

Code for Graduate Degree Program in Ecology

A Special Academic Unit

Colorado State University

Approved by Faculty November 11, 2013

A. Mission

The Mission of the Graduate Degree Program in Ecology (GDPE) is to provide the highest quality of graduate education in ecology through advanced training in ecological theory, concepts, methods and approaches, and applications by drawing on the extensive depth and breadth of ecological expertise at CSU and in our local community of scientists.

B. Structure

The GDPE is jointly administered by three of its member colleges - College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS), College of Natural Sciences (CNS), and the Warner College of Natural Resources (WCNR) - on behalf of all departments and colleges with faculty members in the program. Colleges and departments that currently participate (or have recently anticipated to participate) in GDPE include: College of Agricultural Sciences (Departments of Agricultural and Resource Economics; Bioagricultural Sciences and Pest Management; Horticulture and Landscape Architecture; Soil and Crop Sciences); College of Engineering (Departments of Atmospheric Science; Chemical and Biological Engineering; Civil and Environmental Engineering; Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere); College of Liberal Arts (Departments of Anthropology; Philosophy; Political Science); College of Natural Sciences (Department of Biology); College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (Departments of Clinical Sciences; Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology); Warner College of Natural Resources (Departments of Ecosystem Science and Sustainability; Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology; Forest and Rangeland Stewardship; Geosciences; Human Dimensions of Natural Resources; Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory). Participating colleges and departments are determined by faculty membership, as detailed in C below.

The program is governed by this code. Major features of the program are specified in this code; minor issues will be developed as policy by either the Director or the Executive Committee, and policies will be maintained in a central file in the program office.(A

B.1. The Administrative Oversight Committee (AOC) will consist of four members with equal voting authority: Dean of the Graduate School, Dean of CAS, Dean of CNS, Dean of WCNR. The Director of the School of Global Environmental Sustainability (SoGES) will be a non-voting, ex officio member of the AOC. The Dean of the Graduate School will chair the AOC and have primary oversight responsibility for the GDPE budget. The committee will meet at least once a year with the GDPE Director. The purpose of this meeting will be for the committee to be updated on the overall

status of the GDPE Program, to be apprised of both programmatic challenges and successes, to be alerted of budgetary needs, and for the Director to receive guidance from the deans. All four members will have equal voting rights on any structural, policy or budgetary issues brought to the committee for action by the Director or any of the deans.

B.2. The principal administrative officer is the Director, who shall be responsible to Administrative Oversight Committee. The term of office of the Director will normally be 5 years, subject to satisfactory performance. The Director is appointed by AOC, in consultation with the GDPE Executive Committee. The overall responsibilities of the Director include:

- administering the budget;
- supervising the Graduate Academic Advisor;
- supervising the Program Coordinator;
- overseeing recruitment and retention of graduate students;
- arranging for instructors for program (ECOL) courses;
- preparing strategic plans and other documents for the development of the program;
- coordinating external outreach, including liaison with the ecological community, and leading efforts to obtain external funding support, in collaboration with faculty members;
- developing policies for the program in consultation with the Executive Committee;
- convening and chairing the Executive Committee, as a non-voting member except in case of ties;
- handling student grievances as outlined in this code (see section F below);
- approving faculty membership for graduate student committees;
- fostering clear communication among the faculty and students of the program;
- convening at least one faculty meeting each semester of the academic year, with at minimum two weeks advance written notice.
- annual reporting to the Administrative Oversight Committee.

B.3. The Graduate Academic Advisor of the program (who must be a faculty member of GDPE) is appointed for 1 year (subject to satisfactory performance) by the Director in consultation with the Executive Committee and Program Coordinator, and reports to the Director. The Graduate Academic Advisor will be reviewed annually by the Director, and annual reappointment is possible after the 1-year term, given satisfactory performance. The responsibilities of the Graduate

Academic Advisor include:

- maintaining files on prospective, current, and former students (in conjunction with the Program Coordinator);
- facilitating student inquiries into the program;
- convening and chairing the Academic Committee (as a non-voting member);
- overseeing evaluation of student applications;
- evaluating student programs of study, and graduation contracts;
- participating as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee;
- overseeing the Outcomes Assessment;
- recommending students for financial awards.

In the event a Graduate Academic Advisor position is unfilled for any period of time, these responsibilities will be assumed by the Director and the Program Coordinator.

B.4 The Program Coordinator is a non-faculty, CSU “Administrative Professional” employee on a 12-month appointment hired and supervised by the Director. The Program Coordinator is reviewed annually by the Director. The responsibilities of the Program Coordinator include:

- serving as business manager with guidance from the Director;
- maintaining records in the main office;
- communicating with students enrolled in the program to ensure that forms required by the Graduate School are completed in a timely fashion;
- maintaining the GDPE website, and assembling the GDPE newsletter;
- supervising any student assistants;
- communicating with the appropriate personnel in the participating departments and colleges to ensure the efficient transfer of administrative information and paperwork associated with an interdisciplinary program;
- providing basic information on the program to CSU faculty and students, and to outside inquirers;

B.5. The Senior Ecologist is a special position within GDPE, appointed to a 5-year, renewable term (subject to satisfactory performance) by the deans of the member colleges and the Graduate School, in consultation with the Director and Executive Committee. The senior ecologist has these responsibilities:

- advising the Director and Executive Committee;
- assisting with development of strategic plans for the program;

- representing the program, within the university and the broader ecological community;
- contributing to graduate courses;
- participating as a voting member of the Executive Committee; and
- working jointly with the Director and Executive Committee to select persons for the Distinguished Ecologist Lectureships, and to oversee the program.

B.6. The Executive Committee consists of one member from each of the member colleges, three members elected at-large from among the faculty membership, one member from the non-regular faculty (e.g., agency scientists), two students elected by the graduate student body, the program's Senior Ecologist, and the Director and Graduate Academic Advisor who serve as non-voting, ex officio members. Faculty members are elected to 2-year terms on a staggered basis; graduate student members are elected for 1-year terms. The Executive Committee is convened by the Director. The responsibilities of the Executive Committee include:

- guiding policy development and alterations for the program, with the Director having final decision-making authority for policy; disputes between the Director and the Executive Committee may be taken to the Administrative Oversight Committee;
- evaluating and approving faculty applications for membership;
- advising the Director and Graduate Academic Advisor on academic and programmatic issues;
- reviewing the GDPE Curriculum periodically and recommending any curricular changes;
- discussing issues brought forward by the Academic Committee and graduate student representatives;
- reviewing and ranking nominations for the Distinguished Ecologist lecture series, and providing expertise in the selection process.

B.7. The Academic Committee will consist of one member from each of the three member colleges, appointed by the Director (in consultation with the Executive Committee) to 2-year terms. The academic committee is responsible for:

- evaluating student applications for admission or denial as required by the Director and Graduate Academic Advisor;
- advising the Director and Graduate Academic Advisor as to academic prerequisites or remedial courses required for student admission;
- recommending any curricular changes for consideration by the Executive Committee; and

--serving as a three-person neutral party to review grievances filed in writing by GDPE graduate students (see section F below).

Changes to the curriculum will be initiated by the Director, Graduate Academic Advisor, or the Executive Committee, in consultation with the Graduate Academic Advisor. Once agreement is reached and receives a majority vote, the Graduate Academic Advisor will work with Academic Committee to prepare proposals for changes in the curriculum. These proposals will be reviewed by the College Curriculum Committees of the three member colleges, revised as needed, and submitted to the University Curriculum Committee. Proposals will be prepared in accordance with the CSU Curricular Policy and Procedures Handbook.

C. Membership

The Executive Committee and Director will establish policy guidelines for faculty membership. Individuals wishing to join the GDPE Faculty must submit a formal application (available on the web site) to the Director and Executive Committee.

C.1. GDPE membership is open to all five types of faculty appointments recognized by Colorado State University (see Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual E.1). To be considered, individuals must:

- carry academic rank of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, or faculty affiliate, including those with regular, special, joint, temporary, or transitional appointments, as well as emeritus faculty;
- hold a Ph.D. degree; and
- be active in research or teaching of ecology or a related discipline.

C.2. Department participation in the GDPE is required for all CSU faculty who wish to join the GDPE. Each participating department will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) approving the membership and participation of the new GDPE faculty member. This MOU will be renewed every five years. If a new GDPE faculty wishes to join from a department where an existing MOU is already in force, the Director will notify the department chair of the new membership, so that the list of participating faculty from that department can be updated.

C.3. Membership renewal. The initial period of faculty membership will be for 5 years, followed by a review by the Director and a recommendation to the Executive Committee regarding continued membership. Subsequent reviews will occur every 5 years for each faculty member. Faculty will re-submit applications for approval by the Executive Committee following the criteria in section C.1.

C.4. Membership withdrawal. Individual GDPE faculty may withdraw from

membership at any time. The Director will notify the home department of the withdrawing faculty member so that the faculty participation list from that department can be updated. Once withdrawal has occurred, a new application form must be completed before the individual can be considered for renewed membership.

C.5. Department withdrawal. Participating departments may choose to withdraw at any time. If the department wishes to renew its participation in GDPE, a new MOU must be executed.

D. Graduate student programs

D.1. Advisor: Major advisors who chair graduate committees must be GDPE Faculty, must have full advising privileges within their academic home departments, and must hold academic rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor in a home department (Graduate and Professional Bulletin E.1.1). Regular, special, transitional, joint, temporary, or emeritus/emerita are allowable categories within the academic professorship designation. The advisor may have any of these designations, but may not be a visiting faculty.

Faculty affiliates can serve as advisors only if they are granted a rank/job title of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor by their home academic department. Instructors cannot serve as sole advisors as per Graduate School rules.

D.2. Co-Advisor: Co-advisors must be GDPE faculty, and can include appointments of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, or faculty affiliate. Regular, special, transitional, joint, faculty affiliate, temporary, or emeritus/emerita are categories within the academic professorship designation. The co-advisor may have any of these designations, but may not be a visiting faculty.

D.3. Committee membership.

D.3.1. Graduate committees for M.S. students in GDPE students will consist of at least 2 GDPE faculty members (which must include the major advisor) plus an outside member (see D.3.4).

D.3.2. Graduate committee composition of Ph.D. students will be similar, but with at least one additional GDPE faculty member (giving a minimum total of 4 faculty).

D.3.3. These other committee members can include the same appointments and categories as co-advisors (i.e., professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor, or faculty affiliate, who have appointments that are regular, special, transitional, joint, faculty affiliate, temporary, or emeritus/emerita). These other committee member may not be a visiting faculty.

D.3.4. Outside committee members may or may not be GDPE faculty, but

must be from outside the home department of the student's advisor. Outside committee members can include appointments of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, or instructor with a regular, special, transitional, joint, or emeritus/emerita faculty appointments at CSU. The following faculty cannot serve as the outside committee member:

1. Faculty who hold only a temporary or faculty affiliate appointment
2. Faculty who hold an academic appointment in the department of the student's advisor
3. Faculty who hold a joint faculty appointment in the student's department.

D.4. Course of study. GDPE policy will establish curricular requirements for the program, including required core courses, other course requirements, and examinations.

D.4.1. All students must develop a research proposal (Plan A M.S. or Ph.D.) or project (Plan B M.S.) in consultation with his or her graduate committee.

D.4.2. Ph.D. students are required to pass a comprehensive examination in accordance with the guidelines established by the Graduate School. This exam will include both written and oral portions, and must occur at least 2 terms before the final defense of the dissertation.

D.4.3. Home academic departments participating in GDPE may set additional requirements for coursework or exams for GDPE students advised by faculty in their department. Responsibility for informing students and faculty, and enforcing these additional requirements, rests with the department.

E. Performance evaluations

E.1. Evaluation of program staff - All program members will be invited to submit comments to the Director on the performance of the Senior Ecologist, Graduate Academic Advisor, and Program Coordinator. Comments on the performance of the Director will be solicited by the Administrative Oversight Committee. The Director will ensure that department heads are appraised of the significant contributions of faculty to GDPE.

E.2. Evaluation of GDPE faculty advisors – This evaluation will focus only on the GDPE student-advisor experience and will not be part of formal evaluations of CSU faculty. Thus, graduate students in GDPE will be encouraged to provide constructive feedback (both positive and negative) to the Director on mentoring by GDPE faculty members, through two avenues:

- Confidential comments to the Director in a written memo. This may be especially appropriate when the student elects to change advisors
- Formal written feedback on the exit interview form required of all students before graduating from the GDPE program

E.2.1. – If the student raises a concern and the Director deems it sufficiently serious, e.g., related to inappropriate mentoring by a GDPE faculty member, then the Director will ask to meet with the student to discuss the problem. Many issues of concern can probably be resolved at this level.

E.2.2. – Based on the discussion in E.2.1., the Director may discuss it with the faculty member, who will be given the opportunity to respond. The goal will be to provide feedback (both positive and negative) to the adviser about their performance, as well as learn about the adviser’s viewpoint, and resolve the problem, if possible.

E.2.3 – If the issue is serious and/or persists without resolution after E.2.2., then the Director and Executive Committee reserve the option to remove the faculty member from the GDPE faculty and prevent the faculty member from mentoring graduate students in the program in the future. This will require discussion of the issues by the Executive Committee and a two-thirds majority vote. The Director will provide a summary of the discussion and vote in writing to the Department Head of the faculty member, as input to their evaluation.

F. Student Grievance Procedures

F.1. Discrimination and Sexual Harassment - As an administrative unit of Colorado State University, the Graduate Degree Program in Ecology deplores, condemns, and will act energetically to prevent all forms of personal abuse, including sexual harassment. The GDPE follows the Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment policies laid out in the Graduate and Professional Bulletin (Section L2). Graduate students who encounter such abuse are encouraged to discuss problems, request advice, or file formal grievances with the Office of Equal Opportunity (see www.oeo.colostate.edu/).

F.2. Appeal of Academic Decisions - In the event that a student has a grievance about academic decisions of his/her instructors or graduate committee which cannot be resolved by discussion with the instructor (here including teaching assistants) in question or his/her graduate committee, procedures in Section I.7 of the Faculty-Staff Manual will be followed. The Graduate Committee plus the President of the Graduate Student Organization or an elected Graduate student representative shall sit as a Grievance Committee for all disputes involving graduate students. If a member of the Grievance Committee is also a defendant in the grievance, that person shall not participate in the deliberations.

F.3. Appeals on Violations of Academic Integrity Policy – Appeals of such

violations will follow Section I.7.2 of the Faculty-Staff Manual.

F.4. – Other grievances - Students who have other grievances related to their graduate study are encouraged to first consult with their academic advisers to clarify the specifics of their grievances, discuss appropriate approaches to the resolution of the issues, and to ensure their understanding of the appeals procedure. It is, however, the responsibility of the student to initiate action to resolve the grievance.

If grievances cannot be resolved directly with the adviser, or the student feels threatened, the student is encouraged to prepare a memo to the GDPE Director, who will serve as a neutral party to advise on the issues. The Director will review the evidence, meet with the student if necessary, and suggest a course of action in writing. A complete discussion of options available to students for advice on such issues will be provided in the GDPE Handbook, available online (<http://www.ecology.colostate.edu/pdf/handbook.pdf>)

If the grievance cannot be resolved by GDPE in this manner, then the student is encouraged to discuss the matter with the Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services Office, who can advise on a course of action and the formal process for filing a grievance to the appropriate office at CSU.

G. Code Revision

When changes to the GDPE Code are required, a temporary code committee will be established by the Executive Committee. The code committee will draft changes based on suggestions from members, and any changes must be approved by a two-thirds majority of GDPE faculty with academic rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor in an academic unit of CSU (i.e., faculty that can serve as sole major advisors in GDPE as detailed in D.1. above). Self-evaluation and accompanying review of the code will be conducted at least once each five years.

H. Ratification of the code

This code will take effect when a two-thirds majority of the faculty with academic rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor vote their approval, and a copy is filed with the Administrative Oversight Committee, consisting of deans of the three member colleges and the Graduate School.

I. Procedures manual

GDPE, as a Special Academic Unit, will have a Procedures Manual. The manual may be amended by the Executive Committee, in consultation with members. A two-thirds vote of the faculty with academic rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor is required to approve the Procedures Manual, and any changes made to it.