

## Graduate Degree Requirements for the M.S.

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- (1) **Advisors** – Prior to arrival, each student will have identified an advisor from his/her field of interest. The student may change their advisor at any time by submitting a letter outlining the request to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.
  
- (2) **Course Requirements** – The Graduate School requires that each M.S. student complete 30 total credits: at least 24 hours of graded course work and 6 hours of Non-Topical Research (EVSC 89988999, 9998-9999) and/or Research Problems (EVSC 9995). Non-Topical Research and Research Problems do **not** count toward the 24 credit-hour graded course work requirement. Courses offered under the same name and number and containing substantially the same material may be counted only once toward the course work requirement for the Master's degree.

During each semester that a student is officially registered at the University of Virginia, he or she must be registered for a minimum of 12 hours of graduate credit; the 12 hours do not have to be in formal courses. Non-Topical Research (EVSC 8998-8999, 9998-9999) should be used to augment regular coursework to bring the total to 12 hours.

Undergraduate majors in Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia who desire to obtain the M.S. degree may count up to 6 "excess" graduate level credits taken while the student was enrolled as an undergraduate toward the M.S. degree. "Excess" is defined as graded courses taken as an undergraduate student over and above all requirements for the Bachelor's degree. Under no circumstances will courses be credited toward both the Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

- (3) **Area Requirements** – All graduate students must pass a 3- or 4-credit graduate level non-seminar course from each of the four areas of the department, (Geosciences, Hydrology, Ecology and Atmospheric Sciences). Any courses listed in the area at the 5000-level or 7000-level shall meet this requirement (i.e. EVGE 5xxx or 7xxx, EVHY 5xxx or 7xxx, EVEC 5xxx or 7xxx, EVAT 5xxx or 7xxx). Courses offered as EVSC may be used to fulfill this requirement only with prior approval of the Graduate Academic Review Committee (GARC). In addition, each student must register for EVSC 7092, Department Seminar once during the Masters' candidacy; this course may be counted only once toward the M.S. degree. These requirements must be fulfilled prior to defense of the thesis.
  
- (4) **Elective Courses** –The remaining credits of graded course work must be at the graduate level in EVSC, EVAT, EVEC, EVGE, or EVHY courses. Departures from Course Requirement rules must be approved in advance via petition to the GARC prior to the start of the semester during which the courses are to be taken.

- (5) **Committee Formation** – Each student should form a permanent committee consisting of a major professor and at least two other department faculty, at least one of whom must be from outside the student’s area of specialization. Selection of individuals for this committee is dictated by the type of research to be conducted. To change a committee member (or members), upon consultation with their major professor, the student must send a petition to the GARC outlining the reasons for the requested change. Ideally this petition would be sent no later than at the start of the semester in which the defense is expected to take place. This petition must be accompanied by the “Graduate Student Committee Changes” form.
- (6) **Thesis Proposal** – As soon as possible after formation of the committee, preliminary discussions are held between the student and the committee members concerning the proposed research. This leads to a formal written proposal from the student including a literature review and experimental plan. After allowing the committee at least a week to read the proposal, an open meeting is held for the purpose of discussing the proposed research, making modifications, and, finally, approving the proposal. It is in the student’s best interest to solicit committee input before the research is done.
- (7) **Thesis Defense** – The thesis defense cannot be held until at least four months after the successful proposal defense. Clean, final copies of the thesis should be circulated to committee members at least two weeks prior to the defense. Announcements of the thesis defense should be circulated to all faculty and students one week before the defense. After the defense, suggested changes from the committee members and faculty should be made by the student under the major professor’s supervision. A copy of the Graduate School Final Examination Form must be signed and submitted to the Department Administrative Assistant, and the thesis must be uploaded to LIBRA.

Ideally, every reasonable effort should be made so that a graduate student’s entire committee is physically present for all student milestones (proposal defense, master’s thesis defense). However, faculty travel, sesquicentennial leaves, and other absences should not be a major deterrent to a student’s progress, especially given the increased availability of tele/video-conferencing facilities. Given the importance of the final defense, however, the faculty has developed the following policy:

1. the student’s major professor(s) must be physically present at all master’s thesis defenses;
2. if committee members are not available because of sesquicentennial/sabbatical leave, they may participate via video or tele-conferencing, if such facilities are available;
3. in the event of extraordinary extenuating circumstances, the student or major professor must contact the Department Chair for advice on how to proceed.

NOTE: Questions or problems concerning application of the regulations to specific student programs should be directed to the GARC Chair or your advisor.

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