

## Code for Graduate Degree Program in Ecology

A Special Academic Unit  
Colorado State University

Approved by Faculty October 27, 2021

### 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 units that currently participate in GDPE are determined by faculty membership and are listed below. GDPE is the **Home Department** of students in the program, and the department of advising faculty members is referred to as the **Advising Department**.

College of Agricultural Sciences
○ Agricultural and Resource Economics
○ Agricultural Biology
○ Horticulture and Landscape Architecture
○ Soil and Crop Sciences
College of Engineering
○ Atmospheric Science
○ Chemical and Biological Engineering
○ Civil and Environmental Engineering
○ the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere
College of Liberal Arts
○ Anthropology and Geography
○ Philosophy
○ Political Science
College of Natural Sciences
○ Biology
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
○ Clinical Sciences
○ Microbiology, Immunology, and Pathology
Warner College of Natural Resources
○ Ecosystem Science and Sustainability
○ Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology
○ Forest and Rangeland Stewardship
○ Geosciences
○ Human Dimensions of Natural Resources
○ the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory

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.

**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 Assistant Director;
- 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;
- overseeing execution of the overall strategic plan, as well as the diversity, equity and inclusion plan
- 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 Assistant Director** 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 Assistant

Director will be reviewed annually by the Director, and annual reappointment is possible after the 1-year term, given satisfactory performance. The responsibilities of the Assistant Director 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 the Assistant Director 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 and electronically;
- 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;
- serving as Interim Director when the Director is on extended (sabbatical, medical, etc.) leave, or when the Director position is vacant;
- 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 Assistant Director 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 Assistant Director 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 Assistant 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 Assistant Director;
- advising the Director and Assistant Director 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, Assistant Director, or the Executive Committee, in consultation with the Assistant Director. Once agreement is reached and receives a majority vote, the Assistant Director 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.

**B.8. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee** will consist of two to four faculty members and two to four graduate student members and will be chaired by one of the faculty members. Faculty members will serve 2-year terms with staggered starts, graduate student members will serve 1-year terms. The Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee is responsible for:

- advising the Director and Assistant Director on implementation of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan
- organizing events to foster inclusion in the program
- advising the Director on and participate in recruitment events
- revising the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan as needed, at least every 5 years

### **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.** Faculty membership and faculty affiliate membership are open to people holding faculty member 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, master instructor, senior instructor, instructor, or faculty affiliate, including those with appointments as tenured, tenure-track, contract, continuing, adjunct faculty as well as transitional appointments, emeritus faculty and affiliate faculty;
- hold a Ph.D. degree; and
- be active in research or teaching of ecology or a related discipline;

are not visiting faculty members. Associate membership is open to MS or PhD scientists who may serve as non-voting members on student committees.

**C.2. Department participation** in the GDPE is required for all CSU faculty members 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 faculty member 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 members from that department can be updated.

**C.3. Membership renewal.** Membership will be for 5-year periods, with renewal subject to periodic review at the Director's or the Executive Committee's discretion, based on activity and engagement in the program.

**C.4. Membership withdrawal.** Individual GDPE members may withdraw from membership at any time. The Director will notify the Advising 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 members, must have full advising privileges within their departments, and must hold academic rank of professor, associate professor, or assistant professor in a department (Graduate and Professional Bulletin E.1.1).

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

**D.2. Co-Advisor:** Co-advisors must be GDPE faculty members, and can include appointments of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, master instructor, senior instructor, instructor, or faculty affiliate.

### **D.3. Committee membership.**

**D.3.1. Graduate committees for M.S. students** in GDPE students will consist of a minimum of 3 faculty members: at least 2 GDPE faculty members (inclusive of the major advisor) plus an outside member (see D.3.4).

**D.3.2. Graduate committees for Ph.D. students** will consist of a minimum of 4 faculty members: at least 3 GDPE faculty members (inclusive of the major advisor) plus an outside member (see D.3.4)..

**D.3.3. Committee members** may or may not be GDPE faculty members as long as the total number of GDPE faculty members on the committee align with D.3.1 and D.3.2.

**D.3.4. Outside committee members** may or may not be GDPE faculty members but must be from outside the Advising Department (the department of the student's advisor). Outside committee members can include ranks of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, master instructor, senior instructor or instructor with appointments as tenured, tenure-track, contract, continuing, transitional, joint, or emeritus/emerita faculty. Those who hold a temporary, adjunct or faculty affiliate appointment and those with joint appointments in the Advising Department cannot serve as the outside committee member.

**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.** Advising Departments participating in GDPE may set additional requirements for coursework or exams for GDPE students advised by faculty members in their department. Responsibility for informing students and the 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, Assistant Director, and Program Coordinator. Comments on the performance of the Director will be solicited by the Chair of the Administrative Oversight Committee. The Director will ensure that department heads are appraised of the significant contributions of the 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 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 survey form required of all students before graduating from the GDPE program

**E.2.1. Addressing mentoring concerns.** 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. Addressing advising and mentoring performance.** 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 to the adviser about their performance, as well as learn about the adviser's viewpoint, and resolve the problem, if possible.

**E.2.3 Rescinding GDPE advising privileges.** 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 GDPE 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 deplors, 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/](http://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 that 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 advisors 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 advisor, 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 Graduate School staff, 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 members (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 GDPE faculty 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.