



Student Handbook

2016 – 2017

THIS HANDBOOK IS A CONDENSED VERSION OF THE [ISU GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK](#) AS IT PERTAINS TO MS AGRONOMY STUDENTS.

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ISU Accounts Receivable: (515.594.7388, ubill@iastate.edu) ; UBill

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

STUDENT HANDBOOK: STUDENT ACCOUNTS

It is extremely important to set up your student accounts once you are admitted. You will not be functional without them:

Student ID Number/ISU Card

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

1. The first group of 6 is the University code. It is the same for everyone.
2. **The second group of 9 is your ISU ID number.** All of your student records are linked to this 9-digit number, including transcripts, class registration, class schedule and UBill.
3. The last two numbers are a security code.



The ISU Card number and student ID number are used for:

1. AccessPlus: you will use the 9 digit ID number only to log into AccessPlus.
2. E-library: you will need the last 11 digits of your ISU card number (ID number and security code).
3. If you need to resolve issues with on-campus offices (Graduate College, Accounts Receivable, Registrar), the first thing they will ask for is your student ID number.

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

1. If you can get to campus you can go to the ISU Card Office (0530 Beardshear Hall), fill out an ISUCard application, get your picture taken, and you can get card in person. Be sure to bring a photo ID with you.
2. You can also request a card by email (this will not have a picture).
 - Email distance@iastate.edu, and
 - Include your name, full mailing address, student ID number and the department and course number of the course(s) which you are currently registered for (for verification purposes).
 - You get your card in the mail after 7-10 days.

Do you need an ISU Card? Not really. As long as you have the number, as a distance student the ISUCard itself would be used rarely.

Where can you find your ID number if you don't have an ISUCard? In AccessPlus.

- After you log in, click the A+ tab.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: STUDENT ACCOUNTS

- On the left menu click ISU ID's.
- Your NetID, University ID and ISUCard number are located there.

Network ID (NetID)

Your NetID (and password) is used for logging in to all protected networks at ISU. You will need it to gain access to:

1. MS in Agronomy website: This is a system developed and maintained by our program's development lab, which contains:
 - Course Materials
 - Creative Component Archive
2. Blackboard Learn (BBL): This is a University-wide system, in which students will submit all coursework requirements – assignments, discussions, reflections.
3. It becomes the first half of your Cymail (ISU email) account address. It will be NetID@iastate.edu.
4. Virtual Laboratory: This system is maintained by the Department of Agronomy, and contains certain programs that MS Agronomy students will use during coursework.
5. Register for a NetID using this link: <https://asw.iastate.edu/cgi-bin/acropolis/register>. You will need your ISU Card number.

ISU Email: CyMail

Once you are admitted, all communication from ISU offices will go ONLY to your CyMail. These offices include Admissions, Accounts Receivable, Financial Aid, Graduate College, Registrar's office, etc.

Communication from the MS Agronomy office is a bit different. The MS Agronomy database system contains personal and/or work email addresses – those you used when you used the preapplication system. When you get admitted, we add your CyMail address your contact information, and keep both. Any messages sent from the MS Agronomy office will be sent to all email addresses listed in our database.

Although it's easier to manage your work and/or personal emails, it's imperative that you either use or check your CyMail account regularly. If you prefer, you can forward your CyMail to another account that you use on a regular basis. Here are directions:

1. Use this link: <http://asw.iastate.edu>
2. Log in with NetID and password, and you will find a menu of functions for Account Services on the Web
3. Go to **Manage Net-ID**, and another menu list appears
4. Go to **View/Edit your email delivery**
 - a. Click button **Delivered to Email Address** and enter your preferred email here
5. Click **Update Now**
6. Then Logout

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AccessPlus (A+)

Your personal & private student information is protected in AccessPlus. On the left menu, items most relevant to MS Agronomy students include:

1. *Account/UBill*: ISU does not send paper bills for tuition. Students must manage payments from this menu.
2. *Address Change*: Make sure your contact information is up-to-date if you move and/or change phones. Note! The MS in Agronomy Office database is not linked to AccessPlus. If you need to update contact information, you will need to let the MS Agronomy office know AND update A+.
3. *Class Registration*: You can search for courses and follow the prompts to get registered from this menu. Be sure you know in advance what courses you want to register for (see page 11).
4. *Class Schedule*: Once you have completed registration, your course will be listed here. This is the only official record of your registration. Do not look for your registration by checking your Ubill or Blackboard.
5. *Current Student Info*: Shows contact information, Major Professor, Major, Registration Access Number (if needed)
6. *Enrollment Certification*: This provides a link to a clearinghouse that will provide an Enrollment Verification Certificate. Students use this for a number of reasons, mainly for proof of enrollment to their employers.
7. *Financial Aid*: This will contain your financial aid award information, if relevant.
8. *Grad Student Status*: **VERY IMPORTANT!** This is a snapshot of your graduate progress as tracked by the Grad College. Items highlighted in Green mean you are compliant with Grad College policies and no action needs to be taken. Items highlighted in Orange are those that need attention at some point. Below is a list of the different sections and what they mean:

- Required to Apply for Graduation
 - Status: Active or Inactive
 - Admission type: Provisional, Restricted or Full (see page 5)
 - GPA: will stay green if 3.0 or above (see page 22)
 - Met English Requirement: this is determined at the time of Admission (see page 5)
 - POSC Approved: (see page 14)
 - Graduation Application submitted: Shows the semester a student has applied for graduation.
- Alerts:
 - Will list either Grad College (GPA) or Accounts Receivable (Ubill) holds (see pages 22 & 23)
- Department, Major and Minor Information:
 - Major: Agronomy
 - Department: Agronomy
 - Degree Currently Sought: Master of Science
 - Thesis: Not required
 - Credits Earned in Graduate Status: your cumulative credits completed so far
 - First Registered: the semester you registered for your first class
 - Last Term Registered: the semester most recently completed
 - Graduation Application: Semester/year
 - Final Oral Exam: Semester/year
- Required to take Final Exam:

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- GPA of at least 3.0 – you cannot graduate with a GPA below 3.0
 - Currently Registered: yes/no
 - Incompletes, NonReports & F's on transcript: yes/no
 - C or above on POSC: Yes/no – go to POSC
 - Completed or Enrolled in POSC courses: Yes/No – go to POSC
 - No Overage Courses on POSC: OK/no
 - POSC approved: will list month/year
 - Final Oral Exam Scheduled: scheduled month/year or passed month/year
 - POSC (Program of Study Committee)
 - My POSC form: this is the official list of your committee members and program courses (see page 14)
 - My Program Audit: Each course in your POSC is given a status and highlighted accordingly.
 - Committee Members
 - Your major professor and committee members are listed here after your POSC has been completed and approved.
9. *Grades/Transcripts*: You can find a grade report for your most recent class, or your full unofficial transcript.
10. *Graduation*: When ready to defend, this is the link to apply for graduation. Deadlines for graduation are posted by the grad college website: http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/documents/calendar/Deadline_Sheet_2016_2017.pdf
11. *Tax Info (1098)*: Some students submit their tuition for tax purposes. The 1098-T (Tuition) statement is located here.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: ISU OFFICES

MS Agronomy Program students are ISU graduate students, and must abide by ISU policies. Students may have contact with these offices at some point during their time in the program. **NOTE: Dawn Miller and Jaci Severson handle all correspondence with Admissions and the Graduate College. If you have questions, please contact either of them and they can assist you.**

Graduate Admissions:

Website: <http://www.admissions.iastate.edu/graduate/index.php>

Email: grad_admissions@iastate.edu

Phone: 515-294-5836; 800-262-3810

Fax: 515-294-2592

Program Contact: Dawn Miller, Program Assistant, 515-294-2999; msagron@iastate.edu
Jaci Severson, Agronomy Graduate Programs, 515-294-1361, jjs@iastate.edu

The Admissions office processes your application. There are three types of graduate student admission status:

1. Provisional: These students need to complete background courses.
 - a. NOTE: The MS Agronomy program now requires students to complete all program prerequisite courses before program admission, so this classification is rarely used.
 - b. Students cannot graduate under provisional status.
2. Restricted: These students had undergraduate GPA's under 3.0.
 - a. On restricted status, a student is expected to complete the first 9 credits of graduate coursework (3 MS Agronomy courses) and maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher (grades of B or better). If successful, the admission status is upgraded to full. If this has not happened, their status remains on restricted until GPA is 3.0 or better.
 - b. Students cannot graduate under restricted status.
3. Full: These students have all prerequisite courses and an undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or above. Students must have this status to graduate.

ISU English Requirements

This is determined during the Admission process. The ISU Graduate Admission Application instructions state: *For the purpose of applying to Iowa State, English may be considered your primary language if you have been raised in an environment where English is the only official language of your locality and nation, and English is the language used in your home.*

There are several English placement requirements for students whose native language is not English. The Graduate College follows these guidelines very closely. Students need to follow each requirement in progression:

1. ***Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS).***
These tests measure a student's understanding of the English language. The Graduate College requires a **minimum** score of one the following to qualify for Admission:
 - Internet Based TOEFL (iBT) 79
 - Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT) 550
 - IELTS 6.5

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ISU English Requirements, continued

Students who meet or exceed the following scores comply with ISU English placement requirements, and no further actions are needed.

- Internet-based TOEFL (iBT)--105 (and above)
- Paper-based TOEFL (PBT)--640 (and above)
- IELTS--8.0 (and above)

2. **English Placement Test (EPT):** is required for students who meet the minimum score for admission, but fall short of the high score necessary to comply with the English requirement. The EPT is a test of a student's ability to communicate using the English language. The Graduate College requires students to take the EPT preferably before their first class, and absolutely before the end of the first semester. Website:

<http://engl.iastate.edu/ept/>

- If the EPT is not taken before the end of the first semester, the Grad College will not allow a student to register for classes.
- Distance students can take this online.
- The EPT is scored by staff in the English department, and is pass/fail.

Students who pass the EPT comply with ISU English placement requirements, and no further actions are needed.

3. **ENGLISH 101D:** is required for students who fail the EPT. This class must be completed the next available semester it is offered. There are online sections of this course. A grade of D or above is acceptable to meet the ISU English placement requirement.

Graduate College (GC):

Website: <http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/>

Email: grad_college@iastate.edu

Phone: 515-294-4531

Fax: 515-294-3003

Program Contact: Dawn Miller, Program Assistant, 515-294-2999; msagron@iastate.edu
Jaci Severson, Agronomy Graduate Programs, 515-294-1361, jjs@iastate.edu

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

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

1. **GPA holds:** If a student's GPA falls below 3.0, the GC will put a hold on registration. See page 20 about how the program helps students with this issue.
2. **Graduation Holds:** If a student's GPA is below 3.0 at the end of the program, then the GC will not allow that student to graduate. Actions must be taken to improve GPA.
3. **Change in status:** when a student on restricted status completes 9 credits and has a GPA of 3.0 or better, the GC has a system to automatically upgrade restricted to full admission.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: ISU OFFICES

4. POSC Approval: The POSC form is used to formally identify a major professor and form the graduate committee. It is also the program of study - a list of all courses and projected timeline in which classes will be completed. The POSC system is managed by the GC.
5. Reinstatement to Active Status: If a student has not taken courses for 2 years or more (4 consecutive semesters, not including summer), the GC flags this student as inactive. In order to resume coursework, a [Reinstatement to Active Status form](#) must be completed. Students must complete Sections I & II, sign and send to Dawn Miller.
6. Application for Graduation: Submitted at the beginning of the semester a student will graduate. Use the **Graduation** link in AccessPlus.
7. Request for Final Oral Examination form: Submitted as soon as student and committee set a defense date, it must be a minimum of 3 weeks in advance of the chosen date. Prepped and submitted by Dawn Miller.
8. Report of Final Oral Examination form: Submitted after Final Oral Exam, with student and committee member's signatures. Prepped and submitted by Dawn Miller.
9. Graduate Student Approval form: Submitted after final defense when final copy of CC has been sent in. Prepped and submitted by Dawn Miller

Distance Education Registrar's Office:

Website: <http://www.distance.iastate.edu/>

Email: distance@iastate.edu

Phone: 515-294- 2331

Fax: 515-294-6773

This website site offers all information related to distance education. The most common for students are:

1. Course offerings: The [schedule of classes](#) shows courses offered for current and subsequent semester(s). There is a browse feature allows students to search for classes.
2. Tuition/fees: There is an excellent explanation of distance grad student fees, broken down by credits. Distance graduate tuition is the same for all students, regardless of location. Costs are a combination of tuition, technology fees, and department of Agronomy course delivery fee.
 - ISU Distance Graduate Tuition: \$466/credit (as of Summer 2016).
 - ISU technology fee (depends on number of credits/semester):
 - 4 credits or less = \$46
 - 4.5 – 8 credits = \$69
 - Agronomy course delivery fee (the department cost of offering distance courses)
 - 3 credit class = \$175
 - 1 credit practicum course ~ \$59

For example: You decide to take a 3-credit course in any given semester. The fees would be \$1,398 (Tuition) + \$46(tech fee) + \$175(delivery fee) = \$1,619.00.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: ISU OFFICES

Financial Aid

Website: <http://www.financialaid.iastate.edu/>

Email addresses: financialaid@iastate.edu; studentloans@iastate.edu

Phone numbers: Main office 515-294-2223; Student Loan Ed Office 515-294-0677;

Fax: 515-294-0851

The MS in Agronomy office does not offer whole-program scholarships. Students will need to use the services of the Financial Aid office to search for tuition assistance.

NOTE: In order to receive financial aid, students must take 5 or more graduate credits per semester. This means 2 program courses/semester (6 credits).

Scholarships handled by the Financial Aid Office: <http://www.financialaid.iastate.edu/scholarships/>

Scholarship Opportunities outside of FA

The following opportunities are not directly related to the Financial Aid office:

Virgil K. Webster Scholarship

MS Agronomy students who are using personal funds to pay for their tuition are eligible for this scholarship. It is a \$1,000 award, granted by the MS in Agronomy Program. It is awarded as a \$500 account credit for any two semesters the student is enrolled in for the academic year following the award. Students are allowed to apply each year they are eligible. Applications are due June 30th each year, and can be found on the MS Agronomy Website: <https://masters.agron.iastate.edu/ProgramInfo/webster>

ISU College of Ag Scholarship Opportunities: <https://www.scholarships.cals.iastate.edu/graduate-scholarship-application-instructions>

Scholarships offered by the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and Soil Science Society of America <https://www.agronomy.org/awards/view>. Deadlines for these are usually the end of March, and require a packet of information from the applicant.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: ISU OFFICES

Accounts Receivable (AR)

Website: <http://www.ubill.iastate.edu/>

Email: ubill@iastate.edu;

Phone: 515-294-7388

Fax: 515-294-3196

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

1. Accounts Receivable registration hold: this means that your UBill has not been paid and you will not be able to register for classes.
2. Graduation hold: your official transcripts not be available until the graduation fee and/or any leftover tuition has been paid.
3. Employer Reimbursement: this is a plan managed by your employer and AR in which fee payment will be deferred until 30 days after grades are posted. The benefit certification form must be submitted at the start of summer semester. It costs \$35/semester and must be renewed annually. Link: <http://www.ubill.iastate.edu/u-bill/payment-options/employer-reimbursement>.
4. Itemized tuition billing statement: Some employers require a student to provide an itemized billing statement, which the AR office provides upon request.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: COURSE LISTS AND REGISTRATION

Course Progression

All of the MS in Agronomy courses are required for graduation. It's not a matter of what courses to take, but when to take them. Dawn serves as an advisor to all students regarding courses. The following list contains program courses, their prerequisites and availability.

Course #	Course Name	Prerequisite	Semester offered
501	Crop Growth and Development	Program admission	Fall & Spring
502	Chemistry, Physics and Biology of Soils	Program admission	Fall (always), Spring (odd years)
503	Climate and Crop Growth	Program admission	Fall & Spring
511	Crop Improvement	Agron 501	Fall & Spring
512	Soil-Plant Environment	Agron 502, Recommended: 501	Spring
513	Quantitative Methods for Agronomy	Program admission	Fall & Spring
514	Integrated Pest Management	Agron 501	Fall & Spring
531	Crop Management and Ecology	Agron 501, 502, 503; Recommended: 512, 514	Fall
532	Soil Management	Agron 501, 503, 512; Recommended: 513	Fall
533	Crop Protection	Agron 514	Summer & Fall
591	Agronomic Systems Analysis	Agron 511, 513, 531, 532, 533	Spring
592	Current Issues in Agronomy	Agron 501, 503, 511, 512, 513, 514	Fall & Spring
594	Practicum in Agronomy	Agron 501, 502, 503; Recommended: 511, 512, 513	Summer; 1 week on-campus in last full week in July
599M Seminar	Creative Component Seminar	Must have workable idea, preferably before halfway point	Fall & Spring 1 credit
599M	Creative Component, Defense of CC	Defense date set	Fall, Spring, Summer 2 credits

Buying Textbooks

The MS Agronomy Office will email students textbook information in registration announcements. Text information is also listed on the websites where class registration information is posted. You can purchase textbooks from a retailer of your choosing, but we recommend the following places: [University Bookstore](#), [Amazon.com](#), [Half.com](#), and [BN.com](#). Be sure you comparison shop - used texts are much cheaper! Textbooks from the University Bookstore are usually only available a month before courses start, so it may be easier to get them from another source.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: COURSE LISTS AND REGISTRATION

Semester Course Offerings

REMEMBER – all MS in Agronomy courses posted for registration are section “XW” (off-campus). For example, if you’d like Agronomy 501, you would look for **AGRON 501 Section XW** in the schedule of classes.

You can search for course availability two ways:

- a. College of Ag’s Distance Ed site, known as the Brenton Center for Agricultural Instruction and Technology Transfer: <http://agonline.iastate.edu/>
 - b. From the menu bar, click **Courses**. There are drop down boxes with your options.
 - Semester – Spring, Summer, Fall
 - Department – all courses from the department you choose in the semester you chose
 - Program – only courses from the program and semester you choose
2. Registrar Office’s “Schedule of Classes”: <http://classes.iastate.edu/>
- a. Be sure the semester you want is in the Term field.
 - b. In the Subject field, in the drop down list click Agronomy.
 - c. Course number field:
 - You can leave this blank, then all AGRON courses will be listed (on campus and online). Be sure to look for XW sections
 - You can enter a specific course number
 - d. Click Search. You will find course details listed here, with a link to the University Bookstore.

Registering for a Class

You can always find out when the registration period starts by looking at the [Academic Calendar](#).

- Rule of thumb: Registration for spring semester starts mid-October, and registration for summer and fall starts mid-March.

Dawn always sends out registration announcements before the registration period begins. Be sure to register as soon as the registration period begins.

1. Register yourself through [AccessPlus](#). On the left menu click **Class Registration** and follow the prompts. Here is a video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-NPO-zPQE>
2. Newer students may be asked to enter a Registration Access Number (RAN) or given a specific time/date in which they can access the system. To bypass these requirements, please contact the M.S. in Agronomy office at: msagron@iastate.edu or 515-294-2999. Dawn can send a registration request on your behalf, and let you know when you are registered.

Drop schedule/Critical Dates for Fees

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

- AccessPlus (can only be used until the end of the first week of class)
- Contact the MS Agronomy office by phone 515-294-2999 or email msagron@iastate.edu
- Be sure to include your full name, course & section

STUDENT HANDBOOK: COURSE LISTS AND REGISTRATION

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

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

The student scheduling office will send out critical dates to registered students before each semester begins, but generally follows this rule of thumb:

Drop fee assessment/reimbursement schedule:

1. UBill is posted in AccessPlus the beginning of the month the semester starts.
2. Fee payment due dates for [deferred billing](#). Students can either pay in full or in installments.
 - a. First Payment: 20th of the 1st month of semester (January, May or August)
 - b. Second Payment: 20th of the 2nd month of class (February, June or September)
 - c. Third/Final Payment: 20th of the 3rd month of class (March, July or October)
3. Dropping one course of multiple (reduction in credits): this applies if you drop a class, but still remain in another
 - a. If you drop before the end of the 2nd week of class, you will be refunded 100% of your tuition and fees, including the Agronomy delivery fee.
 - b. After this date, you will forfeit any reimbursement and ISU will retain 100% of your payment for the dropped class. This includes the Agronomy delivery fee.
4. Dropping all or your only class: This is considered a withdrawal from the semester. **You are responsible for tuition even if you drop the first day of class.** In general (specific dates are determined each semester), tuition and fee reimbursement is as follows:

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

Tuition Adjustment webpage: <http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/fees/tuition-adj>

Additional information is found on the registrar's calendar: <http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/calendar/>.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: COURSE MATERIALS & BLACKBOARD LEARN

Preparing for Online Coursework

Testing your computer

- MS Agronomy website has a [Tech Test](#) page to check for supported programs and browsers.
- BBL also has [support page](#). Be sure to see the list of Supported Browsers and BBL Browser checker on the [troubleshooting page](#).

Online Course Materials

All course materials are offered online via the MS in Agronomy website. Course access will be given to students shortly before the start of the term. Students are notified when course materials are ready.

1. Go to the MS in Agronomy website: <http://masters.agron.iastate.edu/>
 - At the top of the website is a black header bar. **Click Login.** Log in with NetID & Password.
2. On the lower half of the homepage, in the center, is a section called **STUDENT INFO**. Click on **Access Courses**.
3. Each course in a current term will be listed, and has a number of icons. Each icon means the following:

 Course information, available to anyone

 Course Syllabus & Introduction, available to anyone

 Complete set of course materials, available only to MS Agronomy Program students (via login).

 BlackBoard Learn (BBL): This is an ISU-wide system, used by all ISU students and faculty. All assignments, reflections and discussions are submitted using this system. Although the course materials and BBL are two separate systems, there are links within the course materials to BBL, and vice versa. Again, students need to login with NetID and password to systems.

 Online Calendar: Every course has its own calendar that lists starting and ending dates for the term, due dates for assignments, reflections, discussions, and exams. This is a static calendar which opens in your web browser when you click it.

 Calendar Import (RSS): This link provides a calendar download which can be imported into calendar programs like Outlook.

 This is a downloadable ZIP file of all course materials.

 Adobe Connect: Some faculty host live, online sessions using this system (office hours, homework or exam review). This link opens the online “room”. Adobe Connect has the following features:

- Video/Audio - students can see & hear can see their instructor, who usually uses a webcam
- Chat – students can type here to ask questions
- Record – instructors can record the sessions and post for students who cannot log in at the time

Backup Course Materials

- The ZIP file shown above. Instructions to use this are given when the class starts.
- Print Lesson feature: There are PDF’s of every lesson that you can print on paper or save on your computer. Interactives (videos, study questions, etc.) will not be functional with PDF.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: COURSE MATERIALS & BLACKBOARD LEARN

Blackboard Learn

This link will get you to the login page of BBL: <https://bb.its.iastate.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>.

BBL links are also found in the ISU and MS Agronomy websites, along the top left of the page.

To learn how to use BBL, there are a number of tutorials for students and faculty. BBL is used by students and faculty in the following ways:

1. Students submit assignments, reflections and discussions.
2. Students find their scores for their work in My Grades.
3. Instructors grade student work and enter scores in the grade center.
4. The grade center lists grades for individual student submissions and calculated fields tally a total score.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: PROGRAM PROGRESSION

Advisor vs Major Professor

Dawn Miller is advisor to all students as they progress through the program. She is the main contact person for questions related to course availability, developing course plans, registration, interpretation of Grad College rules, etc. Any and all questions should start with Dawn. Dawn send a progress check by email once/year (Dec, Jan, Feb). She will assess your progress based on the following, and advise action based on any issues:

- Number of credits completed
- Courses completed
- Cumulative GPA
- Agronomy 594 requirement
- Admission & Graduate Status
- POSC
- Creative Component progress
- Grad College 7-year rule compliance

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

Agronomy 594

Students are encouraged to attend Agronomy 594 (Practicum in Agronomy) when they have completed 6 classes (18 credits). This is considered the halfway point in the program. The following courses are prerequisites: Agronomy 501, 502 and 503. It's recommended, but not required to also have taken Agronomy 511, 512 and 513.

Agronomy 594 is an on-campus requirement, held the last full week of July (Tues-Fri). Students register for this course just like all the others, via AccessPlus or the MS Agronomy office.

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

NOTE: Students who have completed 12-15 credits (including 501, 502, and 503) by the spring semester prior to a particular summer and who are taking 2 classes per semester should attend. Otherwise they would be well past the 18 credit mark if they wait until the following summer.

Program of Study Committee (POSC) Form

The POSC can be broken down into two parts:

Graduate Committee: A major professor is a faculty member who specializes in or has an interest in your topic and has the time to work with you. Committee requirements of for MS students who work on creative components differ:

- The Grad College requires a committee one committee member, the major professor.
- The Agronomy Department requires a committee of two members, the major professor and one faculty committee member (or two co-major professors).

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- The MS Agronomy program has decided to continue requiring a committee of three members, the major professor and two committee members (or two co-major professors and one committee member). Each student will work directly with their major professor. The other two committee members will be Dr. Ken Moore and Dr. Andrew Lenssen.

Program of Study: This is a list of your courses in the order that you plan to take them.

Submitting the POSC is completed when the graduate committee is formed. The Grad College hosts a [POSC home page](#) which has videos and training guides to completing and submitting the form.

The POSC is completed during the Agronomy 599M Creative Component Seminar.

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Creative Component – getting started

The creative component is an essential part of getting your MS in Agronomy degree. It is highly recommended to start a project sooner rather than later. Unlike the other classes, this is an independent project, on the student's timeline. There is no calendar, with deadlines and due dates – students must set these on their own. How to get started? Some students come into the program with a project in mind, usually job-related. Others get ideas during their coursework. Still others have absolutely no idea.

Idea generation

- Can you apply MS Agronomy coursework to address issues faced in your everyday work?
- Is there an issue discovered in your coursework you'd like to pursue?
- Is your topic relevant to your career interests?
- Do you have an area of specialization you want to expand upon?
- Is there a project you have at your job that you can also use for a creative component?
- Make sure your topic is interesting to you.
- Make sure the project is manageable.

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

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

Additional requirements for the CC

- The project must show independence and creativity.
- A written report about the project must be developed. The project must demonstrate understanding of agronomic principles in the context of the project topic. The MS Agronomy office has templates for different projects.
- The project must be approved by instructor of the 599M seminar, and then by the major professor.
- The results of the creative component must be defensible in terms of its findings, conclusions, or recommendations to the POS Committee.
- Results must be publishable, the final results will be public information. This means students must be able to present their information during the final oral exam, and there will be a printed a copy of the CC for the student and our library.
- **If a student is doing a research project through work by their company, be sure to get permission from corporate! There can be legal issues with using company data, due to intellectual property rights. Our program does not handle confidentiality agreements.**

599M – Creative Component Credits

MS Agronomy students are required to take a total of 3 credits of 599M: Creative Component. These credits will be split between the Agronomy 599M Seminar (1 credit) and the creative component defense/Final Oral Exam (2 credits).

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Creative Component – getting started, continued

Agronomy 599M Seminar, 1st credit

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

- You should have a topic in mind when registering for the seminar.
- The seminar does have exercises and discussions geared towards the creative component.
- You will be expected to write a proposal.
- You will search for a major professor, with guidance from the seminar instructor.
- Once the major professor is identified, then the POSC form will be completed.
- You should be ready to commit to doing the writing and organization necessary to get your project going, and keep it going while you finish coursework.

Once the seminar semester is over, you can work on your project without registering for any additional credits until the semester you will defend.

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

Alternative to the 599M seminar

Should an opportunity arise to start a project and the timing is not feasible to take the 599M seminar, a student can write a preproposal and start the process independently. The preproposal should be 1-2 pages and include background information about the issue, what the project is about, and how you will go about accomplishing it. Dawn can pass the preproposal to Dr. Moore, who can make recommendations about major professors based on the topic.

Some students like to see what others have done before committing to their project. The MS Agronomy creative component archive is a compilation of all the creative components completed by MS Agronomy graduates. To View CC Archive:

- Go to MS Agronomy website: **masters.agron.iastate.edu**
- At the very top of the website is a black header bar with links, please go to Login
 - ✓ use NetID/password to log in.
- Under the Iowa State University header there are some links. Click **MS Agronomy**.
- Click **Creative Component**
- Click **Creative Component Archive**

Creative Component Progress

Once the seminar semester is over, students can continue to work on their projects and writing without registering for additional credits 599M until the end of the program. It is the student's responsibility maintain communication with their major professor during this time, and especially as it gets closer to planning for a defense.

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Planning a Defense (Final Oral Exam)

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

The MS Agronomy office handles defenses as follows:

1. Program deadline: full draft of CC due the first day of the semester a student hopes to defend
2. The major professor reviews the CC and makes a decision before the Application for Graduation deadline. **The major professor must give the OK to defend.** No plans are made without major professor approval.
3. When **the major professor** gives the green light to defend, the following actions take place:
 - Complete the graduation application. Log into AccessPlus and on the left menu click Graduation. Follow the prompts.
 - Set a defense date. You and your major professor narrow down a week and let Dawn know. Dawn can check the calendars of other committee members.
 - When a defense date is set, then you are registered for the final credits of Agronomy 599M.
 - Your CC is due 2 weeks before your defense for committee review.
4. Dawn arranges the following details:
 - Completion/submission of Request for Final Oral Examination to the Grad College
 - Completion of Graduate Student Approval form
 - Conference room reservation, usually in Agronomy Hall.
 - Agronomy 599M credit registration request to registrar
 - Announcements to other students and faculty.

Defense Day: What to Expect

1. Seminar Presentation
 - Most CC presentations are about 30-40 minutes long, but work with your major professor to determine this
 - A computer will be available for the seminar, no need to bring your own
 - It will be up to you whether you want the audience to ask questions during or after the presentation.
 - Your graduate committee, M.S. Agronomy faculty/staff, Department of Agronomy faculty/students are usually invited to your seminar.
 - You are welcome to bring any family, friends, or coworkers to attend your seminar.
 - Adobe Connect will be used to stream your presentation live and recorded for the CC archive.
2. Committee Meeting/Discussion
 - At the end of the seminar, staff & visitors will be asked to leave. Your committee will meet with you to discuss your project in private.
 - The committee will then ask you to step outside the conference room to discuss your status in private.
 - When the committee is done, they will then finalize the exam with you, sign the Report of Final Oral Exam form, and discuss any corrections/edits to your written document.
3. Exit Interview

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- The MS Agronomy program conducts a formal in-person exit interview, as well as an online survey. These are part of the ongoing evaluation of the program.

Post-Defense & Graduation

1. Students are given two weeks to complete any edits recommended by the graduate committee.
2. When the final copy CC is turned in, and approved by the major professor, Dawn submits the Graduate Student Approval Form, which was signed the day of the defense.
3. Graduation website: <http://www.graduation.iastate.edu/studentinfo/masters>
4. Students must pay all tuition and graduation fees.

Earning the Graduate Certificate in Agronomy

The [Graduate Certificate in Agronomy](#) program was launched Spring 2015. It consists of 6 MS Agronomy courses: 501, 502, 503, 511, 512 & 514. The Grad College has decided to allow MS students to be granted the Certificate when these courses have been completed as they work toward the full master's degree. There will be an additional form to be completed when the POSC is submitted. Instructions will be given at the time the POSC is drafted. Students who already have a POSC will receive different instructions about getting the Certificate added to their POSC.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: STUDENT SITUATIONS

Students usually come into the program with a definite plan in mind for getting their degree. However, life, work and family responsibilities can sidetrack these plans. Examples include busy seasons at work, changing jobs, getting deployed, getting married or divorced, illnesses, having babies, traveling, etc. Listed here are common situations students find themselves in and how they can be handled.

Active Duty Military & Civil Service Deployment

Students who are called to active duty, and who will not be able to either 1) take a course in which registration has been complete; or 2) complete a class already in progress, need to contact the MS Agronomy office as soon as they know. If documentation is needed from the Program regarding your student status, Dawn will provide any information requested.

The Registrar's office has the following procedures: <http://www.veterans.iastate.edu/active-duty>.

Informing the registrar's office of any deployment, expected or unexpected, is imperative to resolve any tuition reimbursement. The records and registration office handles this:

<http://www.veterans.iastate.edu/active-duty#leave>. Students usually need to provide a copy of their military orders.

MS Agronomy students involved with the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce also have options. Links with helpful information include:

- http://www.army.mil/article/49909/Civilian_Expeditionary_Workforce_prepares_civilians_for_deployments/
- <http://cpol.army.mil/library/mobil/>
- Any registration issues that arise will need to be handled according to registrar's office guidelines.

Interruptions in coursework during a semester: Drop vs Incomplete

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

1. Incomplete: Students who are passing the class at the time can use this option.
 - By taking an incomplete, the instructor will give the student an "I" grade when grades are due. Once the "I" grade is submitted, the student has one calendar year to finish the class but it is NOT recommended to take much time to complete the class.
 - An **Icontract** will be completed: <http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/forms>. This form is for benefit of student and instructor. Complete this form by identifying the work the student must complete, and a date upon which all must be complete. This must be agreed upon between both student and instructor.
 - Dawn can request that the BBL section for that class remains open so the student can submit the necessary work. If the year does go by without completing the class, the I grade will turn into an "F".
 - There are two options for an Incomplete depending on how much of the semester has been completed. If it is early in the semester, then the student should plan on participating in the class from start to finish the next time it is offered. If there are just a few requirements left to submit, then agreeing upon a deadline to submit those after the class has ended will suffice.

STUDENT HANDBOOK: STUDENT SITUATIONS

2. Drop: Students who are failing a class, or do not know when they will be able to continue coursework, should drop. Dropping all courses is considered a withdrawal, and is subject to pro-rated tuition reimbursement depending on time of drop: <http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/fees/tuition-adj>
 - Tuition adjustments: list % of tuition owed based on date of drop. More specific information can be found on page 12.
 - Cancel & Reduce Credits: students who drop a class, but remain in at least one, have a specific date to get their tuition reimbursed for the dropped class.
 - ✓ This is usually the 10th day of term.
 - ✓ Before this date, 100% tuition is reimbursed.
 - ✓ After this date, 100% tuition is owed.
 - Last Date to Drop without extenuating circumstances. This is found in the [ISU Academic Calendar](#).
 - ✓ Fall semester this date is usually the end of October.
 - ✓ Spring semester this date is usually the end of March.
 - Should there be extenuating circumstances, and a student must drop after the “last date”, the Grad College requires documentation (doctor’s notes, legal notes) to prove that they were not able to complete the course.

Holds on Registration

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

1. The student will get a one-semester grace period to bring the GPA back up.
2. If the GPA remains under 3.0, the Grad College will place a hold on registration. If this happens, the student will get a letter saying they are on academic probation.
3. If this happens, please contact Dawn (millerdm@iastate.edu) at the MS Agronomy office. She can verify your situation and Dr. Moore can write a request to the grad college to get the hold lifted to take a class in a given semester.
4. A request to lift the hold will be required for every semester the student’s GPA is under 3.0.

The most common confusion is how C grades relate to cumulative GPA. The program follows all Grad College policies, so this is addressed in the ISU Graduate College Student Handbook – Chapter 5, section 5.2, paragraph 5.2.6: <http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/handbook/chapter.php?id=5>.

C Grades vs GPA Clarification: In a nutshell: 3.0 GPA IS MANDATORY

- All ISU graduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0
- C grades are OK only if you still have a GPA of 3.0 or better
- Any courses with C grades must be retaken if GPA is below 3.0. You must show you can succeed before moving on to other courses. This is a program policy.
- Any courses with grades of C- or lower must be retaken, they are not allowed on the POSC.
- You cannot register for courses or graduate without a GPA of 3.0 or above

STUDENT HANDBOOK: STUDENT SITUATIONS

Accounts Receivable Hold: Be sure to keep the UBill paid. The MS in Agronomy office cannot handle this issue. Please see “Accounts Receivable” section, page 7. Students who are delinquent on their Ubill will not be able to register for classes.

Holds on Graduation

The graduate college will not allow a student to graduate with a GPA below 3.0. In this case, the student needs to retake course(s) in which a lower grade was received in order to bring the GPA back up to 3.0 or better.

Students who owe on Ubills or other fees will not be allowed to graduate.

Time off from program

There are times when students just can't manage coursework in addition to other commitments. A semester or two away from the program will likely not affect progression. If that time extends beyond a semester, this triggers some changes in accounts & status:

- After 6 months a student's NetID will be suspended, and will need to be reactivated by the Solution Center (515.294.4000).
- If a student does not register for classes for two years (equivalent of 4 semesters) the graduate college will change their records to Inactive status. In order to return to the program, the Graduate College will require the “[Reinstatement to Active Status](#)” form.
- Dawn follows this policy - students remain on the MS Agronomy active student list until the grad college flags records as Inactive. Students are then notified that they will be taken off the program active student list until they are reinstated. They will no longer receive communication from the MS Agronomy office.

Graduate College 7-Year rule

The Graduate College now has a 7-year policy to complete an MS degree at ISU. This rule applies to MS Agronomy students in the following manner:

- The MS Agronomy degree is a 40-credit program, and the minimum number of credits to graduate with a master's degree at ISU is 30.
- MS Agronomy students must take all MS Agronomy courses to complete degree requirements. However, up to 10 credits could go overage and a student could still graduate with 30 credits. To clarify:
 - ✓ Courses over 7 years old will count towards completing the degree. However, the older courses may not be added into the total credit count for graduation.
 - ✓ For example, if 2 of your 3-credit courses were completed more than 7 years prior to your graduating semester, 34 credits would be counted rather than 40.
- If you transferred in a course from another institution, this course may not be counted towards graduation if it was taken more than 7 years prior to your graduating semester.
- Be sure to plan your creative component early! If you complete your courses in 4 years, then wait 4 years to finish your CC, the 7 year rule applies to the first courses you took.
- If you reach the point where you have more than 10 program credits that are overage, then you will need to retake courses if you hope to graduate from the program.
- Overage courses must be removed from the POSC prior to graduation.