

Masters Degree in Crop Sciences through Off-Campus Graduate Studies (OCGS) in Crop Sciences

Frequently Asked Questions

Admissions Policies and Enrollment Procedures

Who is eligible to enroll in courses offered through Academic Outreach?

Courses offered through Academic Outreach at the 300 or 400 level are open to undergraduate applicants who can meet any course prerequisites. Courses at the 500 level are open only to students with a B.S. degree from an accredited institution and who meet course prerequisites. In the event of limited space availability, priority is given to formally admitted degree and non-degree students. In addition, departments may limit enrollment in certain courses to persons formally admitted to the degree college.

What is the status of students enrolled in courses offered through Academic Outreach?

There are several status possibilities for Academic Outreach students: 1) non-degree, 2) undergraduate or 3) graduate. Most students enrolled in off-campus courses are classified as extramural non-degree students. These students often have a B.S. or M.S. degree but do not have further degree objectives, and they enroll for purposes of personal or professional development. To enroll as a non-degree student, a student must complete and submit the enrollment form to Academic Outreach. Non-degree students may continue to enroll each semester in Off-Campus Graduate Studies Program courses if they have the necessary prerequisites for each course.

Students who do not have a B.S. degree may enroll with undergraduate status. Students enrolled as non-degree students or as undergraduates are not currently pursuing a graduate degree.

Students who wish to pursue an M.S. degree must apply and be admitted to the Graduate College as a degree candidate. These persons must complete a Graduate College Application Form and submit a nonrefundable application fee to the Graduate College.

When enrolling in an off-campus course through Academic Outreach, should I register for undergraduate or graduate hours?

Students who are already enrolled or who plan to be admitted to Graduate College to pursue an M.S. degree or who would want to complete the requirements for a Professional Development Certificate (PDC) must take Academic Outreach courses as **graduate level hours**. Students who are pursuing a B.S. degree or have completed the M.S. degree can enroll for credit as undergraduate hours.

Does a person need to be admitted to the Graduate College before enrolling in an off-campus course through Academic Outreach?

No. Any adult is permitted to enroll in an off-campus course if eligibility requirements are met and space is available. Many students take Academic Outreach courses solely for professional or personal development. However, credit earned in these courses is not applicable towards a degree unless the student is admitted to the Graduate College, and then only 12 hours of such credit may be applied toward the degree following successful submission of the necessary petition.

Where can I receive help if I have problems enrolling in an off-campus course?

You should contact the Registration Secretary in Academic Outreach at 217-244-2507. You may also receive help from Heather Miller, the Academic Outreach Program Director, at 217-265-6568, or email Heather at hmiller1@uiuc.edu.

How do I qualify for a Professional Development Certificate (PDC)?

No special registration is required. If you have a B.S. degree, then you just need to complete three courses (two 400 and one 500 level course) of 3 hours or more within the Crop Sciences Graduate Studies Program. The office of the OCGS Program Coordinator tracks student progress and awards the Certificate following successful completion of the third course. Registration as a Graduate Student is not required, although course credit needs to be taken as graduate hours. Students can receive only one Professional Development Certificate.

Does enrollment in an Academic Outreach course indicate application for Admission to the Graduate College?

No. Enrollment in these courses is not the same as applying for admission to the Graduate College. To enroll in a course, a non-degree seeking student must complete a course enrollment form at Academic Outreach website and submit the completed form along with the appropriate course tuition and fees.

To apply for admission to the Graduate College, the student must complete several steps:

- 1) Complete and submit the application for admission to the Graduate College and an application fee to the Office of Admissions and Records.
- 2) Submit all required supporting credentials (including transcripts and three letters of recommendation) to the Department of Crop Sciences
- 3) Be accepted for study by the Crop Sciences Graduate Application Committee.

Please keep in mind that only THREE courses (up to 12 graduate hours) of coursework taken prior to admittance will count towards fulfillment of the degree requirement, and only after the proper petition is submitted and is approved by the Graduate College.

If I plan to pursue a degree, when should I apply to the Graduate College for admission?

Persons who plan to pursue an advanced degree through off-campus study can apply for admission to the Graduate College several months prior to the semester that they plan to enroll in their first off-campus course. If you are presently taking courses as a non-degree student, you can apply to Graduate College during the current semester to be effective for the next semester.

Once I have been admitted to Graduate College, do I need to enroll during successive semesters to maintain my graduate-level status?

No. A student admitted to the Graduate College is not required to enroll in a course each semester to maintain graduate student status; however, if you do not take a course for two semesters, you will be required to petition the Graduate College for re-admission to the masters program.

Can I take courses at the Urbana-Champaign campus?

Yes, provided space is available. Students must enroll for all classes taken during that semester through the Department of Academic Outreach or through on-campus registration procedures. An off-campus student can only enroll in a maximum of two on-campus courses per semester.

What is the time limitation for pursuing an advanced degree?

All graduate students are subject to University requirements governing time limitations for pursuing an advanced degree. A candidate for an M.S. degree must complete all requirements for the degree within **five** calendar years after initial registration in the Graduate College. Remember, students can take up to 12 hours of coursework prior to applying for admission to the Graduate College. At the current time, these courses are not factored into the time limitation for completion of degree requirements.

What are the requirements for graduation?

A degree candidate must complete 32 hours of graduate study approved by an advisory committee. At least 12 of the graded hours must be at the 500-level. No more than 4 hours of Independent Study or Special Problems courses (CPSC 593 or NRES 501) can be counted towards the M.S. degree. Independent Study (CPSC 593) must be conducted under the supervision of an advisor, the Off-Campus Graduate Studies Program Coordinator, or an approved faculty member. Independent Study may consist of a field, laboratory, or library research problem, conducted at the UIUC campus or an approved off-site location.

Off-campus graduate students are not required to complete a thesis (non-thesis option), and are therefore exempt from the CPSC 500 seminar requirement. Off-campus degree candidates who desire to complete the thesis option for their M.S. must attend weekly seminars on the UIUC campus each semester of their enrollment in the Graduate College.

A minimum GPA of 3.00/4.00 is required by the Department of Crop Sciences to maintain admission in the program. Grades received in coursework completed from other institutions and accepted by the UIUC Graduate College through petition are *not* included in computation of the GPA after admission. If a minimum of 12 hours of coursework is completed with an average of less than 2.75, the student will receive a warning letter from the Graduate College. A student who completes 24 hours of courses with a GPA lower than 2.75 will be reclassified to limited status. A student on limited status cannot receive a degree. Coursework must be completed within five years following acceptance by the Graduate College.

At the completion of all coursework, students will meet with their advisor and faculty advisory committee for a comprehensive oral exam. During the oral exam, a student will be expected to display proficiency in concepts covered in coursework completed during fulfillment of the degree requirement. Failure to pass the oral examination *by unanimous decision* will result in re-evaluation of the student's degree candidacy.

May I continue to enroll in courses through Academic Outreach after I have completed an advanced degree?

Yes. Persons who have completed a degree may continue to enroll in off-campus courses. These students will be designated as extramural non-degree students.