

## Frequently Asked Questions

- ❖ Should I mail all the required paper documents to your department, UF Admissions and International Student Center, or just submit all documents online?

All official documents for admission should be submitted online to the admissions office at the University of Florida. The Horticultural Sciences department only needs copies of your application materials. You can email those to Mr. Curtis Smyder at [curtisr@ufl.edu](mailto:curtisr@ufl.edu) or mail the hard copy to our postal address given at the bottom of this document. We do not need any official copies. The certification of Financial Responsibility does not need to be completed until an applicant is offered admission into our program and has signed their admissions letter. Contact Mr. Curtis Smyder for details on this. His contact information is below:

Curtis Smyder  
Academic Support Services Coordinator  
Horticultural Sciences  
PO BOX 110690  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0690

- ❖ My application is complete. When will I know if my application has been approved?

Applications are reviewed on an ongoing basis and admissions decisions can come at any time. **This is because we require an applicant to find a faculty member willing to serve as their advisor as a requirement for admission into our program.** There is no set date when all decisions are made as faculty identify students on an ongoing basis. We do have a date in which we ask our faculty to make a decision. That is March 15<sup>th</sup> for fall semester, October 1<sup>st</sup> for spring semester and February 1<sup>st</sup> for Summer semester. However, even after that an applicant can still be admitted if they find a faculty member willing to serve as their advisor and there is enough time to get them here to start their intended term without adversely affecting the student, their advisor, the department or our college.

- ❖ I've submitted my application and all supporting documents. What should I do now?

You should begin contacting faculty members who share your research interests. The best way to do this is to begin browsing our list of faculty members and visit the websites of those who share your research interests and then contact them. Some of the faculty members of the department are stationed in Gainesville (on-campus) and others are located in research and educational centers in different parts of Florida (off-campus).

On campus faculty: <http://www.hos.ufl.edu/faculty/on-campus>

Off campus faculty: <http://www.hos.ufl.edu/faculty/off-campus>

- ❖ Who should I contact if I need help with my application or have questions regarding it?

If you have any questions or concerns during the application process, contact Mr. Curtis Smyder and he will be glad to help. His contact information is below:

Curtis Smyder  
Academic Support Services Coordinator  
Horticultural Sciences  
PO BOX 110690  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0690  
Ph # (352) 273-4781  
Email: [curtisr@ufl.edu](mailto:curtisr@ufl.edu)

- ❖ Who should I contact if I need help with questions regarding the research programs?  
You can contact individual faculty members or the graduate coordinator:

Dr. Bala Rathinasabapathi,  
Professor and Graduate Coordinator,  
Horticultural Sciences  
PO BOX 110690  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0690  
Ph # (352) 273-4847  
Email: [brath@ufl.edu](mailto:brath@ufl.edu)

- ❖ Is the Horticultural Sciences Department independent of the Plant Molecular Sciences Program ?

Yes. Both graduate programs are separate and independent from each other. We both have different admission requirements, procedures and deadlines. Click the following link to see ours: <http://www.hos.ufl.edu/graduate-programs/admissions>

- ❖ Is the GRE required for admission?

Yes, the Admissions Office will not refer your application to us without your official GRE score on file.

- ❖ What are the minimum requirements for admission in to the Horticultural Sciences Graduate Program?

Admission Requirements:

- Graduate Record Exam (GRE) total score of 306 on the new scale.
- English language competency exam (if native language is not English)
  - TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): 80 internet based/213 electronic/550 paper
  - IELTS (International English Language Testing System): 6

- MELAB (Michigan English Language Assessment Battery): 77  
**Note that any of the above English language tests are acceptable.**
- A strong background in horticulture, biology, agronomy or other life science.  
**Students must find a faculty member in the Horticultural Sciences Department who is willing to serve as their advisor in order to be admitted to our program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact faculty doing research in the applicant's area of interest as soon as possible (see Research Programs).**

**"In exceptional situations students scoring less than the minimum scores may be admitted based on other criteria".**

- ❖ Is an English language test required for international applicants?  
**Yes an English language test is required for all international applicants.** However, applicants from the below countries are exempt from the English language requirement.

Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Botswana, British Virgin Islands, Canada (except Quebec), Cayman Islands, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Montserrat, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uganda, United Kingdom, Virgin Islands, Zimbabwe.

**Please note that applicants from Puerto Rico are required to take an English Language test.**

There are also exemptions for those who were enrolled in a degree seeking program at a recognized/regional accredited university or college for one academic year in a country where English is the Official Language. See this link for details:

<http://www.admissions.ufl.edu/intl/admissioninfo.html>

- ❖ Can I just upload my GRE or English Language test scores when I submit my application? **You can upload it, but it will be considered unofficial and you will still be required to have the official scores sent directly from the testing agency to the Admissions Office.**

**NOTE:** Use **code 5812** (UF Institutional code). Scores arrive and are recorded at the University about 2-4 weeks after they are ordered.

**Address for the UF Office of Admissions:**

PO Box 114000, 201 Criser Hall, Gainesville FL 32611-4000, 352-392-1365 (phone), 352-392-2115 (fax)

- ❖ My recommenders are having trouble submitting my letters of recommendation online; what can I do?  
You can have your recommenders send the letters to Mr. Curtis Smyder. He will add them to your application here in our department. He can also ask the Admissions Office to have them added to your online application as well. **Note that these letters must be sent directly from**

**the recommenders and not the applicant. Additionally the letters of recommendation will be verified before they are added to an application in HOS or online. Mr. Smyder's contact information is below:**

Curtis Smyder  
Academic Support Services Coordinator  
Horticultural Sciences  
PO BOX 110690  
Gainesville, FL 32611-0690  
Ph # (352) 273-4781  
Email: [curtisr@ufl.edu](mailto:curtisr@ufl.edu)

- ❖ My university uses a different grading system than UF. Do I need to calculate my GPA?  
No, the Admissions Office will calculate your GPA for you.
- ❖ I've tried contacting faculty but they have not responded yet. What should I do?  
Our faculty are very busy and may not have gotten to your email yet or they may have simply missed it. Please give them some time then try contacting them again.
- ❖ What funding is available to help me pay for my degree?  
Our graduate students are supported by funding from individual faculty members' research program. There are limited number of scholarships and tuition waivers for students already in the program. There is one slot per year for a competitive graduate fellowship for a Ph.D. applicant. Applications for scholarships and the graduate fellowship are considered by a departmental committee. You do not need to make separate applications for these potential financial aids but your application will be used. Some international students are supported by their home country government or international funding agencies.
- ❖ What are the differences between a Graduate Assistantship, a Graduate Teaching Assistantship and a Fellowship?  
**Graduate Assistantship:** A Graduate Assistantship is a job in which a graduate student agrees to work for a period of time each week in their advisor's lab in exchange for a tuition waiver, a bi-weekly stipend and free health insurance. In our department our Graduate Assistants work 13.20 hours a week. Students on a GA are also required to register for a certain number of credits each term while they are on assistantship. This is dependent on how many hours a week they work. For our GA students this means they are required to register for 9 credits in spring and fall terms and 6 credits in Summer terms.  
  
**Graduate Teaching Assistantship:** A Graduate Teaching Assistantship is a job in which a graduate student works as a course instructor for their department in exchange for a bi-weekly stipend, a tuition waiver and free health insurance. Students on a GA are also required to register for a certain number of credits each term while they are on assistantship. This is dependent on how many hours a week they work. Our department does not hire Graduate Teaching Assistants.

**Fellowship:** A Fellowship is something that is awarded to a graduate student in which they get a bi-weekly stipend, free health insurance and a tuition waiver. Students that are on a Fellowship are not required to work in their advisors lab in exchange for their stipend, health insurance and waiver. They are however required to register for more credits each term. Specifically 12 credits in Fall and Spring terms and 8 credits in Summer terms. Fellowships are relatively rare.

❖ **What is a tuition waiver?**

A tuition waiver is something that pays your tuition each term and tells our systems that you should get in-state tuition instead of out-of-state tuition. Note that even international students and students from other states will get in-state tuition if they are on assistantship.

❖ **What is the difference between in-state tuition and out-of-state tuition?**

Total In-state tuition is currently \$530.69 a credit that is \$448.73 a credit for tuition and \$81.96 a credit for student fees (March, 2016 data). Students on an assistantship or a fellowship will only have to pay for their student fees, these are things that pay for campus bus service, campus fitness facilities and more. See this link for a detailed breakdown: <http://www.fa.ufl.edu/bursar/current-students/tuition-and-fees-2015-16/fall-2015-students-for-the-2015-16-academic-year/>

Out of state tuition is the in-state tuition \$530.69 a credit plus a non-resident fee of \$690.21 a credit and a non-resident student financial aid fee of \$34.51 a credit. This totals \$1,255.41 a credit.

❖ **Who can get a tuition waiver?**

Any graduate student can get a tuition waiver. All they need is to get an assistantship or a fellowship and be legally authorized to work by the US Government.

❖ **Does the Horticultural Sciences Department have Teaching Assistantships?**

No. We have Graduate research Assistantships only. Graduate students participate in undergraduate teaching on a voluntary basis as part of their professional development.