



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES
**AGRICULTURAL AND
APPLIED ECONOMICS**
VIRGINIA TECH.

Student Planning Guide
M.S. Programs
Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics
Virginia Tech

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FOREWORD

Thank you for your interest in graduate school in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Virginia Tech. The purpose of this guide is to explain the procedural rules for entry into our M.S. programs, their requirements, and any additional academic opportunities that may pertain to our M.S. degrees. This guide serves as a general reference for both prospective and current students.

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia offers a unified graduate program leading to advanced degrees at the master's level.

The Master of Science (M.S.) degree for the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics is administered entirely by the department. Students in the master's program can obtain a traditional or online master's degree. This planning guide mainly focuses on traditional seated M.S. degree. For information on our online M.S. program, please contact Dr. Dixie Dalton or Amy Guerin.

Students entering the graduate program, in cooperation with their advisors, are responsible for the planning of individual curricula, subject to the core requirements, and other criteria described herein.

Success in the M.S. program requires careful planning by students and advisors to address the following three objectives.

1. Personal educational goals should be determined.
2. Coursework and research activities necessary to achieve appropriate training should be identified.
3. A course and research schedule should be devised to achieve the student's goals and meet degree requirements.

This Planning Guide is designed to help students achieve the second and third planning objectives. Additional guidance is available in the [University's Graduate Catalog](#) and [Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#), from members of the Graduate Program Committee, and from the student's advisory committee.

ENTERING THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

In general, we prefer to admit students for a given fall semester. In some rare exceptions, spring semester entry may be permitted. This should be determined upfront in discussions with the Agricultural and Applied Economics graduate program director.

Before beginning work toward a master's degree, a prospective student must be admitted to the Graduate School. The student must apply online to the Graduate School at Virginia Tech at <https://applyto.graduateschool.vt.edu/apply/>. The basic requirements for admission are stated in the University's Graduate Catalog.¹ Minimum entry requirements for the graduate program in Agricultural and Applied Economics are:

¹ Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, or political affiliation. The university is subject to titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Vietnam Era Veteran Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, Federal Executive Order 11246, Governor Allen's State Executive Order Number Two, and all other rules and regulations that are applicable. Anyone having questions concerning any of those regulations should contact the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office.

1. A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university;
2. Presentation of evidence of potential to pursue graduate work, normally a cumulative; Grade point average of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 base) for the last two years (60 semester credit hours) of undergraduate studies or satisfactory performance at the graduate level.
 - a. Note that the GRE test is no longer required, only "highly recommended" for M.S. applicants. Strong GRE scores submitted by M.S. applicants will be counted positively for admittance and potential funding.
3. Timely submission of the required application forms, transcripts, and reference letters, usually before the January 15 deadline.
 - a. For international students whose primary language is not English, and who have not recently received a graduate degree from another U.S. institution, a minimum TOEFL score of 90 on the internet-based test (iBT) is required for consideration of the application. On the iBT, scores of at least 20 on each subtest (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) are required for admission. An IELTS score of 6.5 is also acceptable for this admission requirement.

Actual admission by the department consists of evaluating the student's GPA, GRE (optional for M.S.), reference letters, personal statement letter, fit with the program based on research background and interests, and TOEFL scores, if needed, in a holistic fashion and not just based on a single criterion. There are no specific undergraduate course prerequisites for the graduate economics program, but almost all graduate economics courses call for an initial understanding of microeconomic and macroeconomic theory equivalent to 3 semester hours (at a minimum) beyond basic principles. Graduate students are assumed to have a working knowledge of basic statistics and calculus. Specific fields of study may require additional prior knowledge equivalent to that obtained in relevant undergraduate courses.

Each applicant's record will be evaluated by the Agricultural and Applied Economics Department to determine their eligibility for admission to the graduate program, and to evaluate whether they need to further develop proficiency in certain areas. Students who are admitted with any deficiencies are expected to take remedial steps prior to arrival or early in their residence. Deficiencies may be made up by taking a designated undergraduate course, independent self-study, serving as a teaching assistant, or by demonstrating that some course or set of courses taken as an undergraduate or graduate student provides equivalent knowledge in the subject area in question.

Students meeting the entrance requirements outlined above may be admitted to the graduate program to pursue a master's degree.² Those students admitted for a master's degree must reapply for admission to the Ph.D. program should they eventually choose to pursue a higher degree.

² As described in the [Graduate Catalog](#), some students not meeting the minimum grade point requirement may be admitted as provisional students for up to 12 hours of coursework. After completion of 12 hours, provisional students are either admitted as "regular" students or dropped from the program.

THE ADVISING SYSTEM

Orientation

Before each fall semester, several orientation sessions are held for students who have entered the graduate program since the fall of the previous year. During this orientation, presentations are made about various aspects of the program. Requirements for timely progress by students toward their master's degree are reviewed. New students are introduced to faculty members and become familiar with faculty teaching, research, and public service activities. Incoming students are expected to attend this orientation. Some social events for current and incoming students and faculty are usually held near the beginning of the Fall semester.

Temporary Advisors

The Graduate Program Director is responsible for informing all new students of the requirements and procedures under which they enter the graduate program. Entering students are assigned to a temporary advisor by the Graduate Program Committee. The temporary advisor will be a member of the Graduate Program Committee or an individual designated by the committee. The temporary advisor will inform the student about all academic aspects of the graduate program. Specifically, the temporary advisor will discuss the core requirements with the student; determine the interests of the student; inform the student of relevant courses offered in Economics, Agricultural and Applied Economics, and other departments of the university; and direct the student to faculty members who teach courses and conduct research or public service activities in relevant areas.

The Student's Advisory Committee and Plan of Study

Master's degree students must choose an advisory committee to replace the temporary advisor and a Plan of Study must be submitted to the Graduate School before the end of their second semester. The plan of study includes a list of courses the student has taken and intends to take to satisfy the core requirements for the degree sought, and the signatures of members who will serve on the student's graduate advisory committee. The Plan of Study Form can be downloaded here: [Plan of Study](#)

A plan of study to be submitted to the Graduate School must be reviewed and signed by the Graduate Program Director. The Graduate Program Director and Graduate Professional Program Coordinator, Amy Guerin, will check that the coursework proposed conforms to the requirements of the graduate program and the University, and will review the proposed advisory committee structure and discuss its membership with the student, particularly to ensure that the full plan of study is consistent with the degree sought by the student.

Advisory committees for a master's Thesis Option and Non-Thesis Project and Report degrees have a minimum of three members. One member is designated to serve as the committee chair, or co-chairs can be selected. The committee chair, or at least one co-chair, must have a Ph.D. in economics, agricultural economics, or applied economics and be a faculty member of the Department. Each student is encouraged to visit with faculty members concerning his/her interests prior to forming an advisory committee. In selecting the committee and committee chair, students may choose members from the faculty in either Economics or Agricultural and Applied Economics and one person from other departments. Including a committee member from outside Virginia

Tech is allowed if they hold a degree equivalent to the degree the student is pursuing. An outside individual is not allowed to chair the committee.

Once selected, it is the responsibility of the advisory committee to review the student's proposed coursework, and to assess the likelihood of the student successfully completing their program. As a student progresses with their program, research plans should be discussed with and approved by the student's advisory committee. It is the responsibility of the advisory committee chair and committee members to evaluate drafts of the thesis and provide continuous reviews. The committee members are required to concur with the chair of the committee in the scheduling of a final oral examination defense of the thesis.

Students can anticipate receiving timely feedback on their performance, and drafts of their thesis. Students may request changes in the coursework on their plan of study or the membership of their advisory committee at any time. Such changes are normal and appropriate as research interests are refined, working relationships are established, new faculty join the departments, and for other reasons. Requests for changes in coursework or advisory committee are routinely accepted by the Graduate School when signed by all members of a committee, including those being replaced and those being added when a change in membership is made. [Plan of Study Change Form](#)

Students in the master's Coursework only, Non-Thesis Option only need one member for their committee. The Graduate Program Director will function as their committee member.

The M.S. Program

The Master of Science (M.S.) degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics allows you to expand your knowledge and skills in managerial decision-making, policy analysis, forecasting, analytics and econometrics, essential in the modern business world. The master's degree offers three options: thesis, non-thesis project, and non-thesis coursework-only options. Our thesis students have the opportunity to work on research related to their interests and complete a thesis during their degree. Non-thesis project and report students work on a research project without completing a thesis. Non-thesis coursework-only students focus primarily on coursework.

The degree being sought by the individual student (thesis, non-thesis project and report, non-thesis coursework-only option) must be indicated at the time an advisory committee is selected and the plan of study submitted to the Graduate School. Only students choosing a thesis option are eligible for financial support from a graduate research or teaching assistantship (See [FINANCIAL MATTERS](#), below).

The general requirements for the master's degree thesis option are: (1) a minimum of 30 semester hours, including 24 hours of coursework, of which at least 20 hours must be at the 5000 level or above, and 6 hours of research and thesis (AAEC 5994), (2) completion of a thesis acceptable to the student's advisory committee, (3) satisfactory performance on a final oral or written examination and (4) completion of ethics training.

The general requirement for a M.S. degree non-thesis project and report option are: (1) a minimum of 30 semester hours, including 27 of coursework, of which 24 hours must be at the 5000 level, and 3 hours of Project and Report (AAEC 5904), (2) satisfactory performance on a final oral or written examination and (3) completion of ethics training.

The general requirement for a M.S. degree non-thesis coursework-only option are: (1) a minimum of 30 semester hours, including 30 of coursework, of which 24 hours must be at the 5000 level, (2) completion of a scheduled final examination meeting for departmental confirmation of degree (no exam administered), and (3) completion of ethics training.

Required Core Courses

All three options for the master's degree build upon a common core of required coursework. The core requirements are shown in Table 1. The applied microeconomics and econometrics courses in the core requirements are designed specifically for students pursuing a master's degree. Courses at the Ph.D. level may be substituted for these core requirements. Other exceptions to the core coursework requirements must be indicated on the plan of study submitted to the Graduate School and can be granted to an individual student only with permission from the Graduate Program Director in consultation with the student's major advisor. Such exceptions, when granted, are based on substitution of equivalent or more advanced coursework that meets the specific objectives of the student, on recommendations by a student's advisory committee chair, and on outstanding performance of the individual.

Table 1: M.S. Agricultural and Applied Economics Curriculum

Master of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics Thesis Option	Master of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics Non-Thesis Project and Report Option	Master of Science in Agricultural and Applied Economics Coursework Only, Non-Thesis Option
Core courses (thesis option-19 credit)	Core courses (non-thesis option-15 credits)	Core courses (coursework only, non-thesis option-12 credits)
AAEC 5025: Applied Microeconomics (3 credits)	AAEC 5025: Applied Microeconomics (3 credits)	AAEC 5025: Applied Microeconomics (3 credits)
AAEC 5804G: Fundamentals of Econometrics (3 credits)	AAEC 5804G: Fundamentals of Econometrics (3 credits)	AAEC 5804G: Fundamentals of Econometrics (3 credits)
AAEC 5044: Applied Macroeconomics (3 credits)	AAEC 5044: Applied Macroeconomics (3 credits)	AAEC 5044: Applied Macroeconomics (3 credits)
AAEC 5014: Applied Economic Analytics (3 credits)	AAEC 5014: Applied Economic Analytics (3 credits)	AAEC 5014: Applied Economic Analytics (3 credits)
AAEC 5104: Research Report Plan (1 credit)	AAEC 5904: Project & Report (3 credits)	
AAEC/ECON 5994: Research and Thesis (6 credits)		
Non-Core courses (11 credits)	Non-Core courses (15 credits)	Non-Core courses (18 credits)
AAEC Major Required Courses	AAEC Major Required Courses	AAEC Major Required Courses
Maximum of 6 credits at the 4000 level.	Maximum of 6 credits at the 4000 level.	Maximum of 6 credits at the 4000 level.
At least 9 credits of non-core coursework must be AAEC and 5000 level or above.	At least 9 credits of non-core coursework must be AAEC and 5000 level or above.	At least 9 credits of non-core coursework must be AAEC and 5000 level or above.
Total Credit Hours: 30	Total Credit Hours: 30	Total Credit Hours: 30

Additional Coursework

Beyond the core requirements, students complete their coursework program with additional electives from 5000 and higher-level courses in economics and agricultural and applied economics unless otherwise approved by the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Final Master's Degree Examination

All M.S. degree students must pass a final oral and/or written examination. The examination must be scheduled with the Graduate School at least two weeks before being held. Once scheduled, a final examination is open to any faculty member, and the Dean of the Graduate School may appoint a representative to take part in the examination. The exam is administered by the student's advisory committee. For the thesis M.S., this examination includes a defense of the thesis, and may also include examination on coursework and its application. The final examination cannot be scheduled until the student's committee chair and members agree that the thesis is suitable for defense.

Non-Thesis Exam

For a non-thesis project and report M.S., students will need to present the project their committee decided upon as their final exam.

Non-Thesis Coursework only exam

Students pursuing a non-thesis course work only M.S., will need to complete a departmental confirmation of degree with the Graduate Program Director.

Preparing to Enter the Ph.D. Program While Still a Master's Student

It is recognized that many students may know that their ultimate goal is a Ph.D. In this case, students in the M.S. program will need to formally apply to the Ph.D. program in their second year. These students can start taking Ph.D. courses in their second year while they are waiting on news of their acceptance into the Ph.D. program. These students can substitute courses in theory and econometrics from the Ph.D. program for the master's degree courses shown in Table 1. Substitution of equivalent or more advanced courses from the Ph.D. program does not require approval from the Graduate Program Director. However, an approved plan of study must be submitted to the Graduate School for each degree sought. In some cases, students who first enter the Ph.D. program may complete only an M.A. or M.S. degree instead of their doctorate. In these cases, credit can also be given for Ph.D. courses that substitute for requirements of the master's degree program. In theory, any 5000-level course could be used toward the Ph.D. subject to approval by the Graduate Program Director.

For further information on the Ph.D. program, please see the Agricultural and Applied Economics Ph.D. Planning Guide.

Combined B.S. and M.S. Program

An undergraduate student admitted to the combined B.S. and M.S. program may take up to 12 hours of graduate credit to be applied toward an M.S. degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics

while also counting toward their B.S. degree. A maximum of 6 of the double-counted credits may be at the 4000 level; all others must be offered for graduate credit. The student must receive a grade of B or higher in courses to be applied for graduate credit that is taken while an undergraduate. To qualify, students must apply for and be accepted into the joint B.S. and M.S. programs. To apply, students should complete an online application to the graduate school (link: <https://applyto.graduateschool.vt.edu/apply/>) including application forms, transcripts, and reference letters by March 1 of the student's junior year. Admission minimum requirements are a cumulative GPA of 3.3 or higher in their undergraduate program. All B.S.-M.S. applicants will be evaluated along with all other applicants for the Agricultural and Applied Economics graduate program. If accepted, the student will be matriculated into the M.S. program upon completion of the undergraduate program.

Students in the five-year BS/MS program are undergraduates until they complete the requirements for their B.S. degree. Students cannot be placed on assistantship until they have completed their undergraduate degrees and matriculate into the graduate program. However, BS/MS students are encouraged to visit with faculty early in their programs to identify potential research opportunities that could lead to a Graduate Research Assistantship. The Graduate Program Committee will review the progress of BS/MS students to decide whether to award an assistantship or fellowship when they matriculate into the graduate program.

PROGRESS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

Progress Reports

Each Department sets requirements for submission of graduate student progress reports. The reports are submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator of the student's Department and will be reviewed by the Graduate Program Director and the chair of the student's advisory committee or temporary advisor. For students with graduate assistantship support, the progress reports may be used to help determine the student's stipend level for the next year. The progress reports will be filed with the student's permanent record and may be reviewed or copied by the student upon request.

Students who receive two unsatisfactory evaluations will have their funding revoked. Students who receive two marginal evaluations from their advisors will have their performance reviewed by the Graduate Committee. If the committee determines the student is not making satisfactory progress, funding may also be revoked.

Minimum Grade Performance

To remain in good standing and receive a degree, a graduate student must obtain a 3.0 GPA overall and on all courses completed from his/her plan of study, including prerequisite (supporting) courses. Satisfactory overall performance toward the degree is determined based upon coursework and/or research and requires passing the examinations specified above. Students who fail to meet the minimum performance criteria will be placed on probation by the graduate school for one semester and may subsequently be asked to leave the program.

Exiting The Program

Upon completion of their degree, graduate students are expected to complete the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics Graduate Program Future Contact form to make sure we have your forwarding address, date of degree, title of thesis or dissertation, and position of employment or further educational plans. You can also give us any suggestions, concerns, or ideas for improvement for the graduate program. If you would like to speak with someone in person, please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator to schedule a meeting.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Graduate Teaching and Research Assistantships

Graduate students enrolled in degree programs for the M.S. thesis option are eligible for support on a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) or graduate research assistantship (GRA). Assistantships may be offered to any of these graduate students, except those entering on provisional status. A graduate student who does not initially receive an assistantship may qualify for assistantship support as early as the second semester of his/her program depending upon performance in the classroom and funding availability. Assistantship assignments may be for the academic year (9-months) or calendar year (12-months). Some students are supported for shorter periods on an hourly-wage basis, and all students enrolled in the graduate degree programs are eligible for hourly-wage employment.

Graduate teaching assistants participate with faculty in conducting undergraduate and graduate courses. Assignments include grading and teaching. Experienced GTAs may be assigned responsibility for a section of a course or a whole course. GTAs are normally appointed by the semester or academic year.

Research within the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics is conducted by both faculty members and graduate students working under their direction. Funding for some of this research is provided from state and federal appropriations channeled through the University's Research Division, or from specific project grants and contracts from governmental agencies, associations, and private organizations, channeled through the University's Office of Sponsored Programs.

Research carried out by graduate students is often supported financially through research assistantships. GRAs are usually appointed by academic year. The research responsibilities assigned to students on GRAs may or may not be related to their thesis or dissertation research, but most students with research assistantships eventually complete a thesis or dissertation related to a funded project. Their assignments may also include some assistance with classroom instruction.

Graduate research assistants on Research Division or external grant funds are usually assigned to the faculty member to whom the grant was awarded, unless another arrangement is agreed to by the student and faculty involved. Typically, R.A.s are on a one-half time graduate research assistantship and enroll for 12 credit hours per semester. Students with a full time assistantship are required to work an average of 20 hours per week on assignments not related to the coursework for their degree.

The Graduate School does not prohibit students on full time assistantships from seeking other employment (unless preempted by visa / immigration rules). However, students should consult with their academic advisor and/or assistantship supervisor to be sure that assistantship responsibilities are not compromised by outside employment. Students on one-half-time assistantships cannot hold hourly wage employment paid with Departmental funds or from projects led by Department faculty.³

The timing of work on an assistantship is subject to negotiation between the student and his/her supervisor. While an average of 20 hours of assistantship work is required per week, students may work less than 20 hours some weeks and make up the time by working more or even full time during other periods. Students on assistantship receive leave for the official University holidays (for example Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving). Students holding calendar-year assistantships are eligible for up to three weeks (15 working days) of vacation per year. Before finalizing vacation plans, students must submit a form signed by the faculty supervisor/advisor indicating planned vacation dates to the Graduate Coordinator. In some cases, an absence longer than two weeks may be acceptable, if the faculty supervisor approves and if there is a clear plan of work negotiated with the faculty supervisor that will be accomplished by the student. In such cases, the work expectation must be documented in the vacation approval form. Failure to submit a signed vacation request form covering the student's absence before any vacations are planned and failure to complete work listed on the vacation request form will be noted in the student's performance evaluation and will jeopardize continuation of the student's assistantship.

At the beginning of each semester, students holding teaching assistantships, and students holding research assistantships who have not initiated a thesis, will be assigned by the Graduate Program Committee in their Department to work with specific faculty members. The purpose of these assignments is to effectively utilize the resources of the departments in fulfilling their missions of research, teaching, and public service. Teaching assistantship assignments continue to be made based on Department requirements. Initial research assistantship assignments continue until a student's advisory committee has been chosen.

Research assistantships will then be supervised in most cases by the chair of the advisory committee.

Students on assistantship must submit a Plans and Duties form by the end of the first week of the semester. The form provides an overview of the employment duties and is signed by the student employee and assistantship supervisor.

Students with assistantships must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 in all coursework. If a student's cumulative GPA drops below 3.0, the student is given notification by the Graduate School and is allowed one probationary semester to bring their GPA back to a 3.0. If a cumulative GPA of 3.0 is not achieved during the probationary semester, the student will be dismissed from the program.

³ Students must notify the Graduate School about any additional employment agreement, including the period of employment, name and contact of employer, and job title or short description of duties
<https://secure.graduateschool.vt.edu/aert/logon.htm>.

To be eligible for reappointment each semester, a student on assistantship must maintain a 3.0 GPA on all work taken and must take a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester (including research hours). The student also must make satisfactory progress on their research and perform satisfactorily on his/her assistantship assignments. Assistantship appointments may be terminated at any time for unsatisfactory progress in a student's program.

Types of Funding

For internal accounting purposes, and to generate incentives for students to procure external funding, the Department distinguishes between two general types of funding sources: Departmental Funds, and Non-Departmental Funds.

Departmental Funds include the following funding sub-types:

1. TA-ships
2. Dean's RA-ship (special research funds administered directly by the College)
3. Departmental operating funds
4. College tuition waiver, if accompanied by one of (1)-(3)

Non-Departmental Funds include all other funding sources, such as:

1. External (grant) funding
2. Faculty startup funds, faculty salary savings, and other faculty-specific funding sources
3. Funding related to independently teaching a course, e.g., through the academic scholar program mentioned above.
4. College tuition waiver, if accompanied by one of (1)-(3)

Students will be informed every semester under which type of funding they are being supported, and about their total accumulated months on Departmental Funds-type funding. This affects the duration of their assistantship, as described below.

Duration of Assistantships

The following guidelines govern the length of time students may earn assistantship support, depending on funding sources:

1. Master's degree students may be carried for a maximum of twenty-four (24) months on a research assistantship, regardless of funding source.
2. No extensions of the duration of assistantships will be made unless prior approval is obtained from a student's Department Head/Chair. Extension will not be the normal case. If an extension is to be sought, a request should be made in writing by the student's advisory committee chair as early in the program as possible.
3. Continuation of any type of funding is always contingent on satisfactory academic progress, satisfactory assistantship performance, and the availability of funds. Students

will be evaluated twice a year: once at the end of the fall semester and once at the end of the spring semester, to determine their funding status.

4. Students who go on academic probation in the spring semester (i.e., have a cumulative GPA below 3.0) will not be funded during the summer months, but may be funded the following fall if the graduate advisory committee and department head determine the student should be given a probationary semester for raising her/his GPA.

Stipends and Tuition for the Seated Master's Program

Monthly stipends for a M.S. student on a full (one-half time) graduate research assistantship or graduate teaching assistantship are paid out at Step 1 (For monthly rates please see Compensation: Stipend at <https://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/assistantships.html>).

Academic year tuition is waived for students on full (one-half-time) graduate assistantships. Students on a graduate assistantship are eligible for in-state tuition only. Students will be responsible for paying the remaining comprehensive fees for each semester. Normally, students do not register for summer courses, however if they do, they are responsible for all fees.

Because of limited funds, and to provide financial support to more students, a department may offer an individual student less than one-half time assistantship with the possibility of a reduction in the amount of tuition that is covered by the Department. Students on less than one-half time assistantships are expected to work a pro-rated share of the 20 hours per week required of holders of one-half time assistantships.

For students not on assistantship, please see the following link: [Tuition & Fee Rates](#). You will need to click on the term you wish to view and then scroll to the page titled Graduate Blacksburg Campus to view the fees and tuition breakdown by hour.

For students in the online Master of Agricultural and Applied Economics (MSAAEC) program, you will find tuition and fee breakdowns under the heading, Graduate Program-Specific Tuition Rates on the following link: [Tuition & Fee Rates](#), under the term you wish to view.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

There are numerous services available to assist M.S. students in finding and preparing for career employment opportunities including the following:

- Career fairs—there are several job fairs held on campus which provide information on employment opportunities. For an up-to-date listing see <https://career.vt.edu/>. Interested students should consult the fair website to learn more about attending employers and the skills for which they are recruiting as well as pertinent advance requirements.
- Past placements. Recent MS placements are listed at <https://aaec.vt.edu/academics/graduate/masters-job-placement.html>

- Virginia Tech Career Services—provides a number of placement services for students including advice on interview skills and resume development
<https://career.vt.edu/channels/career-advising/>
- Non-traditional employment/volunteer opportunities—a number of volunteer organizations including Peace Corps, Peace Corps Response, Americorps, and others provide volunteer opportunities that can lead to careers in development and other areas. For further information see
<https://www.peacecorps.gov/unexpected/?gclid=CKuYx63T3M0CFVNZhgodBIMNLg>
<https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/is-peace-corps-right-for-me/peace-corps-response/>
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps>
- Job search engines—job search engines including Indeed (<http://www.indeed.com/jobs>), and Devex (<https://www.devex.com/jobs>) can be used to locate employment opportunities and post resumes.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Office Space and Budget Support

Students on assistantship are allotted workspace in the Department in which they are employed. Expenses incurred by students on GRAs working on a funded research project will be reimbursed. Expenses incurred for their own classroom assignments are the students' responsibility.

Computing Facilities

Students are responsible for creating a PID (personal I.D.) through Computing Services. The PID provides access to V.T. online services, and serves as the V.T. email address

All incoming graduate students in Agricultural and Applied Economics are required to have their own personal computer or laptop. In general, we recommend a laptop with wireless internet and Ethernet capabilities. The campus has all-around wireless access and there are numerous Ethernet connections that students can plug into.

In addition, students can hook up to V.T.'s Advanced Research Computing (ARC) clusters (<https://www.arc.vt.edu>) once they create an ARC account with the help of their (temporary) advisor. ARC offers high-speed parallel computing and access to Graphics Processing Units (GPUs). Current software available through ARC include Matlab, Stata, RStudio/R, QGIS, and Jupyter Notebook. More packages will likely be added soon.

Students can also obtain their own personal software installation for free or a low annual fee, as listed at

<https://itpals.vt.edu/softwarelicensingcenter/studentsoftware/studentsoftwareproductlist.html>.

Furthermore, the Department has its own computer lab. This lab houses three 24-core high-powered PCs that allow multiple simultaneous jobs submitted by different users. All three PCs can be accessed remotely.

Thesis Preparation and Distribution

Thesis typing and distribution are subject to the following policies.

1. Students are responsible for producing the first, subsequent, and final drafts, including charts and tables, as approved by the chair of the student's advisory committee.
2. The student must give all advisory committee members an electronic copy of the draft of the thesis or dissertation on which the student will base their final oral defense.
3. The student must make all data sets and analytical procedures available to the chair of his/her advisory committee in a fully documented form. The thesis must be submitted electronically to the Graduate School. A copy of the final thesis must be given to the chair of the advisory committee electronically.

GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Graduate students are encouraged to participate fully in the professional and social activities of the departments. The Graduate Student Association is an informal organization designed to serve the needs of graduate students and represent their interests. The Association has representation on various departmental committees. The Association also helps to facilitate recruitment and orientation of new students and host various social activities. Membership in the Association is open to all graduate students in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics.

A larger organization, The Graduate Assembly, is a university organization to which graduate students of all departments may send delegates. The Graduate Assembly provides a forum for discussion of issues affecting graduate students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Members of the Graduate Assembly serve on university-wide committees to ensure adequate graduate student input in university activities.

The CALS (College of Agriculture and Life Sciences) Graduate Student Council addresses graduate issues in CALS. There are 2 student representatives from each CALS department including Agricultural and Applied Economics.

IMPORTANT LINKS

Below, you will find links to information you will need during the course of your master's degree program.

- Agricultural and Applied Economics website
<https://aaec.vt.edu/>
- Agricultural and Applied Economics social platforms
 - <https://www.facebook.com/VTAgecon>
 - <https://x.com/VTAgecon>
 - <https://www.instagram.com/vtaaec/>
 - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/virginia-tech-agricultural-and-applied-economics>
- Faculty Profiles
<https://aaec.vt.edu/people/faculty.html>
- Graduate Course Descriptions in AAEC and ECON
https://secure.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/
- M.S. Plan of Study Form:
<https://aaec.vt.edu/academics/graduate/current.html>
- Graduate School Forms
<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/forms.html>