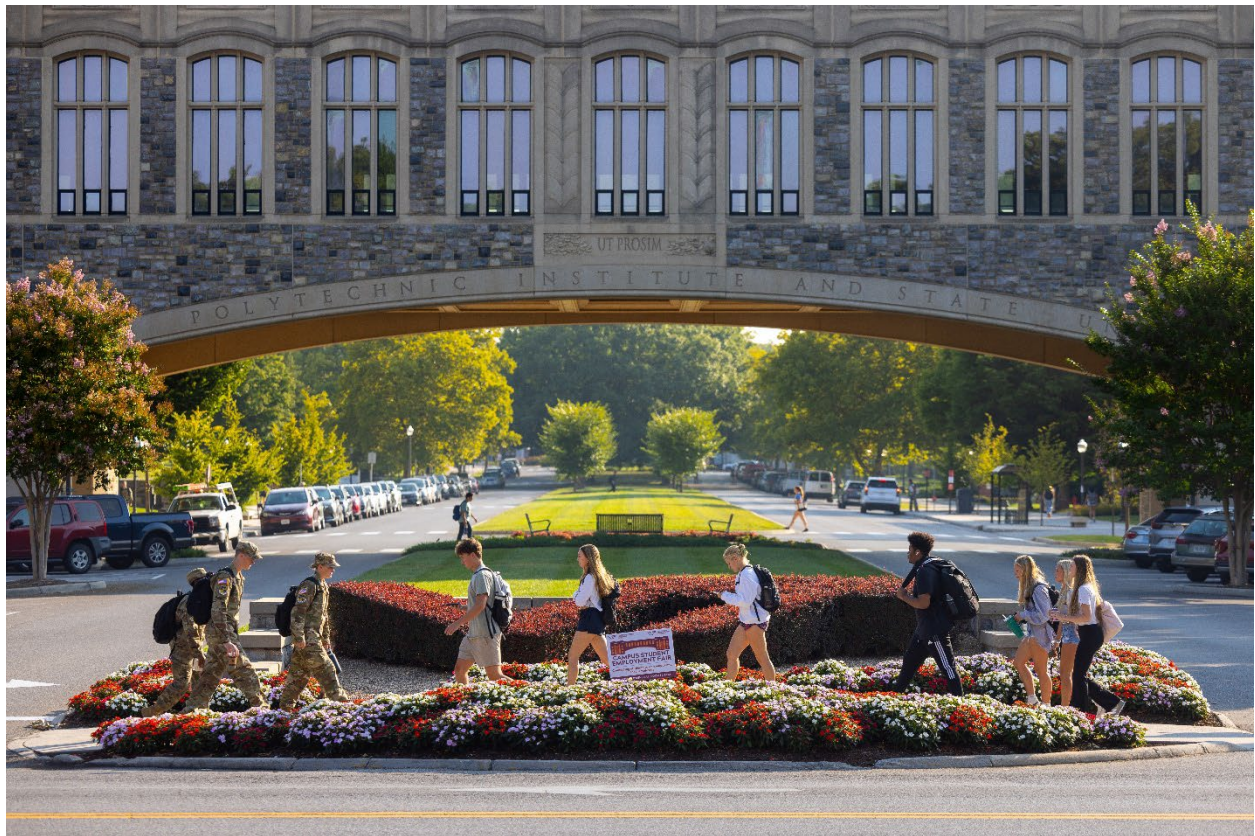




COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES  
**AGRICULTURAL AND  
APPLIED ECONOMICS**  
VIRGINIA TECH.



# Professional Development Planning Guide

The ultimate goal of the Ph.D. training in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Virginia Tech is to graduate and place well-trained *and* well-rounded professional economists.

A well-trained and well-rounded professional economist has not only technical knowledge and skills, such as those on microeconomics and econometrics, but they also have non-technical knowledge and skills regarding the job market, publishing, reviewing, presentation, conference, and writing processes. Indeed, it is often the knowledge and application of non-technical skills that separates the successful professional economist from the unsuccessful. In most programs, these skills have to be acquired through osmosis or within a very loose and inconsistent structure.

We believe that just as students can be trained in the technical skills of the profession, they can also be trained in the non-technical skills of the profession. For this reason, we have a **Professional Development** component of our program that is separate but highly complementary and runs in parallel to the traditional but singular disciplinary training received in most programs. Succinctly stated, at Virginia Tech, you will be taught and will practice not only the technical components of being a professional economist but also the non-technical components. It is this uniquely structured technical and non-technical training we believe that will often differentiate the Virginia Tech Ph.D. graduates from those in other programs.

This document is the **Professional Development Planning Guide (PDPG)** for the Ph.D. program and gives the structure of the professional development component of our program. Just as the academic planning guide gives your required course work and disciplinary academic activities by year in the program, this PDPG provides the requirements and activities for the professional development component of the program by year in the program. Furthermore, just as with the academic planning guide, it should be recognized that what follows would be for the typical student coming in the Fall and progressing steadily through the program with no setbacks.

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## General Principles

- All students will be involved in some professional development activity regardless of their year in the program.
- Activities for student cohorts (1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, etc.) will be targeted toward their needs at that stage.
- Most of the training and activities will be run through the *AAEC 6004 course, Research Seminar and Professional Development*, which students will enroll in each semester starting from the 2nd semester of their first year until they graduate.
- AAEC 6004 will cover numerous professional development topics and will have Ph.D. students from all cohorts in the class at the same time. The class will be split up into sections according to cohort target needs such that there is a *Single Core AAEC6004 (SC6004)* and a *Team Core AAEC6004 (TC6004)*. The *SC6004* will be taught by a single instructor. The *TC6004* will be team-taught. The topics covered in *SC6004* and *TC6004* will be different, and students will move in and out of these sections depending on where they are in the program. **Note that these designations are purely for internal organization and logistical use. The sections are NOT listed separately in the course listings, and the student will just sign up for AAEC6004.** See below for more details.

## Year 1 Students

### *Fall Semester*

The first semester of any Ph.D. program proves to be quite an adjustment and transition for many students as there are professional working norms and expectations that the new Ph.D. student may need to be made aware of that extend beyond the classroom. To assist with this transition, the Graduate Program Director and the Graduate Coordinator will meet with the first-semester Ph.D. students three times during the Fall semester to help orient them to the professional norm expectations in the department. Topics to be covered, but not limited to, will be TA/RA duties and expectations and professional engagement and communication in the

department and Ag Econ profession. This will include human resource topics such as vacation leave, responding to emails, effective communication with supervisors about work duties, etc. First-year students will also be introduced in group meetings to faculty by fields and, more generally, within the department.

### ***Spring Semester***

Students will be expected to meet throughout the Spring semester with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper advising faculty member\Graduate Program Director to be introduced to expectations in order to be a successful graduate student. The 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper advising faculty member\Graduate Program Director will also give an orientation overview of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper expectations and process at the end of the Spring semester.

### ***Summer***

Students will be expected to interact with their advisor and other faculty members to identify possible topics for their 2<sup>nd</sup>-year paper. They will be expected in the Fall of the second year to turn in a brief form indicating what faculty they met with during the summer and a list of potential research topics. See this link [Second Year Paper](#), for details on the second-year paper.

## **Year 2 Students**

### ***Fall Semester***

- August – September. Attend TC6004 – Discussion of 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper with 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper advising faculty member.
- October – December. Attend SC6004 and participate in class activities.

### ***Spring Semester***

- January – May. Attend SC6004 and participate in class activities. Present progress report on 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper.
- May. 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper is due on the final day of class in the Spring semester.

### ***Summer***

- Mock presentations for those presenting at AAEEA meetings.
- Revise and resubmit 2<sup>nd</sup> year paper (if necessary)

## Year 3 Students

### ***Fall Semester***

- August – September. Attend TC6004 with Professional Engagement Topics and Simulations (e.g., Publication Process, Conference Structure and Participation, Grants, Teaching, etc.).
  - Topics outside of SC6004.
  - Team taught by multiple guest speaker faculty.
- October – December. Attend SC6004 and participate in class activities.

### ***Spring Semester***

January – May. Attend SC6004 and participate in class activities.

March – May. Discuss with the advisor if they will be going on the job market and report their status to the AAEC 6004 instructor.

### ***If students are not going on the job market in the next semester:***

Deliverables for Year 3 students will be repeated in the following year.

### ***If on the job market:***

#### ***Summer***

May. Meet with the *placement committee* to discuss creating a job market paper (JMP) package (Cover Letter, Research Statement, Teaching Statement),

Create a JMP package for a sample job listing.

June. Deadline to submit JMP package to placement committee.

July. Placement committee reviews the JMP package. Mock presentations for AAEA.

## **Job Market Students (Year 4 or Above)**

### ***Fall Semester***

August. – September. Work with the placement committee for information on how to better tailor their JMP package. Exit interviews with advisors for revisions.

October. JMP presentation in SC6004 with advisor(s) invited.

November. Departmental seminar of JMP. Mock interviews

December. Mock interviews.

### ***Spring Semester***

Jan. – March. Interviews and flyouts.

March – April. Finish dissertation and graduate.