

# Overview Information, Policies, and Procedures for Department of Geosciences Graduate Students August 2017

Welcome to Geosciences! This guide is designed to help you get started and navigate smoothly through your graduate student experience. The information here is both specific to our department and also reflects CSU Graduate School policies and procedures. For greater detail on overall Graduate School policies, please consult the Graduate Bulletin at <http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/graduate-bulletin/>.

## GETTING STARTED AND CONNECTING WITH YOUR DEPARTMENT

**Department Web Pages.** Graduate students are prominently listed on our web page at <http://warnercnr.colostate.edu/geo-people/geo-grads>. Be sure to go to your individual Department page and update it with links, photos, research descriptions, CV and other information at the earliest opportunity. This is a key component of your professional identity to the world (use the “Update it!” link in the upper left corner).

**Wireless, Email, and other Computer Access.** As a registered student, CSU will supply you with a CSU email address and authenticated access to campus wireless. Campus computer services are facilitated through your electronic ID (eID). To register for your eID, go to <https://eid.colostate.edu/>. The Warner College also supports an IT group (see: <http://warnercnr.colostate.edu/it-support-home>) and dedicated computer resources for teaching and research, and there are also specialized resources within the department. Consult with your advisor to obtain access to relevant in-house computer resources for your graduate program.

**Departmental Seminars.** The Department generally brings in guest speakers to give seminar talks throughout the academic year. Our seminars are a great way to broaden your understanding of Geosciences, meet distinguished speakers and interact professionally and socially with the faculty and your fellow graduate students, and to hear some excellent general audience science talks, many on cutting-edge research. These seminars will typically occur on Thursdays at 12:30. You should mark this time on your calendar as you would a class and plan to attend as many of these as possible. Just before the talks, which typically occur in NR 320, the Department will provide snacks and may in some cases arrange for a post-talk lunch hosted by rotating groups of graduate students. If you are interested in scheduling time with a particular speaker, contact the faculty host. Seminar list available at <https://warnercnr.colostate.edu/geosciences/geosciences-seminar-series/> (updated for each fall semester by early August).

**Geosciences Club.** The Geosciences Club is a student-led organization affiliated with the Geosciences department. The purpose of the club is to educate students interested in the Geosciences about career options in the field and to build community across students, faculty, and professionals. The club also provides networking and social activities to enhance student’s curricular experience. Club meetings are held twice a month, and the club regularly organizes speakers on relevant Geosciences topics, field trips, and other networking events. Graduate students are encouraged to participate in all club activities. For more information on the club

and to keep up on general department news, join the “Colorado State University Geosciences Club” Facebook page.

**Keys.** Key order requests are emailed to the Department office by the student’s advisor. You will be notified to come to NR 322 when yours are ready for pickup. Please take great care of your department keys; if you lose your keys, report this to the department immediately.

**Purchasing, Travel, University Motor Pool Vehicles.** The Warner College Business Office handles purchasing, reimbursement, and travel on University accounts, as well as student field-assistant hiring and motor pool vehicles charged to either research or course-related accounts. Department staff can provide valuable help in navigating this system. For details regarding processing, the Business Office has prepared a Pocket Guide of policies and procedures, posted at: [https://intranet.warnercnr.colostate.edu/cnrbo/docs/Pocket\\_Guide\\_Final.pdf](https://intranet.warnercnr.colostate.edu/cnrbo/docs/Pocket_Guide_Final.pdf).

## RESIDENCY AND TUITION

**Residency Filing.** Residency status has a very strong influence on tuition costs. Tuition for all GTAs (graduate teaching assistants) and many GRAs (graduate research assistants) is currently covered by the University at the non-resident rate for the first year, but that support from the University will be provided only at the resident rate in subsequent years. This means that if a nonresident student fails to acquire Colorado resident status by their second year, the student will likely be responsible for paying the difference between the resident and non-resident tuition rates, which is considerable. International students with graduate research assistantships have recently (beginning 2014-15) become eligible, as well, for in-state tuition status that will continue throughout their assistantship.

Students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents, but are not residents of Colorado, must seek Colorado resident status during their first year to achieve residency by the beginning of their second year. The State of Colorado has a stringent set of requirements for changing residency status from non-resident to resident. These requirements are listed at <http://sfs.colostate.edu/in-state-tuition-requirements/> on the Student Financial Service website. Note that most of the actions that are necessary to acquire residency need to be performed at least one year in advance of the change in residency status; **so it is essential that you complete the process immediately upon arriving on campus, during the week before classes begin.** As of the first day of classes, it will be too late. The department office can help you negotiate the residency process.

A student planning to change residency should also attend a one-hour orientation session on the subject. CSU orientation sessions are available both on-line through RAMweb and in classroom presentations in 100A Centennial Hall, first and third Tuesdays of each month, 3:00-4:00 p.m. (see: <http://sfs.colostate.edu/residency-orientations> for details).

**Summer Tuition.** GTAs who enroll in classes during the summer will generally be responsible for their own summer tuition at whichever residency rate applies to them. This also may apply to GRAs, depending on the details of the tuition support their advisor is able to offer from the funding source.

## ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**Advisors and Graduate Advisory Committees.** When students are admitted to the graduate Program, they are typically assigned a temporary advisor. The temporary advisor generally has research interests that appear to best mesh with the students' interests and has agreed to accept responsibility for getting their students started in the graduate program. In most cases a student's temporary advisor becomes their permanent advisor. Please note, however, that for a temporary advisor to become a permanent advisor, both the student and the advisor must agree to the arrangement. A temporary advisor might decline to become the permanent advisor if the student decides to pursue a thesis topic outside of the temporary advisor's expertise or interests. Similarly, a student may decide not to accept the temporary advisor as a permanent advisor if the student changes research interests or thinks success is more likely with a different or more receptive advisor. If the temporary advisor does not become the permanent advisor, it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to successfully approach another faculty member who will serve as their permanent advisor. **It is essential that each student obtains a permanent advisor who is a faculty member with a regular or joint appointment, and a title of Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor) within the Geosciences Department.**

**Every graduate student needs to have secured an advisory committee by the end of their second semester.** Some advisors prefer to form the committee during the student's first semester; so students should be sure to discuss this with their advisor immediately. Normally, the student and advisor work together to identify likely committee members for the student to approach with an introduction and a request for their service as committee members.

For students pursuing an M.S. degree, the graduate committee of three or more individuals must consist of: a) the permanent advisor; b) one additional member from the Department of Geosciences, and; c) an outside committee member who is a regular faculty member from another CSU department and does not have a joint appointment with the Geosciences department.

For students pursuing a Ph.D., the graduate committee of four or more individuals must consist of: a) the permanent advisor; b) one additional member from Geosciences; c) an outside committee member who is a regular faculty member from another CSU department, and; d) one additional CSU faculty member or a member from the external scholarly community who holds appropriate affiliate status with the department.

Students should consult with their advisors about when to hold their first committee meeting, which is strongly recommended to occur prior to the end of the first semester.

M.S. students should meet at least twice with their committee. At the initial meeting, the committee will summarize the student's likely thesis topics, as well as a list of courses to be taken. While some M.S. committees may not meet again until the final thesis defense, students should keep all committee members informed of their thesis progress on a regular basis.

Ph.D. students must meet with their committee at least once a year. This includes: 1) meeting with their committee to present a dissertation proposal and list of courses by the end of their

third semester; 2) for their preliminary examination (may be oral, written, or both), taken by the beginning of the third year (fifth semester); and 3) for their final dissertation defense. The detailed form of the preliminary examination will be determined by the advisor and committee. Advisors and/or committees may additionally mandate coursework and proposal requirements not specified by either the Graduate School or the Department. The written portion of the exam and any committee notes on the oral portion become a part of the student's permanent record. Successful completion of this exam will advance the student to Ph.D. candidacy.

***Program of Study and Credit Requirements.*** All graduate students should frequently consult with their advisors throughout their graduate student career regarding their course curriculum and other elements or progress. Students are required to formally submit a Program of Study, also known as a GS6 form. The Program of Study lists all courses the student plans to take as part of their degree, and therefore requires discussion with their advisor and possibly discussion with their full committee. Students must file the GS6 form during the second semester (see: <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/policies-and-procedures/forms/>). **It is mandatory to file the GS6 before registration for the fourth semester (registration for the fourth semester occurs about halfway through the third semester); failure to do so will result in denial of subsequent registration.** Note that, with the advisor's approval, it is commonly a straight-forward process (at the time of filling out the GS25 Application for Graduation) to revise the GS6 Program of Study if the actual course work completed (as shown on the unofficial transcript) is different from what had been initially noted.

M.S. students in our department are normally expected to complete a thesis-based degree ("Plan A" in CSU terminology). This requires completion of a minimum of 30 credit hours. Sixteen of the 30 credit hours must be at the graduate level (500-level or higher), and at least 12 of these 500-level or higher credits must be for regular courses. Up to six of the 30 credits may be for "Thesis" (GEOL 699). With the permission of the advisor and committee, graduate students may apply 300- or 400-level course credits to their degree. Graduate students may take courses at the 100- and 200-level, but such courses cannot be applied to the credits required to earn a graduate degree.

Ph.D. students must pass a preliminary (qualifying) examination prior to their sixth semester in the program. The exam format will be coordinated with the advisor and committee, and will typically consist of both written and oral segments. The examination is designed and administered by the student's graduate committee. The written portion of the exam and any committee notes on the oral portion become a part of the student's permanent record. Successful completion of this examination will advance the student to Ph.D. candidacy.

Ph.D. students must complete 72 credit hours beyond those required for the B.S. degree or 42 credit hours beyond the M.S. degree. Unless continuously enrolled at CSU for both M.S. and Ph.D., a minimum of twenty-one credits must be earned in courses at the 500-level or higher, which must include at least two courses offered by other departments. At least 10 credits beyond the Master's degree must be earned in regular (i.e. non-thesis) courses numbered 500 or above. Ph.D. students also must satisfy a breadth requirement by taking a minimum of six credits of upper division or graduate level courses outside of the student's discipline. Most students will take their breadth requirement courses outside of the department.

Ph.D. students are expected to assist in teaching during at least one semester of their graduate program. This expectation may be satisfied by preparing and presenting lectures and/or by assisting in laboratory instruction as a Teaching Assistant or otherwise.

Please note, once more, that an individual advisor or committee may impose additional course requirements as long as the University and Departmental requirements are also satisfied.

**GEOL 601.** Geoscience Approaches and Thesis Proposals (GEOL 601), is a one-credit course designed to make the transition to graduate school at CSU go smoothly and help students to be fully informed. The course is available to all graduate students and is especially strongly recommended for all new M.S. students. It covers a variety of topics, with particular emphases on preparing a successful thesis proposal. The course also includes overviews and discussions of ethical issues in science. All M.S. and Ph.D. students supported on federal grants are required by federal policy to have CSU-approved training in ethics in science, unless they have received equivalent training at a prior institution. This course is approved for that purpose.

***Progress toward Degree and Scholastic Standards.*** Graduate students are required to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or greater, calculated both for regular coursework and overall for regular and non-regular coursework combined (non-regular coursework includes credits for thesis, research, seminars, group study, and certain other activities for credit). **Failure to sustain a 3.0 GPA may result in academic probation or dismissal; additional CSU policy details are summarized in the Graduate Bulletin. Students with assistantships who go on academic probation generally also become ineligible or can otherwise lose their assistantship support.**

Note that graduate students may also be dismissed for failure to make good degree progress. This means that a student who is doing well in coursework and has a GPA above 3.0 may be dismissed if their committee finds their thesis/dissertation progress to be unsatisfactory and likely to remain unsatisfactory.

***Continuous Registration.*** Once a student enrolls as a graduate student at CSU, they are expected to maintain continuous registration for Fall and Spring semesters until they graduate. They may do so either by enrolling in any graduate-level course (regular or non-regular) for at least one credit or by enrolling in Continuous Registration (CR). **Failure to maintain continuous registration will result in needing to apply for readmission to the University and requires Department approval. Graduate students are not required to register during summer semester unless they are graduating that semester. Students must be enrolled for credit or Continuous Registration during their official semester of graduation. Students on a GTA or GRA contract must also register for at least one credit each semester.**

***Time to Degree.*** Completion of the standard M.S. and Ph.D. programs in Geoscience require successfully writing and defending a thesis or dissertation, respectively. A thesis or dissertation represents original research completed to the standards of the University, Department, advisor, and graduate advisory committee; so the amount of time required to completion is variable. The time to degree is also sometimes lengthened by an ancillary summer internship or other external commitments. Nonetheless, students should strive to complete their degrees quickly; the standard

time to completion for an M.S. student is regarded as two years and many of our students do complete in two years. Completion in two years, however, requires that the student work hard and efficiently. Some successful students, especially those who have taken internships, do take somewhat over 2 years to complete. Some Ph.D. students are able to complete their degree in three years, but some take four years or longer.

There is a ten-year CSU time limit for completion of M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. Specifically, courses to be applied toward fulfilling the degree, including any which may have been transferred from another institution, must have been registered for and completed within the ten years immediately preceding the date of completion of degree requirements.

***Petitions to the Graduate School Regarding the 10-year Time Limit.*** The advisor, committee, and student need to meet and review the coursework that falls out of the 10-year time limit. If it is decided that the coursework is still relevant and that the student retains a functional understanding of that body of knowledge, then the advisor and committee may submit a report to the Graduate School that attests to that conclusion. This report must indicate what the student's plan is to complete his/her degree (and this must be within a two-year time frame).

***Completing, Defending, and Filing the Thesis/Dissertation.*** Many students find that writing the thesis or dissertation takes longer than they expected; so students should take that into account when planning for graduation and starting post-graduation jobs, especially given that the thesis or dissertation goes through multiple rewrites after review by the advisor and then by the committee. You may schedule your defense once your committee confirms your readiness and their availability. A copy of your thesis or dissertation should be available in the department office for the general faculty to examine two weeks prior to your defense date.

Ph.D. and M.S. defenses are publicly advertised and attended presentations of a student's research followed by questions from members of the audience. This public phase is followed by a closed-door session with the student's committee. A good way to learn about defense procedures (as well as learning more about research within the department) is to attend the public portion of defenses of your student colleagues.

After a student successfully defends, as indicated when all members of the committee have signed the thesis/dissertation, the student must obtain the signature of the department head. Please note that the department head needs an opportunity to at least briefly review the thesis or dissertation before signing it. The final document will then be electronically submitted to the Graduate School by the student. The instructions for electronic submission are available on the Graduate School web site at <http://www.graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation/>. If the thesis or dissertation contains restricted information you may also petition for an embargo the GS 31 ETD Embargo Restriction Request form at: <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/policies-and-procedures/forms/#GS31>.

To obtain the departmental sign-off on completion of degree requirements, students must clean out their office space, turn in their keys, and complete an online Graduate Student Exit Survey. They are also required to submit, to the Department Office, a digital copy of the thesis or dissertation on CD or DVD inserted in a sleeve or case, accompanied by printed copies of the

title page and abstract. Note that deadlines for filing theses and dissertations are normally more than a month before classes end if the student is to graduate that semester. When students complete their degree requirements after the filing deadline for that semester, their official graduation date will be the next semester. In the event that a student who has completed all requirements, but not yet officially graduated, needs evidence of completion to give to an employer, the Department Head can supply a supporting letter.

**Graduate School On-Line Resources.** The Graduate School uses a variety of official forms to mark a student's progress through the degree program; these are available at <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/policies-and-procedures/forms/>. Note that Ph.D. program students have elements of coursework requirements (detailed above) that are specific to the Department and are not listed in the Graduate Bulletin.

**GS6 Program of Study.** This form lists the coursework completed and planned for the MS or PhD degree and the members of the graduate committee. It must be submitted online with the Graduate School by the end of the second semester. Once submitted you will print it, **bring it to the office for the graduate program coordinator, Sharon Gale, to make sure it is completed correctly**, get advisor(s) signatures, and return it to the office for the department head's signature. Office staff will deliver it to the Grad School and retain a copy for your file.

**GS16 Report of Preliminary Examination.** Ph.D. students must turn in this form within two working days of taking their preliminary examination. Once your committee has signed it, bring it to the office for copying and delivery to the Grad School.

**GS24 Report of Final Examination Results.** M.S. and Ph.D. students must turn in this form to the Graduate School Office within two working days after their defense. Again, once your committee has signed it, bring it to the office for copying and delivery to the Grad School.

**GS25 Application for Graduation.** This form must be turned in at the beginning of the semester in which graduation is planned. Student, advisor, co-advisor (if applicable), and department head signatures are required. This, too, must be reviewed by Sharon Gale before the department head will sign it and office staff will deliver it to the Grad School.

**Graduate School Resources.** The student resources section of the Graduate School Website, <http://www.graduateschool.colostate.edu/current-students/student-resources/>, has comprehensive general information about policies, grad school forms to file, various deadlines, and information about how to submit your thesis. An associated link that you should take a look at before you get very far into writing is the "Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guide" at <http://graduateschool.colostate.edu/for-current-students/completing-your-degree/thesis-dissertation/>. Following these guidelines from the onset of writing will greatly smooth the process of producing an acceptably formatted final draft.

## TEACHING AND RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

**GTA/GRA Rights and Responsibilities.** GTA contracts are awarded at the discretion of the department and are typically for one academic year (9 months), although they may be shorter or

based on a 12-month assignment. The contracts are renewable, and the Department often provides GTA funding for up to two academic years, although it is commonly preferable for the advisor to transfer support to a GRA. Be aware that the Department's ability to offer GTA support can change should College or University funding levels or policies change. GRA support is, with a few exceptions, generally at the discretion of the individual faculty member holding the associated research grant or contract, and this faculty member determines the contract length and level of funding. GTA/GRA support can be terminated either partway through a contract period or at the renewal point for failure to meet expectations or because of unanticipated budget shortfalls. Fundamental expectations include satisfactory thesis progress, satisfactory performance of GRA or GTA duties, and satisfactory performance in coursework.

GTAs and GRAs are employees of the University. These positions are essential to the operation of the department and high professional standards must be maintained in all areas of responsibility. Students with GTA awards report both to their advisor and to the instructor of the course(s) to which they are assigned. You will be paid from mid-August through mid-May so expect to be accountable to your employer for the entire 9-month period. GRAs commonly are supported on the research funds of their advisors and report to them. In cases where someone other than the advisor supplies GRA funding, the student may be expected to report to both the advisor and the collaborators who are supplying the funding. University breaks such as Thanksgiving, the break between Fall and Spring semesters, and Spring breaks are mostly not paid holidays and you should not automatically expect to take these breaks off, with the exception of actual University holidays (e.g., Thanksgiving day and the following Friday are University holidays, but the preceding three days are not.). You may be absent on days when the University is officially open if you negotiate that absence with both your advisor and the faculty member supervising your GTA or GRA. GTAs should not plan to leave campus before final grades are submitted to the University, which is usually by the Tuesday following finals week, without first clearing it with the instructor for whom they are working.

GTAs have dual responsibilities. The first is to satisfy the research and coursework progress expectations of their advisor for degree progress. The second is to meet the requirements and expectations set forth by the instructor of the course(s) to which they are assigned. Failure to satisfy either of these expectations may result in loss of funding during the semester. **Teaching assistants are expected to average no more than 20 hours of GTA work per week during the semester. If a GTA finds they are routinely spending more than 20 hours per week on GTA duties, they should first discuss this with the supervising faculty member. If a workload problem remains after that discussion, they should discuss the situation with their advisor (if this is not the supervising faculty member) and/or with the Department Head.**

## OTHER RESOURCES

***Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention.*** All University employees, including GTAs and GRAs, are required to complete on-line sexual harassment prevention training (see: <http://www.oeo.colostate.edu/sexual-harassment-awareness-training>, and will be contacted with an email from Workplace Answers with instructions. For more information about what constitutes sexual harassment and about university policies and procedures related to sexual

harassment, go to <http://oeo.colostate.edu/sexual-harassment-policy>.

***Scholarships and Student Grants.*** The Department and College have some scholarships available for graduate students. Applications are generally due around March 1 for the following academic year. The application process is on-line. Several professional organizations, as well as federal agencies, for example the Geological Society of America and National Science Foundation, respectively, provide grants to graduate students to fully or partially fund their research. Students should consult with their advisors about strategies to best fund their particular work and for associated deadlines. These are commonly highly competitive so significant advanced planning and effort is typically necessary to compete successfully for these.

***Department Mentoring Program.*** The Department has a mentoring program that connects graduate student volunteer mentors with undergraduate students seeking professional guidance and support. The purpose of the mentoring program is to build community between graduate and undergraduate students, provide career and graduate school preparation assistance to undergraduate students and provide graduate students with opportunities to develop as professionals and mentors to. Participants for the mentoring program (mentors and mentees) are recruited at the start of each academic year (fall semester). The commitment to mentor is minimal; mentors are expected to interact with their mentees at least once a month. If you are interested in participating in the program, please contact Jill Putman, the Department's Academic Success Coordinator.

***Career Services.*** In partnership with the CSU Career Center, the Warner College of Natural Resources (WCNR) career liaison, Wendy Rose, provides career support to all WCNR students. All Career Center events are open to graduate students. The Career Center also maintains a job listserv for WCNR graduate students. To join this listserv, visit to Academic Computing & Networking Services page to subscribe to the "Non-Course Mailing List" at <http://www.acns.colostate.edu/ListServ> (look for the NRCC\_GRAD list).

***Undergraduate Research Assistants.*** The department maintains a database of undergraduate student applicants seeking experience with the department. Students in the database may apply for a wide range of positions, including volunteer research or field assistants. If you are interested in engaging undergraduate students as research or field assistants (paid or unpaid), we encourage you and/or your advisor to access the database to find qualified candidates. The database is updated in real time and is available at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zJrGliuaXlh73502i8-jvC94jn44tMR8RdHvCQGfDhg/edit?pref=2&pli=1 - gid=1640529635>. Copies of students' resumes and transcripts are kept in the main department office.

### ***Other Useful Links***

<http://libguides.colostate.edu/geosciences>: This CSU library website provides links tailored to Geosciences.

<http://safety.colostate.edu/>: This website gives current information about campus safety, e.g., information about weather-related closures. It also hosts links to a variety of local resources

related to health and safety.

<http://www.gradresources.org/>: This is a nonprofit organization set up to “serve the practical and emotional needs of graduate students.” This website has a variety of articles and links to an array of resources that may be of interest. This group also has a 24-hour crisis hotline set up specifically for distressed grad students: 1-877-GRAD-HLP. The hotline is confidential and is staffed by counselors who are specifically prepared to work with graduate students.

<http://nagps.org/benefits-resources/resources/>: NAGPS is the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students. This page has several links to various resources, including scholarships and grants, stress relief, life in grad school, how to get started writing your thesis, looking for a job, etc.