This handbook Contains Information from the ISU Graduate College Handbook as it pertains to MS Agronomy students.
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MS Agronomy Program Director
1577 Agronomy Hall
Email: westgate@iastate.edu
Phone: 515.294.9654

Dawn Miller
Academic Advisor, MS Agronomy Program
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Email: millerdm@iastate.edu
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Gretchen Anderson
Program Coordinator, MS Agronomy Dev Lab
Office: 2104G Agronomy Hall
Email: gretchen@iastate.edu
Phone: 515.294.6602

ISU Solution Center: (515.294.4000, solution@iastate.edu); NetID, CyMail, AccessPlus

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

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

ISU Graduate College: (515-294.4531, grad_college@iastate.edu)

ISU Admissions: (515-294-5836; 800-262-3810, Grad_admissions@iastate.edu)
**Student Handbook: Student Accounts**

**University ID Number (UID) & 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 University ID number (UID).** 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 UID are used for:

1. **AccessPlus:** you will use your UID to log into AccessPlus.
2. **ISU library:** you will need the last 11 digits of your ISU card number (UID 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 UID.

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

1. If you happen to be on campus you can get your card in person. The ISU Card Office is located in 0530 Beardshear Hall. You need to fill out an ISUCard application, and get your picture taken. They require a photo ID.
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, UID 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 your UID, as a distance student the ISUCard itself would be rarely used.

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

- After you log in, click the A+ tab.
- On the left menu click ISU ID’s.
- Your NetID, University ID and ISUCard number are located there.
**Student Handbook: Student Accounts**

**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. OKTA Application dashboard: [https://login.iastate.edu/](https://login.iastate.edu/)
   - OKTA is a single sign-in application. In the dashboard, you can add URL’s for the systems you will use
   - MS Agronomy course website
   - Learning Management System – Canvas
   - MS Agronomy main website for creative component archive
   - Agronomy department Virtual Laboratory (AGRON 513 uses this)

2. Your NetID becomes the first half of your Cymail (ISU email) account address. It will be [NetID@iastate.edu](mailto:NetID@iastate.edu).

3. Register for a NetID using this link: [https://asw.iastate.edu/cgi-bin/acropolis/register](https://asw.iastate.edu/cgi-bin/acropolis/register). You will need your ISU Card number.

**ISU Email: Cymail**

*Once you are admitted and have your NetID, 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 submitted your preapplication. 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 for you listed in our database.

*It is extremely important that you either use or check your Cymail account regularly.* If you prefer, you can forward your Cymail to another email account that you use on a regular basis. Here are directions:

1. Use this link: [http://asw.iastate.edu](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**
   - Click button **Delivered to Email Address** and enter your preferred email here
5. Click **Update Now**
6. Then Logout
**Student Handbook: Student Accounts**

**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. **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.
   - URL for help video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-NPO-zPQE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-NPO-zPQE)
   - Be sure you know in advance what courses you want to register for (see page 9).
4. **Class Schedule**: This is the only official record of your registration.
   - Do not look for your registration by checking your Ubill or Canvas.
5. **Current Student Info**: Shows contact information, Major Professor and Major.
   - When a registration period is active, you will find an assigned date and time to access the system.
6. **Enrollment Certification**: This provides a link to a clearinghouse that will provide an Enrollment Verification Certificate. Students use this mainly for proof of enrollment to their employers or for funding support.
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 an explanation of different sections:
   - **Required to Apply for Graduation**
     - Status: Active or Inactive (see page 7)
     - Admission type: Full or Inactive
     - GPA: will stay green if 3.0 or above (see page 21)
     - 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 page 21)
   - **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 registered (whether or not a class was completed)
**Student Handbook: Student Accounts**

AccessPlus, continued…

- Graduation Application: Semester/year
- Final Oral Exam: Semester/year

- Required to take Final Exam:
  - 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 according to how you have completed courses according to your POSC.

- 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 transcripts. You can also use this to order official transcripts.

10. **Graduation**: When ready to defend, this is the link to apply for graduation. [Grad College Graduation Deadlines](#)

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 can handle all correspondence with Admissions, the Registrar and the Graduate College on your behalf. If you have questions, please contact her and she can assist you.**

Office of Admissions
10 Enrollment Services Center
Phone: 515-294-5836; 800-262-3810
Grad_admissions@iastate.edu

Program Contact:  Dawn Miller, Academic Advisor, 515-294-2999; msagron@iastate.edu

During the Admissions process, the selection committee determined that you could be admitted on Full status. You must remain on this status in order to register for classes or graduate (see page 21).

ISU English Requirements
There are several English placement requirements for students whose native language is not English. These requirements start with Admissions. 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.*

Students need to meet each requirement in progression in order to fulfil Admissions and Grad College policy:

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 (within 2 years of application):
   - Internet Based TOEFL (iBT) 79
   - Paper-Based TOEFL (PBT) 550
   - IELTS 6.5

   Students who meet or exceed the following TOEFL or IELTS cores will fulfil ISU English placement requirements, and will not need to do #2 or #3 below:
   - 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 fulfill 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.
   - 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.
**Student Handbook: ISU Offices**

- 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 fulfill the ISU English placement requirement.

**Graduate College (GC)**
1137 Pearson Hall
Email: grad_college@iastate.edu
Phone: 515-294-4531

Program Contact: Dawn Miller, Academic Advisor, 515-294-2999; msagron@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)
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. Courses must be retaken 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 to full admission.
4. **POSC Approval**: The online 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.
6. **Application for Graduation**: Submitted before the beginning of the semester a student intends to defend and graduate. In AccessPlus, on the left menu is the Graduation link.
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. Submitted by Dawn Miller.
9. **Graduate Student Approval form**: Submitted after final defense when final copy of CC has been sent in to the MS Agronomy office. Prepped and submitted by Dawn Miller.
Online and Distance Learning
10 Enrollment Services Center
Email: distance@iastate.edu
Phone: 515-294-2331

This website site offers all information related to distance education at ISU. The most relevant for MS Agronomy students is the Tuition and fees section (in Programs & Courses menu).

Costs are a combination of tuition, technology fees, and department of Agronomy course delivery fee. These fees are subject to change. Use the Tuition and Fees page to get the most accurate information.

1. ISU Distance Graduate Tuition Experiential Learning Based Majors (resident tuition, regardless of location)
   - $547/credit (as of Fall 2018)
2. ISU technology fee (depends on number of credits/semester)
   - 4 credits or less = $53.50
   - 4.5 – 8 credits = $80.25
3. Agronomy Department delivery fee (the department cost of providing distance courses)
   - 3 credit class = $250 (you will not find this in the Tuition and Fees page, as it is course-specific. The delivery fee will be posted in the schedule of classes.

Sample of fee breakdown: You decide to take one 3-credit course in any given semester. The UBill would be:
$1,641 (Tuition) +
$53.50 (tech fee) +
$250 (delivery fee)
$1,944.50 total

Financial Aid
0210 Beardshear Hall
Email addresses: financialaid@iastate.edu; studentloans@iastate.edu
Phone numbers: Main office 515-294-2223; Student Loan Ed Office 515-294-0677

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. Financial Aid Office Scholarship List

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

Other Scholarship Opportunities
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.

ISU College of Ag Scholarships
**Student Handbook: ISU Offices**

ASA-CSSA-SSSA: for each of the following sites, scroll to the bottom and look for scholarships

American Society of Agronomy Scholarships;
Crop Science Society of America Scholarships
Soil Science Society of America Scholarships

**Accounts Receivable (AR)**
0880 Beardshear Hall
Email: ubill@iastate.edu
Phone: 515-294-7388

The MS Agronomy office cannot access or process 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 or diploma not be available until the graduation fee and/or any leftover tuition has been paid.

3. **Payment Options**

4. **Employer Reimbursement** Deferment Plan: 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.

5. Itemized tuition billing statement: Some employers require a student to provide an itemized billing statement, which the AR office provides upon request.
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 course progression. The following list contains program courses, their prerequisites and availability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Name</th>
<th>Prerequisite</th>
<th>Semester offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>501</td>
<td>Crop Growth and Development</td>
<td>Program admission</td>
<td>Fall &amp; Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>502</td>
<td>Chemistry, Physics and Biology of Soils</td>
<td>Program admission</td>
<td>Fall (always), Spring (odd years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>503</td>
<td>Climate and Crop Growth</td>
<td>Program admission</td>
<td>Fall &amp; Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>511</td>
<td>Crop Improvement</td>
<td>Agron 501</td>
<td>Fall &amp; Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>512</td>
<td>Soil-Plant Environment</td>
<td>Agron 502, Recommended: 501</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>513</td>
<td>Quantitative Methods for Agronomy</td>
<td>Program admission</td>
<td>Fall &amp; Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>514</td>
<td>Integrated Pest Management</td>
<td>Agron 501</td>
<td>Fall &amp; Spring (will change 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>531</td>
<td>Crop Management and Ecology</td>
<td>Agron 501, 502, 503; Recommended: 512, 514</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>532</td>
<td>Soil Management</td>
<td>Agron 501, 503, 512; Recommended: 513</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>533</td>
<td>Crop Protection</td>
<td>Agron 514</td>
<td>Summer &amp; Fall (will change 2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>591</td>
<td>Agronomic Systems Analysis</td>
<td>Agron 511, 513, 531, 532, 533</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>592</td>
<td>Current Issues in Agronomy</td>
<td>Agron 501, 503, 511, 512, 513, 514</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>594</td>
<td>Practicum in Agronomy</td>
<td>Agron 501, 502, 503; Recommended: 511, 512, 513</td>
<td>Summer; 1 week on-campus in mid-July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>599M</td>
<td>Creative Component Seminar</td>
<td>Must have workable idea, preferably before halfway point</td>
<td>Fall &amp; Spring 1 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>599M</td>
<td>Creative Component, Defense of CC</td>
<td>Defense date set</td>
<td>Fall, Spring, Summer 2 credits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Buying Textbooks

The MS Agronomy Office will include 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.

The University Bookstore has a comparison tool when you look up your class using the UBS site. UBS books 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.

Course Searches – checking availability
1. College of Agriculture & Life Sciences Online Learning
   a. From the menu bar, click Courses. There are drop down boxes with your options.
      • Semester – Spring, Summer, Fall
      • Department – choose Agronomy – this will show all Agronomy courses
      • Program – choose Agronomy MS – this will show only MS Agronomy courses
2. Registrar’s Office Schedule of Classes
   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, 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. Select a level – MS Agronomy courses are all 500-level
   e. 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. General rules of thumb:
• Registration for spring semester starts close to October 20th
• Registration for summer and fall starts close to March 20th

Dawn Miller will send 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. Help 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 (this is found in the Student Info in Access Plus). To bypass these requirements, please contact the MS 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
The student scheduling office will send out critical drop dates to registered students before each semester begins. Keep this information if you get into a situation in which you must drop a class.

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

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.

Drop fee assessment/reimbursement schedule:
Your UBill is posted in AccessPlus the beginning of the month the semester starts. The ISU Academic calendar shows fee postings, billing dates, drop dates, etc.

1. 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)

2. 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 10th day of the term, you will be refunded 100% of your tuition and fees, including the Agronomy delivery fee.
   b. After the 10th day of the term, you will forfeit any reimbursement and ISU will retain 100% of your payment for the dropped class. This includes the Agronomy delivery fee.

3. 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drop Date:</th>
<th>You are reimbursed:</th>
<th>You are responsible for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During week 1</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During week 2</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During week 3</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During week 4</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After week 4</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tuition Adjustment webpage
Preparing for Online Coursework
MS Agronomy website has a Tech Test page to check for supported programs and browsers.

Online Course Materials
Course materials are NOT hosted in the Learning Management System (CANVAS), but separately from the MS Agronomy website. Course access will be granted to students shortly before the start of the term. Students are notified when course materials are ready.

1. Course Materials can be found starting with the MS Agronomy website.
   - On the white header bar, click Courses.
2. This shows the Access Courses Page. Each course that is taught in the most recent term will be listed with a number of icons. Each icon means the following:
   - Course information, available to anyone
   - Syllabus: this is the course introduction, available to anyone
   - Complete set of course materials, available only to MS Agronomy Program students. Once course materials are open, there is a link to LOG IN on the bottom left menu.
   - Canvas: This is the ISU LMS, used by all ISU students and faculty (see below)

Backup Course Materials
- 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.

Learning Management System
Canvas, has a number of support sources:
- ISU Solution Center Canvas support page
- Self Help Canvas Guides
- My Canvas Student learning guide

Canvas is used in the following way:
1. Students submit assignments, reflections and participate in discussions.
2. Instructors grade student work and enter scores in the grade center.
3. The grade center lists grades for individual student submissions and calculated fields tally a total score.
4. Students find their scores for their work in Grades.
Student Handbook: Program Progression

Advisor vs Major Professor
Dawn Miller is academic 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, defense planning, graduation requirements, etc. Any and all questions should start with Dawn.

Dawn sends a progress check by email once per year in the late winter/early spring. She will assess your progress based on the following criteria, and advise action based on any issues:

- Number of credits completed, as compared to total
- Courses completed, in relation to course prerequisites
- 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 a one-time on-campus requirement, held in mid-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 practicum 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: The program student population is so large that priority to register for 594 will be given to those students who are furthest along in the program (completed the most credits) or tracking in the program faster than others (2 courses per semester). Dawn takes a look at program progress to determine the priority list.

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.
POSC, continued

- The Agronomy Department requires a committee of two members, the major professor and one faculty committee member. If your major professor is outside the department, an Agronomy faculty member is co-Major Professor with that person.
- Dr. Mark Westgate, as program director, will serve as your second committee member in either the co-major professor or committee member capacity.
- You are welcome to choose a work supervisor as an unofficial 3rd committee member if your creative component is work related.

Program of Study: This is the second part of the POSC. It 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 (see page 16).
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 copy of the CC for the student and our library.
- If a student is conducting a research project for their company that is handling proprietary information, be sure to get permission from the work supervisor and corporate legal department. 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).
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:

- Students should have a topic in mind when registering for the seminar.
- The seminar has exercises and discussions geared towards creative component development.
- Students will be expected to write a proposal.
- Students 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.
- Students should be ready to commit to doing the writing and organization necessary to get their project going, and keep it going while finishing coursework.

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. Westgate, 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.

**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 by providing updates and sending written drafts for review and editing.

**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 plans 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:
**Student Handbook: Program Progression**

**Planning a Defense, continued**

- 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 Dawn will send a request to register you for the final 2 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 the proper length
   - 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 your 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
   - 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. The creative component needs to be uploaded to the ISU Digital Repository.
4. Graduation website
5. 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. MS Agronomy students can be granted the Certificate when these courses have been completed as they work toward the full master’s degree.

Students interested in being granted the Certificate must complete some paperwork:

- [Request to Pursue a Certificate in Addition to a Graduate Degree](#)
- [Certificate Program of Study (CPOS)](#)
**Student Handbook: Student Situations**

Students usually start 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.

Please communicate with Dawn Miller if you have any impediment to course completion or program progress. You should never feel like you have to handle a situation on your own. Dawn is your advisor – you can share issues and she can find ways to help you. 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.

**Veterans Center Active Duty procedures**

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

- 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” when grades are submitted. Once the “I” grade is submitted, the student has one calendar year to finish the class. It is NOT recommended to take much time to complete the class.
   
   - An **Incontract** will be completed. This form is an agreement between student and instructor. It does not need to be submitted to the Registrar or Grad College. Complete this form by identifying the work the student has yet to finish, and a date upon which all must be complete. This must be agreed upon between both student and instructor.

   - There are two options for an Incomplete depending on how much of the semester has passed.
     
     1. 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.
     
     2. 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**

**Drop vs Incomplete, continued**

- Dawn can request that the Canvas 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”.

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 tuition reimbursement adjustments depending on time of drop. See page 11 for detailed explanation.

**Holds on Registration or Graduation**

**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. New students (1st semester) will get a one-semester grace period to bring the GPA back up. More advanced students will do not receive this grace period.
2. The Grad College will inform a student if he/she has been placed on Academic Probation for a GPA under 3.0. There will be a hold placed on registration for future semesters.
3. If this happens, please contact Dawn (millerdm@iastate.edu) at the MS Agronomy office. She can ask Dr. Westgate to send a request to the Grad College to get the hold lifted to take a class.
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 for students is how C grades relate to cumulative GPA. The program follows all Grad College policies - this is addressed in the ISU Graduate College Student Handbook – **Chapter 5, section 5.2, paragraph 5.2.6:**

**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**

**Accounts Receivable Hold:** Students who are delinquent on their Ubill will not be able to register for classes, and will not receive a diploma if they have graduated. Please see “Accounts Receivable” section, page 8.

**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 program 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. It will be reactivated the next time a student registers for and starts a course.
- Library access gets suspended. It will resume when a student is registered for a class.
Student Handbook: Student Situations

Time off from program, continued

- If a student does not register for classes for two years (equivalent of 4 semesters) the graduate college will flag a student’s records Inactive.
  - 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. They will no longer receive communication from the MS Agronomy office.
  - In order to continue the program, the Graduate College will require the “Reinstatement to Active Status” form.

Degree Completion Timeline/7-Year rule

Determining the length of time students have to complete the MS Agronomy program is based on a number of factors:

1. The minimum number credits to graduate with a master’s degree at ISU is 30. The MS Agronomy degree program is 40 credits. This means 9 credits can go overage and a student can still graduate with 31 credits.

2. The Graduate College has a 7-year policy to complete an MS degree at ISU. However, up to 6 course credits can be 8-10 years old and still be accepted for graduation. This is explained in detail in the Graduate Student Handbook Section 6.3.4

3. The pace at which students complete coursework (1 or 2 courses/semester).

Other notes about timeline:

- 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.
- The clock starts ticking from the time the first class is completed. If courses are completed in 4 years, but then it takes 4 years to finish the creative component, the 7 year rule is applied from the very first course.