

**Alaska Pacific University
Master of Science in Environmental Science Program
Graduate Student Handbook
2014-2015**

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Thesis Guidelines

Overview

Graduate education in the sciences is in many ways qualitatively different from undergraduate education. In particular, graduate education emphasizes the development of individual research projects that are original and publishable.

Because a thesis is required for the MSES degree and because progress and success in science is often based on publication record, the program encourages students to write their thesis in form and content suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal of their choice. Alternatively, the thesis may be a “gray-literature” professional report, particularly well suited for projects done in conjunction with an agency. In either case, the main point is that the thesis should be designed and written for—and presented to—an outside audience. It is not just a “big term paper” turned in for a grade and then forgotten.

The independent research and self-direction that a thesis requires may be a relatively new experience for students accustomed to conventional course-based learning typical of elementary through college education. Thus the MSES program encourages students to explore potential thesis topics early on.

Applicants are encouraged to think about thesis ideas early, even before enrolling in classes. This will provide MSES students with a head start on their research, and in particular on one of the earliest classes taken – *Research Methods* (ES 60100) – which has as its outcome a thesis proposal.

Students can consider their credits taken at APU as one of three types:

1. Content, conceptual, and knowledge-based courses. These include many of the policy and science classes required by the degree as well as directed study courses. These help students understand the overall context of their research work.
2. Skills, tool-based, and process-oriented classes such as GIS and quantitative analysis courses. These courses offer students experience with standard methods they will use to analyze, display, and communicate their work.
3. Research and experience based credits oriented around a thesis. These credits reflect the student’s own independent research tasks: data collection, analysis, and writing.

Together the three credit types described above will prepare the student conceptually, provide necessary tools, and encourage active participation as a scientist rather than as a technician. The first two are familiar to most students, since coursework is a fundamental component of any undergraduate degree. But the thesis process is generally new, and we provide some guidelines for this process below.

The thesis process consists of (1) choosing a thesis topic, (2) selecting a thesis advisor and 2-3 additional thesis committee members, (3) writing and orally presenting a thesis proposal, (4) preparing for and conducting the thesis research, (5) analyzing the data and writing up the thesis, (6) defending the thesis, (7) presenting formatted copies of the thesis to the University and Consortium Library, and (8) submitting the thesis manuscript for publication.

Thesis Topics

Students generally find thesis topics through their own interests, through work-place opportunities, or through alerts about funding opportunities through friends, faculty, or postings. Because of contacts outside the University, faculty can sometimes place students with agencies or organizations to work on thesis projects related to management, policy, or environmental science in a “real-world” setting and where other resources are available (e.g. molecular lab, field station).

Some students come to the University with an idea, some funding, a project, or even all three already in hand. These students can finish in two years by tailoring their courses and schedules to reach the goal of the thesis write-up and defense directly. Students who have not formed a thesis idea by the end of their first semester are generally slower to finish their degree.

If the thesis idea is the student’s own, then funding may not be as important. Interest and passion go farther, sometimes, than money alone. If the thesis idea is not the student’s own, then generally a funded project will be more attractive than an unfunded one. The best combination is a funded, student-generated idea.

Thesis Advisor and Committee

Besides a thesis topic and proposal, first year graduate students should assemble a thesis committee of *at least* three members. Most committees have 3-4 members, but more are possible. Every thesis committee *must* include the student’s advisor and at least one “outside” member that is not a member of the Environmental Science Department faculty. Outside members can be, and often are, from outside the University entirely. Faculty from other universities, and members of industry, are two common examples.

Every thesis committee has a designated committee chair. The chair should be a faculty member who has experience and credentials close to the discipline chosen as the student’s topic, and with whom the student anticipates a productive, professional working relationship. This is commonly the student’s academic advisor, and we often use the terms interchangeably, but in rare cases the advisor may be a regular committee member with a different faculty member as chair. In any case, the chair must always be a member of the APU faculty. The committee chair should be the primary APU person with whom the student works on their thesis.

The roles of committee members are diverse. Formally, committee members are required only to sign some forms, read the thesis, show up for a thesis defense, and agree (by signing the thesis and thesis completion form) that the thesis is adequate for graduation. But a well-chosen committee member contributes more than that, advising the student according to their skills or

knowledge. For some committee members, this advising is limited to a narrow area of expertise. In other cases, an outside committee member is deeply involved in every aspect of the thesis process. Both are fine. In the end, it is the responsibility of the student, who chooses the committee, to ensure that the committee collectively includes all the support they will need for their project.

Students should choose their thesis advisor very early in their first term, and finalize their committee before the end of that first term. By default, the Director of the MSES Program assigns each student an advisor when they are first admitted, but during their first semester every student should ask themselves whether that choice was the correct one, and if not—change it. Change your advisor by submitting a *Request for Change Major/Minor/Advisor* form to the registrar.

Once students have chosen both an advisor and a thesis topic, they should discuss possible committee members with their advisor. A committee should be selected by the end of the first term, and is formalized with the University when the student presents their thesis proposal and their committee members are required to sign the *Graduate Thesis Proposal Approval* form.

Thesis Proposal

One outcome of the required *Research Methods* course (ES 60100) taken by all first year fully admitted graduate students is a draft thesis proposal, due before the end of their first semester. Early development of this draft fosters early initiation of other important tasks: identification of a topic, selection of a committee, and applications for grants. The thesis proposal will be a key document in seeking funding, as it will serve as the core of any funding proposal. Specific proposal requirements will seldom permit use of the thesis proposal without some modifications of length, order, and content, but the key ideas, figures, and even much of the text can often be used in grant proposals. For this reason, and also because the study plan articulated in a student's approved thesis proposal will almost invariably evolve over the course of their research, it is appropriate to view even the approved proposal as a living document that will be frequently updated to reflect ongoing changes in the thesis research goals, methods, and timeline.

That said, the proposal completed in *Research Methods* is only a draft. The final proposal (which may or may not differ substantially from what is completed in *Research Methods*) is completed within the context of ES 68900, *Thesis Proposal*. ES 68900 should be taken during the term in which a student intends to formally complete their written and oral thesis proposal and have these items approved and signed by their committee. This most often occurs during the student's second semester, but in rare cases can happen in the first term (for students who enter the University with very well-developed study plans) or—more commonly—later, in the second year. Students who make the latter choice almost certainly will take more than two years to complete the degree.

ES 689 is a zero-unit course. What does this mean? It means, for one, that no tuition is charged, and also that the class does not affect one's GPA. There are also no formal class sessions. The student's responsibility is to meet regularly with his/her committee, schedule a defense, complete it, and have the *Thesis Proposal and Committee Approval* form signed and turned in to the

registrar. This and other forms are available on the APU intranet site under Community/Registrar/Student Academic Forms. With those activities completed, the student will receive a passing grade in Thesis Proposal, and this is important because ES 68900 is a prerequisite for ES 69900 (*Thesis Research*). Students cannot register for *Thesis Research* credits until they have completed ES 68900 with a passing grade.

The specific requirements of a student's written thesis proposal and oral thesis proposal presentation will be determined by the student's committee. Typically, the committee will require a well-edited and nearly complete draft of the written proposal before permitting scheduling of an oral presentation, and then may require minor edits after the oral presentation. The oral presentation is a 30-45 minute public presentation open to all, especially including faculty and students in the Environmental Science Department.

It is the student's job to schedule the presentation, but before doing so the student must consult with their committee and the Graduate Program Director to identify a time and date that permits satisfactory attendance. The Program Director may take an active role in such scheduling when many proposal presentations are required in a short time. Once the time is selected, it is also the student's responsibility to advertise the proposal presentation via posted flyers and an email announcement submitted to the ES Department administrative assistant for circulation at least *two weeks* in advance of the presentation date.

Please note that all MSES graduate students, regardless of their status, are required to attend these presentations. For this reason, and because faculty are also interested in attending, oral thesis proposal presentation must take place during fall or spring session (but not during the last week of classes), when most faculty and students are present and able to attend. Plan ahead to accommodate this requirement, and recognize that the precise timing of your written proposal is more flexible. This affords some creative uses of the APU's flexible semester schedule. Two examples: 1) Sign up for *Thesis Proposal* during fall block, and then give your oral presentation in the first week of session, before block grades are due—hence allowing you to sign up for *Thesis Research* in the fall session. 2) Sign up for *Thesis Proposal* during summer session, but give your oral presentation a little early, just before the end of the spring session, allowing you some extra time to finish the written part. These and other creative schedules will permit wide attendance of your proposal presentation, but also allow you to stay on schedule. Just remember, in all cases your schedule is dependent upon the approval of your advisor, your committee, and the Program Director.

While working on the proposal, students should discuss with their advisor the possible need to submit their proposal for review by either the Off-Campus Risk Management Committee (OCRMC), the Institutional Review Board (IRB), or both. If your thesis research will take place outside the campus, you may be required to file a risk management plan (RMP) with the OCRMC. The goal of an RMP is that the student recognizes and plans for risks inherent in the activity related to their credit-earning activity. Likewise, if your research involves human participants or animal subject, you may be required to file a proposal to the IRB to ensure that your proposed work treats those participants/subjects in an ethical and appropriate manner. Details about both these processes, including guidelines and forms for submission, are found on

the APU intranet at their respective committee webpages.¹ Depending upon their specific circumstances, students may also be required to apply for research permits to conduct their work on public lands. Please note that all of these processes take substantial time, so submission of your documents should take place early in the proposal process. You cannot complete *Thesis Proposal* (ES 68900) if your plan has not received necessary approvals.

Thesis Research

During and after preparation of the proposal, students should prepare for their research by taking appropriate classes. These classes will provide them with conceptual underpinnings or specific analysis tools. Other preparation might include buying or renting equipment, food, and lab space. In addition, students may need to make preliminary visits to research sites, lab facilities, and/or the workplaces of collaborators. The student must arrange these and all other logistics with the help and guidance of their advisor and other committee members, with whom the student should schedule periodic meetings.

It is worth stressing that *all of these tasks, and indeed all others related to the thesis, are the responsibility of the student*. This is one of the primary differences between graduate work and an undergraduate education: committee members, including the advisor, are not “teachers” whose primary job is to assign tasks and evaluate the student’s directed progress. They are coaches and collaborators who provide advice and mentoring to students who are expected to display initiation, self-motivation, and direction with respect to the research topic.

After *Thesis Proposal* is completed, the student formally begins their research by signing up for ES 69900 (*Thesis Research*). Consistent with the expectation that thesis work (data collection, analysis, writing, editing) will continue throughout the rest of the student’s time at APU, students are required to take at least one credit of *Thesis Research* every term (including summer) until they graduate, at which time they should have completed 12 units total. This means that the number of credits taken at any one time is variable, and should be selected by the student to make sure that they complete all 12 at the right time.

Think carefully about how many units of *Thesis Research* to take each term. It is smart to take only one or a few credits per term early on, and then to sign up for the remainder in the anticipated last term. This practice of “saving” some units for the end helps ensure that inadvertent delays in graduation date (not uncommon!) don’t force a student to complete 12 units of ES 69900 before they are ready to graduate. In the event that this occurs, a student continuing to work on their thesis must take one unit of ES 69800 (*Thesis Continuation*) every term (including summer) until they graduate. This adds to the total cost of graduation, so don’t do it!

¹ OCRMC: <https://myapu.alaskapacific.edu/sites/community/Risk%20Management/Off-Campus%20Risk%20Management/default.aspx>

IRB:

<https://myapu.alaskapacific.edu/sites/academics/Faculty%20Governance/Institutional%20Review%20Board/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Your thesis research is a huge part of your masters education. It is for this reason that we require 12 units of ES 69900, *Thesis Research*. But because much of your thesis research is self-directed, APU gives you a break on the tuition for this course. Upon completion of ES 68900 (*Thesis Proposal*), every MSES student automatically qualifies for an eight credit “Masters Scholarship” that provides a tuition waiver for eight of the 12 credits of ES 69900. This means, in practice, that the first 8 units of ES 69900 are free. *But the student must take responsibility for requesting these tuition waivers*. During every term in which you sign up for one or more of your first eight credits of ES 69900, it is your responsibility to notify the Graduate Program Director, in writing, that you’d like Masters Scholarship credit posted to your account. See the “Masters Scholarships” section of this document for more information.

Analysis and Writing

Thesis work typically transitions in the second year from data collection to analysis and writing. The exact timing of this transition will vary from student to student and project to project, but we most students entering the second year of the program to have at least some data to analyze and discuss with their thesis committee and fellow students. At this time, students should sign up for their first *Seminar* (ES 69000), a two-credit course that formalizes collaboration among students in regular meetings. In this seminar, students will share and review their progress on the analysis of their data and preliminary drafts of their methods and results. Two semesters of *Seminar* are required, and will typically be taken fall and spring of the second year. Other schedules are possible, in consultation with the student’s committee and when approved by the Graduate Program Director.

Progress of individual students often begins to diverge during the second year, especially for students with significant outside commitments like jobs and families, but in an ideal two-year program students should be mostly done with their analyses and beginning to write in earnest by December of their second year. Most students underestimate the effort and time required for thesis writing and revision. The exact schedule of draft completion is a matter to be set by the student’s committee, but in general a student hoping to graduate in April should have a complete first draft nearing completion *very early* in the spring term. Recognize that you must allow time for your advisor and committee members, who have busy lives, to read and respond to drafts. A week or so for turnaround is common, and during holidays, breaks, and blocks it might be longer.

The student’s goal should be completion and approval of a final draft by March, allowing time to apply for April graduation and to focus on preparation of an oral thesis defense. In this case, “final draft” means that each committee member feels that the thesis is defensible, while acknowledging that minor revisions and formatting may yet be completed prior to graduation.

Thesis Defense

The defense is a 60-minute public oral presentation of the thesis (including 15 minutes for questions from the audience) followed by a 30-60 minute closed question and answer session that takes place between the thesis committee and the student. The defense is expected to be organized, polished, and practiced.

If the members agree with the student that the written thesis is complete and is ready to be orally defended, then the student must find a time during which all members of the committee can meet for the defense. The defense must take place prior to graduation, and students should recognize that the availability of committee members, other faculty, and fellow students is increasingly limited as the end of the term approaches. Defenses should therefore occur *before* the last week of classes in a term. Except in very unusual cases approved in writing by the Graduate Program Director in advance, defenses may not occur outside the fall and spring terms: holiday and summer defenses are poorly attended. Be aware! Exceptions to this policy are rarely granted.

It will be up to the student to select a defense date and time, confirm the availability of their committee members, confirm with the registrar the reservation of a suitable room, obtain and test audio/visual equipment. The Program Director might take an active role in such scheduling when a large number of defenses are required in a short time. These tasks are generally done with the help of the Environmental Science Department administrative assistant. Students are responsible for publicizing their defense (via posted flyers and an email announcement submitted to the administrative assistant for circulation) at least two weeks in advance of the presentation date. Committee members should be provided with paper copies of the most recent version of the thesis for reference during the defense.

Please note that all MSES graduate students, regardless of their status, are required to attend these presentations

Thesis Formatting and Submission

It is the presumption of the MSES Program that your thesis will be published. For this reason, we encourage writing and formatting the thesis directly for the target audience. If this is journal, follow the style and length guidelines of the journal. If an agency report, do the same. In the common cases where a student cares to present additional data or analyses beyond those permitted in the often-limited space of journal submissions, they should do so in an additional chapter(s). The goal is to make it as easy as possible to submit the completed thesis for publishing.

Given that objective, citation style, writing style, length, and many other formatting requirements for the thesis are largely up to the student and his/her committee. There are some important exceptions. First, the title/signature page has a very specific format that you must follow exactly. Sample signature pages are available in this document and online. Second, your thesis should be formatted to conform to the following guidelines:

- Printed on 8.5 by 11 inches, good quality, 20-pound white typing paper
- Laser printed, one-sided
- Double-spaced, 12 point, non-script font
- All margins except title page: 1.0 inch
- Number pages in the upper right corner
- Title page and optional signature page are unnumbered

- Acknowledgements: page (i)
- Abstract (150 words or less) as a succinct account of the work containing a statement of the problem, methods, results, and conclusions: page (ii)
- Table of contents: page (iii)
- List of figures (if applicable): page (iv)
- List of tables (if applicable): page (v)
- Preface (if applicable): page (vi)
- Body of thesis (text): begin with unnumbered page 1 and number all following pages using Arabic numbers.
- Place figures and tables in the text on the page following their first reference.
- Bibliography or References Cited: begin on new page and follow the sequential page numbering of text.

APU has moved to online submission of graduate theses. To facilitate this, the university has selected a company called ProQuest. This is the premier online database for publication of graduate and doctorate projects. It is used by UAA and other higher education institutions around the world. ProQuest is an online searchable database that contains thesis/dissertations/professional projects. More information about ProQuest can be found at www.etdadmin.com/alaskapac, and the ProQuest database is accessible on the UAA/APU Consortium Library website www.consortiumlibrary.org.

When you have completed your oral defense and received your committee's verbal approval of the written document, submit the *Thesis-Dissertation-PDE Completion* form to your committee for signatures. Note that this form takes the place of a formal signature page in your thesis. We no longer include this, to conform to the standard practice (for privacy purposes) of omitting faculty signatures from the internet-published version of your thesis. If you wish to include a formal signature page in bound hardcopies of your thesis *only*, that is optional.

After your committee has signed the *Thesis-Dissertation-PDE Completion* form and it has been submitted to the Program Director, create an account at ProQuest (www.etdadmin.com/alaskapac) and post a final copy of your thesis. It is recommended that you use a personal email address that will be permanent (since your APU email account will be deactivated one year after you graduate). ProQuest is easy to use and will guide you through the submission process. You will attach your *thesis* as a PDF (a PDF converter is available in the site) and you will also be provided the option to post any additional spreadsheets and files as supplemental files. It is recommended that you view the Resources page on their website before creating the final PDF document for submission. This page explains many details of the process, including options regarding copyright information.

Once you have submitted and proofread your thesis on the ProQuest website, notify the Program Director that you have submitted it. He/she will review your thesis for conformance to the formatting standards given above. Unless it needs revision, the Program Director will then sign your *Thesis-Dissertation-PDE Completion* form to the Registrar, and you are ready to graduate!

To be perfectly clear: you *cannot graduate* without a signed, submitted *Thesis-Dissertation-PDE Completion* form! And the Program Director will not provide that final signature and submit it to the Registrar until you've 1) gotten all your committee signatures, 2) given an approved oral defense, and 3) submitted a final copy of your thesis to ProQuest. If you fail to do all these items before graduation day, you will not graduate in that term!

Additional personal copies of the manuscript can be bound, at student discretion, in any desired format. This is entirely optional. At present, no local bindery offers hardcover (library-style) binding. Fancy hardbound copies can be ordered through Kater-Crafts Bookbinders (<http://www.katercrafts.com>, 562-692-0665). Consult them directly for more information. Less formal binding styles are available at many local vendors. As a courtesy, most students choose to provide bound hard copies of their theses to their committee members and to the Environmental Science Department administrative assistant.

Publishing

As stated already, students are strongly encouraged to publish their manuscripts in an appropriate scholarly journal or other forum. Choice of journal, submittal timeline, choice of co-authors (if applicable), and division of responsibilities should be discussed by the student and their committee well in advance of graduation. In any case, students should recognize that the final submission and subsequent revision(s) of such articles could be a lengthy process that requires additional time commitment after graduation.

Program Structure

Course Requirements

The coursework requirements that formally govern your progress towards graduation are dictated by the course catalog in effect when you are admitted to the program (available on APU's website). Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following all academic regulations in that catalog. Failure to follow those regulations or obtain written permission for exceptions could impact students financially, cause them to delay graduation, or have other negative impacts. Below, we list the requirements in effect for students admitted in 2014-2015.

Each Master of Science in Environmental Science graduate is required to:

- Successfully complete six required courses, two elective courses, and two research seminars.
- Successfully design a thesis proposal and complete an individually designed research thesis.
- Submit MSES thesis committee approval form to the Registrar's Office prior to graduation.

Required Courses

- ES 60100 - *Research Methods* (4)
- ES 60200 - *Quantitative Methods* (4)
- ES 68900 - *Thesis Proposal* (0)
- Two semesters of ES 69000 - *Graduate Seminar* (4)
- ES 69900 - *Thesis Research* (12) **
- Two elective courses (8) *
- Four menu courses, with at least one each from the science and policy menus (16)***

Minimum Graduation Credit Hour Requirement: 48

*Eight units of elective credit may include any combination of 600-level APU courses, graduate courses from other institutions, and upper division undergraduate coursework approved, in writing, by the student's advisor and MSES Program Director in advance of enrollment.

**Upon successful completion of a *Thesis Proposal*, every MSES student is guaranteed an eight (8) unit Masters Scholarship applicable to ES 69900. This guaranteed scholarship waives (8) credits in graduate tuition cost.

***Note that as the course selections available to APU students evolves, the menu sometimes lags a year or two behind. If you see a graduate level APU class that you want to take, but it isn't on a menu, ask your advisor and/or the Program Director. We may be able to count it for you.

Science Menu

- ES 60000 - Tropical Ecology (4)
- ES 62000 - Environmental Geology (4)
- ES 62200 - Geomorphology (4)
- ES 62500 - Applied Statistical Modeling (4)
- ES 62600 - Earth Materials (4)
- ES 63000 - Conservation Biology (4)
- ES 64000 - Coastal Ecosystems (4)
- ES 64200 - Coral Reef Ecology (4)
- ES 65500 - Climate Change (4)
- ES 65900 - Principles of Glaciology (4)
- ES 66000 - Introduction to GIS (4)
- ES 66300 - Introduction to Remote Sensing (4)
- ES 66500 - Applied GIS (4)
- ES 67000 - Principles of Ecohydrology (4)

Policy Menu

- ES 60500 - Environmental Ethics (4)
- ES 60700 - Water Resources Management (4)
- ES 60900 - Global Resources and International Conservation (4)
- ES 63500 - Environmental Law (4)
- ES 63700 - Marine Policy (4)
- ES 65000 - Human Impacts in Marine Systems (4)

Sample Schedule

The sample schedule presented on the next page provides a suggested sequence of events for a graduate student beginning in the fall term and seeking to complete their thesis in two school years. Details may vary, especially for students who begin in the spring term (this is permitted only in rare cases) or only attend school part-time. It is important to recognize that graduate school is a full-time commitment. Coursework, especially in the second year, is only a portion of the student's responsibilities. When you are not in class, you should be "at work" on your research in your lab, in the field, or at your desk at home. The decision to hold other work outside of school will therefore significantly slow a student's progress towards graduation.

Note that while deviations from this idealized schedule are common, one variant is strongly discouraged. August graduations are very difficult to pull off successfully: availability of committee members for feedback, final manuscript review, and signatures is typically very limited, and a summertime thesis defense (oral presentation) is not permitted. Summer defenses and graduations are therefore permitted only in unusual cases at the discretion of the student's committee and with written approval from the MSES Program Director.

APU's annual calendar is a bit unusual, and bears explanation. APU operates on a semester basis with three semesters: fall, spring, and summer. Each semester is broken into a 4-week block and an approximately 11-week session. Blocks, which occur in September ('Fall block'), January

(‘Winter block’), and May (‘Summer block’), provide opportunities for courses that demand more full-time attention from faculty and students than is typically available when taking concurrent courses. Travel courses, field intensives, and other such opportunities fit into this category. But a class is a class, whether it occurs in session or block, and the program (and the registrar) accords the same credit to block and session classes alike. So take a block class if there’s one you want or need. But if there isn’t, we caution you against seeing that time as a vacation. *Graduate students are strongly encouraged to view blocks in which they don’t take a class as ideal times to make significant progress on their research.*

	Course (units)	Other Activities
Year 1 Fall	Research Methods (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select committee and chair • Draft proposal, search for funding • Attend thesis proposals and defenses
	Menu Course (4)	
	Menu Course (4)	
Year 1 Spring	Quantitative Methods (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and orally present proposal • Submit <i>Thesis Proposal and Committee Approval</i> form • Secure Risk Management, IRB, other approvals as needed • Attend thesis proposals and defenses
	Menu Course (4)	
	Menu Course (4)	
	Thesis Proposal (0)	
Summer	Thesis Research (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection
Year 2 Fall	Elective (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis • Begin writing • Attend thesis proposals and defenses • Present results in poster session during senior project presentations
	Thesis Research (4)	
	Seminar (2)	
Year 2 Spring	Elective (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and editing • Apply for graduation • Complete thesis and defend • Submit <i>Thesis Committee Approval</i> form • Attend thesis proposals and defenses
	Thesis Research (4)	
	Seminar (2)	

Leave of Absence Policy

Once you commence your thesis research, you are required to take at least one unit of ES 69900 (*Thesis Research*) per semester, including summers. These credits can be spread out over multiple terms, and should be handled by students carefully. As described earlier, the final (12th) credit should not be completed until the student's final semester. If a student completes 12 credits and has not finished their thesis, they must register for one unit per semester of *Thesis Completion* (ES 69800).

An exception can be made for students who are forced, by illness, family emergency, or other compelling outside events in their lives, to take a leave of absence. A granted leave of absence allows a graduate student to retain the catalog requirements of the year in which they started the program, and also to defer registration for *Thesis Research* or *Thesis Continuation* until they return. Students continuing to work on their thesis but otherwise done with coursework are not eligible for a leave of absence. To apply for a leave of absence, complete a *Request for Special Consideration* form and turn into the registrar.

Graduate students must complete all coursework, including *Thesis Research* and *Thesis Continuation*, within a seven-year period to be eligible for graduation.

Graduate Assistantships and Masters Scholarships

The MSES department offers two kinds of direct financial aid to MSES students: Graduate Assistantships and Masters Scholarships. These are in addition to, and separate from, all financial aid available to students from the University (see Student Financial Services for help with grants, loans, etc.), from research projects (work with your advisor and committee to procure research assistantships, salary, research expenses, etc.), and from any other outside sources.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistantships are tuition waivers offered on a competitive basis to students in the MSES Graduate Program. Their purpose is to facilitate quality research and teaching and to attract and retain quality graduate students. In exchange for an assistantship, which waives anywhere from one to 12 credits per semester (2 or 4 is typical), students work with a faculty advisor at the rate of ~25 hours per term per assistantship credit on a teaching, research, or other project-oriented task agreed upon by the student and advisor.

Consideration for Graduate Assistantships is automatic for newly admitted students, and most Graduate Assistantships are awarded to incoming graduate students for use during their first year of study. Such awards are typically disclosed in the student's acceptance letter. Some awards may be offered to continuing students to reward merit and accomplishments during their first year, to compensate for teaching assistantships, and/or to leverage grant research funding. These are special cases, and continuing students interested in Graduate Assistantships after their first year must notify the Graduate Program Director well in advance of the semester in which the student is hoping for funding. Such notices are most successful when the student can identify a faculty member who has already requested the student's services as a research assistant, TA, or for some other purpose.

The Graduate Program Director will notify applicants of selection or rejection. Award decisions are made by the MSES director in consultation the Environmental Science Department Chair (for MSES assistantships) and the Marine Biology Program Director (for Marine Biology assistantships) and other faculty based on student merit/qualifications and also on departmental instructional or research needs.

Masters Scholarships

As mentioned earlier, every MSES student that successfully completes ES 68900 (*Thesis Proposal*) and turns in their *Thesis Proposal and Committee Approval* form is automatically eligible for an eight credit Masters Scholarship. This Scholarship provides a tuition waiver of eight units applicable towards ES 69900 (*Thesis Research*). The Scholarship may not be used for any other credits or costs, and will be awarded only upon registration for ES 69900. This award is considered by APU to be a non-taxable scholarship, but each student should formally evaluate all tax considerations.

Because students typically take ES 69900 over several terms, it is incumbent upon the student to take responsibility for getting registered for ES 69900 and requesting the appropriate number of Scholarship credits. Here's how you do it: Send an email to the registrar (regoff@alaskapacific.edu) from your APU email address asking to be registered for however many units of ES 69900 you'd like. You cannot register for ES 69900 through the portal. Once you've registered, you must go to the ES Administrative Assistant (Robin Bartlett) and request a Masters Scholarship credit for the number of units you've registered for. Do this every term you take *Thesis Research* until you've completed the first eight of the twelve required units.

If you do not go to Robin and request your Masters Scholarship before the census date of the term in which you registered for it, you may not get your Scholarship. This is your responsibility.

Sample Title Page

Use the template on the next page. The only text you should change is the gray-highlighted text. Do not include the headers and footers that are part of this handbook.

Regardless of margin size, start title 2" below top of page. No bold, all caps

No page number on this page.

THE TITLE OF THE THESIS IN ALL CAPS INCLUDING

A SECOND OR 3RD LINE IF NECESSARY, WITH FULL SPACE BETWEEN LINES

Three blank lines

A Thesis

Three blank lines

Presented to the Faculty of

Alaska Pacific University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Science in Environmental Science

Write out the name of degree and program, exactly as your program director tells you to. The lines above this are the same for everyone.

Here is where you type your full name (as will show on your diploma). Not all caps

By

Your Name

April 2014

Three blank lines

The date here can only ever be July, December, or April, your month of graduation.

No comma is used between the month and the year.

**CENTER EVERYTHING
WITHIN THE SAME MARGINS
AS THESIS TEXT.**