

# **Overview of Policies and Procedures for Department of Geosciences Graduate Students August 2020**

Welcome to Geosciences! This Policy and Procedure overview is designed to new and continuing graduate students' important information to help you navigate smoothly through your graduate student experience. The information here is both specific to our Department and reflects CSU Graduate School policies and procedures. For greater detail on these and overall Graduate School policies, please consult the [Graduate and Professional Bulletin](#), the [Graduate School Website](#), and the [Geosciences website](#).

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### ***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 on the [Student Financial Services](#) 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. **If you are not already a Colorado resident, it is essential that you initiate this process immediately upon arriving on campus, at the latest, during the week before classes begin. As of the first day of classes, you will be too late (!)** The department office is knowledgeable in helping to negotiate the residency process. The separate process of actually applying for residency to begin your second year will take place in the early spring of your first year, at which time you will submit your required residency documents dated prior to the start of your first semester.

A student planning to apply for residency should also attend a one-hour orientation session on the subject. [CSU residency orientation sessions](#) are available both online through RAMweb and in classroom presentations. These sessions provide valuable insight into the process and provide tips and tricks for successfully navigating the process and avoiding what not to do/say in your application that can derail your residency status.

### ***Registration***

Please work with your faculty advisor to register for your first semester prior to coming to campus. For those who register after classes begin, a late registration fee will be added to your account. In order to register for classes, you will need your electronic ID (eID). Please go to the [eID set up](#) page, you will need your CSUID to complete this step.

### ***GEOL 601***

Professional Development for Geoscientists (GEOL 601), is a one-credit course specifically 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 also approved for that purpose.**

### ***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 their student's interests and has agreed to accept responsibility for getting their student 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. For example, 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 obtain 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.**

**All graduate students need to have secured their advisory committee by the end of their second semester.** Some advisors prefer to form the committee during the student's first semester, and 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 service as committee members.

### **MS Students**

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.**

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.

### **PhD Students**

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) a faculty member from another CSU department to represent the graduate

school, **and who does not have a joint appointment with the Geosciences department,** and;

- d) One additional committee member may be
  - i) A faculty member from within the department;
  - ii) A CSU faculty member from another department;
  - iii) A member from outside CSU. This individual must hold affiliate status with the department.

Please note, one (but only one) of the four mandatory committee members may come from outside of the university. CSU faculty members on transitional appointments are eligible as advisors and committee members. Committee members a, b, and c must have 50% or greater tenure or tenure-track appointments.

In addition, a Ph.D. committee may also include a maximum of two optional members. NTT faculty in the department may serve in addition to the members prescribed above in a co-advisor or general capacity. An additional outside member can also generally be added if they bring relevant expertise for the progress of the student's project. All outside members without primary CSU affiliation must hold affiliate status in the department. A member employed at CSU who does not have a faculty title can also be appointed as an extra committee member following the procedure outlined in the [Graduate and Professional Bulletin](#).

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.

The student and advisor will constitute a Ph.D. committee (see Ph.D. Committee membership section below) before the end of the student's second semester at CSU. Ph.D. students are strongly encouraged to meet with their committee at least once a year.

Required meetings of the committee are:

- (1) presentation of a dissertation proposal during their second year in the program,
- (2) preliminary examination by the beginning of their sixth semester, and
- (3) dissertation defense two or more semesters following the preliminary examination.

At the discretion of the committee, the deadlines in (1) and (2) can be extended, in which case the advisor must provide timely written justification to the Department Head

Advisors and/or committees may additionally mandate coursework and proposal requirements not specified by either the Graduate School or the general 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. Please see graduate school website for [GS6 Program of Study](#) for more detailed information. 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 straightforward 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.

### **MS students**

M.S. students in Geosciences 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 15 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.

### **PhD Students**

**Ph.D. students in Geosciences 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 written 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. In accordance with CSU Graduate Policies, the student may subsequently defend their dissertation after at least two subsequent semesters.

Ph.D. students must complete 72 credit hours beyond those required for the bachelor's degree or 42 credit hours beyond the M.S. degree. For students pursuing a Ph.D. after completion of an M.S. degree, a minimum of 21 credits must be earned at the 500-level or higher. For Ph.D. students without an M.S. degree, 37 credits at the 500-level or higher are required.

Courses fulfilling these (21 or 37) credit requirements include dissertation, research, group study, independent study, supervised college teaching, and seminar credits, as well as credits earned in regular courses. At least 10 credits beyond the M.S. degree must be earned in regular courses at the 500-level or above (i.e., courses numbered 500-581, 600-681, and 700-781). Ph.D. students must satisfy a breadth requirement, approved by the advisor, by taking a six-credit upper-division (300- or 400-level) or graduate-level (500-level or higher) course sequence outside of the student's discipline. Most students will use courses from outside of the department to satisfy the breadth requirement. The advisor and Ph.D. committee may mandate additional coursework not specified by the Graduate School or general department requirements.

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,

by serving as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, or otherwise at the discretion of the advisor.

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.

## **PROGRESS TOWARD DEGREE AND SCHOLASTIC STANDARDS.**

### ***GPA***

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 adequate 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, which 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 but may not retain an assistantship under continuous (CR) registration.**

### ***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, and 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 efficiently; the standard time to completion for an M.S. student is regarded as two years and many of our students do complete in this time. Completion in two years, however, requires that the student work hard, continuously, and efficiently. Some successful students, especially those who have internships or other summer responsibilities, do take somewhat over two years to complete.

Some Ph.D. students are able to complete their degree in three years, but most 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 can be made. 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).

## **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 longer in special circumstances. The contracts are renewable, and the Department may provide GTA funding for up to two academic years, although it is commonplace for the advisor to transfer support to a GRA for the second year. 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. GTAs are paid from mid-August through mid-May and can expect to be accountable to the Department throughout 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). Graduate assistants may be absent on days when the University is officially open when an absence is negotiated with both the advisor and the faculty member supervising the 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 should 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.**

#### *Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention.*

All University employees, including GTAs and GRAs, are required to complete [on-line sexual harassment prevention training](#), and will be contacted with an email from Workplace Answers with instructions. More information about what constitutes sexual harassment and about university policies and procedures related to sexual harassment can be found on the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#) website.

#### *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, unless an additional summer appointment is arranged with their advisors. This also may apply to GRAs, depending on the details of tuition support that their advisor is able to offer.

#### *Graduate-student requests for 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 [Undergraduate Research Database](#) is updated in real time with copies of students' resumes and transcripts are stored in the main Department Office.

## **COMPLETING, DEFENDING, AND FILING THE THESIS/DISSERTATION**

All forms for completing, defending and filing your thesis or dissertation are available through [RAMweb](#). Detailed descriptions and samples of each form are also available on the [GS forms website](#).

Prior to thesis completion, students must determine which term they intend to graduate. The **GS25-Application for Graduation** form is due early in the last semester and should be completed prior to scheduling the thesis/dissertation defense. If the defense is subsequently delayed, the GS25 can be re-submitted during the following semester

Many students find that writing the thesis or dissertation takes longer than they expected; students should take this 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.

Immediately after the defense, the student must complete the **GS24-Report of Final Examination Results**. This form must be signed by their committee and submitted 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.

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 on their **GA30-Thesis/Dissertation Submission** form. Please note that the Department Head needs an opportunity to at least briefly review the thesis or dissertation before signing for its submittal. The final document will then be electronically submitted to the Graduate School by the student. The [instructions for electronic submission](#) are available on the [GS form website](#). Theses and dissertations are archived in the CSU library system. If the thesis or dissertation contains restricted information you may also petition for an embargo using the [GS 31 ETD Embargo Restriction Request form](#).

### ***Graduation Forms:***

Please keep a close eye on [Graduate School deadlines](#) for forms to be submitted during this last semester. If forms are not filed in time, you will be able to attend commencement, but your official graduation date will be the end of the following semester. In this case, you will be required to register for CR credits during the semester of your official graduation semester. You must be registered in the semester you are graduating in.

<b>Form</b>	<b>When to File</b>
GS25 – Application for Graduation	Before you defend (early in semester)
GS24 – Report of Final Examination Results	After defense (within 2 working days)
GS30 – Thesis/Dissertation Submission	When you submit your thesis/dissertation
GS25B – Departmental Requirements Clearance	Before last semester deadline
GS52 – Graduation Clearance Response	(if applicable) Before last semester deadline

### ***Departmental Requirements***

Please complete GS25B- Departmental Requirements Clearance prior to graduation (before final semester graduation deadline). To obtain the departmental sign-off on completion of degree requirements, students must:

1. Clean out their office space, please remove rock samples or arrange a storage solution with your advisor.
2. Turn in their keys
3. Send a pdf copy of their dissertation/thesis to the department office
4. Leave a forwarding email address
5. Complete an online [Graduate Student Exit Survey](#).

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 core degree requirements after the Grad School filing deadline for that semester, their official graduation date will be the next semester. The Department sign-off requirements, however, can be finalized any time before the last day of the semester. If a student who has completed all requirements, but not yet officially graduated, needs evidence of completion for employment or other purposes, the Graduate School or Geosciences Department Head can supply a supporting letter.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

***The Graduate School.*** The student resources section of the [Graduate School Website](#), 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 is valuable to consult before you get very far into writing is the [Thesis and Dissertation Formatting Guide](#). Following these guidelines from the onset of writing will greatly smooth the process of producing an acceptably formatted final draft.

***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 online. 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.

***Career Services.*** In partnership with the CSU Career Center, the Warner College of Natural Resources (WCNR) career liaison 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 the [Academic Computing and Networking Services](#) page to subscribe to the “Non-Course Mailing Lists” (look for the NRCC\_GRAD list).

### ***Key Graduate School Forms***

The Graduate School uses a variety of official forms to mark a student's progress through the degree program; these are available at the [Graduate School Forms](#) webpage. 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 M.S. or Ph.D. 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 Geosciences graduate coordinator 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 will 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 submitted 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 the Geosciences graduate coordinator before the Department Head will sign it and office staff will deliver it to the Grad School.
- **GS30 Thesis/Dissertation Submission.**  
All Master's Plan A students and Ph.D. students submit this form after your final thesis or dissertation has been reviewed and approved by your committee.

### ***Additional Useful Links***

[Geosciences Department Ph.D. Policies](#)

[CSU Geosciences library website](#)

[Campus safety and Closures](#)

[Grad Resources](#) - 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 graduate students: 1-877-GRAD-HLP. The hotline is confidential and is staffed by counselors who are specifically prepared to work with graduate students.

[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 graduate school, how to get started writing your thesis, looking for a job, etc.