

## Top FAQs for Enrolled Plant Science Graduate Students

1. ***“I’m just getting started on finding out more research-related information on a topic/subject that will become my MS or PhD project. Where can I go for help finding research that has already been done?”***

a. **Answer:** Your major professor and lab colleagues may have information already located that they are willing to share. The Pendergrass [AGVET Library](#) also has personnel who are willing to help you conduct a literature search and locate journal articles and resources that are not readily available online. Please visit the AGVET Library site or visit with a subject librarian to learn more about the process.

i. **Note 1:** Library Express and Scan PDF services can be used to have the library send journal article reprints and reference resources directly to your mailbox/email.

ii. **Note 2:** Interlibrary Loan can be used to request articles and journals not owned by the UT Library System. Visit Pendergrass [AGVET Library](#) to learn more about these options.

2. ***“The undergraduate catalog and timetable list a 400-level undergraduate course that would provide important knowledge in support of my future academic/career path, but the undergraduate course will not count toward my PhD degree. What can I do?”***

a. **Answer:** Depending on the department and professor teaching the course, it may be possible to request additional assignments or work and enroll for the course as either a PS 501 “Special Topics in Plant Sciences” or PS 593 “Problems in Plant Sciences” independent-study course. The professor’s lectures would supplement your own additional report or research project. *It would be a very good idea to check that your committee approves this option.*

i. **Note 1:** Both PS 502 and PS 593 have a “Variable Title” option, thus can be named to reflect the content of the study you have undertaken. See Sandy Kitts for details about exercising the variable title option. Variable title names should be requested of the registrar’s office early in the semester.

ii. **Note 2:** A student may enroll for only 6 credit hours of PS 501 or PS 593 during a program of study, so choose these opportunities wisely. A faculty member offering a one-time special problems course would likely use the PS 593 option.

3. ***“I would like to get experience teaching some course content while I’m a graduate student...What’s the best way for me to see about doing that?”***

a. **Answer:** The *First Step* is to check with your major professor to confirm that they are willing to allow you to pursue your interest. Once that approval has been given, contact a professor who might be teaching in your area of interest, or who is teaching during the

semester that you are available. Ask them if there is lecture content or lab material that they would like for you to develop to present to their students. Once you find a course, you can enroll in PS 569 “Teaching Practicum” to get from 1 to 3 graduate credit hours for assisting to present course lecture or lab content. Doctoral students can enroll in PS 669 “Teaching Practicum” which can also provide 1 to 3 graduate credit hours for assisting to present course lecture or lab content; there are greater contribution expectations for the 600-level practicum experience.

- i. **Note 1:** *You can ask the major professor to allow a separate review process for you if you want your lecture to be independently reviewed by the students. You can download a sample review questionnaire, then create your own question set that reflects the course content you prepared. Sandy Kitts can provide additional information.*

4. ***“I would like to get experience writing a grant while I’m a graduate student...What’s the best way for me to go about doing that?”***

- a. **Answer:** Check with your major professor ... I suspect that they will be willing to allow you to pursue your interest and may have suggestions about where to apply.

- i. **Note 1:** *Be sure that you do not submit any proposals on your own. There is a specific internal process that guides all grant submissions. Your proposal may not be honored by the University if you do not adhere to these policies and procedures.*

5. ***“Should I expect to present my research results at a professional conference or meeting?”***

- a. **Answer:** Check with your major professor to learn if there are opportunities for you to present your research results at a professional meeting. Poster sessions and oral presentations are valuable professional experiences that we strongly recommend you should try to make a part of your graduate school experience.

- i. **Note 1:** *In 2004, the Plant Sciences Department initiated our [Graduate Student Award Incentive Program](#). Through this program, contributions from faculty and private donors are used to match, up to \$300, cash awards to our students who win recognition at international, national, and regional professional meetings. As of Spring 2009, we have matched more than \$1,500 for awards received by our students for outstanding performance in student competitions at professional meetings. Visit the web link for more details and some restrictions to the program.]*

6. ***“I’m getting ready to finish my graduate degree...Is there someone who can help me prepare and polish my curriculum vitae (CV) or résumé?”***

- a. **Answer:** Good for you! You *should* be taking the initiative to prepare your hiring materials. Your major professor, peers and Plant Sciences Graduate Director are all likely to be willing to review *your* CV...provided that you ask them and give them time to review what you have prepared. The [UT Center for Career Development and Academic Exploration](#) has several personnel and resources that will be helpful to you. Alexis Andershock ([aandershock@utk.edu](mailto:aandershock@utk.edu)) is the staff *Senior Career Coach* for Herbert College students.

7. ***“Is there an expectation that I publish the results of my Master’s or PhD degree in a peer-reviewed journal or online document?”***

- a. **Answer:** Your major professor very likely expects that you will be preparing your thesis or dissertation in publication-ready format. Graduate students typically conduct research or outreach projects on content suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed (refereed) journal or online resource. For Master’s students, at least one and up to 3 journal articles may be typical, depending on the field of study. For PhD candidates, at least 2 to 4 or more journal articles may be typical. Discuss with your major professor their specific expectations about your research or outreach article output. While receipt of your degree is unlikely to be dependent upon journal acceptance of your submission, your major professor may expect you to submit your article for review before final graduation.

8. ***“How do I go about requesting Travel Support Funds from the department and Graduate Student Senate (GSS)?”***

- i. **Answer:** *Students may be able to receive travel support from the Department, the Herbert College of Agriculture, and the Graduate Student Senate [visit Graduate Student Senate’s [GSS travel awards website](#) for details and to access the online submission form. Pay close attention to Travel Award Deadlines and be sure to allow sufficient time for your request to be considered.*