

AGROECOLOGY, M.S.

Created in 2007, the Agroecology M.S. program at UW–Madison trains students to research and analyze agricultural systems within a broader environmental and socioeconomic context. Key to this endeavor is interdisciplinary expertise, which the agroecology program achieves through working with affiliated faculty members from nearly 20 departments across campus.

A typical cohort consists of 8–12 incoming students with diverse backgrounds and undergraduate majors. Agroecology M.S. students work with faculty on focused projects across a wide range of the traditional departments of the academy. Our core curriculum brings together these students for a multidisciplinary, agroecological analysis of agricultural systems in a broadened context.

The agroecology program is supported by the interdisciplinary agroecology cluster, which hired three faculty members in 2002: Michael Bell in community and environmental sociology, Claudio Gratton in entomology, and Randall Jackson in agronomy. These faculty, all still active in the program, were the catalyst for what is now a group of more than 50 faculty affiliates who advise agroecology students and participate in program governance.

The cluster concept is an innovation of the University of Wisconsin in which a core group of faculty is hired into an interdisciplinary area, but have tenure homes in traditional departments.

PROGRAM TRACKS

- The public practice track trains facilitators to enable broader discussion and negotiation at the interfaces of agriculture and other sectors of society. The goal of this "action-in-society" track is to train analysts to increase understanding about the roles of agricultural systems in multi-functional landscapes, and the public policy that shapes these roles.
- The research track addresses the need for continued research and scholarship in order that discussions and negotiations are well informed. Students will have the opportunity to obtain experience in the scholarship of original research, culminating in the writing of a thesis.

ADMISSIONS

Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. **Applicants must meet** the minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>) **of the Graduate School as well as the program(s)**. Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	December 15
Spring Deadline	The program does not admit in the spring.
Summer Deadline	The program does not admit in the summer.

GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required.
English Proficiency Test	Every applicant whose native language is not English or whose undergraduate instruction was not in English must provide an English proficiency test score and meet the Graduate School minimum requirements (https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/#english-proficiency).
Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT)	n/a
Letters of Recommendation Required	3

ADMISSIONS AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The agroecology program accepts students from a wide range of undergraduate majors, not limited to the social and natural sciences. Because the admissions process is highly competitive, applicants should have a record of strong grades, agroecology-relevant interests and experience, and a commitment to learning in a multidisciplinary program. The deadline for fall semester applications is December 15. Inquiries at other times may be considered.

The initial application process is outlined below. Prospective students should keep in mind, however, that this document-based application is only the first step in the admissions process. Students who are deemed admissible on the merits of these documents must then identify an academic advisor and a plan for funding to be fully admitted. The agroecology program will assist students in this endeavor. More information on the process of seeking out funding and an advisor is available in the program's Student Handbook (<https://agroecology.wisc.edu/documents/agroecology-handbook/>). Students who are interested in applying should contact the program administrator.

SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING TO THE UW–MADISON GRADUATE SCHOOL:

- Online application and application fee.
- International applicants whose native language is not English are required to take the TOEFL or IELTS. All test scores must be submitted electronically by the Educational Testing Service to UW–Madison (ETS code 1846). Copies or faxes cannot be accepted.
- Three letters of recommendation. When completing the online application, submit the names and email addresses of three people who will provide letters of recommendation. They will receive instructions on how to upload their letters.
- Electronically, a one-page Statement of Purpose. In the statement, students should describe their interests and goals and which UW–Madison faculty members they would like to work with. In addition, students should identify which program track they plan to pursue—Research or Public Practice—and state why they are interested in this option. Knowing students' intentions will help the program better understand their academic and career goals. Finally, students should indicate if they intend to pursue a Ph.D. degree after completing the master's in agroecology. Although funding isn't guaranteed, some fellowships require that students intend to continue at the Ph.D. level.
- Electronically, a curriculum vitae.

- An official copy of transcripts for all undergraduate work (and graduate, if relevant). Many schools are able to send electronic versions of official transcripts directly to the Graduate School. For the initial application, an unofficial version will suffice but must be followed with an official transcript.

Frequently asked questions regarding the graduate program are available on the agroecology website (<https://agroecology.wisc.edu/apply/>).

FUNDING

GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (<https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/>) is available from the Graduate School. Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (<http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirements>), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/ Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	No

Mode of Instruction Definitions

Accelerated: Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

Evening/Weekend: Courses meet on the UW-Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

Face-to-Face: Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW-Madison Campus.

Hybrid: These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

Online: These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Requirement Detail

Minimum	34 credits
Credit	
Requirement	

Minimum	16 credits
Residence	
Credit	
Requirement	
Minimum	23 out of 34 total credits must be completed in graduate-
Graduate	level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level
Coursework	Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the
Requirement	university's Course Guide (https://public.my.wisc.edu/web/expanded) (https://public.my.wisc.edu/web/expanded/). Please refer to Agroecology Learning Plans.
Overall	3.00 GPA required.
Graduate	
GPA	
Requirement	
Other Grade	Students must earn a B or above in all core curriculum
Requirements	coursework.
Assessments	The research track requires a formal thesis and
and	public defense; the public practice track requires a
Examinations	comprehensive report and public presentation.
Language	No language requirements.
Requirements	

REQUIRED COURSES

Research Track ¹

Code	Title	Credits
Core Curriculum		
AGROECOL 720	Agroecology Field Study	1
AGROECOL 701	The Farm as Socio-Environmental Endeavor	3
AGROECOL 702	The Multifunctionality of Agriculture	3
AGROECOL 710	Agroecology Seminar ²	3
Cross Training Electives		12

Students will select courses to fulfill their cross-training electives in the categories below. Per Graduate School requirements, at least 5 of the 12 cross training electives must be from UW-Madison at the 700 level or above OR from UW-Madison courses in the 300-699 range that have the "graduate attribute." By time of graduation, the student will have taken courses in:

Ecology

The following are examples of courses in this category:

BOTANY/ F&W ECOL/ ZOOLOGY 460	General Ecology
ENVIR ST 506	Modeling and Analysis of Environmental Systems
AGRONOMY/ BOTANY/ SOIL SCI 370	Grassland Ecology

Social Science

The following are examples of courses in this category:

C&E SOC or A A E courses on food systems, agricultural technology, the agricultural environment, or agricultural policy

Data Analysis

The following are examples of courses in this category:

Graduate-level GIS, statistics, or qualitative methods course

Agricultural Science

The following are examples of courses in this category:

AGRONOMY 300 Cropping Systems

SOIL SCI 301 General Soil Science

Research and Thesis

AGROECOL 990 Research 12

Total Credits 34

1

These tracks are internal to the program and represent different pathways a student can follow to earn this degree. Track names do not appear in the Graduate School admissions application, and they will not appear on the transcript.

2

The AGROECOL 710 Agroecology Seminar is offered both fall and spring semester for 1 credit. Students are encouraged to enroll every semester, but must complete at least 3 credits.

Public Practice Track ¹

Code	Title	Credits
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Core Curriculum

AGROECOL 720	Agroecology Field Study	1
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AGROECOL 701	The Farm as Socio-Environmental Endeavor	3
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AGROECOL 702	The Multifunctionality of Agriculture	3
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AGROECOL 710	Agroecology Seminar ²	3
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Cross Training Electives 18

Students will select courses to fulfill their cross-training electives in each of the four categories below. Per Graduate School requirements, at least 11 of the 18 cross-training electives must be UW–Madison courses at the 700 level or above OR from UW–Madison courses in the 300–699 range that have the “graduate attribute.” By time of graduation, the student will have taken courses in:

Ecology

The following are examples of courses in this category:

BOTANY/ F&W ECOL/ ZOOLOGY 460	General Ecology
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ENVIR ST 506	Modeling and Analysis of Environmental Systems
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AGRONOMY/ BOTANY/ SOIL SCI 370	Grassland Ecology
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Social Science

The following are examples of courses in this category:

C&E SOC or A A E courses on food systems, agricultural technology, the agricultural environment, or agricultural policy

Community Process

The following are examples of courses in this category:

PUB AFFR/ POLI SCI/ URB R PL 874	Policy-Making Process
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URB R PL/A A E/ REAL EST 520	Community Economic Analysis
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URB R PL 814	Environmental and Alternative Dispute Resolution in Planning
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Agricultural Science

The following are examples of courses in this category:

AGRONOMY 300 Cropping Systems

SOIL SCI 301 General Soil Science

Project

AGROECOL 990	Research	6
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Total Credits 34

1

These tracks are internal to the program and represent different pathways a student can follow to earn this degree. Track names do not appear in the Graduate School admissions application, and they will not appear on the transcript.

2

The AGROECOL 710 Agroecology Seminar is offered both fall and spring semester for 1 credit. Students are encouraged to enroll every semester, but must complete at least 3 credits.

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) provide essential information regarding general university policies. Program authority to set degree policies beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the degree program faculty. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Work from Other Institutions

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 9 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

UW–Madison Undergraduate

With program approval, up to 7 credits from UW–Madison numbered 300 or above are allowed to count toward the degree. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

UW–Madison University Special

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 9 credits of coursework numbered 300 or above taken as a UW–Madison University Special student. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PROBATION

The status of a student can be one of three options:

1. Good standing (progressing according to standards; any funding guarantee remains in place).

2. Probation (not progressing according to standards but permitted to enroll; loss of funding guarantee; specific plan with dates and deadlines in place in regard to removal of probationary status).
3. Unsatisfactory progress (not progressing according to standards; not permitted to enroll, dismissal, leave of absence or change of advisor or program).

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

All students are required to submit a learning plan, signed by their advisor, by the end of their second semester. Note: there are separate learning plans for public practice and research tracks.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

15 credits

TIME CONSTRAINTS

Master's degree students who have been absent for five or more consecutive years lose all credits that they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; that coursework may not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure>)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>)
 - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (<https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/>)
- Dean of Students Office (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Employee Assistance (<http://www.eao.wisc.edu/>) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (<https://employeedisabilities.wisc.edu/>) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (<https://grad.wisc.edu/>) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (<http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/>) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>) (for concerns about discrimination)

We hope and believe that most issues can be resolved through careful communication – see program handbook section about student-advisor relations. If issues arise, several additional paths are possible:

- if the issue involves another student, staff, or faculty member other than advisor, the starting point should be clear presentation of the facts and discussion with your advisor;
- elected student representatives and our student services coordinator may be able to facilitate discussions and/or serve as allies, particularly in presenting issues to faculty;
- the program chair can be an informal resource to resolve student-faculty issues, including finding a new advisor if differences appear to be irreconcilable;
- if the issue involves the program chair, it may be helpful to discuss the issue with a department chair, either the chair of the advisor's department or the chair of the program chair's department;
- the program has an annual listening session and other forums for students to talk with program leaders to identify broad issues affecting multiple students.

On occasion, issues may arise that require a more formal process. The purpose of our Grievance Policy is to make this option clear. For the purposes of this policy, a grievance is a written complaint identifying an alleged violation of a specific university or program policy. An appeal is a request to higher authority that a grievance decision be reversed. The Graduate School is the ultimate arbiter of such grievances and appeals, unless these involve other issues such as hostile and intimidating behavior (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>), sexual harassment (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/102/2018/01/UW-Madison-Policy-on-Sexual-Harassment-And-Sexual-Violence-January-2018.pdf>), or illegal activities (<https://uwpd.wisc.edu/about-uwpd/contact-uwpd/>). Additional information about reporting the latter problems can be found at central policies and resources (<https://kb.wisc.edu/images/group359/97188/Grievance-RelatedResourcesforStudents-draft.docx>).

If a student believes it is necessary to file a grievance, the following steps will be used:

1. Write a report describing the basis for the grievance. To the extent feasible, document the circumstances that have given rise to it, what the current situation is, and any options you are aware of that have been or could be pursued.
2. Submit the report to an appropriate responsible party (report recipient). This will be the program chair unless the grievance involves the program chair, in which case it can be submitted to the department chair of the student's advisor, the CALS Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (<https://cals.wisc.edu/academics/>) or the Dean of Students (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/>).
3. Within 15 working days, the report recipient will meet with the student and the person or people named in the grievance to ascertain facts to the extent feasible (this may take place separately or together).
4. Within another 15 working days, the report recipient will propose a resolution to the issue.
5. If recommendations are accepted by all parties, the report recipient will follow up after 30 days to determine if appropriate actions have occurred.
6. If recommendations are not satisfactory to the student, the case may be appealed to the Graduate School as specified by the Graduate School Appeals Process. (<https://grad.wisc.edu/documents/grievances-and-appeals/>)

OTHER

All students must have full funding. Please contact the program administrator.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/>) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Analyze tradeoffs of different agricultural systems embedded within the greater complexity of socio-ecological systems.
2. Consider and synthesize concepts of systems, ecology, and public process.
3. Learn to engage in careful consideration of the social, economic, and environmental outcomes of different industrial and biological processes.
4. Understand the potential of inclusive participatory processes in research and analysis of agroecological systems.
5. Recognize and apply principles of ethical and professional conduct in their coursework, research, and communications in the field of agroecology.

PEOPLE

Agroecology faculty (<https://agroecology.wisc.edu/people/faculty/>)