

## How to Apply to the Graduate Program in NRC

Thanks for your inquiry and interest in the Graduate Programs in Natural Resources Conservation (NRC), hereafter simply the “Program”. Before applying to the Program it is important for you to understand our admission policy:

- First, admission to the NRC Program is contingent upon acceptance by the University of Massachusetts-Amherst Graduate School. Thus, you must meet the UMass Graduate School admissions requirements to be considered for admission to the NRC Program.
- Second, and importantly, admission to the NRC Program, contingent on meeting the requirement above, is driven entirely by individual faculty. In other words, individual faculty members (not an admissions committee) have the sole authority to accept students into the Program. No student is admitted without a designated faculty major advisor.

Given these two considerations, there are basically three options for applying to the Program:

- 1) Proactively secure a major advisor (i.e., a faculty member willing to commit to supervise your graduate program of study) and then formally apply to the UMass Graduate School. This is your best chance to get admitted to the Program because once a faculty member agrees to be your major advisor, you will be accepted into the Program as soon as your Graduate School application is complete. In this approach, you avoid the formal application (and expense) until you are guaranteed acceptance into the Program.
- 2) Apply to the Graduate School, indicating the desired Graduate Program (currently either Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation, WFCON, or Forest Resources, FR within NRC), and then initiate communication with one or more NRC faculty in hopes of finding a major advisor. This approach can be successful, but requires that you incur the difficulty (e.g., getting letters of recommendation) and expense of the application prior to any assurance of acceptance into the Program. Given the large ratio of applicants to positions, this approach has a necessarily low success rate.
- 3) Apply to the Graduate School, as above, and wait to be contacted by a faculty member in NRC who is interested in your application. In this approach, you are essentially putting your application into a “pool” of applications that remains untapped until a faculty member seeking a new student has no one suitable already in his/her queue. Given the large number of applicants, this approach has the lowest success rate – but on occasion does work.

Given the above, here is the strongly recommended procedure for applying to our Program:

### 1. FIND A FACULTY MEMBER

Find a faculty member who is interested in taking you on as his or her student. To learn more about individual faculty, view the faculty research profiles on the departmental website or visit individual websites if they exist. The more you know about the prospective faculty member the better off you are going to be in convincing them of your sincere interest in working with them.

Remember, you will not be accepted into the NRC graduate program unless you have a faculty advisor. Importantly, it is your responsibility to seek out a major advisor. I strongly suggest initiating contact with prospective faculty advisors via email to see if they are accepting new students and interested in someone with your background and aspirations. It is advisable to attach your current CV or resume to the message. Follow-up with a phone call as necessary. Also, note that faculty are extremely busy and sometimes get behind in responding to emails. It is your responsibility to follow-up with a phone call or whatever it takes to establish a line of communication.

Contingent upon successfully securing a faculty advisor, continue with the formal application process. Note, you may apply the Program prior to securing a major advisor, as discussed above, but the chances of acceptance are much lower.

## 2. CONTACT THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE AT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Apply online (<http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/prospects.html>) or call for an application (413-545-0721 or -0722). Deadlines are February 1 for Fall admission and October 1 for Spring admission (although late applications are occasionally accepted on a case by case basis).

## 3. TAKE THE GRE

Arrange to take the Graduate Record Exam, including the subject test in Biology if possible (although it is not required). If English is a second language, also arrange to take the TOEFL (exceptions exist, refer to the application packet from the Graduate School). Ask to have the scores sent to UMass (our code is 3917).

## 4. SEND LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Arrange to have at least two (three is better) letters of recommendation sent to the Graduate School (there are forms in the Graduate Application that can be used).

## 5. SEND TRANSCRIPTS

Have two official transcripts sent to the Graduate School from any undergraduate and graduate institutions that you have attended.

I hope this helps eliminate any confusion about the application process and the best procedure to follow to increase your chance of success. If you have other questions about applying to the NRC Graduate Program, you can contact the appropriate graduate program director:

Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation:

Dr. Kevin McGarigal

413-577-0655

[mccgarigalk@nrc.umass.edu](mailto:mccgarigalk@nrc.umass.edu).

Forest Resources:

Dr. Matt Kelty

413-545-1799

[Kelty@nrc.umass.edu](mailto:Kelty@nrc.umass.edu)

For information about admission to the UMass Graduate School, visit the following website:  
<http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/prospects.html>

Thank you and best wishes for you in your search for advisor

Kevin McGarigal and Matt Kelty, Graduate Program Directors