Overview and Timeline

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the process and student progression through the MI degree program. Please note that suggested timeframes for application and contacting individuals is not mandated, but strongly suggested.

3 to 6 Months Prior to Desired Matriculation Date -
The student contacts Dr. Greg MacDonald, MI Program Coordinator, expressing interest in the MI program. Based on student interests and background, suggestion of departments and often potential advisors are discussed. The student does not have to meet specifically with Dr. MacDonald prior to application, but should be aware of any specific departmental requirements.

If the student has a specific field of study in mind, then he/she should also contact the individual department graduate coordinator to make them aware of their desire to enroll in the MI program. The coordinator can then make the student aware of any additional application materials and prior required background coursework needed for admission to the department. The coordinator will also be made aware the student application packet is forthcoming, and can begin the process of working with potential faculty advisors.

*begin Peace Corps application process, it takes 9-12 months from application to actual deployment, so applying at this time will coincide with the end of the 2nd semester, once accepted into grad school a letter will be sent to the student for their Peace Corps application process – students don’t need this letter to start the PC application!

Student applies to graduate school and selects up to three departments for admission (of the 9 departments within the PCMI). Once complete, this application will be sent to the graduate coordinators of the department(s) by the admissions office. Please note there is not a designation on the graduate application form/website for the PCMI program – please denote in your application under the specialization section (see below excerpt from the graduate school application form – enter the specific department (e.g. Agronomy, Animal Science, etc.) in the program line, Peace Corps MI in the specialization area. For the degree goal, specify Master’s.
*Program area selection excerpted from the online application form for graduate admission:

Anticipated Term/Year of Enrollment (select one):

___ Fall-August 20___  ___Spring-January 20___  ___Summer A/C-May 20___  ___Summer B-June 20___

College: ___ Program: __________________________ Specialization: __________________________
Degree goal (specify one): ___ Master’s ___ Specialist ___ Doctor ___ Engineer ___ PhD

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1 – 3 Months Prior to Starting Courses -
Acceptance into a department will be denoted by a letter of acceptance from the graduate coordinator. This acceptance will denote a Master of Science Non-Thesis option. Within this letter the coordinator will designate an advisor for the student if the student has not communicated with a faculty advisor during the application process. The student needs to meet with their advisor to designate courses for the upcoming semester, since some classes may fill quickly. The advisor will work with the student and the MI coordinator to provide the best options of coursework to broaden the student’s background while adhering to departmental course requirements. The goal of the first semester is 3-4 courses, totaling about 12 hours.

The First Week of Class –
The student should plan to meet with their advisor the first week of classes to provide updates and begin the student/advisor dialog that is critical in graduate school. Any problems that could mean dropping and adding a substitute course needs to be addressed within this period (please refer to UF course website for specific drop/add dates for each semester).

The First Semester –
During the first one-two months, the student and advisor should form a supervisory committee and complete their schedule of coursework for the second semester. Once again the goal is 3-4 courses, totaling about 12 hours. In planning this coursework, all departmental required courses (i.e. 12 to 16 hours for the major, depending on department) should be completed.

The Second Semester –
The student should know about their acceptance in Peace Corps and probable region of placement, so students can begin the process of learning more about the area and possibly gain some classroom experience pertinent to the region*. This could include sitting in on courses, attending seminars and guest lectures, talking with faculty, graduate students and others that may have experience or information about agricultural systems, community development, education, etc. that might aid in enhancing their experience.
*once again, placement to a country, region and community is under complete jurisdiction of Peace Corps; the students advisor/committee has no influence on the PC decision making process. Placement is subject to change prior to deployment.

During the second semester the student begins preparations for deployment, which should occur during the summer of the following year in the case of fall enrollment. Basically within 9 months of starting school and about 12 months from initial application process to Peace Corps. The student will need to defer UF graduate school enrollment during their time of PC service.

**Communications between Student and Advisor during Deployment***

We envision limited interaction with the student and advisor for the first 6 months of deployment to allow the student to adjust. After the student has settled in and become comfortable with their PC duties and living environment, communication with the advisor and/or the MI coordinator will become more common. The interaction at this juncture is to provide an update of the student’s experiences and type of work being performed. It also gives the advisor a sense of how the student might frame their PC experience for their research practicum. Dialog on additional work that may be needed (and can be completed) should be discussed within this 6-12 month period after deployment. Setting up protocols by the end of the first year allows research to be conducted during the second year. This also allows proper and timely documentation, e.g. surveys must be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Florida prior to taking data. Depending on internet access and work requirements, students might be able to take a distance education course while deployed.

*This section is only an example, and may or may not be possible for all students. Some locations lack reliable internet service, preventing routine communication and distance education courses.*

**Degree Completion after Peace Corps Service –**

We suggest student re-enroll in graduate school within 3 months after deployment and return to the U.S. During this final semester the student will work with their advisory and supervisory committee to develop and write their research practicum. The student will also take final courses needed for degree completion. It is up to the discretion of the committee on whether Peace Corps service can be used for credit (xxx6932, xxx6905), and then applied to the practicum. It is envisioned that up to 6 hours may be counted. In addition to the practicum and final oral exam by the supervisory committee, the student will likely be required to give an exit seminar. All MI students, regardless of department, should attend these seminars.