

**Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences (CSES)
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**

August 13, 2015

***GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES AND
GRADUATE STUDENT AND FACULTY ADVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES***

The minimum requirements and regulations pertaining to graduate students and graduate degrees at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech) are set forth in the Graduate Student Handbook and Graduate Student Catalog http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/. Graduate students should thoroughly familiarize themselves with relevant policies, procedures and requirements. Students are expected to know and comply with all Virginia Tech and CSES policies, procedures, and requirements. Consult the Graduate School, your major professor, the Graduate Program Director (W. Lee Daniels; wdaniels@vt.edu) or the Graduate Coordinator (Rachel Saville; saville@vt.edu) if there are questions regarding policies and procedures.

The Graduate School's Policies and Expectations for new graduate students can be found at: <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/Expectations>. The department and college have additional regulations that graduate students must satisfy, and additional degree requirements may be imposed by a student's Advisory Committee to qualify for the degree sought. **The CSES Department has established some additional requirements for its graduate students over and beyond those stated in the Graduate School's policies.**

**I. ADVISORY COMMITTEE, INITIATION OF RESEARCH,
EVALUATION OF PROGRESS, THESIS PREPARATION, LANGUAGE
REQUIREMENTS**

1. Establishing a Committee - The major professor and student should select and conduct a preliminary meeting with an Advisory Committee *no later than the end of the first semester of residence*. The minimum number of members for the advisory committee is 3 for M.S. students, and 4 for Ph.D. students. The Ph.D. committee must have at least one member from outside the Department. It is also advisable that the M.S. committee has one member from outside of CSES, but this is not required. At this meeting, the committee will become familiar with the student's training, background, and research interests. The committee also will orient and advise the student regarding research expectations and coursework.

2. Plan of Study – Students are expected to present to their major professor a draft *Plan of Study* that meets all Graduate School minimum requirements (see link

below). After review and approval by the major professor, the *Plan of Study* must be reviewed and approved by all members of the student's advisory committee. After approval, the Plan of Study is submitted to the Graduate School through the Graduate Student Administration Center (238C Smyth). It is the joint responsibility of the student and the major professor to see that the *Plan of Study* is submitted to the Graduate School **prior to completing more than 12 credit hours toward the M.S. degree, and before completing more than 24 credit hours beyond the M.S. toward the Ph.D. degree**. In all instances this should be approved by the end of the second full semester for an M.S. candidate and by the end of the third full semester for a Ph.D. candidate. Changes to the *Plan of Study* must be approved by the Advisory Committee and submitted to the Graduate School through the Student Administration Center. Details on credit hour requirements for M.S. and Ph.D. degrees can be found on the Graduate School website: http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/policies.htm, then click on *Credit Hour Requirements...*

3. Research Proposal- As research is initiated for a degree, a *Research Proposal* will be presented in writing and orally to the student's Advisory Committee. This proposal should include sections containing: (a) an abbreviated literature search; (b) clear and concise objectives; (c) proposed experimental procedures; and (d) data analysis and presentation procedures. The purpose of this requirement is to determine whether the research as proposed is adequate to satisfy degree requirements and to assist the student in clarifying objectives and procedures. The time to present the proposal should be determined by the major professor and the committee; however, this proposal should be approved by the end of the student's second complete term of enrollment for the M.S. degree and by the end of the third term of enrollment for the Ph.D. degree. Students are encouraged to begin this process as soon as possible in order to complete their studies in a timely manner and with minimal wasted effort!

4. Report on Research - Each graduate student will present an annual progress report to his/her Advisory Committee and other interested persons. The purpose of these reports is to provide annual evaluation of academic and research progress and make suggestions for modifications or additions to the research objectives or procedures. A copy of the associated Annual Evaluation Form with committee signatures or Email acknowledgments **must** be provided to the Graduate Coordinator (Rachel Saville) by May 15 of each year. A copy of the form is attached at the end of this document. Submission of this annual reporting form is a mandatory requirement for all graduate students.

5. Preliminary Examination - Candidates for the Ph.D. degree, along with their Major Advisor, should make *plans* for their Preliminary Examination before they have completed 75% of their required coursework. **The preliminary examination must be taken at least six months before graduation and is typically**

administered as a comprehensive exam following completion of the majority of required coursework. This will allow the student time to take courses that the Advisory Committee may require to correct deficiencies. The structure of the preliminary examination often includes written questions to be completed by the candidate before the scheduled oral examination. Written questions may be answered open or closed book/references at the discretion of Advisory Committee members. The format, timing and requirements of the preliminary examination are determined by the major professor and agreed upon by the Advisory Committee. The preliminary examination is now scheduled electronically via the Graduate School website <https://gradexam.stl.vt.edu/>. **Note:** The Graduate School will not approve the request if the student's approved Plan of Study does not match exactly against actual courses taken to date.

6. Preparation of Theses/Dissertations or Non-Thesis M.S. Project Reports -

The student, with the assistance of their major professor, has the responsibility for preparation of the thesis/dissertation/project report. While the Graduate School specifies certain formats, it leaves matters of style largely to departments, but urges that the style conform to the major professional or scientific journals in the student's area of interest. Therefore, the CSES Department suggests that theses/dissertations/project reports follow the style of journals of the Tri-Societies (ASA/SSSA/CSSA) or other sources acceptable to the Advisory Committee. Students may find that certain mechanical considerations for manuscripts will differ between the Tri-Societies and those specified by the Graduate School. Follow the *Graduate Policies and Procedures* in such cases. Preparation of the thesis/dissertation/project report in proper style will facilitate the preparation of manuscripts for publication. **All theses and dissertations must be submitted to the Graduate School in electronic format (<http://etd.vt.edu/>).** Seminars are given by the Graduate School each semester to familiarize students with the procedures needed to prepare the electronic submission. Students are expected to know these procedures and prepare the thesis or dissertation to meet all requirements.

Each section of the thesis/dissertation/project report should be prepared to the satisfaction of the Major Professor before being given to the other members of the Advisory Committee for review. Each section is to be provided to the committee members as it is completed. **According to current Graduate School policy, all sections of the thesis/dissertation are to be reviewed by the committee at least 14 days prior to the final oral examination and each committee member must confirm this in writing on the final examination request form.** Students will provide the members of the Advisory Committee the complete and revised final draft thesis/dissertation at least 7 days prior to the oral examination/defense. Final examinations are scheduled by the student electronically via the Graduate School website <https://gradexam.stl.vt.edu/>.

Even though each member of the Advisory Committee will have provided suggestions or requirements for revisions of the thesis/dissertation/project report prior to the final examination, some corrections or additions will **always** be necessary even following a successful final examination. The Graduate School generally allows a period of two weeks after the final examination to submit the final electronic (ETD) version of the thesis or dissertation. The final project report (for non-thesis M.S.) is submitted only to the major professor and Advisory Committee and is not posted to the Virginia Tech ETD site.

7. Direct to Ph.D. Program – The CSES Department supports a “Direct to Ph.D.” program whereby highly qualified B.S. level applicants are allowed to proceed directly towards the Ph.D. degree without first completing an M.S. degree and thesis. Final approval for the student to continue in the program is granted at the end of the second semester of enrollment by mutual consent of the Advisory Committee and the student. The requirements for Plan of Study and Research Proposal submission vary from those for a regular Ph.D. program. Careful attention must also be paid to the proper allocation of 5994 vs. 7994 research credit hours by both the student and the major professor. More details are available from W. Lee Daniels (wdaniels@vt.edu).

8. Foreign Language Requirement - The department does not require a foreign language for any degree.

9. Professional Ethics and Practice Requirements – As of the fall of 2014, the Graduate School requires all new incoming students to participate in training with respect to professional ethics and practice. This will be accomplished via several two-hour informal seminar sessions offered each fall semester in concert with program-specific training provided by major professors. Topics will include (but not limited to) plagiarism, appropriate authorship and collaboration, ethical standards for teaching and mentoring, professional conduct and ethics, the Graduate Honor Code, and available avenues for reporting misconduct. Program specific training on lab safety protocols and procedures and data management will be provided by the student’s major professor. Participation in this training is mandatory for all new graduate students and will be required for final approval of the MS or PhD degree.

10. Graduate Honor System – All aspects of graduate student life are subject to the expectations and requirement of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor System: <http://ghs.graduateschool.vt.edu/>.

II. ASSISTANCE OR EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND EXTENSION

The Department believes its graduate students should be exposed to a broad spectrum of educational experiences, both within and outside the classroom. Broad experiences in research, classroom teaching, and extension increases the employability of graduates and better prepares them to participate in interdisciplinary research. The department has established a minimum requirement in teaching for thesis M.S. and Ph.D. students, and is willing to work with individual students in arranging for broader experiences in research and extension. Non-thesis M.S. and part-time students do not have a teaching requirement. The minimum teaching requirement and procedures for seeking research and extension experience are as follows:

***Assistance in Teaching* - Students holding a GTA (Graduate Teaching Assistantship) are required to support teaching efforts for 20 hours per week for all semesters when they are on GTA support. Students holding a GRA (Graduate Research Assistantship) are required to support teaching efforts for 20 hours per week for one semester per degree sought (may be 10 hours per week for two semesters). Part-time students or those not on full time GTA or GRA funding support are encouraged (but not required) to teach for one semester for 10 hours per week per degree sought.**

Scheduling of teaching assistance for each academic year will be made by the Graduate Program Director (W. Lee Daniels) prior to the beginning of the fall semester. Once the assignments are made, it is the responsibility of the primary instructor to whom the student is assigned to ensure communication between the instructor, Major Professor, and student to determine the extent of teaching duties that will be assigned the student. The maximum involvement per week should not exceed 20 hours and is often somewhat lower. Students on CSES assistantships who devote less than 20 hours per week to teaching are expected to devote the remainder of their time to research (See section on Requirements and Duties of Graduate Teaching and Research Assistants).

Students assisting with teaching should be given a breadth of experiences, including preparation of teaching materials, preparing tests, grading tests, and giving lectures or supervising labs. The student's duties should not consist largely of menial tasks (e.g. grading quizzes and tests). However, such tasks are a part of many teaching experiences and graduate students may be asked to assume responsibility for a share of them. Following the semester a graduate student assists with teaching, both the student and the faculty member assisted will be asked to evaluate this teaching experience. Those evaluations provide suggestions for improvement of courses and the graduate student teaching experience, and may be useful in recommending graduate students for future teaching positions.

Evaluation of Teaching - Each student will document their teaching in the *EVALUATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT PERFORMANCE* form that is required to be submitted by May 15 of each year. If the student is involved in direct contact teaching (e.g. labs), the lead faculty instructor may also request that the graduate student's teaching be evaluated by the class. It is the responsibility of the major professor to ensure that (A) all graduate student teaching activity is documented on the annual evaluation forms and (B) this evaluation is discussed with the lead faculty instructor for the course(s) supported.

III. REQUIREMENTS AND DUTIES OF GRADUATE TEACHING AND GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Graduate assistantships are awarded to help the university fulfill its responsibilities in teaching and research. Students on assistantships must make satisfactory progress toward completing degree requirements and must satisfactorily perform all assigned duties for annual reappointment. **All students receiving an assistantship must sign a *Graduate Assistantship Agreement* that outlines specific responsibilities of the position.** The following section provides additional information concerning the expectations for students receiving an assistantship. However, the terms of the *Graduate Assistantship Agreement* supersede any information provided in this document. **Graduate students receiving assistantships must be enrolled for a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester as required by the Graduate School.**

Assistantships may be terminated following any semester during which the student does not maintain a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 or does not perform satisfactorily in assigned duties. If a student's GPA falls below 3.0, he or she usually is allowed one semester in which to bring the overall GPA up to or above the 3.0 minimum. While the exact duties for each graduate assistant will vary, it is appropriate to establish some degree of uniformity in the requirements for students on assistantships. The following guidelines are for use by students and faculty:

1. Average Hours of Duty Per Week - Students supported on assistantships (GTAs and GRAs) are expected to work approximately 20 hours per week over and beyond the work required to earn research hour credits (5994 or 7994) or other regular classes for which they are registered. Assistantship work may or may not be duties associated with the student's research problem and may be entirely teaching or research, or a combination of teaching and research duties.

2. "Leave" Policy - Graduate students are not considered full-time employees of the university and, therefore, do not earn annual or sick leave. However, since assistantships are awarded for the purpose of accomplishing teaching or research, it is desirable to establish some understanding regarding the amount of time students

may be away from the campus during periods they are being paid. Graduate assistants generally are expected to keep normal work hours (8 am to 5 pm) Monday through Friday and to be on duty between semesters unless authorized by their major professor to be absent. That being said, major professors are expected to provide reasonable time allowances for graduate students for vacation and visiting families. Therefore, it is recommended that “leave” be granted at the rate of two calendar days (equivalent of 8 working hours) per month on the job, plus New Year’s Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day, plus other university-wide holidays authorized by the President. The student must arrange permission to be on “leave” with the major professor. The Department and University are usually closed between Christmas and New Year’s Day and this week is generally presumed to be taken as leave. Within reasonable amounts, sick days will not count against the above “annual leave”.

Regardless, all CSES funded graduate students are expected to gain pre-approval from their major professor for any significant periods of time (> 1 day) spent away from their duties and to provide contact information while away.

3. Graduate Student’s Record of Work and Leave - Teaching and research assistants might be in a position to verify they have worked an average of 20 hours per week (over and beyond the work required to earn credit for the 5994 or 7994 for which they are registered), or have taken earned leave. Therefore each graduate student is encouraged to keep a daily (or weekly) record of the number of hours devoted to research or teaching duties, and to leave. Students not on assistantships might also find such records useful for documenting work to earn credit for 5904, 5994 or 7994.

4. Keeping the Department Informed - The major professor and other faculty often need to know the whereabouts of graduate students or how to get in touch with them. **After registration is completed each semester, all graduate students should provide their major professor with a class schedule and contact phone numbers and local addresses. It will be helpful if students keep their major professor apprised of their work schedule and location.**

5. Evaluation of Performance - Each graduate student will be responsible for completing the *EVALUATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT PERFORMANCE* form each year in concert with their major professor. The student will complete the form and have each member of the committee add comments if needed and sign. This form should be given to the committee during the year but no later than the end of the second semester, or May 15 of each year. A copy of the form is attached at the end of this document.

6. Computer Use, Security, Backups and Email Policies – While the CSES department does provide a limited number of desktop computers for graduate student use; each graduate student is expected to supply their own personal computer as needed. In some instances, computers/laptops may be provided by the Major Professor’s research program for graduate student use and must be returned when the student’s program is finished.

All graduate student computers must install the VT computer security package and keep it updated. All graduate student computers must be backed up frequently and the loss of research data or files due to lack of frequent backup procedures is simply not excusable and may be grounds for termination. Contact 4help@vt.edu for assistance with computer security and other general IT related issues. For specific assistance with connections to departmental printers or other CSES or college resources, contact aghhelp@vt.edu.

You must use your Virginia Tech approved PID based email address (or an approved alias) for your CSES work-related email traffic. You must check that Email daily for messages and *we expect you to respond to email queries within 24 hours* unless you are on approved leave or in the field and out of email contact. Any Virginia Tech email that has anything to do with your CSES assistantship related duties is potentially subject to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and you could be required to provide copies of it to external parties upon request. Therefore, it is critically important that you maintain copies of all outbound emails and all substantive inbound messages that pertain to your duties, research, performance, or personnel issues. Your email client (Outlook, etc.) will automatically retain all of your outbound messages unless you intentionally delete them and it is quite simple to establish folders for storage of relevant inbound email.

All graduate students are expected to back-up data files on their personal computers frequently. There are a number of options for this including the use of external hard drives and web/cloud based services. Our department suffers several individual computer failures every year; not having your important data files (and email) backed up is inexcusable.

7. Off-campus Violations – Local police departments inform the Virginia Tech police and the Graduate School of any off-campus infractions involving registered graduate students and these can be cause for dismissal or suspension from Virginia Tech.

IV. SEMINAR POLICY

The primary objective of a graduate seminar is the exchange of professional information among graduate students and faculty. In addition, seminars provide an opportunity for development of one of the most important aspects of the professional scientist that cannot be gleaned from normal classroom instruction: ***the ability to prepare and present accurate and interesting verbal summaries of research.*** Therefore, each full-time graduate student is required to present at least two seminars per degree. One is given as part of the for-credit seminar course and one that is given at the student's defense (prior to the examination) and made open to faculty, staff and graduate students. Ideally, both seminars should focus on the student's research, although seminars given as part of the class may instead present a focused literature review, provided that 1) permission is given ahead of time by the Seminar Chair; and 2) that the presentation is focused on the analysis and interpretation of data. The seminar content and presentation should be understandable by the breadth (e.g. crops, soils *and* environmental sciences) of our department's faculty, staff and graduate students. To facilitate the presentation of original data, it is encouraged (but not mandated) that the seminar should be taken at a minimum of one year into an MS and 18 months into a PhD program. Students at ARECs who take classes while on campus may take the seminar class early, without giving a seminar, and receive an "X" in the class. This gives them time to return to campus during a later semester to give their seminar and receive a grade. If a student registers for more than one credit hour of seminar during an academic year, the student will be expected to give additional original seminars to agree with the number of credit hours registered. The maximum credit hours of CSES 5004 seminar allowable for Plan of Study credits is 2 for M.S. and 4 for Ph.D. programs.

A great variety of opinions about the role and format for graduate seminars prevail in this country and even within this Department. However, over a period of years, the Department has developed the following concepts and philosophies to represent our prevailing seminar guidelines. Please note that failure to comply with these guidelines may lead to the student receiving a poor grade and/or being required to give another seminar.

V. CSES SEMINAR GUIDELINES

1. Preparing a seminar is to be a learning experience – The seminar should be on the students own research. However, allowances can be made at the discretion of the Seminar Chair, to allow a student to present on a separate topic. In these situations the seminar must still present data and related interpretation. The seminar must be substantive and based upon published literature and/or the student's collective findings and data. Student seminars on travel experiences or other non-technical topics are not acceptable. It is also expected that all students will present their detailed thesis/dissertation findings to the department during their "final examination seminar."

- 2. Seminars should be presented at a level so as to be informative, interesting and broadening *for all* in attendance** - This may be the most formidable task facing a speaker but it is an essential one. Data summary and interpretation must be a part of each seminar.
- 3. Seminar is to be attended by all graduate students, regardless of whether they are enrolled for credit, unless the student has a direct class conflict.**
- 4. Graduate students may present a seminar and satisfy the Department's requirements even if not enrolled in CSES 5004.**
- 5. The responsibility for all aspects of graduate student presentation of seminars rests with the individual, but close coordination and interaction with faculty mentors is expected** - The individual's major professor or other advisors are in the position to provide assistance. Contact with faculty other than those of the student's Advisory Committee may be appropriate. **It is required that the graduate student rehearse the seminar with the major professor or the Faculty Seminar Chairperson at least three days prior to the presentation.** Frequently, several rehearsal presentations may be required by the major professor. It is the responsibility of the *major professor* to ensure that this requirement is met.
- 6. An abstract or interpretive summary is required and should be distributed to faculty and graduate students at least three days prior to the presentation** - Often a tabular summary may serve as a valued supplement to the narrative abstract.
- 7. All aspects of effective public speaking should be employed by seminar participants.** Careful planning, proper use of well-prepared visual aids, multiple rehearsals, and complete familiarity with the subject are inherent in good presentations. There is no single, best approach to effective public speaking, but a brief introduction is necessary to get the audience thinking with the speaker. A body of pertinent remarks built into concise and orderly development of the major points relating to the topic of discussion must be presented, and one must guard against presenting too much material. Also, students must guard against the excessive use of "text" slides in PowerPoint, with associated reading from the screen!
- 8. The formal presentation of graduate student seminars should be limited to a maximum of 25 minutes with an additional 10 to 15 minutes devoted to discussion.** This mirrors professional meeting presentations which are typically 15 to 25 minutes in length. If two presentations are presented on the same day, then

the presentations should be 20 minutes each with 5 to 10 minutes for discussion. Students and faculty are urged to ask questions and to participate in the discussion.

9. Each graduate student's presentation will be evaluated - The Seminar Chairperson will arrange for evaluation of each seminar by a mix of faculty and graduate students present and will conduct a constructive critique with the student soon after presentation.

10. The Seminar Chairperson may require a "repeat seminar" prior to assigning of a grade when the student's performance has been unsatisfactory and believes that the repeat performance will be helpful in the further development of the student.

11. The seminar chairperson is responsible for assigning grades to those who register for credit - The P/F option may be used only if CSES 5004 is not stipulated on the program of study.

VI. STUDENT INPUT AND GRIEVANCES

The CSES Department encourages graduate student input regarding its policies and procedures for the graduate program. In order to provide some logical means of receiving and evaluating suggestions or grievances, some standing organizations or committees have been established. Those existing at present are as follows:

1. CSES Department Graduate Student Organization (GSO) - The graduate students elect their own chair and other desired officers and meet on an as needed basis. Among responsibilities that have been delegated to this organization are the coordination of desk assignments and maintenance of professional atmosphere in the graduate student offices. Orientation and counseling for new graduate students has been a contribution of this organization. The GSO also sends a representative to department faculty and Graduate Committee meetings. This organization also provides a means for the students to discuss and evaluate suggestions regarding the departmental graduate program. Recommendations are submitted to the Departmental Graduate Committee through the Graduate Program Director (W. L. Daniels).

2. There is a University-wide Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) that Considers Matters Relating to Graduate Study and Graduate Students at this University - The Departmental Graduate Student Organization elects a representative to the GSA and is called upon to nominate individuals to serve on committees or represent the GSA on university commissions or councils.

3. Departmental Graduate Committee - This committee consists of four or more faculty members appointed by the Department Head and chaired by the Graduate

Program Director. One graduate student chosen by the GSO also attends the meetings. The committee recommends to the Department procedures and policies for graduate study and other regulations that pertain to graduate students. The Committee also considers applications for admission to graduate study in the Department and recommends action to the Department Head. The Graduate Coordinator (Rachel Saville) works with the Graduate Program Director (W. Lee Daniels) to maintain records and files for graduate students and receives copies of appropriate documents and correspondence for these files. Among other duties is the scheduling of graduate students to assist with teaching. Upon request, this committee meets with the graduate students to discuss matters of concern.

4. CSES Faculty Meetings - The departmental meetings are chaired by the Department Head (Thomas Thompson). This group considers and acts on recommendations coming from the Graduate Committee before they become departmental policy. A GSO representative is invited to attend all open CSES faculty meetings and to report important issues back to the graduate student body.

5. Graduate School Ombudsperson – For issues or problems where a student needs an impartial review of a problem or grievance, they are encouraged to contact the Graduate School Ombudsperson <http://www.graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/>.

VII. CSES FACULTY PARTICIPATION ON GRADUATE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

All permanent faculties in the Department of Crop & Soil Environmental Sciences are eligible to participate as members of graduate student advisory committees. Faculty members are expected to allocate adequate time to meet with students and with other members of the Advisory Committee to develop course programs for individual students and to work with the graduate student to develop a research project; or a non-thesis M.S. project.

Faculty members are also expected to provide a detailed review of each thesis/ dissertation/project report in order to assist the graduate student in successfully completing degree requirements. Each faculty member is expected to limit the number of committees on which she/he serves to the number on which they can effectively meet the committee responsibilities. Thus, the number of committees on which an individual faculty will be able to participate at any specific time will be determined by their current teaching, research, and extension activities.

Emeritus (retired) Virginia Tech faculty and off-campus individuals with similar credentials to full-time Virginia Tech faculty are also eligible to serve on CSES graduate committees, but their service ***must be pre-approved*** by the department and the Virginia Tech Graduate School via submittal of appropriate forms and certifications (see W.L. Daniels for forms).

All tenured or tenure-track faculty are permitted to serve as major advisors for graduate students. Prior to attaining tenure, junior faculty may work with senior faculty as co-advisors. This is especially important for advising Ph.D. candidates.

Performance of faculty members as major advisors and as members of advisory committees will be evaluated by the Department Head in consultation with the Departmental Promotion and Tenure Committee.

Items that may be considered in the assessment could include recruitment of high-quality graduate students, timeliness of student graduation, and publication of thesis or dissertation research, and interviews with graduate students. Evaluation of faculty service as members of graduate student committees will be on the basis of accessibility of the faculty member to the graduate student, completion of timely and useful reviews of theses or dissertations, appropriate participation in graduate student examinations and contribution to student research and professional training.

Faculty, whose performance evaluations are below an acceptable level as either a major professor, or as a member of student advisory committees, will be required to meet with the Department Head to discuss performance deficiencies. A program to remedy the deficiencies will be developed by the faculty member and the Department Head.

VIII. ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

The department reviews completed applications that are forwarded to the department from the Graduate School via the Online School Application System (GSAPPS). Applications are reviewed by the departmental Graduate Committee that is comprised of at least 4 faculty appointed by the Department Head. Applications are reviewed as they are received and the committee endeavors to complete departmental review within two weeks of receipt of the completed application. The Department Head concurs with the action of the Graduate Committee and the Graduate Program Director prior to returning notice of application acceptance, denial or deference to the Graduate School.

The Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences does not have any additional requirements for admission above the basic requirements of the Graduate School except that all applicants must submit Graduate Record Exam scores for the Verbal and Quantitative (minimum) sections of the GRE. International students who have not received an advanced degree from a U.S. institution are also required to take the TOEFL or other accepted English language examinations. However, candidates that will potentially be involved with field or greenhouse research must be able to safely perform moderately demanding physical activities such as lifting, bending, walking and accessing research equipment such as plot planters, combine harvesters, soil sampling equipment and tractors. Other

positions may require a valid driver's license or professional certifications for pesticide applications, etc.

Regardless, admission to the Department is also governed by available resources (faculty time, research funding, and assistantships), and thus fully qualified students may not be admitted at a specific time due to the lack of resources. Qualified applicants that are denied admission because of a lack of resources to support their education will be clearly notified that this is the reason for their denial of admission.

IX. ORIENTATION AND ADVISING OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

An orientation session for new and continuing students will be held prior to during the first week of the fall semester each year. The purpose of the orientation session will be to provide direction to new students, update continuing students on requirements within the graduate program, and to answer any questions the students might have regarding the Graduate Program. Topics that might be included in the orientation session are the selection of advisors and the formation of advisory committees, the scheduling of regular advisory committee meetings, the departmental requirements for regular evaluation of progress to degree, the preparation and submission of the plan of study, the policy for scheduling preliminary and final exams, and the dates for taking final exams and for submitting theses and dissertations. **All graduate students are expected to attend the fall orientation session, regardless of their level of CSES graduate experience.**

Faculty advisors for graduate students are expected to communicate with their advisees on a regular basis and to be certain that required items such as programs of study are completed on time. Faculty advisors must also insure their advisees understand the requirements necessary for completing their graduate program.

X. TITLE IX TRAINING REQUIREMENT AND CSES PROCEDURES

All Virginia Tech employees, including graduate students, are required to complete a Title IX on-line training module or face-to-face workshop within 90 days of the start of their initial contract. Details can and registration information can be found at <http://www.hr.vt.edu/oea/workshops/index.html>. The on-line module takes approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Additional information on the use of CSES facilities, travel regulations and reimbursement procedures, making vehicle reservations with Fleet Services, and other general departmental business procedures are provided annually to graduate students in a separate set of attachments.

XI. NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment on any of these bases is prohibited by Policy 1025, "Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy." <http://www.policies.vt.edu/1025.pdf>

The university is subject to Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistant Act of 1974, the Federal Executive Order 11246, Virginia's State Executive Order Number Two, and all other rules and regulations that are applicable.

Those having questions or concerns about Policy 1025, any of these regulations, or related issues should contact: **Virginia Tech Human Resources**, Office for Equity and Access, 300 Turner Street NW (0318), Blacksburg, VA 24061, 540-231-2010

ANNUAL EVALUATION OF GRADUATE STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Use the form back for additional comments in any category. Please return the form to Rachel in 238C Smyth Hall.

Student's Name _____

Date _____

Email _____

Please check one: Masters _____ PhD _____

Hours registered: Fall semester____, Spring semester____. **Date of expected completion**_____

Graduate Student Section: *Briefly describe your accomplishments for the semester:*

Thesis related research: _____

Other professional activities (oral presentations, meetings, publications prepared, service on committees, etc.; Provide citations on page 3 of this form!):

Describe briefly any problems encountered in your graduate study or suggestions for improving the graduate program:

Enter Semester and Year completed and dates:		Prelims	Semester/Year: _____
Committee Established	Semester/Year: _____	Defense	Semester/Year: _____
Plan of Study Filed	Semester/Year: _____	Submit ETD	Semester/Year: _____
Proposal Submitted	Semester/Year: _____	Graduation	Semester/Year: _____

Current Cumulative GPA for all VT Graduate Hours _____

Completed CSES Professional Practice & Ethics Training? Y or N? List Semester _____

Completed CSES Teaching Requirement (once per degree)? ____ yes ____ no. (NA for GTA's)

If you answered yes above; list course and term/year taught _____.

Faculty Review Section (to be completed after student self-evaluation):

Major Professor's name: _____

Briefly evaluate the student's performance for year or to date (including teaching where applicable):

Is the student progressing satisfactorily toward completing degree requirements: _____

Did you personally discuss this evaluation with the student? Yes ____ No ____

Committee members signature

Date

Committee members signature

Date

Graduate Student Signature _____

Signature above indicates that you (the Graduate Student) have read and understand this evaluation. If you disagree with any portion of the evaluation or simply wish to add anything, please enter further comments in the space provided below.

Further Graduate Student Comments:

Citations for (1) articles, (2) abstracts, (3) presentations/seminars and (4) posters in past year:

Please use ASA/CSSA/SSSA format for publications and include date, location and audience/meeting name for presentations and posters.

1.

2.

3.

4.