

# AGRONOMY, PHD

**Admissions to the Agronomy PhD will be suspended as of fall 2026 and will be discontinued as of fall 2032. If you have any questions, please contact the department.**

The mission of the Agronomy program is to generate, integrate, and apply knowledge about crop plants that are grown for food, feed, and the general benefit of humankind. We find and disseminate answers to problems and discover opportunities concerning efficiency and sustainability of production, improvements in quality, and methods for safe and environmentally-sound practices.

An education in agronomy prepares graduates for professional careers in research, teaching, and extension at academic and government institutions, and for research and technical careers in industry in areas such as biotechnology, agroecology, cropping systems ecology and ecosystem modeling, crop management and protection, plant breeding, biochemistry, genetics, and genomics.

The UW-Madison Agronomy program is one of the most highly ranked and regarded programs in the nation. We are committed to integrated research, development, teaching, and outreach to address issues of food scarcity, food quality and nutrition, environmental impact, and sustainability.

The program maintains or has access to excellent facilities for research, including fully equipped laboratories, growth chambers and greenhouses, and complete field facilities at nearby agricultural research stations and throughout the state. Students have access to highly controlled plant growth facilities at the university's Biotron and to special analytical services provided by the campus Biotechnology Center. The Wisconsin Crop Innovation Center opened in 2017 and houses a cutting edge transgenic plant laboratory and 26,000 square feet of highly controlled greenhouse space and other lab facilities.

## ADMISSIONS

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**Students interested in the Agronomy PhD may want to consider the Plant Science and Technology PhD, a new program as of Fall 2025. This new program replaces the Agronomy PhD. If you have any questions, please contact the department.**

Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. **Applicants must meet the minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>) of the Graduate School as well as the program(s).** Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	December 1
Spring Deadline	September 1
Summer Deadline	December 1
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required.
English Proficiency Test	Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241</a> ( <a href="https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/">https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/</a> ).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a
Letters of Recommendation Required	3

Candidates for graduate study should have a bachelor's degree in agriculture or in the biological, chemical, or physical sciences. Students considering graduate study in Agronomy should make inquiries to the graduate program several months before the desired enrollment date. In addition to the online application, the graduate program requires a statement of purpose, transcripts, and three letters of recommendation with two from academic sources.

Candidates for research and teaching assistantships can be accepted twice a year, at summer/fall and spring admissions.

Applicants are required to have taken the following coursework to pursue a PhD in Agronomy. At the graduate program's discretion, students may be admitted with deficiencies. These deficiencies are expected to be completed within the first semester of study.

### PREPARATORY COURSEWORK

- 1 year general chemistry with labs
- 1 semester organic chemistry with labs
- 1 semester physics
- 1 semester calculus
- 1 semester statistics
- 4 semesters of biology distributed among three of the following four areas: biochemistry; genetics; plant morphology, anatomy or physiology; and taxonomy, evolution, or ecology.

## FUNDING

### FUNDING

#### GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

[The Bursar's Office provides information about tuition and fees associated with being a graduate student.](#) [Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid.](#) [Further funding information is available from the Graduate School.](#)

Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

#### PROGRAM RESOURCES

The vast majority of our graduate students are awarded research assistantships to fund their education. These RA appointments come with tuition remission and a monthly stipend for living expenses. These

assistantships come directly from the mentoring faculty; as a result, space in our graduate program is extremely limited. We do not support lab rotations. More details can be found here (<https://pasdept.wisc.edu/agronomy-graduate/#funding>).

## REQUIREMENTS

### MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum degree requirements (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#requirements>) and policies (<https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policies>), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

### MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

#### MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/ Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	No

#### Mode of Instruction Definitions

**Accelerated:** Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

**Evening/Weekend:** Courses meet on the UW–Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

**Face-to-Face:** Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW–Madison Campus.

**Hybrid:** These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

**Online:** These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

### CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

#### Requirement Detail

Minimum Credit Requirement 51 credits

Minimum Residence Credit Requirement 32 credits

Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement 26 credits must be graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244> (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/>).

Overall Graduate GPA Requirement 3.00 GPA required. Refer to the Graduate School: Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirement policy: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203> (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203/>).

Other Grade Requirements n/a

**Assessments and Examinations** Doctoral students are required to take a comprehensive preliminary/oral examination after they have cleared their record of all incomplete and progress grades (other than research and dissertation).

As a PhD student you must take your final oral exam within five years of passing the preliminary examination or you will be required to take another preliminary examination and be admitted to candidacy for a second time. All PhD candidates are required to present an exit seminar. This often is most convenient just prior to the final examination, or you may present the seminar as part of the agronomy colloquium. The final examination ordinarily covers your dissertation and the general fields of your major and minor studies.

Deposit of the doctoral dissertation in the Graduate School is required.

**Language Requirements** none

**Graduate School Breadth Requirement** All doctoral students are required to complete a doctoral minor or graduate/professional certificate. Refer to the Graduate School: Breadth Requirement in Doctoral Training policy: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1200> (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1200/>).

The coursework for completion of the breadth requirement is decided at the time of certification, with approval of the minor or certificate advisor. The minor or certificate department sets the requirements for completion. In both options, one course cross-listed with the major may be used for the minor or certificate, so long as it is staffed by the minor or certificate department and is not applicable to any requirements of the major.

The type and completion of the minor or certificate is reported to the Graduate School on the preliminary examination warrant.

### REQUIRED COURSES

Code	Title	Credits
Complete three semesters of one or both of the following:		
PLANTSCI 920	Seminar in Plant Science and Technology	1
PLANTSCI 957	Seminar in Plant Breeding and Plant Genetics	1

The Agronomy graduate program requires two full-time semesters in residence for a PhD. Your certification committee can petition the graduate studies committee for a deviation from the residence requirement under unique circumstances.

Teaching experience is not required, but is highly recommended and the time for completion of this recommended experience should be included on the certification form.

## POLICIES

### GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) serve as the official document of record for Graduate School academic and administrative policies and procedures and are updated continuously. Note some policies redirect to entries in the official UW-Madison Policy Library (<https://policy.wisc.edu/>). Programs may set more stringent policies than the Graduate School. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

### MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

#### PRIOR COURSEWORK

##### Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

##### Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

##### Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

##### Credits Earned as a University Special Student at UW-Madison

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

#### PROBATION

If students were admitted on probation and they satisfy the conditions outlined at the time of admission, probationary status will be removed automatically. Once their studies have begun, students are expected to make satisfactory progress toward their degree.

Refer to the Graduate School: Probation (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1217/>) policy.

#### ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

Refer to the Graduate School: Advisor (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1232/>) and Graduate School: Committees (Doctoral/Master's/MFA) (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1201/>) policies.

#### CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

The Graduate School considers full-time enrollment to be 8–15 credits taken numbered 300 or above, excluding pass/fail and audit, during the fall and spring semesters, and 4–12 credits during the summer term. If students elect not to enroll as full-time students as defined by the Graduate School, they are responsible for knowing about possible obligations that may require full-time status. Such obligations may include visa eligibility, fellowships, assistantships, financial aid, external funding agencies, and program satisfactory progress requirements.

Dissertators take exactly 3 credits per semester.

#### TIME LIMITS

Refer to the Graduate School: Time Limits (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1221/>) policy.

#### GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure>)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>)
  - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (<https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/>)
- Employee Assistance (<http://www.eao.wisc.edu/>) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (<https://employeeabilities.wisc.edu/>) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (<https://grad.wisc.edu/>) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (<https://osas.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (<http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/>) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>) (for concerns about discrimination)

#### College of Agricultural and Life Sciences: Grievance Policy

In the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs), any student who feels unfairly treated by a member of the CALs faculty or staff has the right to complain about the treatment and to receive a prompt hearing. Some complaints may arise from misunderstandings or communication breakdowns and be easily resolved; others may require formal action. Complaints may concern any matter of perceived unfairness.

To ensure a prompt and fair hearing of any complaint, and to protect the rights of both the person complaining and the person at whom the complaint is directed, the following procedures are used in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Any student, undergraduate or graduate, may use these procedures, except employees whose complaints are covered under other campus policies.

1. The student should first talk with the person at whom the complaint is directed. Most issues can be settled at this level. Others may be resolved by established departmental procedures.

2. If the student is unsatisfied, and the complaint involves any unit outside CALS, the student should seek the advice of the dean or director of that unit to determine how to proceed.
  - a. If the complaint involves an academic department in CALS the student should proceed in accordance with item 3 below.
  - b. If the grievance involves a unit in CALS that is not an academic department, the student should proceed in accordance with item 4 below.
3. The student should contact the department's grievance advisor within 120 calendar days of the alleged unfair treatment. The departmental administrator can provide this person's name. The grievance advisor will attempt to resolve the problem informally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, in discussions with the student and the person at whom the complaint is directed.
  - a. If informal mediation fails, the student can submit the grievance in writing to the grievance advisor within 10 working days of the date the student is informed of the failure of the mediation attempt by the grievance advisor. The grievance advisor will provide a copy to the person at whom the grievance is directed.
  - b. The grievance advisor will refer the complaint to a department committee that will obtain a written response from the person at whom the complaint is directed, providing a copy to the student. Either party may request a hearing before the committee. The grievance advisor will provide both parties a written decision within 20 working days from the date of receipt of the written complaint.
  - c. If the grievance involves the department chairperson, the grievance advisor or a member of the grievance committee, these persons may not participate in the review.
  - d. If not satisfied with departmental action, either party has 10 working days from the date of notification of the departmental committee action to file a written appeal to the CALS Equity and Diversity Committee. A subcommittee of this committee will make a preliminary judgement as to whether the case merits further investigation and review. If the subcommittee unanimously determines that the case does not merit further investigation and review, its decision is final. If one or more members of the subcommittee determine that the case does merit further investigation and review, the subcommittee will investigate and seek to resolve the dispute through mediation. If this mediation attempt fails, the subcommittee will bring the case to the full committee. The committee may seek additional information from the parties or hold a hearing. The committee will present a written recommendation to the dean who will provide a final decision within 20 working days of receipt of the committee recommendation.
4. If the alleged unfair treatment occurs in a CALS unit that is not an academic department, the student should, within 120 calendar days of the alleged incident, take his/her grievance directly to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. The dean will attempt to resolve the problem informally within 10 working days of receiving the complaint. If this mediation attempt does not succeed the student may file a written complaint with the dean who will refer it to the CALS Equity and Diversity Committee. The committee will seek a written response from the person at whom the complaint is directed, subsequently following other steps delineated in item 3d above.

## OTHER

n/a

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/>) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

### PROGRAM RESOURCES

The agronomy program does not require but encourages all students to complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP). As you begin your Graduate School career, an Individual Development Plan (IDP) is an essential tool to help you:

- (1) Assess your current skills and strengths
- (2) Make a plan for developing skills that will help you meet your academic and professional goals
- (3) Communicate with your advisors and mentors about your evolving goals and related skills.

For graduate students in the natural sciences and engineering, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) online tool provides a comprehensive set of materials and exercises that will guide you through the process of self-assessment, career exploration, goal-setting, and implementation of your plan. Set up a free account to create and monitor your IDP at [myidp.sciencecareers.org](http://myidp.sciencecareers.org) (<http://myidp.sciencecareers.org/>).

The UW-Madison IDP template (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/idp/>), which includes instructions and examples, is flexible and appropriate for all disciplines.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Articulates challenges and limits with respect to knowledge within the field of agronomy.
2. Independently formulates ideas and/or research methods to advance knowledge within the field of agronomy.
3. Independently conducts research that makes a substantial contribution to the field of agronomy.
4. Demonstrates understanding of the primary field of agronomy in a historical, social, or global context.
5. Communicates complex ideas in a clear and understandable manner.
6. Fosters ethical conduct and professional guidelines.
7. Fosters best practices with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion in scientific endeavors