



Department of Geography
and Environmental Sciences

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

GRADUATE STUDIES
in
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

Approved by GES faculty

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I. INTRODUCTION

The information in this handbook pertains to programs, rules, and regulations specific to the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences (GES). It complements and extends the general guidelines and requirements of the Graduate School and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences of the University of Colorado Denver. Please also see the information contained in their websites:

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/current/Pages/resources.aspx>

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/Pages/CLAS.aspx>.

Graduate Faculty

The Core Graduate Faculty in Geography and Environmental Sciences comprises the following members, who include professors and instructors of the department. These faculty members may serve as members of thesis committees, with professors (at the ranks of assistant professor, associate professor, or professor) eligible to chair thesis committees.

Peter Anthamatten, Associate Professor

Christy Briles, Assistant Professor

Frederick Chambers, Associate Professor

Anne Chin, Professor

Matthew Cross, Instructor

Rudi Hartmann, C/T Associate Professor (Clinical Teaching Track)

Rafael Moreno, Associate Professor

Brian Page, Associate Professor

Gregory Simon, Associate Professor

Amanda Weaver, Senior Instructor

Bryan Wee, Associate Professor

In addition, Affiliated Graduate Faculty contribute to training graduate students in the Master of Science in Environmental Sciences Program. These faculty members may serve as chair or member of student thesis committees. They include:

N.Y. Chang, Professor, Department of Civil Engineering

Gregory Cronin, Associate Professor, Department of Integrative Biology

Michael J. Green, Associate Professor, Department of Integrative Biology

David Mays, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering

Annika Mosier, Assistant Professor, Department of Integrative Biology

Timberly Roane, Associate Professor, Department of Integrative Biology

Diana Tomback, Professor, Department of Integrative Biology

Alan Vajda, Associate Professor, Department of Integrative Biology

Mike Wunder, Associate Professor, Department of Integrative Biology

For thesis research requiring expertise not available in the Core Graduate Faculty and Affiliated Graduate Faculty, the GES Chair or Graduate Director may request that the Graduate School add individual faculty members within and outside the university to the Graduate Faculty by special appointment. The Graduate School considers requests for special appointments on a case-by-case basis, with approval requiring demonstration of exceptional expertise and competence for the faculty member nominated. Section IV of this handbook outlines specific requirements for the composition of student thesis committees.

Administration

The *Graduate Director*, working with the *GES Chair* and faculty, has primary responsibility for administering the MA degree program in Applied Geography and Geospatial Science and MS degree program in environmental sciences (described in the next section). The Graduate Director supports graduate students by tracking students' progress in the degree programs. The Graduate Director conducts and approves degree audits in conjunction with students' application for admission to candidacy, an important step required by the Graduate School toward graduation. The *Graduate Director* also chairs the Graduate Committee, which oversees graduate admissions, comprehensive examinations for non-thesis students, requests for substitutions in student degree programs, the annual review of graduate students, and related ad hoc issues.

The *Administrative Assistant* supports the graduate programs and serves as a point of contact for graduate students and individuals interested in the graduate programs. The administrative assistant communicates with graduate students about departmental deadlines and announcements, such as thesis defenses and the GES speaker series. Additionally, the administrative assistant further maintains and updates the files and database relevant to graduate students.

II. DEGREE PROGRAMS

The department offers two graduate degrees: MA in Applied Geography and Geospatial Science and MS in Environmental Sciences. Students in both programs complete a set of required core courses combined with electives in their areas of interest. Students in each program must select the thesis or non-thesis track (see details below).

MA in Applied Geography and Geospatial Science

Program Goals

The Master of Arts program in Applied Geography and Geospatial Science focuses on the following key objectives and outcomes:

- Acquisition knowledge of theory, methods, research and applications in the field of geography
- Learning how geography provides a useful and robust forum for exploring, analyzing, and responding to problems at the human-environment interface
- Development of ability to analyze problems, pose hypotheses, and design research
- Application of skills in geo-spatial analysis to research and real-world problems
- Mastering communication skills to articulate problems and recommend solutions in team settings

Course of Study

Students in the MA program have flexibility in selecting their focus of study. Under the guidance of a Graduate Advisor (see below), students develop a program of study according to their interests, as well as the availability of faculty resources and course offerings. Usually, the students' degree programs align with departmental themes and strengths. Common themes include cities and nature, climate change, environment and health, food systems, fluvial systems, globalization and sustainable development, resources conservation and management, spatial and environmental histories, and watershed management.

The MA program requires completion of 36 credit hours. All students must complete three core classes (9 credit hours) and a service learning studio (3 credit hours). Student must choose their geospatial science and methods coursework (12 credit hours) and their remaining electives (12 credit hours) in human and/or physical geography. At least one elective (3 credit hours) must focus on physical geography, and at least one (3 credit hours) must be in human geography. Students enrolled in the thesis track (details below) complete 3 credit hours of thesis writing in lieu of one elective course.

Students may apply up to 6 credit hours of independent study and/or internship coursework (combined) toward elective requirements. Inclusion of independent study and internship coursework in students' degree programs requires *prior* approval of the Graduate Committee (through a request for substitution; see Section IV of handbook). A maximum of 3 credit hours per independent study or internship may apply, with a maximum of 6 credit hours through a student's entire program. Students may take a maximum of 3 credit hours of independent study or internship with the same instructor or in the same term. Additionally, students may take a maximum of 2 online courses (6 credit hours) toward graduation requirements. Under extraordinary circumstances, students may request approval of additional online courses from the Graduate Committee (through a request for substitution; see Section IV of handbook).

Additionally:

- Some graduate courses require pre-requisites that may not “count” toward the MA degree (e.g. GEOG 5080 Introduction to GIS, which is a pre-requisite for admission into the MA program).
- Students may not apply 4000-level courses in their graduate programs, unless the Graduate Committee grants approval in exceptional cases through petition (request for substitution)
- Students are required to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.00 (a B average) for all graduate courses. Courses in which students receive a grade below B- do not apply toward fulfillment of degree requirements. If these courses in which students receive a grade of below B- are required for the degree program, students must re-take the course to achieve a grade of B- or higher. All grades received, including those in repeated courses, appear on the student's transcript. All grades are also included in the calculation of overall GPA. Only one course enrollment, however, will “count” toward the total credits required for graduation.

MS in Environmental Sciences

Program Goals

The Master of Science in Environmental Sciences program provides training in natural, physical, and social sciences associated with environmental analysis and systems. Specifically, the key goals of the program are:

- Provide a multidisciplinary approach to the study of environmental systems interacting with human activity.
- Teach students theories and methods pertaining to the innerworkings of water, air, biotic, soil, and landscape systems.
- Familiarize students with timely issues relevant to the environmental sciences.
- Enhance communication skills in students to serve as leaders in environmental research and problem solving.

Course of Study

Students must complete 39 credit hours toward the MS degree in environmental sciences. The core structure of the MS program comprises the following:

(a) Students must complete four required courses (12 hours): ENVS 6002 Environmental Sciences Seminar, ENVS 6100 Research Topics in Environmental Management, ENVS 6200 Risk Assessment, and ENVS 6800 Community-Based Research Practicum.

(b) An important feature of the MS program in environmental sciences is the specialization options. In consultation with their Graduate Advisor, students may select one of the following specialization options:

- Air Quality,
- Ecosystems
- Environmental Health
- Environmental Science Education
- Geospatial Analysis
- Water Quality/Systems

Within each specialization option, students must complete two required courses plus a choice of two additional elective courses specific to those areas of specialization (12 credit hours).

(c) In lieu of one elective course, students enrolled in the thesis track must complete 3 credit hours of thesis preparation and writing (details are provided below).

Students may apply up to 6 credit hours of independent study and/or internship coursework (combined) toward elective requirements. Inclusion of independent study and internship coursework requires approval of the Graduate Committee (through a request for substitution; see Section IV of handbook). A maximum of 3 credit hours per independent study or internship may apply. Students may take a maximum of 3 credit hours of independent study or internship with the same instructor or in the same term. Additionally, students may take a maximum of 2 online courses (6 credit hours) toward graduation requirements. Under extraordinary circumstances, students may request approval of additional online courses from the Graduate Committee (through a request for substitution; see Section IV of handbook).

Additionally:

- All students must complete at least one course in the ecological sciences and one course in the physical sciences.
- All students must complete at least two field- or lab-based courses.
- Some graduate courses require pre-requisites that may not “count” toward the MS degree.
- Students may not apply 4000-level courses in their graduate programs, unless the Graduate Committee grants approval in exceptional cases through petition (request for substitution).
- Students are required to maintain a minimum GPA of “B” (3.00) for all graduate courses. Courses in which students receive grades below B- will not apply toward fulfillment of degree requirements. If these courses (in which students receive a grade below B-) are required for the degree program, students must re-take the course to achieve a grade of B- or higher. All grades received, including those in repeated courses, appear on the student’s transcript. All grades are also

included in the calculation of overall GPA. Only one course enrollment, however, will “count” toward the total credits required for graduation.

Thesis/ Non-Thesis Options

By the end of the first semester (see timeline below; Table 1), students in both the MA and MS programs should declare whether they intend to pursue the thesis or non-thesis track. Students pursuing the thesis track must identify and gain agreement from a Graduate Advisor for guiding their thesis and course of study. Section IV below outlines requirements for identification and development of appropriate thesis committees. In addition, students must submit the appropriate departmental forms for approval by the Graduate Director (Table 1). Students are eligible to enroll in thesis preparation and writing hours only after submission of signed committee form, which requires approval of the thesis proposal. Students receive final grades for thesis writing hours only after successful defense of their thesis, not necessarily at the end of the semester in which they enrolled in these hours.

Transfer of Credit

Students may transfer up to 9 hours of approved graduate coursework into the MA and MS programs toward electives. Students must request these transfers via substitution forms (see Section IV) for approval by the Graduate Committee. For students who have completed coursework toward the GISci Certificate in the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences at the University of Colorado Denver, up to 15 approved credit hours may apply toward the MA program. Students may also apply coursework completely concurrently for the GISci Certificate toward requirements of the MS degree. Students may transfer credit for coursework completed as a non-degree student only with grades of B- or higher in those courses.

III. TIMELINES AND PROGREE TOWARD DEGREE

Target Timelines and Required Steps

Table 1 below outlines target timelines and steps for completing the MA and MS programs within approximately two years. Students pursuing the thesis degree plan may require additional time to complete thesis research and writing. The faculty recognizes that some students may elect to attend school part time, while employed full time outside the university, for example, and allows flexibility in completing electives and thesis research.

Table 1. Target timelines and required steps toward completion of MA and MS degree programs.

Semester	Core Courses		Required Steps
	MA	MS	
Year 1 Fall (1 st semester)	GEOG 6300- Foundations Seminar in Human Environment Interactions	ENVS 6002- Environmental Sciences Seminar	1. Establish area of specialization 2. Identify graduate advisor and file faculty advisor form ¹ 3. Select degree plan (thesis/non-thesis) and file relevant form ¹
Year 1 Spring (2 nd semester)	GEOG 6750- Research Design/Project Management (thesis students only)	GEOG 6750 - Research Design/Project Management (thesis students only)	1. Identify thesis topic (if applicable)

Year 2 Fall (3 rd semester)		ENVS 6100- Research Topics in Environmental Management	1. Identify thesis committee members (if applicable) and file thesis committee form ¹ 2. Thesis proposal approved by committee (if applicable) 3. File prospectus degree plan ¹ 4. Download deadlines for graduation from Graduate School website
Year 2 Spring (4 th semester)	GEOG 6800 - Community-Based Research Studio	ENVS 6800 Community-Based Research Practicum	<u>(4th or Final Semester)</u> 1. Apply for admission to candidacy ¹ 2. Apply for graduation 3. Request for examination ¹ 4. Take final examination (comprehensive examination or oral thesis defense)

¹Students must submit the relevant form to complete this step.

Summary of Required Submission of Forms

Students must complete the required steps (as outlined in Table 1 above) and submit the corresponding forms during their first three semesters in the MA and MS programs. If necessary, students may take additional semesters to complete the steps listed under the fourth semester toward graduation. Students submit all forms to the GES department for processing, summarized below.

- Student Intake Form (at new student orientation)
- Faculty Advisor Form (by December 1st, first semester)
- Degree Plan Form (thesis/non-thesis) (by December 1st, first semester)
- Faculty Thesis Committee Form (third semester)
- Student Prospectus Degree Plan (third semester)
- Admission to Candidacy (final semester)
- Request for Examination (final semester)

Review of Graduate Students

Each spring semester, the GES faculty conducts an annual review of all graduate students, overseen by the *Graduate Committee*. This review comprises the following four components: (1) A review of progress toward degree, including students' GPA and completion of the required steps and submission of corresponding forms (outlined above); (2) a perspective from the student's *Graduate Advisor*; (3) an overall departmental evaluation (e.g., effectiveness as a teaching assistant or laboratory instructor; general contributions toward departmental activities); (4) and general faculty comments. The review concludes with a brief in-person meeting with the *Graduate Advisor*.

IV. PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Advising

Students in the MA and MS programs must have a faculty advisor at all times, along the guidelines specified below. Students should meet at least once a semester with their faculty advisors.

Intake Advisor: Upon entry into the MA and MS programs, students are assigned an Intake Advisor, who serves as the students' faculty advisor during the first semester. This Intake Advisor assists students with transition into the graduate programs and the university community. The Intake Advisor also assists students with identifying a Graduate Advisor whose areas of interest match those of the student. The role of the Intake Advisor ceases after the first semester of the students' degree programs, or earlier if the student has identified a Graduate Advisor the first semester of the degree program.

Graduate Advisor: The Graduate Advisor is the student's primary advisor through her/his graduate program. The role of the Graduate Advisor begins after the student submits her/his Graduate Advisor Form for approval by the *Graduate Director*, at the latest during the first week of the second semester, and continues until the student graduates. The Graduate Advisor has primary responsibility for guiding students through the MA and MS programs. This Graduate Advisor offers substantive expertise in helping students build an appropriate degree plan. For students pursuing the thesis plan, the Graduate Advisor also supervises students' thesis research toward completion of a thesis. As chair of the student's thesis committee, this role includes guidance toward building an appropriate thesis committee (see below) and administering the final examination (thesis defense). Because faculty have various levels of availability at a given time, faculty agree to serve as graduate advisors for individual students on a case-to-case basis and may elect to decline requests from students to serve in this role.

Specialization Advisor: For students pursuing the MS degree, Specialization Advisors may offer guidance in the selection of courses acceptable to complete specialization options. Specialization Advisors also provide input to the Graduate Committee for substitution requests in the specialization options in which they serve in this capacity.

Graduate Director: The Graduate Director guides students' progress toward completion of their degree programs. This role entails two main tasks: overseeing completion of the steps (e.g., through submission of forms) required by the GES department and Graduate School; and ensuring that the student's degree plan meets the requirements for graduation. As chair of the Graduate Committee, the Graduate Director also administers the annual evaluation of graduate students and processes requests for substitutions in students' degree plans, working with the Graduate Committee. Additionally, the Graduate Director conducts degree audits and advances students to candidacy toward graduation.

Course Substitutions

Students must request substitutions of courses into degree programs, including courses transferred from other programs, by submitting the requisite Request for Substitution form. Requests for application of independent studies and internships in degree programs also require this form. This form is available from the *Administrative Assistant*. In addition to the information requested on the form (e.g., course to substitute, course to replace, semester/year, justification), students requesting substitutions must submit a current unofficial transcript and syllabi of the courses in question. The *Graduate Director*, in consultation with the *Graduate*

Committee, considers each request and informs the student of the decision. Approval is required before enrollment in those courses. Therefore, students should seek approval for course substitutions well in advance of enrolling in the course.

Thesis Committee

After committing to pursue a thesis plan by the end of the first semester (Table 1), students develop a thesis committee, working closely with their *Graduate Advisor*. Students should aim to pick their topic by the end of their second semester and form their thesis committees by the end of their third semester, and submit the Faculty Committee Form by the first week of the third semester. The research question and methods should guide the formation of the committee, incorporating people with the relevant expertise. Students pursuing a thesis must identify additional members to form a thesis committee. Typically, a thesis committee comprises three members: a chair (the Graduate Advisor), and two additional members. These three individuals guide the student's research toward completion of a thesis. Under unusual circumstances, if additional expertise is required, for example, a student's thesis committee may comprise up to four members. Because faculty have various levels of availability at a given time, faculty agree to serve as committee members for individual students on a case-to-case basis and may decline to serve.

All thesis committees for the MA and MS degrees must comprise at least two members from the Graduate Faculty of Geography and Environmental Sciences (see Section I above). Thesis committees for students pursuing the MS degree must comprise at least one member from the core Graduate Faculty. The chairs of thesis committees are eligible core and affiliated members of the Graduate Faculty of Geography and Environmental Sciences: assistant professors, associate professors, and professors (see Section I above). *Students should select additional members of their committees from among the GES core and affiliated Graduate Faculty. If the student's thesis research requires specialized expertise not available in the Graduate Faculty of Geography and Environmental Sciences, the student may submit a request to add an individual to the Graduate Faculty, in consultation with their Graduate Advisor.* This request must include a detailed justification of the (missing) expertise to be filled and nominee's professional status, along with a curriculum vitae of the nominee. The individual to be nominated may be a faculty member at CU Denver or another university or institution. Students should complete all steps required to finalize a thesis committee no later than the end of their third semester, and submit the required Faculty Thesis Committee Form for approval.

Thesis Proposal

Students work closely with their Graduate Advisor for guidance in completing and distributing a draft of their research proposal. In some cases, students may work with their Graduate Advisor to complete the full draft, while seeking input from committee members where relevant. In other cases, committee members may request to see working drafts, or sections of drafts, before students complete a draft in its entirety. In all cases, all committee members must review and approve the thesis proposal. This important step represents an agreement between the student and the thesis committee regarding the work comprising the student's thesis. Students may enroll in GEOG 6950 (Master's thesis preparation and writing) only after they gain approval of their thesis proposal.

Final Examination

All students must complete a final examination. The final examination for non-thesis students is the *Comprehensive Examination*, which is administered by the Graduate Committee. For students pursuing a thesis, the *Thesis Defense* serves as the final examination, overseen by the

students' thesis committee. In both cases, students must request this examination by submitting the form for [Requesting an Examination](#). The deadline from the Graduate School for receiving this form is *two weeks before the date of the examination*. Because this form requires approval by the *Graduate Director*, departmental deadlines are much earlier.

Comprehensive Examination

Candidates for non-thesis master's degrees are required to complete a comprehensive examination. The *Graduate Committee* administers this examination in accordance with guidelines for the Graduate School and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Comprehensive Examination comprises written and oral components. Each term, the *Graduate Director* or other members of the Graduate Committee distributes the examination to eligible students who have advanced to candidacy and completed the request for examination form. Working with the Graduate Director and Graduate Committee, the *Administrative Assistant* also schedules a time for the oral component of the examination with each student. After the examination concludes, all members of the Graduate Committee sign an examination report form signifying the results. The Graduate Director (or chair of the examining committee) submits the report to the Graduate School.

Thesis Defense

The student's thesis committee administers the thesis defense in accordance with guidelines for the Graduate School and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Students who have advanced to candidacy are eligible to undertake the thesis defense, upon recommendation from their thesis committee.

The thesis defense takes place over an approximately two-hour period. In some cases, the thesis committee may conclude the examination with less time. Students prepare an oral presentation of 20-25 minutes that is open to the public, in addition to the examining committee members. After the oral presentation, the audience may engage in a question/answer period for 10-15 minutes. Then, the examination will resume with the thesis committee only. Once the examination concludes, all members of the thesis committee sign an examination report signifying the results. The thesis committee chair submits the report to the Graduate School. To schedule a time and reserve a room for the thesis defense, students work with the *GES Administrative Assistant* during preparation of the request for a final examination (see above). The standard room is the GES conference room (NC 3014). At least two weeks before the thesis defense, students also provide the Administrative Assistant the *title of thesis, date/time of defense, and location (room) of defense*. The Administrative Assistant announces the event (through flyers and e-mails) and invites interested parties to attend. Students are responsible for acquiring and setting up technical equipment required for their thesis defenses. Students are advised to reserve departmental projects in advance and plan for other audio-visual needs. Thesis defenses should start and end on time.

Upon successful completion of the thesis defense, students may undertake revisions of the thesis to address questions and issues raised during the defense. After gaining approval of an acceptable version of their thesis from committee members, students produce the final thesis for submission to the Graduate School. Students then submit a digital copy of the final thesis to the *Administrative Assistant* and to ProQuest.

Appendix I contains a comprehensive guide for completing a thesis in GES.

Steps Toward Graduation

During the final semester, students must complete specific tasks and meet program and university deadlines toward graduation. In addition to the information outlined below, students should review the guidelines from the Graduate School and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences:

- <http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/registrar/degrees/Pages/Graduation.aspx>.
- <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/current/Pages/masters-services.aspx>
- <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/current-students/graduate/thesis-graduation/Pages/graduation.aspx>

The key tasks and procedures are summarized below (see also Table 1 above):

- (1) Enrollment: Students must enroll in at least one credit hour of coursework during the semester of anticipated graduation. Students pursuing the thesis plan may enroll in one credit hour of thesis writing if they have completed their required coursework.
- (2) Degree audit: Before advancement to candidacy, the Graduate Director completes a degree audit and certifies that the student has completed (or will complete) all requirements for the degree. This step requires the student to submit a transcript showing all coursework through the semester in which the student is expected to graduate.
- (3) Advancement to candidacy: Once degree audits are completed, students may apply for advancement to candidacy. This step entails submission of the relevant form to the Graduate Director for signature, available from the Graduate School, that includes a list of all coursework approved by the Graduate Director during the degree audit. Submission of this form to the Graduate Director for application to candidacy may also occur in conjunction with the degree audit. Students must also obtain the signature of their Graduate Advisors to complete this form. After students obtain the requisite signatures (from the Graduate Director and Graduate Advisor), they are responsible for submitting their approved applications for advancement to candidacy to the Graduate School ahead of the stated deadline.
- (4) Application for graduation: Students must complete this step on the student portal, *i.e.* UCD Access.
- (5) Thesis format review: Students completing the thesis plan must submit their thesis electronically to the Graduate School for review.
- (6) Request final examination (comprehensive examination or thesis defense; see above): Students completing the thesis plan must work with their thesis committee to determine a mutually agreed date and time for their thesis defense. Students work with the *Administrative Assistant* to reserve a room and date for a thesis defense. Students completing the non-thesis plan take the comprehensive examination on a date and time offered by the *Graduate Committee*.
- (7) Complete final examination (comprehensive examination or thesis defense): The chair of the Graduate Committee (for non-thesis students) is responsible for submitting the results of the comprehensive examination to the Graduate School. The examination

report may contain requirements for additional work for the student to earn a “Pass” for the examination (i.e., students may receive a “conditional pass” for the examination). For students completing the thesis plan, the chair of the thesis committee (i.e., Graduate Advisor) submits the final examination report.

- (8) Students completing theses must submit the final version of their thesis through *ProQuest*.

Departmental and Graduate School deadlines vary each semester for the required tasks outlined above. The steps for completing degree audits, advancement to candidacy, and requesting a final examination (for non-thesis students) impose departmental deadlines that are earlier than the deadlines published by the Graduate School. Students should pay close attention to these deadlines, which communicated through their university (ucdenver) e-mail accounts, in accordance with university policy.

The Graduate School’s website contains their forms and deadlines, under Students, Deadlines & Forms: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/current/Pages/resources.aspx>.

V. GRADUATE SCHOOL/GES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The information outlined above specifies the rules and regulations specific to the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences. Students should also be aware of the general policies and procedures of the Graduate School at the University of Colorado Denver. For example, students must follow the graduate school deadlines for submission of paperwork for the graduation application, comprehensive exam, and any other deadlines. The policies and procedures are available on the Graduate School website:

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/Pages/default.aspx>

Transfer Credits

Transfer credit refers to any graduate-level credit earned at an accredited institution outside the CU System, both in the USA and abroad. Transfer credits must be approved by the Graduate School and the *GES Graduate Director*.

Students who obtained graduate-level course credits within the CU system in another graduate program or as a non-degree student, must seek the approval of the *GES Graduate Director* to apply the coursework towards a GES program.

Coursework cannot be accepted for GES programs if it applied towards a previously awarded degree.

All courses accepted for transfer must meet the following requirements:

- graduate level (5000 or above);
- “letter” grade (satisfactory/unsatisfactory or pass/fail grades are not acceptable);
- a grade of “B minus” or better

Credit cannot be transferred until the student has established a satisfactory record of at least one term of enrollment at the CU Denver and earned a minimum 3.00 GPA.

Enrollment Requirements

Enrollment for a minimum of five credits is required for eligibility for financial aid and full-time status. Master's students should aim to finish the degree in two years with full-time enrollment and seven years with part-time enrollment.

Grades

To maintain satisfactory academic progress, advance to candidacy, and earn a graduate degree, students are required to maintain a minimum GPA of "B" (3.00) for all graduate courses taken while in Graduate School, which includes any undergraduate (i.e., 4000 level) courses that may be required for the graduate degree. Grades below B- count towards the GPA but not towards the degree requirements. Failure to maintain a 3.00 GPA will result in academic probation for the student, as defined below.

An in-progress (IP) grade is recorded for thesis hours until the final approved thesis is submitted to the Graduate School. For other courses, the instructor assigns a letter grade or an "Incomplete (I) grade. A grade of "I" automatically changes to an "F" after one year unless the course instructor initiates a grade change.

Academic Probation

When a student's cumulative GPA falls below 3.00, the Graduate School notifies the student (and Graduate Director) that s/he has been placed on academic probation.

The student has two semesters if s/he is enrolled as a full-time student, or four semesters if part-time, in which to raise his or her cumulative GPA (calculated using Graduate Level courses only) to at least 3.00. The Graduate Committee may impose special conditions on a probationary student in addition to meeting the minimum GPA requirement. The Graduate Committee will notify the student on probation, as well as the Dean, of these conditions in writing.

Student Honor Code

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of personal integrity and professional ethics as detailed in the Graduate School Academic Honor and Conduct Code. The Dean may place students on disciplinary probation upon recommendation of the Academic Conduct and Appeals Committee (ACAC) if students who fail to meet these standards of integrity and ethics or violate the honor code.

Academic Grievances

If concern exists about a course, students should first schedule an in-person meeting with the instructor to discuss the issue. Often, problems arise from miscommunication and/or misalignment of expectations. These problems are frequently resolved through discussion that leads to agreement on how to move forward. If resolution is not satisfactory, the student and faculty member should individually schedule an in-person meeting with the Chair of the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences to register concerns and seek resolution. Further, if a student has a concern about the curriculum or other departmental functions, s/he should schedule an in-person meeting with the Chair to discuss these issues and seek resolution.

If the outcome of the process described above remains unsatisfactory, students who believe that they have received unfair treatment beyond normal programmatic or departmental policies

may file a grievance with the Graduate School in accordance with grievance procedures outlined in the Student Handbook.

University Employment

The number of hours a student employee may work in all positions combined (the aggregate of a student employee's positions across departments for any University of Colorado employer) is limited as follows:

- Fall and spring semesters: For the purpose of this policy, the fall semester is defined as August 15 through January 1 and the spring semester is defined as January 1 through May 15. The maximum number of hours a student employee may work during a fall or spring semester is 25 hours per week or 50 hours per bi-weekly payroll period, provided no single week in that period exceeds 40 work hours.
- Summer: For the purpose of this policy, summer is defined as May 15 through August 15. The maximum number of hours a student employee may work during the summer is 40 hours per week.

The university recommends the same hourly limits for employment outside the university or the combination of university and outside employment.

VI. STUDENT RESOURCES

A variety of resources are available to students through the department, Graduate School, and University.

Teaching Assistantships

Lab instructor positions are available for MS students. By contract, students with these appointments teach labs for the ENVS1042 course. MA students are eligible for student hourly positions. These positions are typically designated toward assisting faculty with large courses (e.g., grading), but also may include other relevant duties toward supporting teaching. Neither the lab instructor nor student hourly positions offer tuition benefits.

These positions are competitive. The GES department offers half of the available positions to new incoming students, whose applications for admission are considered automatically for assistantships. Each spring semester, continuing students also have opportunity to apply for assistantships. Students who hold lab instruction positions and student hourly positions, and who demonstrate strong performance in their positions, have priority over new applicants. The GES department aims to offer assistantships to new and continuing students for two academic years. Limited opportunities exist for summer terms.

Research Assistantships

Individual faculty members may employ student research assistants with research grant funds. The department, however, does not offer research assistantships.

Research and Travel Support

The GES department does not have dedicated funds for supporting student travel for conducting research or delivering presentations at conferences. The department aims to

support graduate student participation, however, at the regional GIS in the Rockies conference and the regional meeting of the Great Plains/Rocky Mountain division of the American Association of Geographers. Students should make requests for financial support to the Chair of GES by e-mail, with sufficient time to allow an expected response time of at least two weeks. In making a request, students should provide the following information: name, student ID, title of presentation, name of conference, location of conference, estimated cost of attendance, requested amount (up to \$300).

To earn eligibility for departmental support, student MUST work with a faculty advisor when preparing and submitting abstracts. Because students are affiliated with GES/CU Denver, participation at these conferences offer opportunities for professional development. The GES department will host a day of review for presentations and posters before the meetings.

Additionally, the GES department may provide some match to the funds from the Graduate School and College of Liberal Arts and Science (see below) for other conferences.

Through the Graduate School, financial support may be available to support attendance at conferences for students who are presenting a paper or poster. Students may apply for up to \$500 from the Graduate School to defray expenses incurred for presentation of his or her work at a national professional conference. These funds may apply toward the costs of conference registration, travel, lodging, or food. Students may download the Travel Request Form from the graduate school website.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences also offers support (up to \$500) for graduate students presenting a research paper or poster at professional conferences. To be eligible for this competitive funding, students must also apply to the Graduate School (described above) for funding support. Students may download the Application for CLAS Graduate Student Travel Awards form.

Departmental Activities and Resources

- GES Website: Students can find current information relevant to GES at clas.ucdenver.edu/ges
- GES Student Group -- EDGE (Every Day Geographic Experiences): <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/Departments/ges/Students/Pages/GESGISStudentClub.aspx> and at Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UCDEEDGE/>
- GES Department Facebook Site: https://www.facebook.com/pg/cudenverGES/posts/?ref=page_internal
- GES Department LinkedIn Site: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4705730>
- Speaker Series: On Friday afternoons, two to three times per semester, GES sponsors a speaker series with professional academic talks across a variety of subject areas relevant to geography and environmental sciences. Graduate students are highly encouraged to attend!

Important University Resources and Policies

While not intended as a complete list, the following are some resources most frequently used by graduate students:

Policies

- Academic Freedom: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/policy/pages/academic-Freedom.aspx>
- Attendance:
http://www.ucdenver.edu/faculty_staff/employees/policies/Policies%20Library/OAA/StudentAttendance.pdf
- Email Policy (all university email business must be conducted using the ucdenver email address): <https://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/6002>
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/AcademicAdvising/ParentsandFamilies/Pages/FERPA-Advising-FAQ.aspx>
- Grade Appeal Policy: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/policy/Documents/Process-for-Grade-Issues.pdf>
- Student Code of Conduct:
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/standards/students/pages/default.aspx>

Resources for Success on the Downtown Campus

- Links to Many Important Current Student Resources:
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/Pages/index.aspx>
- Auraria Library Research Assistance: <http://library.auraria.edu/services/research-help>
- Bursar's Office (tuition and fees): <http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/CostsAndFinancing/StudentBilling/Pages/default.aspx>
- Campus Assessment, Response & Evaluation (CARE) Team (Assists in guiding students with financial difficulties or emotional distress who are not an immediate threat to themselves or others. This non-confidential service assists students in finding the appropriate campus resources.):
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/CARE/Pages/default.aspx>
- Disability Accommodations: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/disability-resources-services/accommodations/Pages/accommodations.aspx>
- Financial Aid and Scholarship Office: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/resources/CostsAndFinancing/FA/Pages/FinancialAid.aspx>

- International Student & Scholar Services (Assists international students with issues related to their immigration status):
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/InternationalPrograms/OIA/ISSS/Pages/default.aspx>
- Internships and Jobs (GES page, and Office of Experiential Learning):
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/Departments/ges/Students/Pages/JobInternships.aspx> AND
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/ExperientialLearning/Pages/default.aspx>
- Learning Resources Center:
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/LRC/OurServices/Pages/default.aspx>
- Office of Equity (Oversees complaints related to discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and retaliation): *<http://equity.ucdenver.edu/>*
- Psychology Service Center:
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/Centers/psychservices/Pages/default.aspx>
- Student Health Center at Auraria: *[_http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/health-center/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/health-center/Pages/default.aspx)*
- Student Life and Campus Community (fosters student participation in non-academic student activities such as student government, student organization, and club sports):
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/studentlife/Pages/StudentLife.aspx>
- Writing Center:
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/CLAS/Centers/writing/Pages/TheWritingCenter.aspx>

APPENDIX I: Guide for Completing a Thesis in GES

1) **Start considering topics early.**

Begin conversations with faculty to help solidify a research topic, which will guide the selection of coursework for you to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills to successfully conduct research.

2) **Select a potential thesis advisor.**

This person is likely different from your intake advisor, who was assigned to give you a point-of-contact for academic advising as you entered the program. Your thesis advisor should be a person whose expertise aligns with your topic and who can direct the course of your thesis work. Importantly, having a working relationship with this person establishes a foundation for embarking on a thesis. For example, it is a good idea to have some coursework with a potential advisor and/or work on research projects with her/him. Not all faculty have the same level of availability and may not be taking new students for advisement. Faculty are not required to agree to work with any particular student; this is a mutually agreed upon arrangement. For the MA, the thesis advisor must be GES core faculty (tenure/tenure-track, senior instructor, or instructor). For the MS, GES core faculty or affiliated faculty can act as a thesis advisor. There is no promise of financial support (paid research position, travel, or thesis research funding) from a thesis advisor.

3) **Begin to refine the topic.**

It is acceptable to change advisors to accommodate adjustments in the direction of your work, though the earlier this occurs, the better. Good communication is the key in navigating these changes. Once an advisor has worked with you on developing a proposal, it is not recommended to change advisor, and even less so once the proposal is approved by the thesis advisor and committee.

4) **Form a committee of 3 members (in some instances 4 may make sense).**

Working with the thesis advisor, identify potential committee members. The research question and methods should guide the formation of the committee, incorporating people with the relevant expertise. The committee must include at least two (2) core GES faculty, including the advisor. MA and MS students often select a third person from another department because of the interdisciplinary nature of the discipline. The committee may include a member from outside the university if s/he has significant expertise relevant to your thesis. In this case, this person needs to be temporarily appointed to the CU Denver Graduate Faculty through a request to the Graduate Director or the Department Chair. The student will then submit the Thesis Committee Form to the Graduate Committee.

5) **Request Graduate Faculty status for committee members.**

For committee members outside of the GES (either a non-affiliated person in another department or a person outside of the department), check with the Administrative Assistant to see if they are a member of our Graduate Faculty. If not, you should send an email to the person you would like on your committee to request her or his

participation. If they agree, you should request that they send a current copy of their CV to the GES Chair. You should also send a copy of this email to your thesis advisor.

6) Complete department forms.

Once the thesis advisor and the committee are finalized, fill out the GES Advisor Form and the GES Thesis Committee Form and submit them in the GES office to document that everyone agrees with the arrangements.

7) Establish work expectations.

In communication with the faculty advisor and the committee, decide how often you plan to meet, the turn-around time needed for feedback, the type of feedback you would like to receive, etc.

8) Complete your thesis proposal and gain approval.

Generally speaking, you should work closely with your thesis advisor to complete a proposal draft prior to distributing your work to the full committee while still getting input from various committee members when relevant. Some committee members may want to see drafts of sections prior to distribution of a full draft. The entire committee must review and approve the thesis proposal prior to enrollment in thesis credits and your data collection efforts. This ensures that everyone is on the same page with regard to the direction you will take. A good plan means fewer pitfalls and fewer surprises along the way!

9) Gain COMIRB approval, if necessary.

If you are doing human subjects research (such as surveys), you must gain approval from CU Denver's Institutional Review Board in coordination with your thesis advisor prior to conducting any work on the project.

<http://www.ucdenver.edu/research/comirb/Pages/COMIRB.aspx>

10) Enroll in thesis credits.

You may only enroll in thesis credits after the proposal is approved by your entire committee. The faculty advisor will submit a grade of IP (in progress) for thesis credit when work is not yet complete. A letter grade will only be assigned following the thesis defense. Your advisor will fill out a Change of Grade form at the defense for outstanding thesis credits and assign a grade based on the quality of the thesis in discussion with the rest of the committee.

11) Seek mentoring and guidance.

Your primary thesis advisor will guide you through the data collection, analysis, and writing process, and should support you throughout the process as your primary point of contact. The other committee members should support specific facets of the work, such as the methodological approach, but generally do not oversee the day-to-day execution of the thesis. If major re-direction is needed, communicate with your entire committee, not just your advisor. Good communication with the committee avoids surprises and potential delays in your defense.

12) Submit final draft to the full committee.

Once a final draft is in place and the thesis advisor believes it is ready for committee-wide review, the draft should be submitted to the entire committee so that the members can decide how close you are to a defense. The student does not make a determination about the readiness for a defense.

13) Schedule thesis defense date.

You may schedule a thesis defense date after the committee has agreed the final draft is ready for the defense. Given challenges in scheduling, you may schedule a tentative thesis defense as the committee is reviewing the final draft with the understanding that the committee may decide the thesis is not ready after the members review the final draft. In this case, the defense date can be moved. A defense date cannot be scheduled while the work is incomplete. In general, GES does not support thesis defenses in the summer. Most faculty members are generally not paid to work in the summer and others have research responsibilities in the summer months, making it very difficult to coordinate schedules.

14) Allow ample time for review.

The committee should have a minimum of two weeks to review drafts of your work. It is the responsibility of the faculty advisor and committee members to submit comments in this time period so that the student can move forward efficiently.

15) Present your thesis defense.

At the defense, you will present for approximately 20-25 minutes, followed by a session of questions and answers. You will then leave the room for the committee to discuss the final assessment. Ensure that all paperwork is signed at the thesis defense with a digital copy for the department and then submitted to the Graduate School:

- a. Request for Examination should be submitted two weeks prior to the defense. A digital copy should be submitted to the department for approval and forwarding to the Graduate School.
- b. The Graduate Advisor must complete a Change of Grade Form after the committee agrees to the letter grade following the defense. Students do not handle this form, but rather a digital copy is kept for the student's record and then submitted directly to the Graduate School.
- c. All Thesis Committee Members sign a Statement of Examination Results for Thesis, with a *pass/conditional pass* or *fail* as the outcome. Student are also not allowed to handle this form. The Graduate Advisor submits a digital copy to the department, and then forwards the form to the Graduate School for processing.

16) Submit all paperwork in the semester of graduation.

In the semester of graduation, meet with the Graduate Director for processing the degree audit and a request for examination. Ensure that you meet all deadlines as defined by the CU Denver! The Graduate School forms are found on their website under Students, Deadlines & Forms: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/Graduate-School/current/Pages/resources.aspx>

- a. Application for Candidacy (Graduate School).

- b. Examination Request (Graduate School, comprehensive for non-thesis, or thesis defense for thesis option).
- c. Apply for Graduation (Registrar):
<http://www.ucdenver.edu/anschutz/studentresources/Registrar/PlanYourDegree/Pages/ApplyforGraduation.aspx>
- d. NOTE: If you miss the formal thesis defense deadline, the request graduation can occur in the following term as long as the thesis has successfully been defended before the end of the previous semester.