

Graduate Application for Admission Guide

Agricultural and Extension Education



**SCHOOL OF
HUMAN SCIENCES**

2025 - 2026

Preface

The purpose of the *Agricultural and Extension Education Graduate Application for Admission Guide* is to provide details and information about applying to Master of Science, Master of Agriculture, and Doctor of Philosophy in agricultural and extension education at Mississippi State University. Most of the essential information needed to accomplish this task can be found within this guide. However, in some instances one will need to refer to the Mississippi State University [*Graduate Studies Bulletin*](#). This is a dated publication and subject to change. Please check with the Graduate Coordinator if in doubt.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, pregnancy, gender identity, status as a U.S. veteran, and/or any other status protected by applicable law. The University will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation and is committed to preventing or stopping them whenever they may occur at the University or in its programs.

Further, it is the policy of Mississippi State University to comply with applicable civil rights laws, regulations, and orders, including but not limited to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, Executive Order 11246, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Vietnam Era Veterans' Adjustment Assistance Act, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008.

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General Information

Mississippi State University Mission Statement

Mississippi State University is a public research, land-grant university with a mission to provide access and opportunity to all sectors of Mississippi's diverse population, as well as other states and countries, and to offer excellent programs of teaching, research, and service.

Mississippi State University offers a comprehensive range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across many disciplines.

The university embraces its role as a major contributor to the economic development of the state and beyond through targeted research and the transfer of ideas and technology to the public, supported by faculty, staff, student, and alumni relationships with industry, community organizations, and government entities.

Mississippi State University is committed to its tradition of instilling among its community ideals of diversity, citizenship, leadership, and service.

Building on its land-grant tradition, Mississippi State University strategically extends its resources and expertise for the benefit of Mississippi's citizens, the nation, and the world by offering access for working and place-bound learners through its on- and off-campus education and research sites, Extension, and distance education programs.

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences / MAFES Mission Statement

The mission of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) is to ignite the potential of future leaders by fostering excellence through experiential learning, driving scientific discovery, and pioneering innovative research that leads to pragmatic solutions and advances economic prosperity.

Keeping with the land-grant tradition, we are committed to nurturing sustainable agricultural practices that increase profitability, encourage stewardship of our natural resources, enhance food security, and promote the well-being of rural communities that are based on fundamentally sound and applied research. Through our collaborative and interdisciplinary approach, our outreach initiatives address the complex challenges of current and future generations.

School of Human Sciences Mission Statement

Driven by our commitment to feeding, clothing, and caring for people worldwide, the MSU School of Human Sciences cultivates well-being by inspiring students, advancing science, and engaging

communities. An integrative approach is carried out in these program areas:

- Agricultural Education, Leadership, and Communications (AELC)
- Agricultural and Extension Education (AEE)
- Fashion Design and Merchandising (FDM)
- Human Development and Family Science (HDFS)

Agricultural and Extension Education Program Summary

Agricultural and Extension Education (AEE) prepares graduates for professional careers in formal and non-formal educational settings. The School of Human Sciences offers the Master of Science degree in AEE with concentrations in Community and Extension Education, Teaching and Learning, and Agriculture Teacher Licensure and an online Master of Agriculture degree with a concentration in Agricultural and Extension Education. The School also offers a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Agricultural Science with a concentration in Agricultural and Extension Education. Specific degree requirements can be found on the [School of Human Sciences Website](#).

Master of Science in Agricultural and Extension Education (AEE)

Community and Extension Education Concentration

This may be a good fit for you if:

- You are passionate about working with communities and want to lead educational initiatives outside traditional classrooms.
- You're interested in careers with Cooperative Extension Services, non-profits, or community-based organizations.
- You enjoy planning, evaluating, and managing educational programs serving local communities.
- You want to develop skills in communication, grantsmanship, and leadership in agricultural and extension contexts.

Teaching and Learning Concentration

This may be a good fit for you if:

- You are currently teaching or aspire to teach in agricultural education.
- You want to enhance your instructional design, curriculum development, and program evaluation skills.
- You're interested in pursuing leadership roles in educational institutions.
- You value research and service as part of your professional development.

Agriculture Teacher Licensure Concentration

This may be a good fit for you if:

- You want to become a licensed agriculture teacher.
- You're looking for a structured path to enter the teaching profession with a focus on agricultural education.
- You're committed to completing student teaching and passing the Praxis II PLT.

Master of Agriculture (M. Ag.) in Agricultural and Extension Education

This may be a good fit for you if:

- You're a working professional seeking a flexible, non-thesis graduate degree that aligns with your career goals.
- You want to deepen your expertise in agricultural education, communication, and leadership.
- You prefer a scholarly project over a thesis and value practical application of knowledge.
- You're looking for an online program that accommodates your schedule and professional commitments.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Agricultural Science – Agricultural and Extension Education Concentration

This may be a good fit for you if:

- You aspire to become a university faculty member, researcher, or high-level administrator in agricultural education.
- You're passionate about advancing the field through research, evaluation, and scholarly inquiry.
- You want to specialize in areas like leadership, youth development, extension, or teaching and learning.
- You're prepared to engage in rigorous coursework and original research that contributes to the discipline.

Admission Policy

The decision to admit an applicant to pursue graduate study at Mississippi State University is based upon evaluations of both qualitative and quantitative information. All admission applications and supporting documents become the property of Mississippi State University upon receipt and will not be released. Standardized test scores, when required, represent only one element considered in the admission decision of an applicant. Scores are never used as the sole criterion but rather are considered in conjunction with other factors such as the applicant's purpose of study relative to the opportunities in the proposed field, the number of positions available in the program, prior professional and employment activities, and/or recommendations of the faculty in the proposed field of study, especially regarding the availability of faculty support for research. Consequently, an applicant who meets the required grade point average and/or whose standardized scores fall at or

above a competitive level is not automatically granted admission, with exception to those who meet the direct admission requirements into our M. Ag. program. Admission is granted only to those students considered to have the potential to complete the program successfully.

The decision to admit is determined by the AEE graduate faculty, and the student may not enroll in another degree program without formal admission. A student may request consideration for admission to an area of study or to a degree level different from the original application at The Graduate School, gradapps@grad.msstate.edu (email). However, once a student is admitted to a graduate program, they must remain in that program for one semester before admission will be approved to change to another graduate program. Such a request will have the status of a new application for admission, subject to the current admissions criteria. Application is usually made to only one graduate program at a time. Admission to more than one degree program requires the approval of the Graduate Coordinators of all degree programs affected.

The decision to admit has a time validity of 12 months (with departmental approval) for use in making initial enrollment. After the lapse of 12 months without enrollment, an applicant should inquire at The Graduate School for procedural instructions. The academic dean has the authority to grant admission to graduate programs. The decision will be communicated to the applicant and to The Graduate School. Only a written notice of admission is valid proof of admission. After applications and supporting credentials have been received, applicants for admission usually are notified within 30 days of the action taken on their application. Admission to Mississippi State University for graduate study is open to qualified students regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, handicap, sex, or veteran status.

Expectations for Distance Students admitted into the AEE Ph. D. Program

Students admitted to the AEE Ph. D. program offered through the Starkville Campus, who are not regularly on the Mississippi State University (MSU) Starkville campus, are expected to maintain active engagement with their coursework, faculty advisors, and research activities. The following expectations apply:

Faculty Advising

Students are required to meet in person with their major professor at least once per semester. These meetings are essential for maintaining academic progress and ensuring alignment with program goals.

Course Participation

Students must work with individual course instructors to understand and fulfill course-specific expectations. These may include:

- Traveling to the MSU-Starkville campus for presentations, labs, or other in-person components.

- Logging into class sessions remotely via approved platforms.
- Completing assignments and assessments in accordance with course guidelines.

Comprehensive Exams

Written Comprehensive Exams must be completed either:

- In person on the MSU-Starkville campus, or
- At a remote location with a proctor approved by the student's graduate advisory committee.

Oral Comprehensive Exams must be completed in person on the MSU-Starkville campus.

Dissertation Proposal and Defense

Students must propose and defend their dissertation project in person on the MSU-Starkville campus. These milestone events are integral to the doctoral process and require physical presence.

General Engagement

Off-campus students are expected to maintain regular communication with their graduate advisory committee and participate in departmental activities as appropriate. This includes responding promptly to emails, attending virtual meetings, and staying informed about program requirements and deadlines.

Critical Dates

To be considered for admission, all materials should be submitted to The Graduate School no later than:

Fall	March 1
Spring	July 1
Summer	December 15

PLEASE NOTE: These deadlines are set by the AEE Graduate Program and are earlier than the deadlines established by The Graduate School.

Complete applications received on or prior to the initial deadlines above will receive priority consideration for the desired academic term. **It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all supporting materials are received.**

Graduate Admission Procedure

The following outlines qualifications for admission into the M. S. program in Agricultural and Extension Education, the M. Ag. program with a concentration in Agricultural and Extension Education, and the Ph.D. program in Agricultural Science (Concentration in Agricultural and Extension Education). The required documents are described in detail later in this document.

Graduate Admission Requirements by Program

Requirement	M.S. – Ag & Ext. Education	M. Ag. – Ag & Ext. Education	Ph.D. – Ag Sci (AEE Concentration)
Minimum GPA	3.00 (on a 4.0 scale)	3.00 (on a 4.0 scale)	3.25 (on a 4.0 scale)
GRE	Not required	Not required	Not required
CV or Résumé	✓	✓	✓
Statement of Purpose	✓	✓	✓
Writing Sample	✓	Not required	✓
Letters of Recommendation	3 - at least one from professor or employer	3 - at least one from professor or employer	3 - at least one from professor or employer
TOEFL/IELTS (if applicable)	79/6.5 (for assistantship eligibility)	Not required	79/6.5 (for assistantship eligibility)
Professional Experience	Not required	Not required	3 years teaching experience for pre-service teacher education applicants

Special Notes:

1. Qualified applicants for the AEE graduate program are expected to have interests and goals that are consistent with the graduate faculty's expertise and course offerings.
2. Admission decisions are based on a holistic consideration of the applicant's credentials.
3. Based on educational background, the applicant may be required to take some remedial coursework before gaining full acceptance into the program.

Direct Admission

The M. Ag. program offers a direct admission option. To be eligible for direct admission, applicants must have a bachelor's degree in the major, a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and three supportive recommendation letters. Applicants not meeting the direct admission criteria will be submitted for full review by the graduate faculty.

The MS and PhD programs do not offer a direct admission offer. All MS and PhD applications will be submitted for full review by the graduate faculty.

Thrive in Five Program

With MSU's Thrive in Five accelerated degree program, students who are currently enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at MSU can earn their bachelor's and master's degrees concurrently in only five years. And by completing the required course load in less than the typical six years, they'll enter the workforce and start earning sooner. The Master of Science in AEE – Community and Extension Education concentration is currently approved for the Thrive in Five accelerated degree program.

This may be a good fit for:

- Self-motivated high school graduates with advanced placement courses who want to continue a fast pace to the finish line
- Highly skilled community college graduates looking for a flexible, fast way to climb the ladder and achieve career goals
- Eager college students with some degree coursework in search of the perfect degree program

Requirements:

- 60 completed credit hours of coursework and a minimum 3.5 GPA.
- Students must complete their bachelor's degree separately before they can officially be part of the master's program.
- Students in graduate-level coursework (Thrive in Five or not) cannot exceed a total of 15 credit hours of enrollment for a semester. Anything above this must have Provost approval, and they typically do not approve over 16.
- Students cannot exceed 9 graduate credit hours in one semester (Thrive in Five or not).

Please note, the Thrive in Five accelerated degree program does not guarantee acceptance into the Master of Science in AEE – Community and Extension Education concentration. Once a student successfully completes the requirements of their undergraduate degree program, they must apply for acceptance into the Master of Science in AEE degree program. Please visit the [Thrive in Five](#) webpage for more information about the accelerated program. Students interested in the Thrive in Five program should contact Dr. Carley Calico Morrison, AEE Graduate Coordinator, at carley.c.morrison@msstate.edu.

Graduate Program Application Guidelines

This section provides detailed guidance for developing your application for admission into a graduate program in AEE.

Résumé or Curriculum Vitae

A graduate school résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) is a document that accompanies your graduate application. It provides the graduate faculty with more information than what's included in the graduate application. This résumé or CV is different from a résumé or CV for a job application. A graduate school résumé or CV is designed to enhance your application to a school and provide the reader with a sense of your academic potential in their program of study. Determining whether to submit a résumé or a CV will depend on the level of experience you have obtained.

Master of Science and Master of Agriculture Applications

Under most circumstances, a résumé is an appropriate option for individuals applying to the Master of Science - AEE program. A résumé emphasizes skills and is usually one to two pages in length. Below are some tips for preparing your résumé.

- **Common categories.** Some common categories included in a résumé are - Education, Relevant Coursework, Research/Teaching Experience (including academic or extension publications, presentations, or grant experience), Employment History, Volunteer Experience, and Certifications. If a category is not applicable, omit it from your résumé. Likewise, don't be afraid to generate your own categories depending on your experiences.
- **Layout.** The layout and order of your résumé should be determined by what you want to emphasize to the graduate faculty. The most important and relevant experiences should be listed first.
- **Impact statements.** Focus on quantifiable statements that set you apart from the other applicants. For example, everyone has communication skills, but someone who has delivered professional presentations in a class or at a conference has stronger communication skills (in the context of academia) than someone who can make a phone call or send a text.

Doctor of Philosophy Applications

Once you are qualified to apply for a Ph.D. program, a CV may be more appropriate. A CV emphasizes academic achievements and has no page limit. The tips for preparing a résumé also apply to developing a CV.

Letters of Recommendation

Three letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with your academic work are required for admission. At least one letter must be from a faculty member/professor within the last two years or your most recent employer/supervisor. **NOTE:** Please do not submit letters of recommendation from family members or close friends.

Statement of Purpose

The expectations for a graduate school statement of purpose are narrower and more sophisticated than for undergraduate program applications. Rather than writing an autobiography, you must demonstrate your aptitude for becoming a valuable and productive member of the professional academy, including stating your academic and research goals.

When writing your statement of purpose, keep it between one to two pages in length, preferably in a block letter format. Make sure the statement of purpose is addressed to:

Dr. Carley Morrison
Graduate Coordinator, Agricultural and Extension Education
School of Human Sciences
Mississippi State University

Here are some tips to help you write a successful statement of purpose:

1. **Know your audience.** Research the AEE graduate faculty and become familiar with their teaching and research interests. A description of the backgrounds and teaching/research interests of the AEE graduate faculty is located at [school website](#). Faculty members will appreciate a statement that shows you know the strengths of the department and the faculty's scholarship. Furthermore, be sure to mention how your goals as a graduate student align with the faculty member who catches your attention!
2. **Make your statement of purpose simple but unique.** Start your statement of purpose with an idea in the field that interests or excites you. Take this idea and demonstrate your ability to intelligently engage major concepts or issues within the field. Try to avoid using cliches, catchy phrases, or famous quotes when writing your statement of purpose.
3. **Indicate your professional interests and intended field of specialization.** Develop your statement of purpose around problems and issues you would like to explore. Be specific and provide illustrative examples. You might also refer to the work of certain faculty when appropriate. If you have not yet fully decided the field of study in which you want to specialize, that's okay (and completely normal). Still, the graduate faculty needs to see that you have developed some interests in specific topic areas. They want assurance that you can articulate a focus of study. Pick one or two major interests and develop these with detailed examples; present them as your main interests. While these may be your current interests, once

you're in a program, it will be ok if your interests change as you learn about new topics. And chances are good that you will change your focus anyway.

4. **Demonstrate your strengths with specific examples.** What can you offer this graduate program in terms of your experience and perspective? How do your life and background shape your specific interests in AEE? Consider how your previous employment, internships, service work, extracurricular activities, travel, hobbies, mentors, writing projects, and coursework in other disciplines have contributed to the way you approach your area of interest. Provide specific details about your point of view that will make your application stand out.
5. **Stick to the length requested.** Brevity, clarity, and organization will make a much stronger statement.
6. **Tailor the statement to the AEE graduate program.** Do not try to write a "one-size-fits-all" or generic statement of purpose. Be specific to the program and concentration you are applying.
7. **Address extenuating circumstances in a positive manner.** If you had issues during school or work that impacted your academic and professional performance, address them briefly and in the affirmative, to demonstrate your perseverance despite obstacles.
8. **Ask several professors/mentors to read your drafts.** Ask some of your professors/mentors to read what you have written to provide feedback on your statement of purpose. Allow plenty of time to make revisions before the graduate application deadline.
9. **Carefully edit your statement of purpose.** Write several drafts of your statement of purpose. Make your assertions specific and support them with examples. Avoid passive voice. Try to edit out all grammatical and mechanical errors.

The following is an example of a letter written in [block letter format](#).

Writing Sample (not required for Master of Agriculture Applications)

The writing sample is another crucial part of your graduate application. It demonstrates your ability to articulate and sustain an original argument; your research skills; your writing aptitude and fluency; your intellectual maturity, creativity, and insight; and your familiarity with issues in the field of literature.

The writing sample you submit with your application will depend on your experiences as an undergraduate or graduate student or other professional experiences. Examples of writing samples that may be submitted with a master's degree application include (but are not limited to):

- Capstone Research Paper
- Review of Literature from an undergraduate research project
- [Conference Poster Abstract](#) (submitted, accepted, or rejected)
- [Refereed Journal Article](#) (published, submitted, accepted, or rejected)
- [Conference Manuscript](#) (submitted, accepted, or rejected)
- [Extension/Practitioner Publication](#)

Examples of writing samples that individuals with a master's degree may submit with their Ph.D. application include (but are not limited to):

- [Conference Poster Abstract](#) (submitted, accepted, or rejected)
- [Refereed Journal Article](#) (published, submitted, accepted, or rejected)
- [Conference Manuscript](#) (submitted, accepted, or rejected)
- [Extension/Practitioner Publication](#)

Examples of these writing samples are provided in the above links. Each writing sample has different requirements for length and format. Typically, conference poster abstracts are two to three pages in length, conference manuscripts may be 6 to 20 pages in length, and journal articles may generally not exceed a certain page requirement length (i.e., 28 pages). If you have questions about a writing sample, please contact Dr. Carley Calico Morrison, AEE Graduate Coordinator, at carley.c.morrison@msstate.edu

Below are some tips to help you select a strong writing sample.

1. **Consult faculty, mentors, or colleagues on which paper to send.** Bring a selection of your strongest writing samples and work together on selecting the best example to submit with your application.
2. **Choose a writing sample in your likely field of interest.** Choose a writing sample on a topic you are passionate about and that you would like to further pursue in graduate study. While the graduate faculty may not be completely familiar with your topic, how you present your topic through the various sections of the writing sample and how it is organized will show your potential for completing graduate studies.
3. **If necessary, revise the writing sample for a general academic audience.** If your writing sample was originally written for a class at your current or previous institution, its argument may rest on assumptions and context that the committee reader may not share. Faculty members and/or employers can help you revise for audience expectations, or you may need to provide the context of the writing sample to the readers of your graduate application.
4. **Stick to the length requested.** Most of the writing samples identified above have guidelines for submission that are followed. Focus on the organization and quality of the writing sample. Lengthy writing samples tend to make one look undisciplined.
5. **Ask someone to read your revised drafts.** Allow plenty of time before the admission deadline for faculty members or colleagues to read your writing sample. This will allow you time to revise and make your writing sample more professional.
6. **Carefully edit your writing sample.** Make your writing sample as professional as possible. Try to edit out all grammatical and mechanical errors.

Assistantship Application

If you are interested in applying for a graduate assistantship please submit a [Graduate Assistantship Form](#) to Dr. Carley Calico Morrison, AEE Graduate Coordinator, at carley.c.morrison@msstate.edu.