The information contained here has been prepared to assist graduate students in becoming familiar with the operating procedures and requirements of the College of Natural Resources and Environment. The following is the website link as a resource for newly admitted graduate students. It would be to your advantage to review all of this information. [http://graduateschool.vt.edu/admitted/index.html](http://graduateschool.vt.edu/admitted/index.html)

General university procedures can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/), which includes information on admission, degree requirements, preparation of documents, and other important topics. Departments, major professors, and advisory committees may prescribe additional requirements.

All graduate students are expected to be familiar and comply with university, college, department, and subject area requirements. In addition, graduate students must follow the Graduate Honor Code ([http://graduateschool.vt.edu/admitted/policies.html](http://graduateschool.vt.edu/admitted/policies.html)). Failure to comply satisfactorily with all requirements may seriously inconvenience the student and could lead to assistantship termination and/or dismissal from the program.

Following are department heads names and where they can be found.

- **Dr. Janaki Alavalapati**  
  Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation  
  Room 313, Cheatham Hall

- **Dr. Eric Hallerman**  
  Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation  
  Room 100, Cheatham Hall

- **Dr. Bill Carstensen**  
  Department of Geography  
  Room 115A, Major Williams Hall

- **Dr. Barry Goodell**  
  Department of Sustainable Biomaterials  
  Room 230, Cheatham Hall

Graduate students should report, as noted below, as soon as possible after arrival on campus in order to sign the necessary payroll forms. When reporting, be prepared to show proof of citizenship or immigration status. For U.S. citizens, a current photo identification card and either an original Social Security card or an original birth certificate are required. Copies are not acceptable.

**Fish and Wildlife Conservation** - Dana Keith (100 Cheatham Hall / 231-5573)  
**Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation** - Sue Snow (313 Cheatham Hall / 231-5483)  
**Wood Science and Forest Products** - Debbie Garnand (230 Cheatham Hall / 231-8853)  
**Geography** - Karen Bland (115 Major Williams Hall / 231-7557)
The Graduate School, the College of Natural Resources and Environment, and the departments all offer orientation events for new students. Check the appropriate websites for dates and times or check with Teresa Quesinberry in 138 Cheatham Hall (231-5482, tquesinb@vt.edu).

Dr. Dean Stauffer is the Associate Dean for Academic Programs for the College of Natural Resources and Environment. He is available to assist you with any academic issues you may encounter. Dr. Stauffer is located in 138 Cheatham Hall, and can be reached at dstauffe@vt.edu or 231-5297.

DEAN’S COUNCIL DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES FOR 2012-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish and Wildlife Conservation</td>
<td>Brandon Peoples</td>
<td>Bernardo Mesa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation</td>
<td>Kim Cowgill</td>
<td>Beth Boehme</td>
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<td>Geography</td>
<td>Haitao Wang</td>
<td>Justin White</td>
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<td>Sustainable Biomaterials</td>
<td>Jose Villasenor</td>
<td>Jeff Dolan</td>
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who will my major professor/graduate advisor be?
Your major professor or graduate advisor is a faculty member within your department and will be assigned by your department. They will provide you with specific information and guidelines regarding your plan of study.

How do I request approval for an independent study?
You will need to complete the 5974 Graduate Independent Study Request form located in a link through our home page at http://cnre.vt.edu/students/forms/index.html. Follow the instructions on the form for completing it, obtaining signatures, and then return it to the Academic Programs Office for the final approval and signature from the associate dean, Dr. Stauffer.

How do I request to add a class which I am not able to add myself (force add)?
Force add forms are located at the receptionist desk in Room 138 Cheatham Hall. This form requires approval signature from the instructor of the course first and then approval signature from the department head and then returned to Room 138 for processing.

Is there funding available for my research through the College of Natural Resources and Environment?
Your department may or may not have funding for research. Please check with your graduate advisor on what might be available and how to apply for funding.

Is there other graduate student funding available?
DESK, LABORATORY SPACE, AND KEYS

Desk and laboratory space will be provided for graduate students by the appropriate department head if and when such space is available. Department of Geography graduate students should see Karen Bland in 115 Major Williams Hall regarding desk, lab space, and keys.

Building keys for Cheatham Hall are available from Arlice Banks in the Dean’s office in Room 324, Cheatham Hall. Please help to keep Cheatham Hall secure by relocking entry doors at night and on weekends. **Do not prop doors open for any reason.** A signed key slip, available from department head administrative assistants, and a deposit of $5.00 per key, are required for each separate key request. The Dean’s office in Room 324 will process a reimbursement request once you return your keys upon leaving Virginia Tech. This request is processed through the Virginia Tech HokieMart system and a check will be direct deposited into your account, so please don’t close your account until your refund check has been deposited. Cash refunds are not allowed.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE

How to contact the CNRE HelpDesk:
- Phone: 1-9599
- Email: CNREHelpDesk@vt.edu
- Web: it.cnre.vt.edu
- Physical: 216 C Cheatham Hall

Lon Weber - IT Director, Microcomputer Teaching Lab Manager
Les Fuller – Systems Administrator, CEARS lab manager, Geography computer lab manager
Chad Dent – HelpDesk Technician, Brooks computer lab manager
Will Pfeil – Web and Media Specialist

HEALTH SERVICES AND HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

Certain immunizations are required for students attending Virginia Tech. Refer to the Schiiftert Health Center’s website ([http://www.healthcenter.vt.edu/](http://www.healthcenter.vt.edu/)) for a list of requirements. Mandatory student fees (US $836.50 per semester for Virginia residents; US $1,138.50 per semester for non-Virginia residents) include a charge for health services. Services include unlimited visits, most medications, and most laboratory procedures. As not all medical situations can be treated at the Schiiftert Health Center, additional medical insurance is recommended. Information regarding health insurance is available at: [http://www.co.vt.edu/Risk/studenthealthinsr/](http://www.co.vt.edu/Risk/studenthealthinsr/) or, for your convenience the Student Medical Insurance office is located at the Student Services Building; Room 110. The hours of operation are 8:00am – Noon and 1:00pm – 5:00pm Monday-Friday. Phone 540-231-6226 / Email smi@vt.edu.
You may also visit the Frequently Asked Questions section from the Graduate School’s website on insurance benefits: [http://www.grads.vt.edu/financial/insurance/ga_benefit/index.html](http://www.grads.vt.edu/financial/insurance/ga_benefit/index.html)
• Health Insurance Sign Up – There are 2 sessions offered in the Graduate Life Center lobby (Tuesday, 8/21, 12:00-3:00 p.m. and Thursday, 8/23, 2:00-4:30 p.m.)
Please plan to attend one of these sessions.

GRADUATE ADVISOR AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The department head, in consultation with the faculty, makes major professor (also known as "advisor," “graduate advisor,” or “graduate committee chair”) assignments. Students are encouraged to consult with the appropriate department head if changes in major professor assignments or field of study become desirable.

Prior to initial registration, each graduate student’s academic background is evaluated in accordance with department/section procedure. A temporary advisor is assigned who, along with the graduate student, will prepare a tentative plan of study. Prior to submitting the formal plan of study to the Dean of the Graduate School, an official graduate advisory committee will be formed for each student. This committee is selected by the major professor, in consultation with the individual student, and is subject to approval by the department head. Doctoral students must and master’s students are advised to enlist at least one suitably qualified committee member from outside the student’s department. The College of Natural Resources and Environment requires that each student’s graduate advisory committee meet with the student before the student has been in residence for one year and at least annually thereafter. While these meetings should center on the research project and coursework, an additional function will be evaluating the student’s progress and making recommendations for improvement. It is the obligation of the student to arrange these meetings, in consultation with his/her major professor. Progress evaluations become part of the student’s file.

PLAN OF STUDY

Each graduate student must file a Plan of Study with the Graduate School. This program lists courses the student plans to complete as part of his/her degree requirements. Modifications to the Plan of Study are allowed if approved by the student’s committee and appropriate administrative officials. The Graduate School requires that MS students submit their plan of study by the end of the second semester enrolled. Ph.D. students must submit their plan of study by the end of their third semester in residence.

RESEARCH WORK PLAN (PH.D. AND M.S. STUDENTS ONLY)

Completion of graduate research is the requirement that most often extends the period of residency. Therefore, all graduate students should give prompt attention to choosing their research topic in consultation with their major professor and their advisory committee. Choice of topic should be guided by the student’s interest, the availability of faculty to direct the research, research funding, and the
college’s ongoing research programs. An early choice of topic will allow for planning a more effective Plan of Study.

Following selection of a general research topic, the student should begin preparing a research work plan. The plan should include (at a minimum) sections related to justification, review of past research, research objectives, and the experimental design and methods to be used in the research. The plan should be prepared in accordance with the specific requirements of the department, section, and/or committee. A sample format for the work plan is attached (Appendix A).

The work plan should be provided in writing to and approved by the student’s graduate advisory committee by the end of the first year in residence. A signed, approved copy of the student’s plan should be filed in the student’s departmental office.

**PH.D. COURSE WORK AND EXAMINATIONS**

The following requirements are specific to the college:

I. **Minimum Competency in Statistics**

The minimum competency for Ph.D. students regarding statistics is to pass STAT 5606 or STAT 5616 or another course of equivalent statistics content with a grade of “B” or better. The statistics requirements must be satisfied before a student is allowed to take preliminary examinations. The college Student Policy and Affairs Committee recommends that this requirement be satisfied during the first year of residency.

II. **Qualifying Examination**

Departments or sections may require a qualifying examination for Ph.D. students. See the *Graduate Catalog* ([http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/](http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/)). Click on the *Policies* tab for additional information.

III. **Preliminary Examination**

A preliminary examination is required for all Ph.D. students. The student’s advisory committee administers this exam and determines the format. Departmental requirements and those of individual sections or committees may prescribe additional procedures regarding administration, format, timing, and evaluation. An expected preliminary examination date must be submitted with the Plan of Study for approval by the Graduate School. In addition, (1) the examination must be scheduled during academic sessions, (2) requests to schedule the examination must be received by the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the examination date, (3) students must be registered during the term the examination is taken, and (4) the results must be reported to the Graduate School within two weeks of the examination (all in accordance with university procedures).
IV. Additional Coursework

Requiring additional courses (beyond those included on the Plan of Study) remains within the purview of the student’s graduate advisory committee. Most often, such requirements are the result of weaknesses uncovered by progress evaluations, qualifying examinations, and preliminary examinations.

**THESIS / DISSERTATION**

Format and procedures for submitting your thesis or dissertation are given in the [Graduate Catalog](http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/). Individual departments or sections may prescribe additional procedures. Students are advised to consult their major professor and graduate advisory committee concerning requirements and expectations.

The preparation of the thesis/dissertation is time consuming and can be expedited by giving careful attention to the following details:

1. Remember that the thesis/dissertation is a permanent record that will require several revisions before submission to your advisory committee and may require additional revision afterwards.

2. During the initial stages of writing the thesis/dissertation, the major professor will be responsible to see that the material is properly organized, correctly stated and interpreted, and written in an acceptable style.

3. When the major professor is satisfied that the manuscript is ready for review, copies will be furnished to each committee member. Copies are best made on paper with numbered lines. Committee members are to be allowed a minimum of two weeks for review and comment.

4. At least one week before the oral examination, each member of the examining committee must be provided with a copy of the reviewed manuscript.

5. Each graduate student is responsible for the preparation of his/her thesis/dissertation in the required electronic form. Refer to [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation](http://etd.vt.edu/) for information. Additional departmental requirements may apply. Please check your department’s Graduate Program Procedures for details.

**PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH**

No research project is complete until the results are available for general use. Students are expected to publish their research promptly upon completion. In some instances it is advisable to publish
research prior to the preparation of a thesis/dissertation. Publication should proceed with the cooperation of the major professor, who should be incorporated as a co-author in recognition of the faculty contribution to the overall direction of the research. Some major professors require that theses/dissertations be in a form that is easily prepared for publication. In addition, major professors may require that manuscripts for publication be submitted at the time the thesis/dissertation is defended.

USE OF COLLEGE FACILITIES

The college laboratories and equipment are available for research and teaching. In addition, other facilities—computers, electron microscopes, and many other items—are available within the university. Arrange for the use of equipment and/or space by consulting the faculty member or technician in charge of the facilities. Your major professor will know who to contact. This person will ensure you know, or are shown, how to use the facilities. Be especially careful to clean up after you have finished. Do not leave notebooks, samples, or other items where they may prevent others from using the equipment or space. Laboratories should be maintained in a neat and orderly fashion at all times. Adherence to safety protocol in laboratories is mandatory. Consult with your major professor regarding the handling, storage, and disposal of chemicals.

To reserve classrooms or Conference Room 136B, please see Teresa Quesinberry (tquesinb@vt.edu) in Room 138. There is a projector in that room which can be used, but you may require an adapter for your computer. To reserve Room 315, please see Arlice Banks (arbanks@vt.edu) in Room 324.

SEMINARS

A variety of seminars are sponsored within the college and across campus. Students are encouraged to attend seminars of interest arranged by other departments. All graduate students are required to attend departmental or section-sponsored seminars. Departments may require that students register (pass/fail option) for the departmental graduate seminar (course no. 5004) every semester they are in residence. Students are expected to attend those seminars organized by the College of Natural Resources and Environment, regardless of topic.

GENERAL DUTIES

Detailed graduate student responsibilities are the mutual concern of the student and major professor. All graduate students are expected to broaden their experience by assisting in research programs other than those specifically designated as their research topic. This is particularly true when other graduate students need assistance in fieldwork for safety or other reasons.

Graduate students are expected to obtain teaching experience by giving seminars, assisting with undergraduate laboratories, presenting formal lectures, and grading. Since teaching, in one form or
another, frequently forms a part of each student’s later life, thought should be given to including appropriate education coursework within the graduate Plan of Study. Also, students are expected to assist in the maintenance and operation of equipment in their area of specialization.

Graduate students on assistantships are expected to maintain regular hours. Each graduate research assistant is expected to work 20 hours per week (or a proportionately smaller number when employed less than half-time) for their assistantship and is considered to be 50 percent employed. It should be noted that this requirement does not provide for vacation time. Therefore, all graduate assistants who wish to be away from campus must make prior arrangements with their major professor concerning the fulfillment of their obligation to the university.

A summary of important degree requirements for master’s and doctoral students, taken from the Graduate Catalog (http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/) are attached for your convenience (Appendix B).

Information regarding enrollment limits and credit hour loads for employed graduate students can be found in Appendix C.
APPENDIX A
Research Work Plan - Example of cover page

RESEARCH WORK PLAN
for
John C. Doe
Candidate for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
FORESTRY

TITLE: The Growth of Open-grown Virginia Pine (Pinus Virginiana)

OBJECTIVE: (1) To examine the vertical distribution of foliage and other components in the canopy of open-grown Virginia Pine.
(2) To investigate the relationships between several parameters of tree measurements (Dbh, height, and others) and the dry weight of the above-ground portion (bole, branches, cones, and foliage) of open-grown Virginia Pine.
(3) To use the above relationship and stem analysis to formulate growth curves for open-grown Virginia Pine.

APPROVAL:
__________________________________  ___________________________________
Chair                     Date

__________________________________  ___________________________________
Committee Member          Date

__________________________________  ___________________________________
Committee Member          Date

__________________________________  ___________________________________
Department Head           Date

At a minimum, the Research Work Plan should contain the following sections:

1. Justification: The reasons for undertaking the research
2. Literature Review: A thorough review of past work
3. Objectives
4. Materials and Methods
   Data Collection: A complete description of techniques to be used
   Methods of Analysis: An outline of the statistical methods to be used
5. References
I. **Master's Degree**

Virginia Tech allows for both thesis and non-thesis master's degrees. For each degree type, the student’s Plan of Study must meet the semester credit hour requirements shown below. Departments/programs may have additional requirements, and an advisory committee may add specific requirements needed for an individual student’s academic development. Graded credits must be taken for an A/F grade unless the course is only offered P/F (see Grading System Requirements). See Transfer Credit for policies about the transfer of graduate credits for use on the Plan of Study. See Undergraduates Taking Graduate Courses for policies allowing students at Virginia Tech to transfer some courses from the bachelor’s degree to the master's degree (also referred to as double counting courses toward both degrees).

A. **Thesis Master's**

   **Minimum total credits:** 30 credit hours

   **Minimum graded credits:** 20 credit hours

   1. May include a maximum of 6 credits of Virginia Tech 4000-level undergraduate course work. These 6 credits may include Special Study (4984) courses but may not include Undergraduate Independent Study (4974) or Undergraduate Research (4994) courses.

   2. All other graded course work must be 5000-level or higher (i.e., graduate course work). The graded course work may include:

      - A maximum of 9 credits total in 4984, 5974, 5984, and 6984 courses, and
      - 3 credits of seminar.

   **Minimum research credits:** 6 credit hours of Master’s Research (5994) taken at Virginia Tech

B. **Non-thesis Master's**

   **Minimum total credits:** 30 credit hours

   **Minimum graded credits:** 24 credit hours

   1. May include a maximum of 6 credits of Virginia Tech 4000-level undergraduate course work

1'Taken from the *Graduate Catalog* (http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/)
work. These 6 credits may include Special Study (4984) courses but may not include Undergraduate Independent Study (4974) or Undergraduate Research (4994) courses.

2. All other graded course work must be 5000-level or higher (i.e., graduate course work). The graded course work may include:

A maximum of 9 credits total in 4984, 5974, 5984, and 6984 courses, and 3 credits of seminar.

**Maximum project and report or research credits:** May include a maximum of 6 credits of Project and Report (5904) or Master’s Research (5994) credits taken at Virginia Tech.

II. Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Doctoral degrees at Virginia Tech must meet the semester credit hour requirements listed below and include a dissertation that involves original research/scholarship. Departments/programs may have additional requirements, and an advisory committee may add specific requirements needed for an individual student’s academic development. Graded course work on the Plan of Study must be taken for an A/F grade unless the course is only offered P/F (see Grading System Requirements). See Transfer Credit for policies about the transfer of graduate credits for use on the Plan of Study. Courses transferred from the bachelor’s to the master’s degree for a student in the master’s program at Virginia Tech cannot be used for doctoral credit (i.e., they cannot be “triple counted”).

**Minimum total credits:** 90 credit hours

**Minimum graded credits:** 30 credit hours

A. At least 27 graded credits must be at the 5000-level or higher (i.e., graduate course work). Some departments have approval from the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies to reduce the minimum number of graded course work credits required for a specific degree program. See departmental degree requirements to determine if a department has approval for such changes in requirements.

The 5000-level course work may include a maximum 18 credits total in 5974, 5984, and 6984 courses and 4 credits of seminar.

B. The Plan of Study may include a maximum of 6 credits of Virginia Tech graded 4000-level undergraduate course work.

The 6 credits of Virginia Tech 4000-level course work may include Special Study (4984) courses but may not include Undergraduate Independent Study (4974) or Undergraduate Research (4994) courses.

**Minimum research credits:** 30 credit hours of Doctoral Research (7994) taken at Virginia Tech
I. Full-Time Enrollment

Full-time enrollment for graduate students, for purposes of tuition and fees, consists of a minimum of 9 credit hours during academic year semesters. However, the Commonwealth of Virginia does not count students as full time unless they are enrolled for at least 12 credits, and in most academic contexts, 12 credits is considered full time. The maximum number of credit hours is 18 during academic year semesters. Overloads (more than 18 credit hours per semester, or more than 6 per summer session) require permission from a graduate dean.

II. Graduate Student Employment/Assistantships

The Graduate School recognizes that many students depend on part-time employment (including assistantships) and are part-time graduate students.

Maximum Credit Hour Load

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Employed</th>
<th>Academic Semester</th>
<th>Each Summer Term*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 or less</td>
<td>12-18</td>
<td>6</td>
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* Maximum of 12 credit hours in both summer terms (maximum overload to 9 credit hours in a single summer term).

Graduate Assistants (GAs, GTAs, and GRAs) must enroll for at least 12 credit hours per semester to be eligible for their assistantship. Students on full assistantship are expected to work an average of 20 hours per week for the assistantship and are considered to be 50 percent employed. Graduate students on assistantship can enroll for up to 18 credit hours of course work in academic year semesters and up to 6 credit hours during each summer session.

2Taken from the Graduate Catalog (http://www.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/)
Notes: