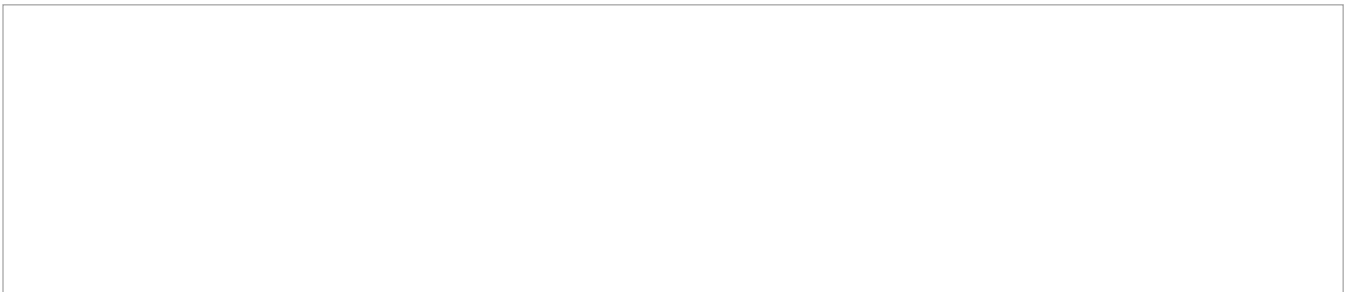


# GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Department of Geological Sciences  
College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics



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## GRADUATE PROCESS MILESTONES

Your graduate progress can be divided into three phases. These phases and their appropriate milestones are summarized below.

### Phase 1: Pre-Advancement

Students in their first year of graduate school are working toward “Advancement to Candidacy.” Students can only advance after they have completed 6 units within the program. The Advancement consists of two parts: the Degree Program (a list of predetermined classes) and the Advancement Proposal (a brief description of your research project). Students are expected to Advance by the end of their first Spring Semester.

Milestones:

- ✓ Completion of Geol 500
- ✓ Formation of Thesis Committee
- ✓ Completion of written Advancement Proposal
- ✓ Presenting the Advancement Proposal to Committee

### Phase 2: Post-Advancement

After successfully Advancing to Candidacy, students will be busy taking the courses in their Degree Program, collecting and analyzing their thesis data, and writing their thesis. This is a period of intense work.

## WHO DOES WHAT

Your degree progress will be facilitated by a number of people: some you will know, some you will not. Keep in mind that you are a student of the Graduate School of the University. The Graduate School can (and does) dictate many of the rules by which you and the department must abide. Here is a brief list of who's who:

### Thesis Advisor

This is the professor with whom you have come to work. She/he will be guiding your research, assisting you in course selection, helping you find funds, encouraging you to attend meetings, and ultimately signing off on your Master's Thesis.

### Graduate Advisor

Current Advisor: Dr. Lora Stevens

This professor is in charge of the Graduate Program for the Department. She is responsible for the logistics, not research. She signs and files all forms, forwards all petitions (see GS 700), and can serve as an intermediary with your Thesis Advisor should the need arise. She is not responsible for financial aid or any of your research duties.

### Director of Graduate Students (CNSM)

Current Director: Dr. Babette Benken

This professor oversees the Graduate Program for the entire College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. It is likely you will never meet her, but in essence she is the Graduate Advisor's supervisor. She signs off on all forms



### Filling Out Your Degree Program

There is more to planning your course of study than simply selecting courses. You want to plan your schedule so that you are as close to completion of your thesis as possible by the time you have completed the coursework in your program. (Note: It is departmental policy that data collection and a rough draft be completed by the end of GEOL 698.)

Financial aid often has unit limitations. Many students take a 1 unit kinesiology class (e.g. yoga, bowling, archery, etc) to keep themselves at the appropriate unit level. These do not go on your Degree Program form. See [Financial Aid: Newly Admitted and Current Graduate Students](#)

To fill out your degree program correctly and avoid unnecessary hassles, follow these easy steps:

1. Request an electronic copy of the degree program from the Graduate Advisor.
2. Fill it in electronically with your Thesis Advisor.
3. Send it back (electronically) to the Graduate Advisor for checking. 90% of all degree programs have a mistake. Catching mistakes before the signatures saves everyone time and aggravation. If the GA catches mistakes after the signatures, then the student will have to do it all over again.
4. Once the Graduate Advisor "oks" the degree program, she will send it back to you electronically. Print it out and take it to your advancement presentation. You will need the signatures of the thesis advisor, grad advisor and dept chair.
5. Once signed, place it in the Graduate Advisor's box in the main office. She will route it to all the necessary people. Your program is filed with the University.
6. You should receive an email indicating acceptance of your degree program by the university within 4 weeks. Please keep this notification on file.





## PHASE 2: POST-ADVANCEMENT

Research can be difficult to fit into schedules when you are taking classes and working or TAing classes. Still, exploration and mastery of a specific topic is the goal of your program. In fact, it is the cornerstone. Classes are important—but don't mistake a Master's degree as an extension of your Bachelor's degree. It is something completely different.

Even if it is difficult to find time for your research, you are expected to make timely progress. Timely progress will likely include late nights, weekends and intensive summer work. In fact, Fridays and summers are key. Even though the beach may be calling, this is your most unfettered (especially if you need to get things done in the field). Summer isn't a vacation during a Master's prime working time. Use it wisely.

You are expected to have all data collection and interpretation done by the end of your last semester of GEOL 698 units. Ideally, you will have a draft prepared by then as well. All data must be uploaded into your Thesis Advisor's folder on the Geology Department's drive. Failure to meet either criteria may result in Administrative Academic Probation, which will be discussed later.

Occasionally a student's research hits a snag that is not of their making. Examples include loss of access to a field site, poor weather, instrument failure. It is up to your Thesis Advisor to make reasonable accommodations for you to complete your thesis. You are not expected to sit idly for months waiting for access or a machine to be fixed. If you are concerned about an issue such as this, please notify the Graduate Advisor and she/he will facilitate a compromise.

Sometime students are unfamiliar with what constitutes a reasonable amount of work for a Master's thesis. The best guide is to skim through previous theses (especially more recent ones) that are kept in the main office. Cutting edge techniques may require fewer analyses, whereas traditional theses that build on vast amounts of literature may require more. This is an important discussion to have with your Thesis Advisor.





All theses should be “A” quality and that can mean 5, 6, even 10 rounds of edits. Also keep in mind that each member of your committee should be given a ~~minimum~~ of 3 weeks to read your thesis. This is 3 weeks AFTER your Thesis Advisor gives the final stamp of approval. So, please don’t expect to hand everyone a first draft of your thesis one week before the library deadline. That is not enough time and ~~you will~~ **you will** make the deadline.

### Submission Process

Your thesis must be approved by the University Thesis Office. The Thesis Office has established a window of time to receive theses each semester. This deadline is early in the semester. Once received, a thesis will be reviewed within a 4-week window. If there are significant errors found upon review, the thesis will be returned to you, and you will be asked to correct the error(s) identified (usually within one week). When the thesis is reviewed for a second time, if errors still persist, you will need to work on the thesis and resubmit within the defined window of time the following semester.

All theses are now submitted electronically. However, the signature page, must be brought to the thesis office separately in hard copy.

Please note filing your thesis with the library Thesis Office is separate from filing to graduate. You must file to graduate the semester before you intend to graduate. See [Graduation Checklist for Master’s Students](#)

### Thesis Assistance

Prior to the window of times indicated by the [Thesis & Dissertation Office](#), the personnel are happy to work with students on a drop-in basis or by appointment to answer questions about style and formatting of their theses. They also have handouts on questions not addressed by the Thesis Handbook. Please visit the Thesis and Dissertation Office in the library or their website for updates, deadlines, and changes to policy.

### Presentation

The final step in completing your Master’s degree is a 30-minute oral presentation that is open to the public, including friends and family come. This is an opportunity to show off all that you have accomplished. Talk to your Thesis Advisor about the most appropriate dates.

Note that this is not a defense. Some people may ask probing questions, but no one is trying to derail your presentation. The best research raises more questions than it answers.

### Filing to Graduate

You must [file to graduate](#) which is done months in advance. If you do not finish during the semester in which you applied to graduate, you must refile. Please see the University Catalog for rules and help in Applying for Graduation.





## RESOURCES

## APPENDIX A

### Thesis Assistance

