.

Introduction. Note- This section should start with the 'big picture' and relevant background. It should focus into the specific problem being addressed and end with a reiteration of the specific aims and hypotheses being tested in the proposal. A few figures may be appropriate to include. Four pages is a reasonable target length for this section, though that may vary depending on the topic and your advisor's input.

Preliminary Results. Note- This section should include the most recent results related to the proposed project. These results can be published or unpublished and should be supported with figures and figure legends. Three to four pages is a reasonable target length for this section, though that may vary depending on the topic and your advisor's input.

Specific Aims. Note- This section reiterates the specific aims proposed and hypotheses being tested and should not be more than a half a page in length.

Research Approach

Aim 1 Rationale: Each Aim (and potential sub-aims) should be presented. For each aim, first state the overarching rationale and end with the hypothesis for the aim.

Aim 1: Give a title for each aim and/or sub-aim. Then describe the experimental approach. Use enough description, including appropriate controls, so that the reviewer understands that you know how to do the experiment.

Aim 1 Anticipated results, limitations and pitfalls. This is where you explain what you expect the results to be (they could go different ways) and how you will interpret the results as well as demonstrate whether that aim has succeeded or failed. It is important to recognize the limitations of interpretation of any given results. You should also state potential pitfalls in the experimental design or outcome and how you would address them. **Repeat the above approach for each of the proposed aims.**

Note- This section of the proposal can include figures if they illustrate the experimental design. You can refer to figures in the preliminary results as well. This section will likely be the longest in the proposal and can easily take up six pages. Be succinct but also clear. You may need to cut back on the background or preliminary results section in order to have enough space for this section.

Intellectual Merit of these Proposed Studies

Broader Impacts of the Proposed Work. Note- These two sections expand on what was written in the one-page summary.

Timeline. Note- Having a realistic time line for your proposed studies is essential. Do not propose a life-times worth of work. The time line should be no more than three to four years (most grants are funded for three with the option for a one-year no-cost extension). There are many different ways to format this, from verbal statements for each year to a table or other form of visual representation.

Appendix 4: Structure of Qualifying Exam Proposal (Second Proposal)

Note- 7-page limit, including the one-page summary and figures, but excluding references.

This proposal **MUST NOT** be written with your advisor's help but should be written in consultation with your Advisory Committee.

PROJECT TITLE

NAME/AFFILIATION OF RESEARCHER

PROJECT SUMMARY

Note- This will be a modified version the one-page project summary that was submitted (along with the two other potential projects) to your committee to choose the topic of your Qualifying Exam.

Modifications can be made based on input from your committee members (or others in the scientific community) but not your advisor. Do not change the topic that you have proposed and has been approved by your committee.

Introduction

Note- This section should start with the 'big picture' and relevant background. It should focus into the specific problem being addressed and end with a reiteration of the specific aims and hypotheses being tested in the proposal. You will likely not have space for figures. One and a half pages is a reasonable target length for this section.

Preliminary Results

Note- This section should include the most recent results related to the proposed project. Since this is a project on work unrelated to your lab or projects, these results can be recently published observations from other lab's work. You will likely not have space for figures. Approximately one page is a reasonable target length for this section.

Specific Aims

Note- This section reiterates the specific aims proposed and hypotheses being tested and should not be more than a half a page in length.

Research Approach

Aim 1 Rationale: Each Aim (and potential sub-aims) should be presented. For each aim, first state the overarching rationale and end with the hypothesis for the aim.

Aim 1: Give a title for each aim and/or sub-aim. Then describe the experimental approach. Use enough description, including appropriate controls, so that the reviewer understands that you know how to do the experiment.

Aim 1 Anticipated results, limitations and pitfalls. This is where you explain what you expect the results to be (they could go different ways) and how you will interpret the results as well as demonstrate whether that aim has succeeded or failed. It is important to recognize the limitations on interpretation of any given results. You should also state potential pitfalls in the experimental design or outcome and how you would address them. **Repeat the above approach for each of the proposed aims.**

Note- This section will likely be the longest in the proposal but will have to be shorter than a full proposal.

Be succinct but also clear. You may need to cut back on the background or preliminary results section to have enough space for this section.

Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts of these Proposed Studies

Note- Because of space limitations, you will include this in one paragraph.

Timeline

Note- Having a realistic timeline for your proposed studies is essential. Do not propose a life-time's worth of work. There are many ways to format this, from verbal statements for each year to a table or other form of visual representation, e.g., a Gantt chart.

Appendix 5: DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN MOLECULAR PLANT SCIENCES OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

Objectives and Outcomes

The objectives of the program are:

1. To enable students to develop as successful professionals in a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment as preparation for highly competitive positions in industry, government, and academia
2. To prepare students to be effective and innovative researchers in the field of molecular plant sciences
3. To enhance visibility of the doctoral program in molecular plant sciences nationally and internationally

The outcomes for each of the stated program objectives are:

1. To enable students to develop as successful professionals in a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment as preparation for highly competitive positions in industry, government, and academia, the program aims to provide a variety of experiences that help students to:
 - a. Achieve mastery of knowledge in the general field of molecular plant sciences and the highest level of expertise in a specific, defined area of this field
 - b. Develop the expertise to use molecular technology to solve novel and emerging problems related to plant and agricultural sciences.
 - c. Present research to local, regional, national, and international audiences through publications in professional journals and conference papers given in a range of venues and to a diverse type of audience.
 - d. Participate in professional organizations, becoming members, attending meetings, and taking leadership roles where appropriate.
 - e. Broaden their professional foundations through activities such as teaching, internships, fellowships, and grant applications.
2. To prepare students to be effective and innovative researchers in the field of molecular plant sciences, the program aims to provide a variety of experiences that help students to:
 - a. Become independent, self-motivated researchers with the ability to recognize problems in their field of expertise and formulate solutions to the problems.
 - b. Develop a comprehensive knowledge of previous and current research in their field of expertise and be able to demonstrate that knowledge capably in a review of the literature.
 - c. Generate viable questions within their field of expertise and pose problems or hypotheses related to those questions.
 - d. Apply sound research methods to problems in molecular plant sciences and describe the methods effectively.
 - e. Perform statistical analyses of research data and present the results in a way that makes clear sense of the data.

- f. Discuss the solution to the research problem or the support or lack of support for the hypothesis in a way that effectively documents the contribution of the research to the area of study.
-
- 3. To enhance visibility of the doctoral program in molecular plant sciences nationally and internationally, the program aims to:
 - a. Attract and retain high-quality students.
 - b. Provide effective mentoring that encourages students to graduate in a timely manner.
 - c. Place graduates in positions in academia, industry, and government.
 - d. To attract, retain, and support nationally recognized research-active faculty actively involved in the molecular plant sciences graduate program.

Appendix 6: GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MOLECULAR PLANT SCIENCES ANNUAL STUDENT EVALUATION

Evaluation Period: 2025-2026 Academic Year (August 16, 2025, thru April 15, 2026)

The MPS academic coordinator will email the annual student evaluation spring 2026. Please update your CV for the evaluation. Evaluations will be due by May 1, 2026.

Appendix 7: MPS Preliminary Examination Rubric

	Poor	Fair	Competent	Good	Excellent
Demonstrates mastery of general knowledge in the field of molecular plant sciences					
States a research problem in such a way that it clearly fits within the context of the literature in an area of study					
Demonstrates the potential value of the solution to the research problem in advancing knowledge within the area of study					
Provides a sound plan for applying research methods/tools to solving research problem and shows a good understanding of how to use methods/tools effectively					
Provides a sound plan for analyzing/interpreting research data					
Communicates research proposal clearly and professionally in both written and oral forms appropriate to the field					
Demonstrates capability for independent research in the area of study, the ability to develop and apply substantial expertise in that area and to make an original contribution to it					

Comments:

Appendix 8: MPS Final Examination Rubric

	Poor	Fair	Competent	Good	Excellent
Demonstrates high level of expertise in a specific, defined area of molecular plant sciences and a mastery of knowledge in the general field of molecular plant sciences					
Reviews the literature in a way that demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of previous and current research in the field of study					
States a research problem in such a way that it clearly fits within the context of the literature in an area of study					
Demonstrates the potential value of the solution to the research problem in advancing knowledge within the area of study					
Applies sound research methods/tools to problems in an area of study and describes the methods/tools effectively					
Performs statistical analyses of research data and presents the results in a way that makes clear sense of the data					
Communicates research clearly and professionally in both written and oral forms appropriate to the field					
Has demonstrated capability for independent research in the area of study, applying substantial expertise in that area and making an original contribution to it					

Comments:

Appendix 9: MPS Bylaws Link

The MPS Graduate Program bylaws can be found here:

<https://gradschool.wsu.edu/bylaws/>

Appendix 10: Student Bill of Rights

The WSU student Bill of Rights can be found here:

<https://www.gpsa.wsu.edu/about-gpsa/governing-documents/student-bill-of-rights/>

Appendix 11: Graduate School Policies

All students are expected to follow the Standards of Conduct for Students under [WAC 504-26-401](#). We would like to bring your attention, particularly, to the following provisions:

Academic Integrity

Violations of include but is not limited to cheating by use of unauthorized materials or sources, acquisition of tests when acquired without permission, fabrication, counterfeiting data, research results, etc., and engaging in any behavior for the purpose of gaining an unfair advantage. If you are accused of a violation your instructor will assemble the evidence and notify you of their finding either in person or by email/phone. Your instructor will make a determination if you did or did not violate the academic integrity policy based on the evidence and circumstances surrounding the issue. You have 21 days from the date of the decision to file an appeal. For more information on the academic integrity violation process, go to <https://communitystandards.wsu.edu/policies-and-reporting/academic-integrity-policy/>

Faculty-Student and Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship Policy

Faculty or anyone in a supervisory role is prohibited from having supervisory responsibility over a student or subordinate with whom he or she is currently having a romantic and/or sexual relationship. Supervisory responsibility includes any supervisory role perceived as a position of power or authority, and is not limited to instruction, research, academic advising, coaching, service on research and thesis committees, and assignment of grades, evaluation and recommendation in an institutional capacity for employment, scholarships, fellowships, or awards. For more info see http://public.wsu.edu/~forms/HTML/EPM/EP28_Faculty-Student_and_Supervisor-Subordinate_Relationships.htm

Grievance policy

The Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities document describes procedures for channeling graduate student complaints, grievances, and concerns to faculty, staff and administrators for appropriate action. <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/rights-and-responsibilities/> Please also refer to the Graduate Student Bill of Rights for additional information (contained below).

All forms can be found at <https://gradschool.wsu.edu/facultystaff-resources/18-2/>

You may find all forms pertaining to Doctoral degree requirements at the link above. It is recommended to access all forms via the Graduate School website, as forms are updated frequently.

Deadlines and Procedures for Doctoral Degree

When to complete certain forms and do other administrative tasks, such as graduation, exam scheduling deadlines, and other important dates can be found on the graduate school website, in the deadlines form. Please refer to this prior to engaging in an administrative task. If you have any questions, please contact Tiffany Boswell, the MPS Academic Coordinator.

<https://gradschool.wsu.edu/facultystaff-resources/18-2/>

Note: It is **REQUIRED** that each form is downloaded and edited within an Adobe application.

The auto-populate feature **WILL** glitch if edited within a web browser.

Appendix 12: Credit Agreement Template

To comply with [Academic Regulation 27](#), all graduate research (700-800) courses must use a [Credit Expectations Agreement](#). This agreement establishes clear expectations between the faculty member assigning the grade and each graduate student regarding the work required. Key requirements include:

- The provided template serves as a baseline and may be adapted to meet program-specific and individual student needs while maintaining term-specific applicability.
- Separate Agreements are required for each student enrolled in research credits.
- A new *Credit Expectations Agreement* must be completed for each term a student enrolls, cover that term only, and be finalized no later than the end of the second week of classes.
- Faculty should provide timely feedback throughout the term. If a student is not meeting the academic expectations outlined in this agreement, feedback should be documented and accompanied by a clear plan for improvement. This may occur before, at, or after the mid-

semester evaluation, as the mid-semester review alone may not be sufficient to support student progress.

Send your completed Graduate Research Credit Agreements to molecular.plants@wsu.edu.

Credit Expectations Agreement Template

Washington State University
Molecular Plant Sciences

Student Information

Name: [Student's Full Name]

ID Number: [Student ID]

Degree Program: Molecular Plant Sciences

Semester/Year:

Course Information

Course Number: MPS800 (or MPS700)

Course Title: Doctoral Research Dissertation and/or Examination

Number of Credits: [e.g., 3 credits]

Advisor Information

Name: [Advisor's Full Name]

Department:

Goals and Objectives

Instructions: List specific goals and objectives for this semester's work:

- [e.g., Complete data collection for Chapter 2 of the dissertation]
- [e.g., Draft introduction and methods sections of a journal article]
- [e.g., Prepare and present research progress at the department's graduate seminar]

Expected Outcomes/Deliverables

Instructions: Detail the concrete outcomes or deliverables expected by the end of the semester:

- [e.g., A complete dataset for Chapter 2 stored and organized in the lab's database]
- [e.g., A draft of introduction and methods sections (approximately 2000 words) for review]
- [e.g., Slides and notes from the graduate seminar presentation]

Timeline and Milestones

Instructions: Outline key milestones and their expected completion dates:

- [e.g., Complete data collection by October 15]
- [e.g., Submit draft of introduction and methods sections by November 30]
- [e.g., Deliver graduate seminar presentation on December 5]

Criteria for Satisfactory (S) Performance

Instructions: Specify the criteria that will be used to evaluate performance:

- [e.g., Timely completion of all listed deliverables]
- [e.g., Quality of work meets departmental standards for doctoral-level research]
- [e.g., Regular attendance at required meetings (lab meetings, individual check-ins)]
- [e.g., Adherence to ethical research practices and academic integrity standards]

Consequences of Unsatisfactory (U) Performance

Instructions: Outline potential consequences of not meeting the agreed-upon expectations:

- [e.g., Failure to meet these expectations may result in an Unsatisfactory (U) grade for this course]
- [e.g., Two U grades in research credits may lead to dismissal from the program as per Graduate School policy]
- [e.g., Unsatisfactory progress may affect future funding or assistantship opportunities]

Communication Plan

Instructions: Describe how and when the student and advisor will communicate about progress:

- [e.g., Bi-weekly individual meetings to discuss progress and address any challenges]
- [e.g., Monthly written progress reports submitted by email]
- [e.g., Immediate communication if any significant problems or delays arise]

Mid-Semester Review

Instructions: A mid-semester review will be conducted on:

Date: [Date]

Student Acknowledgment

Text: I understand and agree to the expectations outlined in this Credit Expectations Agreement.

Signature: Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor Comments

Instructions: [Space for additional comments or clarifications by the advisor]

Signatures

Advisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Notes

Instructions: A copy of this agreement should be kept by the student, the advisor.

This agreement may be revised during the semester if both parties agree to the changes. Any revisions should be documented and signed by both parties.

MPS.WSU.EDU

