

## T. Policy and Procedures for Admittance of Graduate Students to Majors in the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management

### Applications

The Department typically receives a group of applications in late winter/early spring from students that hope to attract the attention of faculty that may be recruiting for the following fall semester. If no faculty member nominates the student for fall admission, the student is advised of this in late summer and is also informed that the application will remain active for consideration by any faculty who may be recruiting for the coming spring semester. If the applicant is not nominated by anyone for the spring semester, then the student is notified that their application is being returned to the Office of Graduate Admissions and is no longer active. For applications that are received during other times of the year, the same policy is applied (i.e., the applications remain active for one semester and are then deactivated).

### Nominations

The sponsoring faculty member is responsible for submitting a nomination letter to the Graduate Admissions Committee (GAC) for review. This letter is added to the prospective student's file, which is maintained by Student Services. The completed file contains 1) the nomination letter from the faculty member, 2) a personal letter of interest and career goals from the applicant, 3) official transcripts, 4) GRE scores, 5) 3 letters of recommendation, and 6) an evaluation form. Items 2 through 4 are provided to the department by the Graduate College. For M.S. applicants, official GRE scores from the past 5 years must be submitted. For Ph.D. applicants, either an official score or a copy of the scores from the student's M.S. degree institution may be submitted. The Committee does not review incomplete packages.

The nomination letter from the faculty member should include a brief summary of the nominee's qualifications for graduate school and directly address any circumstances that are relevant to the admissions decision. The letter must include documentation of financial support for at least **1 year** for M.S. students and **2 years** for Ph.D. students. Financial support includes both the TA/RA stipend **and** the tuition support for the student (50% for M.S. students, 100% for Ph.D. students). Funding sources for potential students will be verified by the Department Chair before admission of the student to NREM. A faculty member should inform the applicant only that he/she has been nominated for admission, and that a final decision cannot be communicated until the admissions process is complete.

The completed file is given to the Chair of GAC, who in turn routes the file to all committee members for evaluation. Each member includes comments and records an individual recommendation on admission status (see below) on a spreadsheet. The Chair then summarizes the collective comments and recommendations into a final recommendation. If there is substantial variation within the Committee on the admission recommendation, the Chair is responsible for working with the Committee members to achieve consensus. The application file is then transmitted to the Director of Graduate Education (DOGE) for a final decision. If there is disagreement between the

DOGE and GAC the GAC and DOGE will meet and arrive at a consensus recommendation.

### Admission Categories and Evaluation Criteria

There are 4 possible admission decisions: 1) full acceptance, 2) provisional acceptance, 3) restricted acceptance, or 4) denial.

1) Full. Normally, with a GPA >3.0, verbal, quantitative, and analytical GREs > 50th percentile, reasonable experience, and prior academic training in a relevant natural resource related discipline, GAC will recommend full admission.

2) Provisional. This recommendation will be made when a student does not have the relevant academic background in a natural resource discipline. Prior academic performance is usually of the same caliber as described in (1), but it is likely that GAC will recommend remedial coursework in natural resources or other related disciplines. These courses could be at the undergraduate as well as graduate level. The final recommendation will be made by the DOGE in consultation with the major professor. In order to transfer from provisional to full admission status, the student must complete these courses with a B average or better, and a written recommendation for transfer must be approved by the major professor, DOGE, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Students admitted as provisional are eligible for the Graduate School tuition scholarship.

3) Restricted. This recommendation will be made when there is a reasonable level of concern about the student's potential to successfully complete the desired graduate program, based on a pattern of poor performance in one or more specific sub-disciplines, as evidenced by GPA and/or GRE scores, or rank in the lower half of a graduating class. Restricted admission may be recommended for non-English speaking students even though the student ranks in the upper half of the graduating class. Transfer from restricted to full admission requires completion of 9 hours of graduate coursework with a B average or better, and a written recommendation for transfer must be approved by the major professor, DOGE, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Graduate assistantships may be awarded on a semester basis, but the Graduate School will not provide tuition scholarship funds.

4) Denied. This recommendation will be made when GAC believes that, based on consistent evidence of substandard performance and experience, it is not reasonable to expect that the student can successfully complete the desired graduate program.

### Review of Interdepartmental Program (IDP) Applicants

Since the creation of the department, GAC policy has been to not review applicants nominated by NREM faculty for admission into an IDP. Concurrence on the request for NREM as a home department was handled by the DOGE. We propose to change this policy and formally review IDP nominations and make a recommendation using the same criteria and process as for students nominated for NREM degree programs. The rationale for this policy is two-fold. First, these students use departmental resources in the form of facilities and staff support. There is also the potential that students may need tuition scholarship support from NREM at some time during their program. Second, our philosophy is that there should be a standard set of expectations for incoming graduate students who are mentored by NREM faculty, independent of their

major. This review will occur after the IDP admissions committee has recommended admittance. If there is a difference between the 2 committees in the recommended admittance status, then the Chairs of the committees will attempt to achieve consensus. If consensus cannot be achieved, then the student cannot use NREM as a home department.

### Miscellaneous

#### *Ph.D. admittance without an M.S. to NREM Graduate Degree Programs*

An applicant without an M.S. degree may be admitted as a Ph.D. student if there is demonstrable evidence of exceptional promise. Such evidence may consist of previous research and writing experience that is judged to be equivalent to the experience normally obtained during an M.S. program, or successful competition for fellowships offered by the Graduate College or external agencies, or significant academic awards. This guideline implies that outstanding academic performance at the B.S. level is necessary but not sufficient for direct admittance as a Ph.D. student. If a student admitted as an M.S. student shows extraordinary potential and outstanding academic performance after their first year, and the student wishes to change status into a Ph.D. program, the major professor may petition GAC, which will review the request and make a recommendation to the DOGE.

#### *Length of assistantship support*

An M.S. student cannot be supported on TA and/or RA appointments for more than 3 years. For Ph.D. students, the limit is 5 years. Under extenuating circumstances, time extensions may be granted by the Department Chair based on a formal petition from the student's POS committee.

#### *Transfer from another Major*

If a student has previously been admitted to a non-NREM graduate major and wishes to transfer to an NREM graduate major under the direction of an NREM faculty member, the departmental admission review process described above will apply.