

# Environmental Science and Management New Graduate Student Handbook



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## INTRODUCTION FROM THE GRADUATE COMMITTEE

Greetings Incoming Graduate Students,

On behalf of the faculty of Portland State University's Department of Environmental Science and Management, and the ESM community at large, we are thrilled to welcome you to the program and to this new and unconventional academic year. We look forward to getting to know you better over the coming months, and we hope your transition to this new chapter is smooth despite the turbulent times in which we find ourselves, in Portland and beyond.

Part of the purpose of this handbook is to ease that transition. In the following pages, you will find basic information about the department (e.g., roles and contact information for department personnel), as well as summaries of and links to the variety of campus resources available to PSU graduate students, from library and email access to discount transit passes and writing and tech support. The fact that we are operating remotely at this time makes it less likely that you will happen upon these resources organically as you explore the physical campus. It is therefore especially important that you review this information carefully, so that you know about the programs, tools, and services available to facilitate your success here.

Another, equally important purpose of this handbook is to make you aware of departmental and university policies governing graduate study at PSU. Careful review of these policies will help you understand what you should plan to have accomplished in each term of your degree, what the faculty expect graduate students to do remain in good standing, and how to manage your relationship with your advisor so that you clearly understand their specific expectations for your progress.

We realize that this may seem daunting, but reading through this material now will help you familiarize yourself with what it means to be a graduate student, and head off common problems that can slow or frustrate the process of earning your degree. Again, we want to see you meet your goals and thrive here, and being clear about what we expect is part of how we guide you to those outcomes. The Graduate Committee, along with your individual advisors and committee members, are available to answer your questions, hear your concerns, and strategize with you when you need support. Please consider us a resource, too.

Again, welcome to the ESM community; we are very glad you're here.

Sincerely,

The Graduate Committee

Dr. Elise Granek  
[graneke@pdx.edu](mailto:graneke@pdx.edu)

Dr. Kelly Gleason  
[k.gleason@pdx.edu](mailto:k.gleason@pdx.edu)

Dr. Sarah Carvill  
[scarvill@pdx.edu](mailto:scarvill@pdx.edu)

## **GREETINGS FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE STUDENTS (AESS)**

Dear Environmental Science and Management Graduate Students,

We would like to welcome you to this very exciting and important journey in your life. You should be proud of the decision you have made to embark on the path to pursue higher education, particularly in the field of environmental science and management. You will need support and guidance from your advisor, ESM professors, and peers during your graduate program. It is our hope that the AESS makes the process a little easier for you.

Portland State University is home to a diversity of students, and one of the aims of the Association of Environmental Science Students (AESS) is to ensure that all students feel accepted and supported. Especially in this unusual time when we are not sharing a physical space, we hope that AESS will provide opportunities for community building, informal peer mentoring, and time to have fun with fellow students. While the membership of the AESS changes from year to year, the character will remain the same. The next two to five years (depending on your program) will pass by quickly, so remember to enjoy the journey!

Best wishes,

Your AESS Officers

Taylor Dodrill  
[tdodrill@pdx.edu](mailto:tdodrill@pdx.edu)

Lara Jansen  
[ljansen@pdx.edu](mailto:ljansen@pdx.edu)

Clare McClellan  
[clmcc2@pdx.edu](mailto:clmcc2@pdx.edu)

## DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

### Contact Information

Office Location: Science Research and Teaching Center (SRTC) 218  
Office Email: [esm\\_admin@pdx.edu](mailto:esm_admin@pdx.edu)  
Phone Number: (503) 725-4982  
Department website: <http://www.pdx.edu/environmental-science/>

The ESM website contains general department news with links to other important and helpful information. Please note that PSU website is currently undergoing an update that may affect functionality of the department website in Fall Quarter 2020.

ESM faculty information can be found [here](#).  
(<https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-science/facultystaff-directory>).

### Office Personnel

ESM Department Chair: Dr. Max Nielsen-Pincus  
Office: SRTC 218C  
Phone Number: (503) 725-8038  
Email: [maxnp@pdx.edu](mailto:maxnp@pdx.edu); [esmchair@pdx.edu](mailto:esmchair@pdx.edu)

Department Manager: Sherie Huffman  
Office: SRTC 218B  
Phone Number: (503) 725-9856  
Email: [sherie@pdx.edu](mailto:sherie@pdx.edu)

Sherie is responsible for department budget and finances, as well as course scheduling and the general operation of ESM. She knows all and likes sweets.

Program Coordinator: Emma Spadaro  
Office: SRTC 218  
Phone Number: (503) 725-4982  
Email: [espadaro@pdx.edu](mailto:espadaro@pdx.edu)

Emma is responsible for office support and coordination. She also helps oversee the onboarding of graduate students and runs many of ESM's events.

Labs & Equipment: Rebecca Wilson-Ounekeo  
Office: SB1 425  
Phone Number: (503) 725-9817  
Email: [rwi2@pdx.edu](mailto:rwi2@pdx.edu); [esmlabs@pdx.edu](mailto:esmlabs@pdx.edu)

Becca oversees GTAs and mentors, coordinates their course assignments, assists with lab course preparations, and oversees ESM's teaching and stockroom equipment.

Undergraduate Office Staff: The ESM department employs a few undergraduate office staff that can assist you with questions about departmental operations or point you in the right direction. You can find them in SRTC 218.

### **Key Requests**

You will need to request a key to access your secured lab space and/or office space. Fill out a Key Request form (which can be downloaded from the [PSU Facilities website](#) or obtained from the ESM office) and submit it to [esm\\_admin@pdx.edu](mailto:esm_admin@pdx.edu) or the ESM front desk. Requests may take a while to be fulfilled, especially at the beginning of the quarter, so file your request early and be prepared to wait. You will receive an email from PSU Facilities when your key is ready for pickup at Facilities (located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the University Services Building (USB)). You will need to show your photo ID (see below). Be mindful of your PSU-issued keys— if lost, they are very expensive to replace!

### **ID Card Services**

ID Card Services, located in Fariborz Maseeh Hall, will issue you your PSU Student Key Card. The Student Key Card will be used to access secured buildings and rooms on campus. Your Student Key Card will need to be activated in order for you to have access to these secured spaces. To gain access to the Science Research and Teaching Center (SRTC) and Science Building 1 (SB1), you will need to provide your PSU ID number and Student Key Card badge number to [esm\\_admin@pdx.edu](mailto:esm_admin@pdx.edu). If you do not provide both numbers, the request cannot be submitted. This access will need to be renewed every 12 months by the ESM department. Unfortunately you're not notified prior to access termination, so for continued access you'll need to ask the ESM office staff to submit an updated request for you. We suggest making a note in your calendar from one year from the date you submit your original request.

### **ESM Stockroom**

The ESM Stockroom maintains the lab and field equipment used in our teaching labs. Stockroom equipment can also be borrowed for personal research when it's not being used by a course. Equipment commonly requested by graduate students includes waders, GPS units, hot plates, glassware, and access to our teaching lab's drying oven and muffle furnace. Contact the Lab and Stockroom Coordinator at [esmlabs@pdx.edu](mailto:esmlabs@pdx.edu) to inquire about borrowing items. Please visit the [Stockroom website](#) for more information and equipment inventories.

## **GRADUATE DEGREES AND COURSES IN ESM**

### **Master of Science (MS)**

MS students complete courses in physical and ecological systems, environmental management, and advanced data analysis, and develop depth in a concentration area and any additional needed skills through electives. The degree culminates with a lab- and/or field-based hypothesis-driven thesis project addressing an environmental question. MS theses report the design and findings of the research project. The written thesis document is orally defended in a public presentation and exam format and must be approved by the student's graduate committee. Although MS students may work with a community partner in developing their thesis project, this is not a requirement of the degree; the student is advised primarily by a faculty advisor.

[Master of Science Degree Description](#)  
[Planning Grid for MS Degree](#)

### **Master of Environmental Management (MEM)**

MEM students complete the same coursework as MS students, but are additionally required to complete a project management course (usually ESM 551). As a culminating experience, MEM students complete a management project that is similar to a thesis in scope and effort, and in the requirement for in-depth study of an environmental question or problem. Unlike a thesis, MEM projects must be conducted in collaboration with a community partner (e.g., a government agency, a non-profit group, or a private sector company such as a consultancy), who co-advises the student along with the faculty advisor. In order to ensure that students' work is responsive to the community partner's needs, the project provides greater flexibility of topic, design, and format than a traditional thesis, however submission of a substantial, thesis-quality, original written report (similar in depth and professional quality to a state or federal agency publication) is required as evidence of project completion, and the student must give a public presentation of their work.

[Master of Environmental Management Degree Description](#)  
[Planning Grid for MEM Degree](#)

### **Professional Science Master (PSM)**

The PSM degree is similar to the MEM degree in both the core coursework and culminating project requirements, however PSM students must also take courses in communication, ethics, and policy. As with MEM students, PSM students complete their culminating project in collaboration with a partner organization, and a representative of the partner organization co-advises the student alongside their ESM faculty advisor. Submission of a substantial, thesis-quality, original written report (similar in depth and professional quality to a state or federal agency publication) is required as evidence of project completion, and the student must give a public presentation of their work.

[Professional Science Master Degree Description](#)  
[Planning Grid for PSM Degree](#)

## **Earth, Environment, and Society PhD (EES)**

The EES PhD Program is a combined PhD program shared by the Departments of Environmental Science and Management, Geography and Geology. EES PhD students complete an in-depth, hypothesis-driven, original lab- and/or field-based research project addressing environmental questions. EES PhD students are advised primarily by a faculty advisor and write a dissertation document that is orally defended in a public presentation and exam format and must be approved by the student's graduate committee.

[Earth, Environment, and Society PhD Description](#)

*An important note for PhD students: Policies for doctoral students are set by the Earth, Environment, and Society (EES) program. This handbook provides information on the requirements of the Graduate Office (GO) for all PSU doctoral students, as well as departmental policies, recommendations, and best practices of relevance to EES doctoral students whose primary advisors are ESM faculty members; please be aware that EES policies may impose additional requirements on EES doctoral students and that these may be more restrictive than GO and ESM policies. For questions about EES requirements, talk with your advisor, or contact EES staff at [environ@pdx.edu](mailto:environ@pdx.edu).*

## **Graduate Courses**

The following websites may be useful for identifying courses that match your interests and satisfy your requirements, and understanding when they will be offered:

- ESM Graduate Core Courses: [MS](#) | [MEM](#) | [PSM](#)
- [PSU Bulletin - General Catalog](#)
- [PSU Course Planning Guide](#)
- [PSU Class Schedule](#)

The following PSU departments offer useful courses for many ESM students:

- [Biology](#) (Examples: Population Biology, Plant Physiology, Evolution)
- [Geology](#) (Examples: Glacial Geomorphology, seminars)
- [Geography](#) (Examples: GIS I, GIS II, seminars)
- [Anthropology](#) (Examples: Environmental Anthropology, Society and the Environment)
- [System Science](#)
- [Urban Studies and Planning](#) (Examples: Environmental Planning Methods, Environmental Policy, Data Analysis)

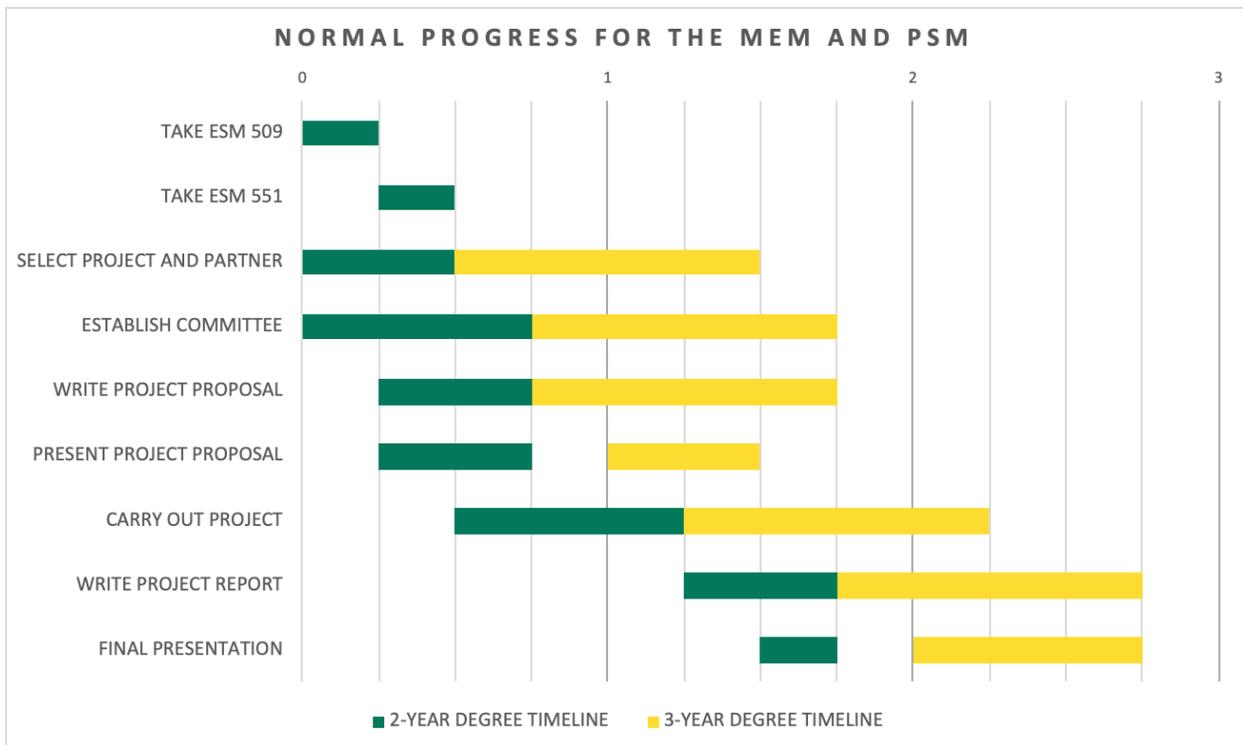
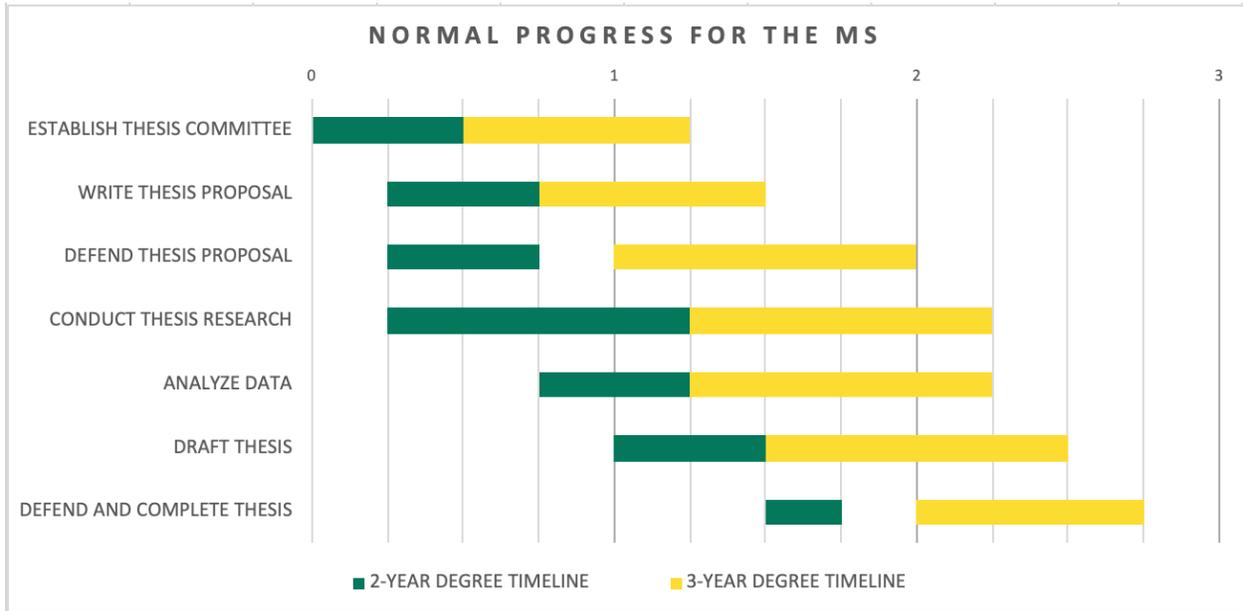
## **Tracking Your Progress**

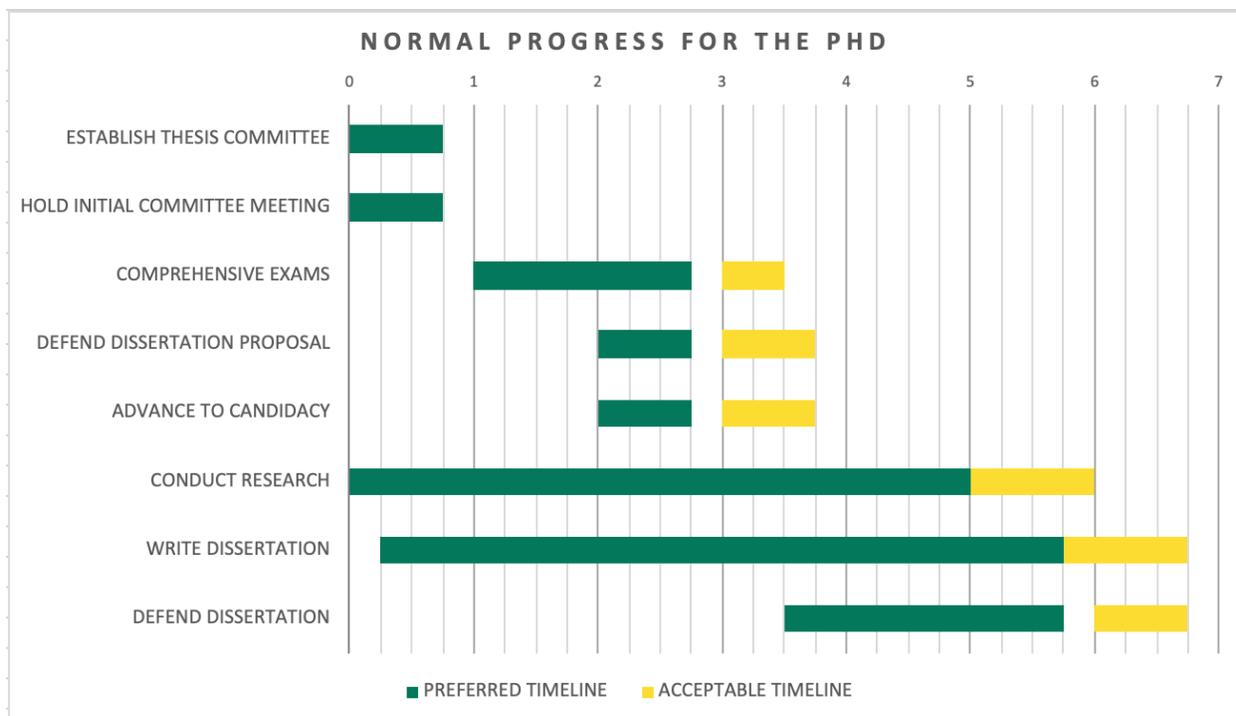
PSU's Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) allows you to track your progress toward your degree and identify areas in which you still need to complete credits in order to graduate. Access DARS through Banweb, and enter your degree and the term in which you started your program as a graduate degree candidate when prompted. The resultant report will tell you your graduate GPA, how many credits you have completed so far, how many credits you have completed in each area required for your program (e.g., physical systems core; seminar; project credits), what courses would automatically satisfy any remaining unfilled requirements, and whether your application to graduate has been received. You can also use this feature to check whether any course substitutions you have requested have been approved, and how the courses you have already taken would satisfy the requirements for a different degree (e.g., MS instead of an MEM). You may find it helpful to review and print out a copy of your DARS report before meeting with your advisor about course selection or your degree completion timeline. (For information on how to access Banweb, see "myPSU and Banweb" in the "Campus Technology" section of this handbook.)

# POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND MILESTONES

## Degree Timelines: Norms and Limitations

The following timeframes reflect the expectations of faculty in the ESM Department.





Dissertation research and writing timelines will be driven largely by the nature of your project and how you plan to publish your work. For example, some projects may function as a series of sequential experiments that are written up for publication shortly after each component is completed, whereas other dissertations are composed of studies conducted in parallel. Be sure to communicate with your advisor early and often regarding expectations for written products.

Additionally, **all graduate students** should:

- Begin annual reviews in Winter Quarter each year, and leave enough time to meet with their advisors to go over the completed review documents before the deadline in Spring Quarter (see “Annual Reviews” section for more information).
- Set dates for milestone meetings (i.e., comprehensive exams; proposal, thesis and dissertation defenses; final presentations) as soon as you are confident in your timetable, and ideally several months in advance of your desired exam dates. Do not underestimate the difficulties of coordinating the schedules of 1 grad student and 3+ faculty members.

The Graduate Office (GO)<sup>1</sup> also imposes time limits for achieving the major milestones of the master’s and doctoral degrees, which include the following:

- All work submitted for a master’s degree (including transferred credits, thesis work, and all other requirements) must be completed within a period of seven calendar years. A student may petition to be awarded credit for any work that was completed more than seven years (but no more than ten years) prior to their intended graduation date by

<sup>1</sup> You may also see Graduate Office referred to by its former name, the Office of Graduate Studies, and/or the associated acronym, OGS.

following the procedure for validation of out-of-date graduate credit described in Form GO-15, published by the GO. Only one such petition may be submitted by any master's student.

- Doctoral students entering their programs with a master's degree must complete their comprehensive exams within five years of PhD program admission.
- Doctoral students who enter their programs with only a bachelor's degree have an additional two years to complete their comprehensive exams.
- Doctoral students must advance to candidacy within three years of completing their comprehensive exams.
- Doctoral students must complete and successfully defend their dissertation and graduate within five years of advancing to candidacy. Failure to complete the dissertation in the allotted time invalidates the comprehensive exams.

Please be aware that these rules provide the *maximum* time students are permitted to take to achieve each graduate milestone without automatically disqualifying themselves from the degree program; *they are upper limits and, as such, do not represent a schedule that would constitute "satisfactory progress" toward the degree by the standards of this department, absent specific and extenuating circumstances.*

### **Departmental Conditions for Good Standing**

All ESM graduate students are expected to maintain good standing in their program of study. To remain in good standing, each student must:

- Maintain a B average (3.0 GPA) or above and not receive a grade of I, X, M, NP, AU, or C+ or below in any single course. As soon as a student suspects they are in danger of a grade or GPA infraction, they should let their advisor know and contact the Graduate Committee chair(s). If the student has a good reason for why the infraction occurred, and it is their first such infraction, the student may petition to be put on probation for one quarter. A student may remain in good standing (and receive tuition and stipend support) during this probationary period. However, a student who fails to successfully petition for probationary status following a grade or GPA infraction is considered to not be in good standing, and will not be eligible for tuition and stipend support. If such infractions occur in two separate quarters, tuition and stipend support will be permanently terminated. Multiple grade or GPA infractions can be considered sufficient grounds for dismissal from the program.
- Retain an academic advisor who is willing to serve as their mentor.
- Comply with the Student Conduct Code.
- Meet the standards of the profession they will be entering.
- Make satisfactory progress in their research, as assessed by the student, their advisor, and their committee. In making this assessment, ESM students and their advisors should refer to the normative timeframes for degree milestones provided in this handbook (see "Timely Progress: Norms and Limitations") as well as the student's research activities, including collection of data, summarization and presentation of data to the advisor and committee, and if at all possible, presentation of results at professional conferences and submission of papers to peer review journals prior to graduation.

- Complete an annual review by the appointed deadline in each Spring Quarter.

Please note that the above requirements are additional to the various conditions graduate students must meet in order to maintain their status as a graduate student in good standing with the university, which are summarized below (see “University Conditions for Good Standing”) and detailed in the PSU Bulletin.

### **Grounds for Dismissal**

As noted above, repeated grade/GPA infractions may constitute grounds for dismissal from an ESM graduate program. Additionally, dismissal from the program can occur if a student chooses to no longer work with their advisor or the advisor chooses to no longer work with the student *and* the student is unable to find a new advisor within two quarters (see “Advisors” section for additional details), or if a student fails comprehensive examinations or a defense or presentation (see “Comprehensive Examinations” and “Defenses and Presentations” for details).

Finally, dismissal can occur if the advisor determines that a student is not making satisfactory progress in their research. The student may then hold a meeting of their committee (including the primary advisor) to discuss the progress and state of their research. If, following the meeting, the consensus of the committee is that the student has not made satisfactory progress, then this is sufficient grounds for termination and dismissal from the program. The student will be notified of the decision by email at their pdx.edu account.

If the student disagrees with the committee’s determination, the student has two weeks to respond to the email notification. The department’s Graduate Committee should also be included on the response letter. The response will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee and a written notice of their decision will be emailed to the student.

### **University Conditions for Good Standing and Grounds for Dismissal**

To remain in good academic standing by the standards of the university, graduate students must:

- Validate their initial admission by registering and paying for at least one credit.
- Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or above.
- Register for courses in each academic term (excluding summer) or obtain a leave of absence.
- Comply with all departmental requirements for maintaining good standing.

There are also a number of university criteria that are considered grounds for dismissal from the program. These can be found in the University bulletin and include:

- Failure to obtain an approved leave of absence, successfully complete a graduate course, or make satisfactory progress toward the degree (as determined by the department) during a one year period. Students who do not meet this criterion may have their admission to the degree program canceled. A doctoral student who has not been registered for three years will have their admission to their degree program canceled.

- Failure to raise a graduate GPA above 3.0 in the next nine credits taken after the term it falls below that threshold
- Allowing a graduate GPA to dip below 3.0 more than one time
- Academic dishonesty
- Failure to successfully complete a graduate course in the approved program of study for the degree
- Failing all or a portion of the comprehensive examination (PhD students only)
- Failing the dissertation defense (PhD students), thesis defense (MS students), or final presentation (MEM and PSM students).
- Failure to meet the following time limitations:
  - No more than five years (for doctoral candidates who enter with a master's degree) or seven years (for students entering with a bachelor's degree) may pass between admission and completion of comprehensive exams.
  - No more than three years may pass between completing the comprehensive exams and advancing to candidacy.
  - No more than five years may pass between advancing to candidacy and completing all graduation requirements for the doctoral degree.

### **Leaves of Absence**

An admitted graduate student in good academic standing may request a leave of absence. A leave of absence:

- Provides a guarantee that a student will be allowed to return to the graduate program at the agreed-upon time.
- Exempts the student from the continuous enrollment requirement (applicable only to advanced doctoral students).
- Does not waive or pause any applicable time limits for completing a graduate program, nor the one-year time limit for completion of a course.
- A leave of absence is granted for a specific period of time, up to a maximum of three terms (Excluding summer). Students may request a second leave of absence, also for a maximum of three terms. A student with an approved leave of absence cannot:
  - Register for any coursework;
  - Engage in any activities that require faculty time or use of University resources.

It is the student's responsibility to drop or withdraw from all courses as well as notify other appropriate offices on campus (Financial Aid, etc.) of their leave status.

A completed "Graduate Leave of Absence Request" form must be submitted to the GO *by the student* no later than the Friday of the second week of the term in which the leave will take effect. A leave of absence cannot be approved retroactively. If a leave of absence results in the student not being enrolled for four consecutive terms, a "Graduate Re-enrollment Request" form must be submitted to the GO at least three weeks before the beginning of the term of re-enrollment. Both forms are available at <https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/forms>.

## Forms

All GO forms for Masters students must be submitted to the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator obtains the department chair's signature, retains a copy of the form to add to the student's file, and submits the original to the Graduate Office. If you are a PhD student, all of your GO forms should be submitted to Angela Canton in the Dean's office for processing.

## Advisors

Each student who receives an offer of admission to an ESM graduate program is accepted to work with the specific faculty advisor(s) who is (/are) identified in their acceptance letter. This faculty member will serve as the student's dissertation, thesis, or project committee chair in addition to providing general guidance on matters such as course selection and professional development.

Students should be aware that advisors may have differing expectations about how they will work with their students and what a student must do to demonstrate satisfactory progress toward their degree. The university and departmental policies in this handbook establish a minimum required level of graduate student performance, but each individual faculty member must use their own professional expertise to assess student progress and run their lab, and may establish their own procedures for doing so. To avoid misunderstandings, graduate students should talk directly with their advisors at the outset of their degree about matters such as how often they will meet one-on-one, whether and how often the advisor meets with their lab as a group, and expectations related to publishing, working in the office (as opposed to from home), use of shared spaces, vacation, and lab-related expenditures. Students should also meet with their advisors several months or more in advance of key degree milestones (e.g., proposal submission; defense or final presentation) in order to ensure that both parties agree on a timeline for submitting and revising drafts.

Students may change advisors, but should not expect to be able to do so, as availability of space in each advisor's lab is a significant factor in admissions decisions. Both the original and the new advisor must agree to any advisor change. Remember that *retaining an advisor who is willing to advise you is a condition for good standing*, and that *failure to find a new advisor within two quarters of separation from your original advisor* (regardless of who initiates that separation) is grounds for dismissal from the program (see "Departmental Conditions for Good Standing" and "Grounds for Dismissal" for more information).

## Committees

In an academic graduate setting, the term "committee" is used to refer to a group of faculty (and, under some circumstances, other professionals with relevant expertise) including your advisor who:

- Provide feedback on your proposed program of study;
- Evaluate your written research or project proposal;
- Administer your comprehensive examinations (for PhD students);

- Read and approve your final thesis, dissertation, or project report; and/or
- Evaluate your thesis or dissertation defense or project presentation.

Forming your committee is an opportunity to bring multiple perspectives, areas of expertise, and experiences that are relevant to your research or project to the review of your work, and careful selection of committee members is particularly helpful when your research or project includes components that do not overlap with your primary advisor's areas of specialization. In addition, the committee may assist with the initial choice of a research or project topic; the planning and execution of your research or project; the writing of your report, thesis, dissertation, and/or related publications; and general career planning and professional development. Strategic selection of committee members can help ensure that you get guidance that is specific to the needs of your research or project, and appropriate for your career goals.

You **must** consult with your advisor before asking another faculty member or other professional to serve on your committee. Ultimately, however, it is up to you to select the members of your committee, and it is your responsibility to ensure that your selections conform to university-level, departmental, and degree-specific policies concerning committee composition (see below). If the needs or expertise required for your research or project shift, you may change committee members, but please consult with your advisor before doing so and make sure to inform the person who will no longer be on your committee of the change.

Finally, be aware that faculty often serve on many committees (in addition to chairing the committees of their own students) and may not have time to give your research or project the attention it is due, so you should not take it for granted that a particular individual will agree to join your committee.

### For PhD Students

*Reminder: The Earth, Environment, and Society (EES) program may impose additional requirements on doctoral students whose primary advisors are ESM faculty members. Please make sure that you are informed of and comply with all relevant EES rules as well as the GO and ESM policies and recommendations described in the following section.*

PhD students must meet the following requirements in forming their committees:

- Your committee should be composed of at least four and no more than six PSU faculty members, including:
  - Your advisor (the “chair” of your committee)
  - 2-4 regular members
  - A Graduate Office Representative (the student may suggest two eligible faculty members as candidates to fill this role, but the GOR is selected by the GO). Faculty members that are affiliated with EES are ineligible to be GORs for PhD in the EES program.
- At least two committee members, including the committee chair, must be from one of the EES departments.

- The chair of the committee and the GOR must be regular, full-time PSU instructional faculty, tenured or tenure-track, assistant professor or higher in rank. Other committee members may be fixed term faculty, individuals holding ESM courtesy appointments, or members of the OHSU faculty. If you would like to select a committee member who is not a member of the PSU or OHSU faculties, you must submit a CV for the proposed committee member with your GO-16D form (see below) and have your advisor submit a CV to the department for the individual to be considered for a courtesy appointment in ESM. Any such off-campus committee member may substitute for one of the 2-4 regular committee members. Be prepared to identify the specific expertise that the proposed off-campus member brings to the committee that is not available among PSU faculty.
- All committee members must have doctoral degrees.

EES doctoral students advised by ESM faculty are expected to select their committees within their first year in the program. The dissertation committee must be approved by the GO prior to defense of the *proposal*. You are required to submit Form GO-16D (“Appointment of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee”) to Angela Canton in the Dean’s office a minimum of six weeks before the anticipated date of your proposal defense.

You must deliver a final draft of your proposal or dissertation to all members of the approved committee no fewer than 14 days before the defense. Please see the “Defenses and Final Presentations” section of this handbook for additional policies related to the committee’s role in proposal and dissertation defenses.

#### For MS Students

MS students must meet the following requirements in forming their committees:

- Include at least three and no more than five faculty members, including your advisor (the “chair” of your committee).
- Your committee chair and at least one other member of your committee must be regular, full-time, ESM instructional faculty members, either tenured or tenure-track, with a rank of assistant professor or higher.
- The remaining committee members may be from other PSU departments or from OHSU, and may include fixed term faculty or professionals external to PSU. If you would like to select a committee member who is not a member of the PSU or OHSU faculties, you must submit a CV for the proposed committee member with your GO-16M form (see below) and have your advisor submit a CV to the department for the individual to be considered for a courtesy appointment in ESM. Be prepared to identify the specific expertise that this person brings that is not available among PSU faculty, and note that any such off-campus committee member must be in addition to three PSU faculty members.
- All committee members must have a master’s degree or higher and at least three must have a PhD.

You must select your committee in order to schedule your proposal defense, which you must pass by the end of your first year in the program, so plan to talk with your advisor about

committee selection in Fall Quarter or early in the Winter Quarter of their first year. You will complete a departmental form identifying your committee members as part of your proposal defense (see “Defenses and Presentations” for details on this step). While you are only required to convene your committee for the proposal and thesis defenses, failure to communicate with each committee member about your progress between these two milestones deprives your work of the benefit of their expertise, and will likely make it more difficult to address any critical feedback you receive about the design of your study, analytical methods, etc. *It is recommended that you hold your first committee meeting by the end of your second quarter to review your program of study and present initial research ideas.*

Your thesis committee must be approved by the GO in the quarter *before* you defend your thesis. You are required to submit Form GO-16M (“Appointment of Master’s Thesis Committee”) in advance of the due date listed on the “Graduate Candidate Deadlines” page on the GO website (<https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/graduate-candidate-deadlines>). Master’s students submit their completed paperwork to the ESM Program Coordinator, who obtains the department chair’s signature, retains a copy of the form to add to the student’s file, and submits the original to the Graduate Office, so please provide this form to the department well in advance of the GO deadline to allow for processing. Note that the deadline for submitting the form falls in the quarter **prior** to the quarter of your intended defense, so if you plan to defend in Spring Quarter, you should prepare the form for your advisor to sign and submit it in Winter Quarter. Please see the “Defenses and Final Presentations” section of this handbook for additional policies related to the committee’s role in proposal and thesis defenses.

#### For MEM and PSM Students

At minimum, your committee must consist of:

- Your primary advisor (the “chair” of your committee)
- A representative of your community partner organization (usually your primary contact there, or the person supervising and providing primary direction on your project)
- At least one other ESM faculty member

If you would like your committee to include a PSU faculty member who is not affiliated with the ESM Department, a faculty member from another university, or a second community professional, *one* additional committee member may be selected with the approval of the committee chair.

You must select your committee in order to schedule your proposal presentation, which must take place by the end of your first year in the program, so plan to talk with your advisor about committee selection in Fall Quarter or early in the Winter Quarter of their first year. You will complete a departmental form identifying your committee members as part of your proposal presentation (see “Defenses and Presentations” for details on this step). While you are only required to convene your committee for the proposal and final presentations, failure to communicate with each committee member about your progress between these two milestones deprives your work of the benefit of their expertise, and will likely make it more difficult to address any critical feedback you receive about the design of your study, analytical methods,

*etc. It is recommended that you hold your first committee meeting by the end of your second quarter to review your program of study and present initial project ideas.*

Please see the “Defenses and Presentations” section of this handbook for policies related to the committee’s role in proposal and final project presentations.

### **Annual Reviews**

Each spring, all ESM graduate students are required to fill out a short report on their progress toward their degrees. These annual reviews are a way to make sure that you and your advisor are on the same page about your work, reflect on your accomplishments during the previous year, and set goals for the upcoming summer and academic year. The department will send out an email with deadlines for the annual review, and provide detailed instructions for how to complete and submit it. Please note that completion of an annual review is necessary to maintain good standing in the program, and failure to complete your annual review by the departmental deadline will render you ineligible for continuing or new GTAships.

You must meet with your advisor as part of the annual review process, so start early and plan ahead. While you are not required to meet with your full committee in order to complete your annual review, graduate students are encouraged to hold committee meetings at least once a year, so you may wish to schedule your committee meeting so that it aligns with and informs your annual review. When you submit your annual review via the departmental form, you should also email a copy to your advisor.

### **Comprehensive Examinations** (*PhD Students Only*)

After forming your committee, and before the end of your ninth quarter of enrollment (not including summer quarter), PhD students must take a comprehensive examination that involves both written and oral components. The purpose of this exam is to test your mastery of the scholarly areas that are most relevant to your intended or expected research, as well as your ability to critically analyze and communicate key ideas and controversies in your field. In each phase of the exam, faculty will be looking for evidence that you:

- demonstrate advanced knowledge in at least one area of expertise within earth, environmental, or geographical sciences, and are prepared to successfully propose, design, and complete publishable research and teach advanced undergraduate courses in that area;
- are knowledgeable in at least two additional fields or subfields, at a level sufficient to discuss key theories, hypotheses, debates, and literature, and teach undergraduate courses in each of those areas;
- understand and can effectively integrate the social and bio-geo-physical sciences, especially with respect to environmental issues and particularly in the context of your study system(s) and/or research topic(s);
- can evaluate the validity and limitations of scientific hypotheses, theories, and claims about the environment that are relevant to your intended area(s) of study and more broadly;

- can communicate with a committee of professors as a scholar, and at a level befitting an expert in your primary field, as demonstrated by your comprehension of the questions asked of you, the technical and factual accuracy of your responses, and your ability to clearly take and defend positions of your own, critique the claims of others, and modify, qualify, or change your opinions as appropriate.

Note that the GO requires comprehensive exams to be held during regular terms (i.e., not between terms). Students work with their committee members to select the areas in which they will be examined well in advance of the exam itself (generally 3-5 months in advance). This preparatory work will include co-development of a reading list for each topic area, which is articulated in the Comprehensive Exam Prospectus. Comprehensive exam committees typically consist of four members, including the student's primary advisor, who subsequently serve on the dissertation committee. Accordingly, you should select your exam committee with requirements for the dissertation committee (see "Committees" section for details) in mind.

For the written component, each member of the committee will write specific questions and provide them to your advisor along with instructions on how long you have (half day/full day) and under what terms (open/closed book, with/without internet access) you must answer the questions. Your advisor will then compile and administer the exam in an appropriate manner. The entire exam may last no longer than five consecutive days. Following the written exam, the questions are returned to the appropriate committee member for grading. You must pass the written portion of the exam to proceed to the oral component.

No more than two weeks after the successful completion of the written exam, you will meet with your entire committee for the oral exam. It is your responsibility to identify a time that is acceptable to all committee members, to book a space for the oral exam, and to notify all committee members of the exam location. Oral exams typically last for three hours. During this time, committee members may ask you to address, clarify, or expand on any aspect of their written questions that they feel you did not adequately address. They may also ask questions related to or derived from your original topics as necessary to make a judgment as to whether you are prepared to advance to candidacy in the PhD program. After the questioning is complete, you will be asked to leave the room while the committee discusses and reaches a consensus as to whether or not you passed the comprehensive exam. If you successfully pass, your committee will sign and complete Form GO-22 ("Report on Passing Comprehensive Examinations"), which is available on the GO website (<https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/forms>). This is often a good time to complete and submit Form GO-16D ("Appointment of the Doctoral Dissertation Committee"), which is due to the GO at least six weeks before the anticipated date of the dissertation proposal defense. *Note that you must pass your comprehensive exams in order to schedule the proposal defense.*

*Reminder: The Earth, Environment, and Society (EES) program may impose additional requirements on doctoral students whose primary advisors are ESM faculty members. Please make sure that you are informed of and comply with all relevant EES rules as well as the GO and ESM policies and recommendations described in the following section.*

## Defenses and Presentations

A “defense” is a formal oral presentation of either a research proposal or a finished research project made in-person by a student to their advising committee. Defenses of finished projects (as opposed to proposals) are open to interested members of the public. The student typically takes questions from the audience, then meets with and takes questions from the committee, and is evaluated on the presentation, the written document on which it is based (i.e., a research proposal, thesis, or dissertation), and their responses to committee and (if applicable) audience questions.

In the ESM Department, MS and PhD students must successfully defend a research proposal as well as the complete thesis or dissertation. MEM and PSM students give a presentation of both their project proposal and their final project report that is substantively similar to a defense, but is not subject to GO paperwork requirements that apply to MS and PhD defenses (the paperwork requirements for MEM and PSM students are departmental and described in greater detail below).

### General Guidance for All Defenses and Presentations

All graduate students in the ESM Department, regardless of their degree program and career stage (i.e., proposal versus completion), must submit a written, polished draft of the document they are defending or presenting (i.e., proposal, project report, thesis, or dissertation) to their committee at least 14 days in advance of the date of the presentation or defense.

Defenses and final presentations may only be scheduled during the regular academic terms, within the regular academic year.<sup>2</sup>

We expect all defenses and presentations to occur in person when feasible.<sup>3</sup> If one of your committee members cannot be physically present for your defense or presentation, it is your responsibility to ensure that remote participation takes place in a manner consistent with GO terms (see <https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/remote-thesis-dissertation-participation> for details).<sup>4</sup> It is also your responsibility to identify a time for your defense or presentation that is amenable to all committee members. Faculty members and community professionals typically have very busy schedules, and finding a time that 3-6 of them can make that also works for you can be challenging, even if you plan ahead. If you wait until the last minute, you may not be able to hold your defense or give your presentation in the intended term.

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<sup>2</sup> Per GO policy, defenses may also be conducted during the eight-week Summer Session, however most faculty are not under contract at this time. As such, you should not assume that any PSU faculty member will be available outside of the regular academic year, and plan to schedule your defense in Fall, Winter, or Spring Quarter.

<sup>3</sup> Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, PSU defenses have been conducted via video conference. This experience may or may not prompt revisions of pre-Covid restrictions on remote defenses promulgated by the GO when campus returns to normal operations; the handbook will be updated to reflect any changes to GO or ESM policies on remote participation at that time.

<sup>4</sup> Additionally, PhD students should be aware that the EES program has the authority to impose additional limitations on remote participation in defenses; if any of your committee members cannot attend your defense in person, check with EES program staff before proceeding with scheduling.

Finally, in addition to adhering to the above and following departmental and university-level requirements and recommendations, all ESM graduate students should consult with their advisor and other committee members well in advance of their defense or presentation to make sure that all expectations are clearly understood, and to allow time to produce a professional document and presentation. While failing a defense or presentation is not common, such outcomes are grounds for dismissal from all ESM graduate programs. Maintaining good communication with your advisor and committee is the best way to ensure that you are clear on their standards, and that they have opportunities to assess whether or not you are prepared to successfully defend or present your work.

### Preparing Your Proposal

ESM is an interdisciplinary department, so the format and content of project, thesis, and dissertation proposals will vary based on the student’s primary field, as well as project-specific considerations and committee preferences. For suggested components of PhD and MS research proposals and PSM project proposals, see the boxes in this section. MEM students should consult with their advisor to determine which is the most appropriate format for their project.

<b>SUGGESTED ELEMENTS FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS (MS AND PHD; some MEMs)</b>	
<b>Abstract</b>	Provide a brief overview of the most relevant context, research question(s), methods, expected results, and take homes.
<b>Introduction</b>	Provide a detailed discussion of the context for and significance of the research or project; a review of the existing, relevant literature may be incorporated here or in a separate section. The scientific question to be addressed and the specific aims of the project should be presented at the end of this section.
<b>Methods and/or Research Design</b>	Provide for each specific aim identified in the introduction; include experimental plan and/or approach. Include limitations and contingency plans.
<b>Preliminary (or Expected) Results</b>	Include preliminary results if available, or expected results if not.
<b>Discussion</b>	Provide an overview of the expected contributions or takeaways of your project.
<b>References</b>	Include short form citations in the main text and full citations at the end of the main text; use the style most appropriate for your field, and be consistent.
<b>Length requirements:</b> Minimum 10 pages, not including figures and references.	

<b>SUGGESTED ELEMENTS FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS (PSM; some MEMs)</b>	
<b>Introduction or Overview</b>	Provide a brief overview of the problem or issue your project will address and the specific aims of the project, making it clear how your work will serve your community partner's needs.
<b>Background</b>	Provide a more detailed discussion of the context for and significance of the project, including any previous work on which it builds or existing data that will be used; a review of the existing, relevant literature may be incorporated here or in a separate section if applicable.
<b>Project Objectives and Deliverables</b>	Clearly identify specific, measurable objectives of the project, and all key deliverables. Bulleted lists are encouraged.
<b>Project Design and Methods</b>	Describe the data that will be collected and/or used, and the analytical techniques used to draw conclusions or create value from it.
<b>Schedule</b>	Provide a high-level view or summary of how you will spend your time and key deadlines for draft and final deliverables.
<b>Required Resources</b>	Include a detailed or summary budget, along with a description of any other resources that you will need to complete the project.
<b>Limitations, Risks, and Contingencies</b>	Identify the limits of your work, what might go wrong, and plans for addressing problems that may arise. This information may be included in the project design section, after the methods for each objective or deliverable.
<b>References</b>	Include short form citations in the main text and full citations at the end of the main text; use the style most appropriate for your field, and be consistent.
<b>Length requirements:</b> Minimum 6 pages, not including figures and references.	

MEM and PSM students will draft their project proposals in the winter of their first year of the program as part of ESM 551: Project Management. A complete proposal is due to your advisor by the middle of the following quarter, and a proposal presentation should be scheduled soon after.

### Proposal Defenses and Presentations

All ESM graduate students must complete a proposal for their research or project and obtain approval of that proposal from their committees in a formal proposal defense (MS and PhD students) or presentation (MEM and PSM students).<sup>5</sup> The procedures for the proposal defense/presentation are as follows:

<sup>5</sup> The proposal presentation is a requirement for MEM and PSM students who begin their degrees in or after Fall Quarter 2020.

- After identifying a date and time for the defense/presentation with the committee, the student should contact ESM office staff to book a space, and then let the committee know where they will meet.
- The student should obtain and fill in the basic information on the paperwork to be completed at the end of a successful proposal defense or presentation, and bring it to the meeting. PhD students can download a copy of Form GO-23 (“Doctoral Request for Advancement to Candidacy”) from the GO (<https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/forms>). Master’s students can download a copy of the appropriate departmental form (“ESM Master’s Research/Project Proposal Approval Form”) from the ESM website.
- The chair of the committee welcomes the committee and begins the meeting.
- The student gives a slide presentation covering the research or project proposal. The committee may ask questions at any point. An additional question period may follow the student’s presentation.
- Upon completing the presentation and questions, PhD students will be asked to leave the room. MS, MEM, and PSM students may be asked to leave the room. The committee will discuss the proposal and its recommendation (i.e., pass or fail). The student is invited back into the room and informed of the committee’s recommendation. The student and the committee discuss the proposal and next steps, including whether the student has passed the defense/presentation, what modifications to the proposal are expected, and when and how they should be delivered to the committee.
- Students who have passed their proposal defense or presentation should obtain the required signatures from their committee members at the close of the meeting. Master’s students submit their completed paperwork to the ESM Program Coordinator, while PhD students submit the completed Form GO-23 to Angela Canton in the Dean’s office.

Note that graduate students must be registered for a minimum of one graduate credit in the term they defend their dissertation proposal.<sup>6</sup>

### Thesis and Dissertation Defenses (MS and PhD Students)

Generally, your defense date must be at least five weeks prior to the end of the term in which you intend to graduate; specific defense deadlines for each term are posted on the GO website (see <https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/graduate-candidate-deadlines>). A final defense after these deadlines will push your graduation to a subsequent term.

You should plan on submitting a complete draft of your thesis or dissertation to your advisor six weeks before your desired defense date *at minimum*. This is also a good time to make sure that all appropriate committee designation paperwork has been filed with and approved by the GO (see the “Dissertation, Thesis, and Project Committees”), and that the GO record of the members of your committee matches your understanding of its composition. Once your advisor has reviewed the draft and agreed on a timeframe for completing the necessary revisions, you may work with your committee to schedule a tentative date and time for the defense. Make sure to reserve a room through the ESM office, as well.

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<sup>6</sup> Additional information on minimum enrollment policies for the 2020-2021 academic year are available here: <http://pdx.smartcatalogiq.com/2020-2021/Bulletin/Graduate-School/Enrollment/Minimum-enrollment>

A revised draft incorporating your advisor's comments is due four weeks before your desired defense date. Your advisor will review this draft to determine that:

1. there is no need for additional data collection;
2. there is no need for major re-analysis; and
3. the advisor is confident you can accomplish any additional analysis and revision of the text successfully before the end of the quarter in which you intend to graduate.

If your advisor agrees that the revised draft meets these standards, you may proceed with the defense as-scheduled. The purpose of this requirement is to avoid last-minute discovery that the thesis or dissertation is not adequate for graduation.

Defenses of final theses and dissertations are generally similar to proposal defenses, but they are open to the public. To advertise your defense, prepare a visually compelling flier that includes your name, your degree, the title of your thesis or dissertation, the names of your committee members, and the date, time, and location of the defense. At least two weeks beforehand, email a PDF copy to ESM office staff ([esmoffice@pdx.edu](mailto:esmoffice@pdx.edu)) for posting on the departmental website and in SRTC, and circulation on departmental listservs. Most students provide light refreshments for defense attendees.

Your defense begins with a presentation which should be of professional quality and use PowerPoint or a similar program as a visual aide. MS students should plan to speak for 30 to 40 minutes and take questions from their committee and other audience members for an additional 15 minutes; doctoral students should prepare a talk of 40-45 minutes and expect around 20 minutes of questioning. When audience questions have been exhausted or time for discussion is up, your committee will dismiss the general public in order to privately question and discuss your work with you. When they have completed their questions, which may cover both your oral presentation and the written thesis or dissertation, they will ask you to leave the room. When you are invited back into the room, the committee will tell you whether or not you have passed the defense, and outline any further action steps that need to be completed in order for you to receive your degree.

It is highly recommended that you attend at least one defense per year to fully understand the scope of student presentations, public questions, and the process at large.

The final, approved thesis or dissertation must be submitted to the GO not later than three weeks prior to the close of the term of application for graduation. Be sure to follow the electronic thesis and dissertation formatting guidelines on the GO website (see <https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/etd-formatting-requirements> for detailed instructions).

#### Final Presentations (MEM and PSM Students)

Each MEM and PSM student must present their project in an oral presentation that is open to the public. Both this presentation and the final written report must be completed by the Friday of finals week in the term of intended graduation.

Project reports generally go through several drafts before the final version, so you should plan on submitting a complete draft of the report to your advisor six weeks before your desired presentation date *at minimum*. Once your advisor has reviewed the draft report and agreed on a timeframe for completing the necessary revisions, you may work with your committee to schedule a tentative date and time for the presentation. Make sure to reserve a room through the ESM office, as well.

A revised draft incorporating your advisor's comments is due four weeks before your desired presentation date. Your advisor will review this draft to determine that:

1. there is no need for additional data collection;
2. there is no need for major re-analysis; and
3. the advisor is confident you can accomplish any additional analysis and revision of the text successfully before the end of the quarter in which you intend to graduate.

If your advisor agrees that the report meets these standards, you may proceed with the presentation as-scheduled. The purpose of this requirement is to avoid last-minute discovery that the project report is not adequate for graduation.

At least two weeks before you present, prepare a visually compelling flier that includes your name, your degree, the title of your talk, the names of your committee members, and the date, time, and location of the presentation, and email a PDF copy to ESM office staff ([esmoffice@pdx.edu](mailto:esmoffice@pdx.edu)) for posting on the departmental website, in SRTC, and circulation on departmental listservs. Most students provide light refreshments for presentation attendees.

Your presentation should be of professional quality and use PowerPoint or a similar program as a visual aide. You should plan to speak for 30 to 40 minutes and take questions from your committee and other audience members for an additional 10-15 minutes. When audience questions have been exhausted or time for discussion is up, your committee will dismiss the general public in order to privately question and discuss your work with you. When they have completed their questions, which may cover both your oral presentation and the written project report, they will ask you to leave the room. When you are invited back into the room, the committee will tell you whether or not you have passed the presentation, and outline any further action steps that need to be completed in order for you to receive your degree.

It is highly recommended that you attend at least one project presentation per year to help you prepare for your own.

### **Submitting Your Dissertation, Thesis, or Project Report**

All dissertations and MS theses must meet GO [formatting requirements](#). You are strongly encouraged to review these requirements before you begin writing your dissertation or thesis.

Finished dissertation or theses are submitted electronically; [detailed instructions](#) are available on the GO website. After you submit your document, GO staff will check your document to ensure

that it complies with the aforementioned formatting requirements. Note that the submission deadline for dissertations and theses falls well before the end of the term, and that you will also need to submit a hard copy of a form with your committee members' signatures.

MEM and PSM students are strongly encouraged to follow GO formatting requirements for dissertations and theses, so long as they do not conflict with your community partner's needs and preferences. Doing so will ensure that your document looks professional and is easily accessible to online readers when converted to a PDF. The project report must have an abstract or executive summary and list the student's name, the adviser's name, the name of the community partner, and other committee members as appropriate. When *both* your presentation and report are both complete and have been approved by your committee, you must email the ESM Chair to request that they submit the DARS non-course exception to verify that the presentation and report requirements have been met. This email should include your PSU student identification number, your degree program (in this case MEM or PSM), the catalog year to be used (usually the term in which you began the program), the date of the project presentation, and the date of the final paper acceptance.

Graduate dissertations, theses, and project reports are included in PDXScholar, PSU's online institutional repository, where they are publicly accessible and serve as an important reference for future graduate students. PhD dissertations and MS theses will be added to PDXScholar automatically; MEM and PSM students must submit their project reports directly to the repository by emailing a copy of the document to [pdxscholar@pdx.edu](mailto:pdxscholar@pdx.edu). Students can request an embargo for their work for a period of time, usually one year. The projects will be added to PDXScholar without an embargo unless requested in the email submission. If you have questions about PDXScholar, you may contact Karen Bjork ([kbjork@pdx.edu](mailto:kbjork@pdx.edu)), Head of Digital Initiatives, who curates the repository.

## **Graduation and Commencement**

Commencement is a ceremony. It is an opportunity for you, your family, friends, and the PSU community to celebrate your accomplishment. PSU holds one commencement ceremony each year, at the end of Spring Quarter (for details, visit <http://www.pdx.edu/commencement/>). Commencement should not be confused with graduation, a term that refers to the actual fulfillment of degree requirements and credits resulting in a diploma being processed.

### Applying for a Graduate Degree

Master's, doctoral, and graduate certificate program students must apply for graduation by the first Friday of the anticipated term of graduation (see <https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/graduate-candidate-deadlines> for specific dates for each term). Applications are submitted through BanWeb, and there is a nonrefundable \$30 application fee for each degree and/or certificate and a \$2 service charge. Advanced degree and graduate certificate candidates should see their advisor and the GO concerning graduation requirements and clearance and review the relevant GO webpage (<https://www.pdx.edu/gradschool/applying-for-graduation>) for complete information on applying to graduate.

## Participating in Commencement

If you are graduating in the Fall, Winter, Spring or Summer of a given academic year, you may participate in Spring Commencement. Doctoral candidates must be certified by the GO before participating in the Spring Commencement. For more information, please contact the Commencement Office at (503) 725-4422 or [commencement@pdx.edu](mailto:commencement@pdx.edu).

## **Teaching Assistantships**

The department has a limited number of graduate teaching assistantships (GTAs), which include a stipend and tuition remission for 9 credits per quarter for the quarter(s) in which you are working.<sup>7</sup> Please be aware that your GTA typically does not apply to some student fees, so you may still have a bill from the PSU in the quarters that you are supported by a GTA.

When supported by a GTA, you are expected to teach undergraduate discussion and/or laboratory sections and assist with grading for departmental courses, as well as make satisfactory progress in your degree program, including coursework and your research/project.

GTAs are generally awarded each year to a subset of incoming PhD, MS, and MEM students with qualifying undergraduate GPAs as part of their admissions offers.<sup>8</sup> Graduate students who have been guaranteed this type of support are assigned to specific courses. Assignments are made the quarter prior to the quarter of service based on the fit between courses that need graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and the experience of each student in the GTA pool. On very rare occasions, additional GTAs become available (beyond those needed for students accepted into their degree program with a guarantee of support, i.e.) and are offered to graduate students based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to experience in relevant subject areas and prior departmental support received.

## Requirements for GTAs

Your GTA includes a tuition waiver for nine credits per term. You must register for nine credits at the 500 level or above while you are a GTA. If you sign up for more, you will have to pay for any credits exceeding nine out of your own pocket. If you need to take a course below the 500 level, you must obtain permission before doing so.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The University Studies program offers GTAs that may be available to ESM graduate students; interested students should monitor the University Studies website (<https://www.mentors.unst.pdx.edu/content/application-peer-mentor-positions>) and apply when “graduate mentor” positions are announced. These positions also come with a stipend (typically lower than the ESM GTA stipend) and tuition remission. While the ESM department does not directly administer UNST mentorships, we expect ESM students who work as UNST mentors to meet the same standards and requirements and execute the same responsibilities as ESM GTAs.

<sup>8</sup> Applicants must have a minimum 3.0 GPA to be considered for a TAship. PSM students are not eligible for TAs. (This is a CLAS rule, not a departmental policy.)

<sup>9</sup> Section 17.1.5 of the Graduate Employees Union (GEU) contract provides that four of the minimum nine credits may be taken at the undergraduate level if the undergraduate course in which the graduate employee wishes to enroll is needed as a prerequisite or is important for the student's program of study. A graduate employee may also register for as few as five graduate credits in the final two terms before graduation provided no additional credits are needed to meet the requirements of the degree. If you intend to take advantage of either of these exceptions while employed as a GTA, please talk with your advisor to ensure that the policy applies in your case.

Your GTAship is provided to you by the department to make it easier for you to achieve your research and degree goals. As such, it is expected that the remainder of your time will be spent on your research and degree. *You are required to satisfactorily complete your courses and make satisfactory progress on your research to remain in good standing and thereby to maintain your GTAship.* (For more information on good standing and how to maintain it, see “Departmental Conditions for Good Standing”). Other employment or volunteer work should be limited to activities that are considered important for your graduate training.

We value high-quality teaching and expect our graduate students to do the same. Although your first priority as a graduate student should be your research, you will need to balance your teaching duties (and coursework requirements) with research. At minimum, this means that we expect you to:

- Come to class early and be prepared.
- Attend **all** TA meetings, proctored exams, and labs. There is a zero tolerance policy for being late or missing labs, prelab meetings, assigned proctoring or other duties. **Do not** be late for a lab or miss a lab without making prior arrangements for a substitute and clearing it with the course instructor.
- You must be available to meet with the instructor beginning the week before the term you are on contract as a GTA.
- Present yourself well, including appropriate dress, hygiene, and language.
- Submit assignments and return graded work to your students in a timely manner.
- Cooperate with your fellow GTAs to establish fair grading policies, and help each other to improve the overall learning experience of the students in your classes.

If there are serious or repeated issues that adversely affect the undergraduate experience, or if any of the above requirements are not met in full, a GTAship may be revoked and/or the student may not receive future support from the department.

Once a graduate student has completed their first year in the program, they **must** submit their annual review to the chair of the Graduate Committee to be eligible for a GTAship. Failure to do so causes the student to be excluded from consideration for continuing or future support. (See “Annual Reviews” for more information on this requirement.)

Finally, all GTAs will need to complete the “Creating a Culture of Respect” learning module and quiz prior. Directions for accessing the module can be found at <https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/learning-module>.

### Evaluations

If a GTA is listed as the instructor of record for a numbered course (e.g., for a lab section), students will have the opportunity to evaluate the GTA at the end of the term just as they ordinarily do for primary instructors. If a GTA is not the instructor of record for the course, students may be given the opportunity to complete evaluations of the GTA at the discretion of the primary instructor. In any case where the university, department, or course instructor

administers student evaluations of the GTA's performance, the GTA will receive a report with anonymized data from those evaluations, which will also be provided to the course instructor and the Graduate Committee. While student evaluations have shortcomings, they can still provide an opportunity to gain valuable insight into your teaching abilities and subject area knowledge. We recommend that you pay particular attention to areas where you are rated lower by multiple students, and to issues that are mentioned by more than one student— especially if similar feedback is given by students in different sections. If you have questions or concerns about your evaluations, you should speak with your advisor, who can provide guidance on how to shift your approach to address student concerns.

### Graduate Employees Union

Graduate student employees at PSU, including GTAs, are represented by the Graduate Employees Union (GEU). Many of the above requirements are discussed in greater detail in the GEU's current contract, which establishes the terms and conditions of employment for all graduate assistants, including GTAs and graduate research assistants (GRAs). The contract can be viewed at <http://pdxgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/GEU-PSU-CBA-04.10.18.docx.pdf>.

### Scheduling

If you are concerned that your GTA assignment may conflict with a class that you need to take to complete your degree, be sure to let your advisor know, and notify the lab manager (via [esmlabs@pdx.edu](mailto:esmlabs@pdx.edu)) at the beginning of the school year (or well in advance of the term in question). The department coordinator, lab coordinator, and any faculty involved must approve any changes to GTA assignments should you be assigned to a course that conflicts with a required course for your degree.

### Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student educational records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should be aware of its requirements. Information on FERPA and a tutorial can be found at <http://www.pdx.edu/registration/ferpa-student-records-privacy-tutorial>.

### **Research Assistantships**

ESM graduate students may also have opportunities to earn a stipend and tuition remission through graduate research assistantships (GRAs). Typically, advisors secure this type of funding for their students through grantseeking or community partnerships, and the student conducts specified research tasks or provides an agreed-upon work product in exchange for financial support. Students who receive GRAs should communicate with their advisors about the details of the position, including expectations and responsibilities. As with GTAs, *students receiving GRAs are required to satisfactorily complete their courses and make satisfactory progress on their research to remain in good standing and thereby to maintain their GRAs*. Additionally, note that GRAs are covered in the GEU collective bargaining agreement (see discussion under "Teaching Assistantships").

## **By Arrangement Forms**

By Arrangement Forms are used to enroll students in project, thesis, independent study, and other types of credit that tend to encompass research activities. The ESM department no longer accepts paper By Arrangement forms. Please submit all By Arrangements through the eBA Request Dashboard (<https://by-arrangement.campus.wdt.pdx.edu/>). If you are a PhD student, please ensure you are labeling your course name and number as “ESR 6XX” and not “ESM 6XX,” as your By Arrangement forms need to be processed by EES and not by the ESM department.

## **Research Ethics Training Requirement**

All graduate students must complete an online ethics course titled “Responsible Conduct of Research”, which is available at <https://www.citiprogram.org/>. Create an account and complete the physical science portion of the course (for a description that will help you locate the correct offering, see [https://www.citiprogram.org/citidocuments/catalogs/RCR\\_Catalog.pdf](https://www.citiprogram.org/citidocuments/catalogs/RCR_Catalog.pdf)). The course is free and will take you a couple of hours or longer to complete. Quizzes are given at the end of each section of the course and you will need to pass with an overall score of 85%. You do not have to finish the course in one shot; you can save your progress and can come back at a later time to finish. When you have successfully completed the course, please submit your completion certificate to [esm\\_admin@pdx.edu](mailto:esm_admin@pdx.edu) or the ESM front desk. The department will keep it on file. You must complete this course before By Arrangement forms (see above) will be processed for you by the ESM office.

## DEPARTMENTAL EVENTS AND RESOURCES

### Association of Environmental Science Students (AESS)

*The text of this section was provided by AESS student leaders.*

The purpose of the Association of Environmental Science Students (AESS) is to provide guidance to new and returning graduate students on matters of ESM departmental policy and practice, to organize social activities for the benefit of fostering communication among students and faculty, to provide representation for ESM graduate students (at departmental and university levels) and act as a voice for ESM graduate (and undergraduate) student concerns.

The AESS holds quarterly administrative meetings in addition to weekly seminars (Fridays from 3–4 p.m.; the schedule is available [here](#)) that provide time for graduate student practice presentations, writing and poster help sessions, professional development workshops, and presentations by faculty and other interesting speakers from the environmental community. These Friday seminars are a great place to convene with and support fellow graduate students. The AESS also has many social, non-academic focused activities (e.g., Friday social hours, outdoor adventures, etc.) that we are actively adapting to meet social distancing guidelines. Other than these regular meetings, the AESS also helps host several events throughout the year that may be of interest to graduate students.

Annual ESM Alumni Panel (Winter Term) — ESM Department graduates will share their experiences and answer questions in regards to their educational experience and current employment. Panelists will vary from MS, MEM, PhD, and BS backgrounds, while working for a variety of agencies or private companies.

Annual ESM Graduate Research Colloquium (Spring Term) — ESM and the AESS host the annual Graduate Research Colloquium to enhance the interactions among graduate students and faculty. Every returning graduate student is required to make a poster of his/her thesis or dissertation research and present the poster during the colloquium.

Have an idea of something you'd like to see the AESS sponsor, a speaker you'd like to invite, or questions about the AESS or being a graduate student in general? Please feel free to contact us – we are here for you!

AESS website:	<a href="#">AESS Portland State Connect Website</a>
General AESS email:	<a href="mailto:aess@pdx.edu">aess@pdx.edu</a>
AESS Officers 2020-2021:	
Taylor Dodrill	<a href="mailto:tdodrill@pdx.edu">tdodrill@pdx.edu</a>
Lara Jansen	<a href="mailto:ljansen@pdx.edu">ljansen@pdx.edu</a>
Clare McClellan	<a href="mailto:clmcc2@pdx.edu">clmcc2@pdx.edu</a>

### Annual Joint Campus Environmental Conference

ESM also participates in the Joint Environmental Graduate Programs, an organization of the Oregon universities (PSU, UO, and OSU). Member departments take turns hosting an annual

Joint Campus Conference in which graduate students from the three universities present their research and exchange ideas with their peers and environmental faculty.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

### Tuition, Fees, and Financial Aid

Information on regular tuition, individual fees, and financial aid opportunities for graduate students is available on the Student Finance website (<https://www.pdx.edu/student-finance/tuition/graduate>).

### Oregon Residency

Funding your own graduate degree can be expensive. Oregon residents pay a significantly lower tuition cost than residents from out of state. To establish Oregon residency, you must reside in the state for one year; however, this is not the only requirement. The Registrar provides a synopsis of residency requirements here: <https://www.pdx.edu/registration/residency-requirements>.

### Funding Opportunities

In addition to GTAships (i.e., employment opportunities that provide tuition remission and a living stipend), the ESM Department also makes smaller awards to graduate and undergraduate students which can be used to fund research supplies and travel, registration fees and transportation to conferences, and other smaller expenses. The ESM website (specifically <https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-science/awards-and-scholarships>) provides descriptions of each award, including deadlines and application procedures. Deadlines may change and come up quickly, so start looking sooner rather than later.

Speak with your advisor and/or your community partner about possible funding opportunities relating to your research or project. PSU is subscribed to [GrantFoward](#), a grant searching service, which you can access by creating an individual account. Once you have registered with the service, you can use it to search for grants related to your field of study or research interests.

The following environmentally-focused, PSU-affiliated organizations may be useful resources for funding and/or networking:

- The United States Geological Survey (USGS) [Oregon Water Science Center](#), located on the PSU campus and works collaboratively with PSU students and faculty through the [USGS-UPP Partnership](#) (UPP).
- The [Institute for Sustainable Solutions](#) (ISS) works to match PSU students and faculty with community groups, businesses, and government organizations to advance sustainability-related projects.
- The [Institute for Natural Resources - Portland](#) (INR) identifies, evaluates, and produces scientific resources to support natural resource policy and management decision making in Oregon. Key program areas include Oregon biodiversity, natural areas, and landscape assessment and mapping.

## CAMPUS TECHNOLOGY

### Computers on Campus

To use computers on campus, you will need to login using your Odin account name and password. Every student has 500 MB of storage on a personal H drive that is accessible from any campus computer. Make sure you always log out when you are finishing using a campus computer. To access files stored on campus computer from off campus, use <http://myfiles.pdx.edu/> and login using your Odin account name and password. This will allow you to access files on your H drive and any other drive you have linked/access too.

### myPSU and Banweb

[myPSU](https://my.pdx.edu/student/home/index) (<https://my.pdx.edu/student/home/index>) provides news on campus events as well as links with helpful information. Banweb is used for registration, maintaining your personal contact information, accessing unofficial transcripts, run DARS reports, enrollment verification, and employee services. To access Banweb, go to myPSU, then click “School Tools” in the bottom left hand corner of the screen. On the next screen, click “Banweb.” You will need your Odin account name and password to log into Banweb.

### Google Account and Apps

PSU uses a Google interface. Use your Odin account name and password to log into the GSuite, including your PSU Gmail account. You are expected to monitor your pdx.edu [Gmail](#) account while you are enrolled in the graduate program, and you will also make frequent use of several other GSuite apps. If you are unfamiliar with these tools, the following links provide getting started guides for [Google Drive](#), [Google Calendar](#), and [Google Groups](#), all of which you are likely to use often during your time at PSU.

### D2L

[D2L](https://d2l.pdx.edu/) (<https://d2l.pdx.edu/>) is a learning platform that you will use for courses you are enrolled in as a student, as well as those you may support as a GTA or mentor. To access D2L, login using your Odin account name and password. D2L provides [tutorials](#) for help getting started and using the service. GTAs and mentors may utilize the faculty and staff [D2L helpdesk](#) for assistance with instructor functions.

Regardless of how you interact with D2L, you should be attentive to the presence and limitations of its internal email service. You will be notified that you have a new D2L email by the presence of a small envelop icon in the D2L menu bar, but this notification will only appear each time you are logged into D2L. If you set your D2L email to forward to your PSU Gmail account, you will get a notification of any D2L emails in your PSU Gmail inbox even if you are not logged into D2L. For this reason, many students and faculty elect to set up forwarding even though there may be a slight delay in receipt of D2L emails in your Gmail inbox. To reply to a D2L email (the email address will end in @d2l.pdx.edu) you must reply using D2L.

## **Office of Information Technology and OIT HelpDesk**

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) supports PSU's technology needs with a robust campus infrastructure that includes networks, telecommunications, servers and data storage, email and web services, and labs and classroom technologies. It also operates the OIT HelpDesk, located in Fairborz Maseeh Hall. The HelpDesk is available by phone seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to midnight (call (503) 725-4357 or (800) 547-8887, ext. 5-4357). You may find it helpful to add this number to your phone contacts in case you experience technical difficulty with classroom computers or projectors. The HelpDesk also offers chat support on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., remote HelpDesk support by appointment, and a form for submitting online support requests, all of which can be accessed [here](#).

## GENERAL CAMPUS RESOURCES

### Campus Map

- [PSU Campus Map](#)

### The Graduate Office (GO)

The [GO website](#) is straightforward and filled with useful information for graduate students. Additionally, you can contact GO staff with questions by any of the following means:

Phone: (503) 725-8410  
Email: [grad@pdx.edu](mailto:grad@pdx.edu)  
In person: XSB 183 (1633 SW Park Ave, Portland, OR 97201)  
Hours: Monday through Friday, 8am to 5pm

### Academic Calendar

The PSU [Academic Calendar](#) provides key information for current and upcoming academic terms, including when the class schedule will be made available online, when registration begins, when classes begin, important deadlines for dropping courses and refunds, final examination periods, when grades will be posted, and holidays and university closures.

### PSU Library

Search for books, articles, journals, and audio/video on the library [website](#). The library provides access to the academic databases to which PSU is subscribed, Interlibrary Loan (ILLiad), Summit Libraries (which costs PSU much less than ILLiad; both services provide access to items not available at PSU by linking with other academic institutions), a department-specific librarian, and the option to chat online with a librarian. Graduate students are able to check out “Library Use Only” materials for extended periods of time, which is helpful if you need to read over archived journal articles that are not available electronically. Additionally, each student at PSU receives 500 prints through the library per quarter. Note that these prints do not roll over quarter to quarter. You can check your [print quota](#) online at any time.

### Writing Center

Need help with your writing? Contact the [Writing Center](#) (188 Cramer Hall) to schedule an appointment, or visit the website for a list of writing resources, including [guidance aimed specifically at graduate-level students](#). Remote consultations are available and can be booked online (email [wrcntr@pdx.edu](mailto:wrcntr@pdx.edu)) or by calling (503) 725-3570.

As you progress in your graduate degree work, be aware that ESM and other campus departments occasionally offer graduate-level writing seminars to support graduate students completing theses and dissertations, drafting peer-reviewed journal articles, and preparing

professional reports. Some of these classes may be substitute for other degree requirements (e.g., seminar credit). Ask the MEM and PSM program manager (Dr. Sarah Carvill) for details.

## **Transportation and Parking**

Transportation Services is located at 1812 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave and sells student parking permits and a variety of TriMet passes, including multiple use passes and single fares. ([TriMet](#) is Portland's public transit agency.)

The [PSU Bike Hub](#) provides instruction in basic bicycle repairs and maintenance, as well as pay-for-service repairs, bicycle rentals, and permits for [secure indoor bike parking](#) (\$15 per quarter or \$45 for the year). You can also join the Bike Hub as a [member](#) and receive discounts.

## **Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC)**

[SHAC](#) offers affordable physical and mental health care, including dental services, counseling, prescription medication, and vaccines. Located at 1880 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave, SHAC is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and can be reached by phone at (503) 725-2800.

## **Recreation Center**

The second, third, and fourth floors of the ASRC building (1800 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave) in PSU's Urban Plaza house the [Campus Recreation Center](#). Campus Rec provides students and the greater campus community with opportunities for exercise and social engagement, such as [fitness classes](#), [personal training](#), [resources for adaptive and accessible athletics](#), and [outdoor trips and gear rentals](#). Student membership is included, for those taking one or more credits, in tuition and fees. Hours vary by quarter/holidays. Call (503) 725- 2931 or email [campusrec@pdx.edu](mailto:campusrec@pdx.edu).

## **Public Safety**

The Campus Public Safety Office (CPSO) provides emergency response, emergency dispatching, and campus patrol services 24/7.

Emergency phone number: (503) 725-4404

Non-emergency phone number: (503) 725-4407

CPSO will also escort students and other members of the campus community to their bus, car, apartment, or office on campus, or up to two blocks off campus, free of charge, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call (503) 725-4407 or request this service, or stop by CPSO at 633 SW Montgomery Street to request a safety escort in person.

## **FINAL NOTES AND TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

One of the biggest challenges you will face in graduate school is balancing your project with your other academic commitments— and with other aspects of your life. It is important to understand what you want and need to accomplish during your time as a graduate student, what kinds of pursuits will serve your career goals, and how to procure funding for and publish your graduate work. However, maintaining your well-being and finding healthy outlets for stress relief are also critical. Please talk with your advisor, other ESM faculty, and your peers about this aspect of graduate school as well as traditional academic concerns, and bear in mind that building a community here is a source of support in and of itself.

To that end, talk to your labmates. Your interests, expertise, and the methods you use will often overlap; the students who entered the lab before you will often have valuable insights on what classes to take and how to work productively with your shared advisor; and you can in turn help new students navigate that same learning curve after your first year.

Be open in your communication with your advisor, and try not to feel awkward about asking them questions. They want to see you succeed and can often help you troubleshoot problems when they arise. Attend lab meetings regularly to build rapport and trust with your advisor and labmates, and to demonstrate your commitment to your education and that of your peers. Consider sitting in on other labs, too— this will help you learn how other groups operate, and you may have opportunities to present your research to an audience with a different perspective or complementary expertise.

Your fellow ESM graduate students are another source of support. While the logistics of group work can be challenging, recognize collaborative class projects as an opportunity to build positive working relationships with your peers. Attend and participate in AESS seminars and other events— these are great opportunities to meet and learn from your graduate student peers (see the section titled “Association of Environmental Science Students (AESS)” for more information). Go to as many PhD, MS, MEM, and PSM final defenses and presentations as you can to help you understand what constitutes a strong final product and how to structure your presentation— and to show support for your colleagues. The camaraderie fostered within labs and among graduate students in a department can make your trip through graduate school much more enjoyable and rewarding, and pay lifelong dividends in professional connections and friendship, so it is worth investing in that part of your education, as well.