Guide to the Graduate Program

Department of Geosciences
Fort Hays State University

Revised Fall 2021

Guide to the Graduate Program of the Department of Geosciences Fort Hays State University

I. Degrees

The Department of Geosciences (Geosciences) at Fort Hays State University offers a Master of Science (M.S.) degree with emphases in Geography or Geology. Students have the option of a thesis-based or non-thesis curriculum

II. Faculty

Geosciences Graduate Faculty are eligible to serve as major advisor. Any FHSU-approved graduate faculty can serve as committee members.

III. Philosophy

The M.S. curriculum should provide the student with an advanced understanding of the Geosciences. The thesis-based M.S. should also provide experience in independent, scientific research. The M.S. curriculum is designed to be completed in two years.

IV. Areas of Specialization

The M.S. curriculum is very flexible, and students are encouraged to design a Program of Study specific to their interests and abilities. This "area of specialization" is also important for deciding on a thesis or project topic. Each student is encouraged to choose their own area of specialization, but it must be with the approval of their major advisor. Some students are accepted into the M.S. program to work with specific faculty, so it is imperative that each student consult closely with their major advisor before choosing an area of specialty.

V. Requirements for both plans

1. Grades:
    a. Maintenance of 3.0 GPA or better in all graduate-level course work.
    b. One semester with GPA <3.0 results in the student being placed on probation. Multiple semesters with a cumulative GPA <3.0 results in dismissal from the program.
    c. The student must earn a grade of C, or better, for the course to count on their Program of Study
2. Committee
    a. Prior to the end of the student's first semester, they must have formed a graduate committee.
    b. The graduate committee consists of the major advisor and at least two other graduate faculty. Graduate committees may not contain more than five graduate faculty.
3. Program of Study
    a. In consultation with the graduate committee, a Program of Study is formulated.

b. The student's Program of Study lists graduate-level courses that the student *must* complete to obtain the M.S. degree. This should be a list of the minimum course requirements (at least 30 hours) rather than a comprehensive list of courses.
c. The Program of Study must be on file in the graduate office prior to the completion of 9 hrs. of graduate course work (See Graduate School section, University Catalog).

4. Course work
   a. All M.S. students must complete 30 hours of graduate-level courses. Six of the total required courses can be fulfilled by "thesis hours" for thesis students.
   b. All M.S. students must take a graduate-level writing and research course.
   c. Thesis students must complete Scientific Writing (GSCI 800) in their first year in residence. This course fulfills the Graduate School's research requirement. Thesis students must take at least two "thesis hours".
   d. Non-thesis students must complete Scientific Writing (GSCI 800) or Research Design (GSCI 685) in their first year in residence – depending on which is offered. This course fulfills the Graduate School's research requirement.
   e. Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) must be enrolled in a minimum of six graduate hours per semester during fall and spring or three graduate hours during summer.
5. Admission to candidacy
   a. Students should apply for admission to candidacy when they have completed at least 9 hours of graduate study but before 15 hours are completed (See Graduate School section, University Catalog).
   b. Admission to candidacy forms are available via Lotus Notes and must be on file at the Graduate School.
6. Comprehensive Exam
   a. Thesis students must complete 2 hours of oral comprehensive examination in addition to their thesis defense.
   b. Non-thesis students must complete 6 hours of written comprehensive examination followed by 2 hours of oral comprehensive examination. The oral exam should be scheduled two weeks after the written exam.
   c. Students must be admitted to candidacy (see Graduate School section, University Catalog) before taking comprehensive examinations. The examination **must be taken prior to the student's final semester.**
   d. Examiners are limited to the following:
      i. All members of the student's committee will sit on the examining committee.
      ii. Other Geosciences graduate faculty may participate in the oral examination by asking questions relevant to the student's course work and/or research.
   e. The **student is responsible** for checking with the examiners as to:
      i. Types of general questions that students may expect on the examination.
      ii. Possible reference material to aid in study for the examination.
   f. The **student is responsible** for arranging for a room and a time convenient

to all parties concerned and for notifying said parties.

g. Action on the exam shall be governed by a simple majority vote of the student's graduate committee.
h. Failure:
    i. If a student fails the first attempt at the comprehensive examination, he/she may retake the examination the next semester.
    ii. If a student fails the comprehensive examination a second time, the student may be asked to leave the program. At the discretion of the graduate committee, the student may retake the comprehensive examination a third time only after a waiting period of one year. During this period, the student is expected to take additional course work.
    iii. Non-thesis students must pass the written exam (by consent of the graduate committee) before proceeding to the oral exam. If the student fails the written exam, the student may retake it the next semester. If the student fails the written exam a second time, the student may be asked to leave the program. If the student passes the written exam, he/she may proceed to the oral exam. If the student fails the oral exam the first time, he/she may retake it the next semester. If the student fails the oral exam a second time, he/she may be asked to leave the program.

VI. Thesis Review

1. A completed draft of the thesis, in its entirety, should be submitted to the graduate committee at least two weeks prior to the thesis defense. This draft should have already been reviewed by the major advisor. If the student wants committee input prior to the defense, he/she should submit a draft to the committee four weeks prior to the defense.
2. Students can expect to receive committee member comments on the final draft prior to or at the thesis defense.
3. If the defense of a thesis is successful, minor suggestions by committee members at the defense should be incorporated into the final draft under the supervision of the major advisor.

VII. Defense of thesis

1. The student is responsible for arranging the time and place of the defense for the convenience of all parties concerned.
2. The defense will consist of a short (normally limited to 20 minutes), initial presentation by the student with an oral defense of the thesis work to follow. The presentation is open to the public, but the defense is limited to faculty.
3. All faculty of the Department of Geosciences will be invited to attend the defense; however, only committee members shall be entitled to vote. A decision will be reached by a majority vote of those committee members present.
4. While defense questions will deal primarily with the thesis, the student should be prepared to answer questions over graduate course work or areas where a weakness was demonstrated during the comprehensive exam.
5. If a student fails to complete the thesis defense satisfactorily, the major advisor may request that the student be allowed a second such defense.

The date for a subsequent defense shall be determined and set by the thesis committee during the first oral defense.

VIII. Portfolio

1. All non-thesis students are required to prepare a portfolio showcasing graduate-level work completed during his/her time at FHSU. This will be submitted to the student's primary advisor during his/her fourth semester.
2. The portfolio will be submitted to the major advisor and reviewed by the graduate committee.
3. The student is responsible for meeting with his/her primary advisor during the course of the degree program to discuss portfolio guidelines, structure, format, and due date.

IX. Miscellaneous

1. Copyright Laws
   a. The Copyright Laws regarding photocopying of diagrams for theses have been interpreted as follows (8-25-85 Memo from Gary Warren): 1) the student should attempt to contact the publisher to obtain permission for inclusion of copyright materials (line drawings, diagrams, etc.) into the thesis; 2) the student should keep documentation of attempts to contact publisher; 3) the student should use only <u>one</u> diagram or chart from each article; 4) under no circumstances should the student publish the thesis without permission form the diagram publisher; 5) The student should always cite references within the thesis.
   b. Once enrolled in thesis hours, the student must remain continuously enrolled during fall and spring semesters until the thesis is completed. Failure to enroll as required makes the student eligible for dismissal (see Graduate School section, University Catalog).
   c. Specimens of fossils, rocks, etc. will be loaned only to academic departments or museums or individuals sponsored by <u>bona fide</u> academic or research units (e.g., Smithsonian Institution, University of Kansas Natural History Museum, Yale Peabody Museum, etc.). Loans to students should be made through the primary supervisor.
2. GTA/GRA Requirements
   a. Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) assist with one or more section of Introduction to Geology Lab, Elements of Physical Geography, World Geography, Environmental Geology, and/or other labs/classes as assigned. GTAs maintain office hours for the labs/courses they assist. They also monitor the GIS Lab and assist with other assigned duties (e.g., assist with department projects, assist with courses (e.g., class exams, grading, material prep), drives vans for field trips). Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) assist faculty with research projects; duties vary across research projects.
   b. Department GTAs and GRAs will have extra expectations related to their contracted positions. Specifically, GTAs/GRAs are expected to be available once contracts start and to attend all required functions that take place within the contract period.
   c. GTAs and GRAs who fail to fulfill requirements and who fail to attend required meetings/functions/events without a valid excuse may be placed on probation. Further problems regarding contracted duties could result

in the loss of funding.