UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Department of Veterinary Sciences

Graduate Student Handbook

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Introduction

Welcome to the Department of Veterinary Sciences' graduate program! We hope you use this brief guide as a summary and supplement to the University of Wyoming Catalog and other relevant University publications with which you should become thoroughly familiar, especially the Graduate Student Regulations and Policies. Should you find omission of fact, process or justice herein, please bring this to the attention of the Department Head or member(s) of the department's Graduate Students Committee. We, at the Department of Veterinary Sciences, will always will follow University minimums and, in some cases, add higher expectations and require stricter standards. It is your responsibility to read and to adhere to all procedures and deadlines established by the University of Wyoming and the Department of Veterinary Sciences. This handbook applies to all students registered in the Animal and Veterinary Sciences graduate program who are advised by a faculty member in the Veterinary Sciences department.

Graduate (Advisory) Committee

Our departmental requirements align with UW regulations for graduate committees (sometimes called "graduate advisory committees"). The graduate committee's major role is to guide you during your program; advise and approve coursework; and advise you on your research project(s), from study design to result interpretation and manuscript preparation. Along with your faculty advisor (also known as "major professor" in some UW's documents) you should form a graduate committee before the end of the second full semester of registration (be it spring, summer or fall), and complete the associated paperwork. Along with your faculty advisor (who will be the Chair of your graduate committee), you will identify individuals who are experts relevant to your research project and invite them to join. Committee members are primarily composed of faculty members at the University of Wyoming (either with an active, adjunct or emeritus[1] status). Occasionally, scientists who are not part of the UW faculty may be chosen to be part of the graduate committee, as an external member. Appointment of an external committee member should be discussed with your advisor(s) and the Head of the Department of Veterinary Sciences before an offer is made to join the committee. If a main advisor, who chairs a committee, leaves UW and the student is to remain in the Veterinary Sciences department, another Veterinary Sciences faculty member must become the committee's Co-Chair or Chair. The composition of your graduate committee varies depending on the degree you are pursuing, and must follow UW guidelines (graduate committee formation). In a nutshell:

- Master of Science (MSc) committee: Must include at least three members. At least two members must be UW faculty: one must be from the Veterinary Sciences department (internal member, usually your main advisor who will also serve as Chair) and one must be from a different UW department (outside member). The third member may be either another internal, another outside, or an external member (non-UW faculty). At least two of the committee members must hold an MSc or higher degree.

- Doctoral (PhD) committee: Must include at least four members[2]. At least three members must be UW faculty. Of the three UW members at least one member must be from the Veterinary Sciences department (internal member, usually your main advisor who will also serve as Chair), and one must be from a different UW department (outside member); the other UW faculty member may be an internal or and outside member. The fourth member may be another internal, another outside, or an external member (non-UW faculty). At least three of the committee members must hold a PhD degree.

[1] An adjunct, emeritus or emerita faculty member of the Department of Veterinary Sciences is considered an internal member and may not serve as an outside member.
[2] As of spring of 2026, the School of Graduate Education has accepted a reduction to four members, from the original five required in the Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure currently on UW's website.

The graduate committee is the authoritative entity regarding the terms of your program of study, research proposal and defense exam (i.e., no administrative structure can overrule the graduate committee regarding the content of these items). Once you have formed your committee, you should submit a Committee Assignment request via WyoWeb to the Registrar's Office for approval.

A petition may be filed if it is necessary to change your committee's composition. This requires the signatures of all current members of the committee, plus that of the Department Head. For any other aspects not cover here, refer to UW's graduate committee regulations and fill out a Committee Change form, which can be found through WyoRecords.

Program of Study

A Program of Study is the **list of formal coursework**, including seminars, research, and thesis hours, that is required to successfully complete a degree. It should be developed with, and approved by, your graduate committee. Courses on degree plans vary between students depending upon their background and career objectives. The degree plan is a contract between the student and their graduate committee. It is in your best interest to have the Program of Study approved as soon as possible. As per UW regulations, the program of study should be developed and submitted for approval BEFORE the end of the third full semester of your program (spring, summer, or fall) Your program should emphasize graduate-level work (i.e. 5000-level courses at UW), but undergraduate coursework (4000-level courses) may be included to address academic deficiencies, particularly for research skills and techniques, up to a maximum of 8 credit hours per entire program (MSc or PhD). If critical deficiencies exist, your committee may require you to take additional undergraduate courses, above the 8-credit limit, even if they do not contribute to the fulfillment of your graduate degree requirements. The total number of credits you need to graduate depend on your program of study (MSc vs PhD). Program-specific requirements are specified in the following section.

Program-Specific Degree Requirements

Because UW Graduate regulations and policies may change often, before making important decisions, make sure to refer to Graduate Student Regulations and Policies under the Registrar's Office.

It is desirable that a minimum of about 12 hours be selected from Veterinary and Animal Sciences course offerings associated with the degree title. In unique circumstances (e.g., exceptional disciplinary academic background before arriving at UW, or special targeted career objectives) your graduate committee may allow fewer disciplinary courses be taken at UW in lieu of other specialized coursework. Conversely, the committee may require additional hours for the degree or additional hours within the discipline, depending on the scope of the research problem and previous course work. A petition may be filed if it is necessary to change the Program of Study. This requires the signatures of your committee and the head of the department. The Registrar's Office houses relevant forms for the currently enrolled graduate students.

Remember that if you also belong to a graduate group such as Program in Ecology, Neuroscience, or Molecular and Cellular Life Sciences, there will likely be additional or different requirements for your graduate program, beyond what is included in this handbook. Below are the requirements for all graduate students associated with the Veterinary Sciences Department. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

Master of Science Program

The department only offers the thesis option (also known as Plan A). A minimum of **30 credit hours** is required**:** a minimum of **26 academic credit hours** in 4000-5999 level courses including some mandatory courses (listed below), and **4 research thesis hours** (PATB 5960). Remember that the program of study is arranged with input from your graduate committee. If a mandatory course is not offered during a time that fits the student's program, a suitable alternative must be proposed and approved by the student's advisory committee.

Mandatory courses, MSc:

- **One semester** of Advanced Seminar in Pathobiology (**PATB 5515**)
- **One semester** of Statistical Methods for Biological Sciences (**STAT 5050**)
- **Two semesters** of Advanced Seminar in Animal Sciences (**ANSC 5890**). First time (1 credit): student attends. Second time (2 credits): student attends and delivers one presentation following the course's guidelines. Students must contact course coordinator prior to the start of the semester to inform them whether they are attending only or attending and presenting.

Doctoral Program

A PhD program requires a minimum of 72 credit hours from UW or another approved university. This 72-hour requirement may include graduate credits earned while working toward the MSc degree in the same discipline. At least **42 academic credit hours** must be earned through formal course work, including some mandatory courses (listed below). The remaining **30 credits** may include additional academic credits or consist solely of **research dissertation hours** (PATB 5980). Remember that the program of study is arranged with input from your graduate committee. If a mandatory course is not offered during a time that fits the student's program, a suitable alternative must be proposed and approved by the student's advisory committee.

Mandatory courses, PhD:

- **Two semesters** of Advanced Seminar in Pathobiology (**PATB 5515**)
- **One semester** of Statistical Methods for Biological Sciences (**STAT 5050**)
- **Three semesters** of Advanced Seminar in Animal Sciences (**ANSC 5890**). First time (1 credit): student attends. Second and third times (2 credits, each): student attends and delivers one presentation following the course's guidelines. Ideally, the first presentation will be during the student's first 2 years, while the second presentation is delivered close to the program's completion. Students must contact course coordinator prior to the start of the semester to inform them whether they are attending only or attending and presenting.

Retention

You are required to maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher. A student who falls below a 3.0 GPA has ONE semester to reestablish a satisfactory GPA or face loss of assistantship funding and dismissal from the department. Once accepted, a student is allowed ONE probationary semester.

Although a 3.0 GPA (or higher) is the criterion for retention, progress toward a degree and commensurate academic accomplishments are expected. If you earn a D, F, or U in a course on your degree plan, the class or

course must be repeated and a C (or higher) or S achieved. Your graduate committee may write a provision into the Program of Study that certain classes require at least a B (i.e., courses that are so important to your degree that at least a B level of mastery is required).

Satisfactory work is required throughout the entire graduate degree program process - in the lab and/or fieldwork; analyzing data; teaching via assistantships; writing proposals, manuscripts, thesis or dissertation; and other graduate student functions. That means coming to work every weekday per your faculty advisor's requirements and within UW policies. If you do not fulfill all requirements and/or lapse in attendance, work, etc., you will be notified and procedures according to UW policies (UW Regulation 2-109) may be instituted to end a GA (Graduate Assistantship) and to start graduate student dismissal proceedings. These are serious situations but can be prevented by good, regular communication (verbal and digital) with your faculty advisor and graduate committee, and through attendance and diligent work per your agreement with your faculty advisor.

Time Limits

Master's students have 6 calendar years to complete their degree from the beginning of the first course taken that is listed in the Program of Study. Doctoral candidates have 4 calendar years after successful completion of their preliminary examination to complete their degree. A student has four weeks after the final oral exam to submit the thesis or dissertation.

Minimum Registration

All graduate students (even those without assistantships) are required to maintain continuous registration until they complete all requirements for graduation, unless a specific leave of absence is approved by the student's graduate committee and granted to a student in writing by the Department Head. Head, after approval from the student's graduate committee. Any condition that requires a higher minimum registration (e.g. insurance plan, loan, fellowship or visa requirements) would supersede this minimum registration standard. Graduate students with University of Wyoming teaching or research assistantships must be registered for 9 hours during the fall and spring semesters unless:

- They have a program of study on file AND
- 90% of their coursework is complete AND
- They are working full-time on their thesis.

If you hold a graduate assistantship and need to drop a course after the 12th class day, you may maintain your graduate assistant position with a memo supporting the drop signed by the Department Head, with prior approval from your graduate committee. Please consider other possible implications (e.g., some insurance programs have special enrollment considerations) before attempting to drop below the minimum hour requirements for full-time classification.

If you are a foreign national, you should be registered for 9 credit hours for all Fall and Spring semesters and at least 1 credit hour during the Summer semester. If you are an international student and you begin your program during the Summer semester (uncommon but possible), you should be registered for a minimum of 6 credit hours, not only 1. Be sure to never allow the time indicated on your IAP-66 or I-20 to lapse. Work with International Student Services if you need to get the time period indicated on either of those forms extended. Make sure you begin the appropriate paperwork at least 6 months before the time period expires.

Other Requirements

As a graduate student at the department of Veterinary Sciences, you are expected to embody a spirit of collegiality, good communication, and to participate in and help to coordinate departmental functions, social events, and other activities.

You are required to complete all necessary trainings related to UW and departmental compliance (eg. safety training, training for work with research animals, etc.), and complete refresher trainings as necessary.

As a GTA or GRA, as per UW regulations, you are expected to spend a maximum of 20 hrs/week working on assistantship activities outside of your program's academic and research work. This limit does not include the significant additional time you will spend on work directly related to your education and progress through the degree program. At the beginning of your program, you should discuss with your faculty advisor what is expected of you regarding your own research project and remember that research does not always follow a 5-day week schedule. All work from home during office hours must be approved by your faculty advisor.

Presentation Requirements

All graduate students in the Veterinary Sciences department will make an annual presentation on their research project, either during a seminar course or as a separate event organized in coordination with other students and faculty, unless excused by their faculty advisor. Even if the presentation occurs outside of a departmental event (as part of the Animal Science seminar course, for instance), you must inform all members of Veterinary Science of the time and date for the seminar at least 2 weeks in advance.

You are expected to attend local, regional and or national professional meetings to present your research – these provide important career development opportunities. Your faculty advisor or Department Head may be able to cover all or part of the meeting costs. Please communicate with your advisor about which meetings you can attend and at what stage in your program you should attend them. Remember that attending scientific meetings is an honor that often requires you to have quality results organized and analyzed appropriately.

Thesis/Dissertation Research Proposal

During the second full semester, you will make a formal presentation of your program of study, along with your proposed research objectives to your advisory committee. The purpose of this is to encourage you to work on your research proposal (see below), and to ensure that it is sound and meets the standards of the department. The research proposal represents a contract between you and your graduate committee. You should work with your faculty advisor to develop the research proposal and submit it to the graduate committee for approval before your third full semester of study. The title page must be signed by you, all members of your committee, and the Department Head. One copy of the proposal with a signed title page must be submitted to the Department Head. Copies should also be given to members of the graduate committee. Research involving one or more components regulated by UW's committees such as IACUC, IBC or IRB require additional approval forms

The narrative of the research proposal should be maximum 10 double-spaced pages in length and contain:

- Justification and rationale: Summarize previous research on the subject, provide literature citations, and identify the particular research questions your study will help resolve.

- Statement of hypothesis or objectives: Specify questions your research is designed to address.
- Procedure: Describe the experimental design and identify the methods of data collection and analysis to be used to definitively answer your hypothesis statements, including statistical analyses.
- Timeline: Set target completion dates for when different components of the data collection, analysis and presentation of findings will be completed. Gantt charts are particularly useful for project timelines.

The student should report regularly (i.e., at least once a year) to the advisor and the advisory committee regarding research progress in order to avoid last minute surprises or misunderstandings, and to gain approval of any redirection. Besides normal frequent communication, you are expected to officially meet with your advisory committee and present them with an annual progress report (see pages 1-3 in **Appendix A**). Your faculty advisor will, in turn, provide feedback on that progress report (see pages 4-5 in **Appendix A**).

Preliminary Examination for PhD Candidates

A formal preliminary examination is required for all PhD students in good standing (i.e. with a minimum GPA of 3.0). Your graduate committee may administer the preliminary exam when you are within approximately 6 credit hours of completing the academic courses specified on your program of study. You must take the preliminary exam after the 4th and before the end of the 6th long semester (Spring and Fall semesters) of your program.

Preliminary examinations will cover all areas within the scope of your doctoral program and involve a written exam from each graduate committee member followed by an oral exam administered by the committee as a whole. A majority affirmative vote by the committee, recorded in writing in the Report on Preliminary Examination for Admission Candidacy form, is required for you to pass the preliminary examination. If you fail the preliminary exam, your graduate committee, in consultation with UW's School of Graduate Education, may grant you permission for one re-examination. The re-examination must take place no sooner than one and no later than four semesters after your first preliminary exam. If you do not graduate within 4 years of passing your preliminary exam, you will be required to retake it.

Thesis and Dissertation Deadlines

Deadline dates for completing the thesis (MSc) or dissertation (PhD) documents are announced each semester by the Registrar. The research project should be designed to produce one or more publishable articles in refereed journal(s). Students are encouraged to organize the document into chapters that represent stand-alone publications. If the thesis/dissertation content is the same as published material, appropriate citations must be provided to avoid plagiarism.

To meet deadlines for graduation, you need to begin the final defense process months in advance to allow adequate time for the graduate committee to review the thesis and sufficient time for corrections to be made. You should be in frequent contact with your graduate committee members so that travel schedules can be accommodated and planning adjusted accordingly. It is the your responsibility to initiate and to coordinate this process. Professional courtesy dictates that ample time be allowed for each step in the process if academic standards are to be maintained. It is inappropriate for students to pressure their committee members to short-circuit this process to meet graduation deadlines.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

A good quality draft of the thesis/dissertation in a format that follows UW's Thesis and Dissertation Guide, 2020, should be delivered to your graduate committee for review only after you and your advisor agreed upon technical and editorial content. Committee members have the right to reject documents with grammatical errors or papers

that fail to meet high standards of scientific style. Signatures can be obtained on the thesis/dissertation only when changes recommended by the committee have been incorporated. You should schedule time for the following sequence of steps:

1. You submit a draft of the thesis/dissertation to your faculty advisor (also known as major professor), and allow them at least 30 days for review.
2. Your faculty advisor returns the draft to you, with comments, for revision. Normally, several drafts will be required to produce a document acceptable to the committee.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until your faculty advisor considers the document ready for review by your graduate committee. Submit the version to your committee and expect at least 2 weeks for your committee to review. Envision the possibility of multiple revisions.
4. Once your graduate committee agrees that your thesis/dissertation is ready, and have agreed on a date for your defense seminar and oral exam, you post the defense seminar announcement at least one week in advance of the agreed upon date.
5. You present your defense seminar and sit for the final oral exam.
6. Once you have passed the final oral exam, you may be required to make additional changes to the thesis/dissertation document before the committee gives final approval. If you fail the final oral exam, you may request permission to retake it after a 6-month waiting period.
7. You have 3 weeks to make any additional changes to your thesis/dissertation and submit it as the final version for your graduate committee's and Department Head's approval signatures.

Defense Seminar and Final Oral Examination

All students will present a final thesis/dissertation research seminar, known as the defense seminar, prior to their final oral examination. The final defense seminar must be approved by the Department Head at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled date. You should distribute copies of seminar announcement to the College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources, and to all Veterinary Sciences faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students at least one week in advance of the scheduled date. Your graduate committee will administer the final oral examination after the seminar audience has been excused

Although the final oral exam tends to focus on the contents of your thesis/dissertation, additional issues may be addressed as a follow-up to the preliminary exams (PhD candidates) or as an outgrowth of the discussion of your research, coursework, or professional activity. The final exam is to be scheduled only after the graduate committee agrees that the thesis/dissertation is ready for public defense. All students must schedule a final thesis/dissertation defense seminar in conjunction with the final oral exam (see Seminar section below).

You must make formal degree application to the Registrar via WyoWeb before the final oral exam can be scheduled. The degree application and fee must be submitted within the time frame indicated by the Registrar. You must be enrolled in the University in the semester in which the final examination is taken, have a GPA of at least 3.00, and have no unabsolved grades (e.g., D, F, X or perhaps C; please see program of study section for more explanation) for any course on your program of study.

A majority affirmative vote by the graduate committee, as recorded in the Report of Final Examination Results form, is required for you to pass the final examination.

Publication of Research

Students are expected to submit a manuscript related to their research project to a peer-reviewed journal prior to their final examination. PhD students are required to submit at least one first-authored manuscript, and MSc students are highly encouraged to submit at least one manuscript. Students should discuss authorship expectations with all relevant parties early in their program.

Other University policies that impact students

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with rules pertaining to use of University vehicles and equipment. Parking regulations are enforced on campus. If you receive a fine, make sure you pay it as this could block your ability to complete your degree. Please familiarize yourself with current rules and protocol.

Summary of Deadlines

1. Identify a major professor and apply for admission.
2. Select graduate committee before the beginning of the second full semester.
3. Submit Program of Study before the end of the second full semester.
4. Finalize a research proposal with advisor's assistance during your third full semester.
5. Present the Research Proposal to your committee before the end of the third semester.
6. PhD students take preliminary examination during the 4^{th} or 5^{th} full semester.
7. Make formal application for degree to the Registrar according to deadlines issued each semester by the Registrar's Office.
8. Submit draft of thesis/dissertation document to advisor for evaluation and input and develop a publication timeline.
9. Submit a polished draft of thesis/dissertation to advisory committee AFTER faculty advisor agrees the document is ready.
10. Schedule final oral examination after committee has approved document.
11. The Graduation/Title Form must be filed by the Thesis and Dissertation Deadlines set by the Registrar (approximately midterm-check Registrar schedule) for the semester in which graduation is planned.
12. Advertise defense seminar.
13. Pass final oral examination.
14. Submit thesis/dissertation to the Graduate School.
15. Schedule an exit meeting with the Department Head.

For a quick reference guide, see **Appendix B**.

Resources available to UW graduate students

Student health

Counseling center

Legal resources: free legal advice for students

English language center: support for native English speakers

International students and scholars: for non-USA citizen concerns, including all VISA-related issues

Global student ambassadors: opportunity for involvement with international programs

English language center: resources and events for non-native English speakers

University Disability Support Services

Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND)

Advising Career Exploratory Studies Center (ACES)

Peter M. and Paula Green Johnson Student Success Center

Center for Assistance with Statistics and Mathematics (CASM)

Appendix A

Graduate Student Annual Progress Report and Feedback FORMS

PhD/MSc Student Annual Progress Report

Student's Full Name: _____

Thesis Title:

_____

Period Covered by this Report (YY/MM/DD): _____

1. Working Hypothesis:

_____

2. Proposed Objectives:

_____

Objectives covered in this report:

_____

3. Activities Carried Out:

_____

4. Materials and Methods:

_____

5. Results:

_____

6. Discussion and Conclusions:

---

7. References Cited:

Other activities

Conference Presentations:

Scientific Publications:

Courses Taken:

Seminars / Workshops Attended:

Faculty Advisor's Feedback

1. Are the proposed activities and objectives being fulfilled?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
   Comments:

---

2. Has the methodology used been appropriate?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
   Comments:

---

3. Are the results obtained relevant?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
   Comments:

---

4. Is there coherence between the results and the preliminary discussion and conclusions?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
   Comments:

---

5. Is the bibliography cited relevant and up to date?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
   Comments:

---

6. Is the overall presentation of the progress report satisfactory?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other: _____
   Comments:

---

7. The progress report is considered:
   ☐ Approved without corrections
   ☐ Approved with minor corrections
   ☐ Approved subject to major corrections
   ☐ Not approved

General Comments on the Progress Report:

Advisor Information

Full Name: _____

Institution/Department: _____

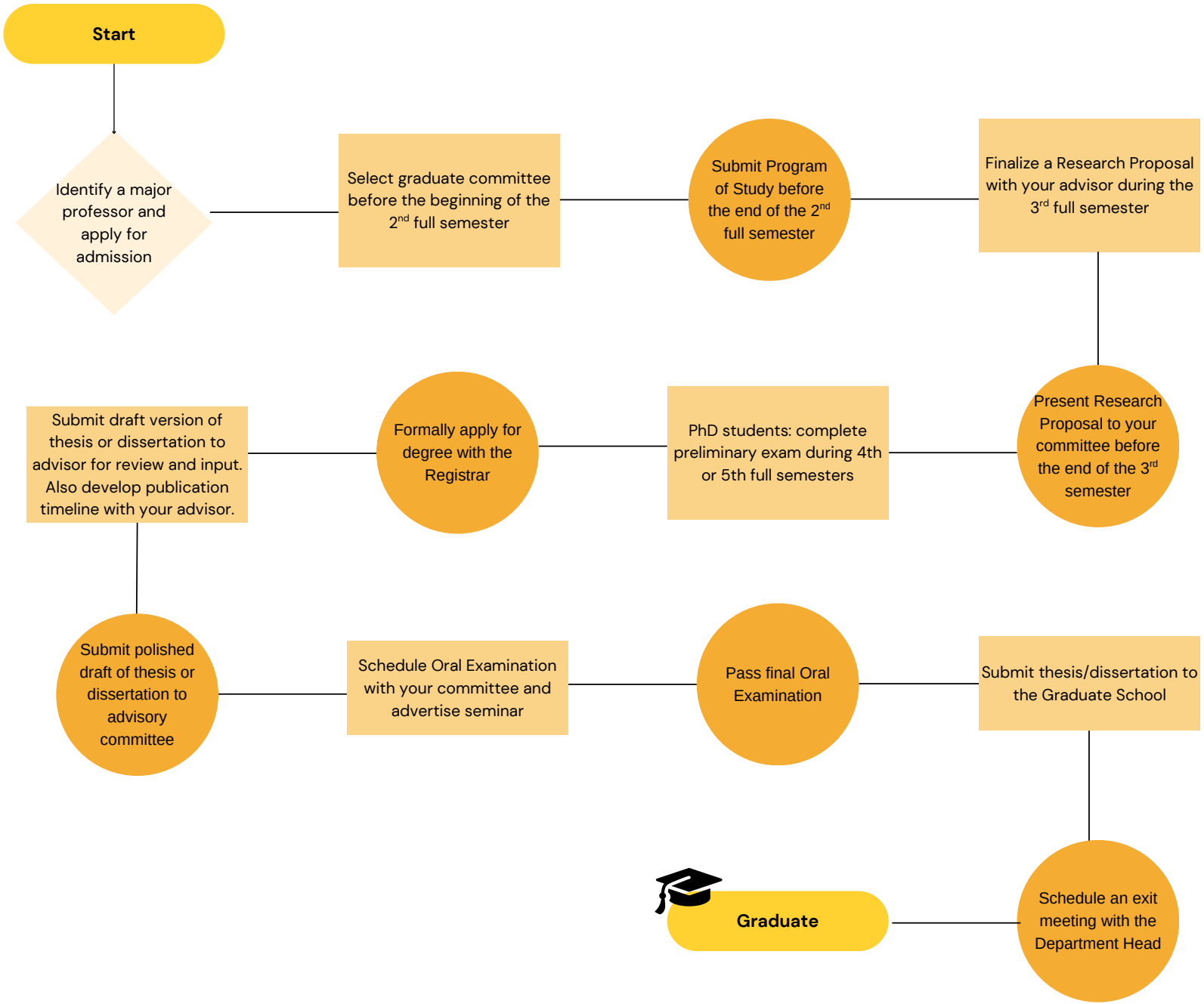
Email: _____

Phone: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix B

Reference Guide to Summary of Graduate Student Deadlines

Veterinary Sciences Graduate Degree Program