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## Master of Science in Geoscience Program Handbook

### Welcome

The Master of Science degree in Geoscience is designed to prepare students for a broad range of challenging careers in government service, private consulting, and industry. This thesis-based degree program also serves as a stepping-stone for students pursuing Doctoral studies. Working closely with their advisor, students focus on original research in one of several areas of specialization, including: petrology, volcanology, economic geology, structural geology, sedimentary geology, geochemistry, hydrology, soil science, climate change, petroleum geology, and paleontology. Students are expected to develop original research suitable for submission to a refereed scientific journal. Students are expected to have strong content knowledge in their area of emphasis, which is tested during the culminating defense of their thesis research.

### Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the UNLV Graduate Catalog, as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: [valarie.burke@unlv.edu](mailto:valarie.burke@unlv.edu) or [GradAssociateDean@unlv.edu](mailto:GradAssociateDean@unlv.edu).

### Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Faculty must hold either associate or full graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up-to-date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the Graduate Faculty status web page.

### Program Information

[Masters of Science in Geoscience](#)

Contact Information: <http://geoscience.unlv.edu>

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## Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding admission, coursework and culminating experience are found in the [graduate catalog](#).

## Graduate Program Administration

The Graduate Affairs Coordinator of the UNLV College of Sciences is a valuable contact for navigating graduate school and serves as a liaison with the Graduate College. The coordinator can help answer questions about forms and policies. The current Coordinator's contact information is available on the UNLV College of Sciences webpage (<https://www.unlv.edu/sciences/grad-studies>). The Graduate Program in the Department of Geoscience is administered by the Graduate Coordinator who oversees student inquiries about graduate school in the Department and the admissions process, and guide students through the regulations of their graduate program in the Department at UNLV. The graduate coordinator is typically a Graduate Faculty member in the Department of Geoscience.

## Graduate College Policies

The UNLV Graduate College sets forth policies and deadlines in the Graduate College Catalog, which governs all graduate students at UNLV. New graduate students will follow the edition of the Graduate Catalog current for their year of entrance to UNLV. With Department and Graduate College approval, the Graduate Catalog in effect during the semester in which degree requirements are completed may be used. In addition, the Department of Geoscience has developed the following guidelines, which are in some cases more rigorous and rigid than those of the Graduate College.

These guidelines were generated in order to establish a framework that will assure uniformly high standards throughout the Department and to permit the best possible education for Geoscience M.S. students. Each student is obligated to be aware of both sets of policies and to review them periodically so that they are followed to the best of each student's ability. Please refer to Graduate College Policies for Leave of Absence.

## Petitions for Departures from the Rules

The policies of both the Graduate College and of the Department are somewhat flexible and written petitions for exceptions maybe submitted for special cases in which extenuating circumstances occur. Petitions for exceptions must be approved in writing by the advisor, committee, Graduate Coordinator and Department Chair. The Petition must also be approved by the College of Science and Graduate College Deans. Use the UNLV Graduate College Appeal Form available in Graduate Rebel Gateway. If the petitions are granted, the policies may be modified, but students should not and cannot rely on such a mechanism to circumvent the regulations. Questions regarding any of the policies can and should be addressed by the student's advisor, the Department Chair or the Department Graduate Coordinator. If the information provided by these sources within the Department is not satisfactory, M.S. students should make an appointment with either the Dean or Associate Dean of the Graduate College in order to have questions answered. Do not rely on hearsay information: see it in writing.

## Useful Resources

Students are responsible for their own graduate education and are expected to consult all relevant rules and regulations available at UNLV and in the Department of Geoscience. Below are some useful links that include policies and procedures relevant to Graduate School. As web addresses frequently change, the student should stay up to date with the most recent sites, and contact the relevant offices directly.

1. UNLV Graduate College: <http://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege>
2. Grad Rebel Gateway: <https://unlv-gradcollege.force.com/GradRebelGateway>
3. UNLV Department of Geoscience web page: <https://geoscience.unlv.edu/>
4. College of Sciences: <https://www.unlv.edu/sciences>
5. MyUNLV for course registration: <http://my.unlv.nevada.edu>
6. Financial Aid and Scholarships: <http://www.unlv.edu/finaid>
7. Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA): <https://www.unlv.edu/gpsa>
8. Office of Student Conduct: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct>
9. Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS): <http://www.unlv.edu/iss>

## Admission Requirements

[Visit the Graduate Catalog for Admissions requirements.](#)

The establishment of standards of admission to graduate programs at UNLV is largely the responsibility of the Graduate College. The Graduate College receives the credentials of applicants, and the Department recommends that an applicant either be denied admission or admitted with one of the following classifications: (1) Full Graduate Standing, (2) Graduate Provisional, (3) Conditional Admission, and (4) Non-Degree Seeking Student. For either of the first two classifications there may be deficiencies listed or graduate course work specified.

The admissions recommendation from the Department of Geoscience is based, in part, on finding an advisor who has agreed to advise the applicant, and by meeting the Departmental guidelines for admission in a competitive process. Contact with potential advisors should be completed in advance of the admission deadline, and the application should mention the advisor's agreement to advise the student. The admissions recommendation made by the Department to the Graduate College maybe rejected if it is judged to conflict with Graduate College standards.

For a currently admitted graduate student to change from one department to another department or program, the student must submit a new application for admission, the required application fee, and all necessary credentials to the Graduate College.

### **Admission Contingencies**

Conditional Admission is given when additional admission materials are needed. It is the student's responsibility to comply with the terms of admission. Admission contingencies vary with each student. The Department and Graduate College must receive all materials required at the time of matriculation no later than the end of the first semester.

Progress toward completion of deficiencies noted at the time of matriculation should start in the first semester and be continuous until completed. Deficiencies must be completed as soon as possible. Questions should be addressed to the Department's Graduate Coordinator. Students must make their potential advisor aware of admission conditions.

### **International Students**

The Office of International Student and Scholars (OISS) at UNLV provides expert help on navigating visa and other issues. International students in the Department of Geoscience should work closely with the OISS, their faculty advisor, and the Graduate Coordinator to ensure a smooth transition into UNLV Department of Geoscience graduate program.

Program Timeline:

1. Complete GEOL 701 in Fall semester of 1<sup>st</sup> year; GEOL 795 in Spring semester of 1<sup>st</sup> year;
2. Formation of committee by end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester; File Appointment of Advisory Committee form;
3. Thesis proposal by end of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester; submit prospectus form to Graduate College.
4. Apply for graduation at beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> semester
5. 5<sup>th</sup> semester state-funded GA support will be evaluated by the graduate committee and will be given to those who are close to graduation.

Please note that students should not expect 6th semester state-funded GA support.

### **Program Timeline**

#### **Prior To and During the First Semester**

Prior to enrolling for the first semester, M.S. students must confer with the consenting advisor listed on their admission form that was chosen based on the student's statement of interest. During the meeting, it will be decided which courses should be taken during the first semester.

GEOL 701 and 795 must be taken during the first year (GEOL 701 in the fall semester and GEOL 795 in the spring semester), as well as some of the deficiencies or graduate courses that maybe listed on a student's admission form. Students admitted in spring must take GEOL 701 in their second semester. Before the end of the first semester, M.S. students must select an advisor who consents to supervise the research. Before enrolling for thesis credits, the student's advisor must be consulted to determine the amount and type of work to be completed for a specified number of credits during any given semester. This should be viewed as a contract, and each semester the advisor will judge whether the stated work was completed. If the work was either not completed or was of an unsatisfactory quality, then the student may be placed on probation.

#### **During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester**

The advising committee should be established prior to the end of the 2nd semester. The M.S. student and the advisor need to identify additional committee members that will best augment the research requirements. Both breadth and related

expertise need to be balanced. The thesis advising committee will normally consist of the advisor (committee chair); two additional members from the graduate faculty of the Department of Geoscience; and a graduate faculty member from another department to serve as the Graduate College Representative. According to the Graduate College, "*The Graduate College Representative is a neutral, outside faculty member with approved appropriate level of graduate faculty status who participates on the committee to ensure that all graduate college policies are followed, to make sure that all milestones in the student's progression are met appropriately, and to witness rigor, quality, and fairness throughout the student's culminating experience and defense.*"

If the identified faculty members are willing to serve, the Appointment of Advisory Committee form initiated by the student in Grad Rebel Gateway will be routed to the faculty electronically for signature. Students must submit the Appointment of Advisory Committee form to the Graduate College before establishing the degree program. The name of the advisor, committee members, and external member must be submitted to the Graduate College. The Graduate College must approve the Graduate College Representative suggested by the student and the advisor. The student should talk to this person and ask to what extent they wish to be involved in the student's program and progress. The M.S. student must not ignore this person during the years spent in the graduate program, or there may be repercussions that delay completing the degree.

Prior to the end of the second semester after admission to UNLV, M.S. students should also (1) identify a thesis topic, (2) meet with the committee to provide recommendations for the Degree Program; (3) submit to the Graduate College an approved Plan of Study and Appointment of Advisory Committee Form. The Appointment of Advisory Committee form must be submitted to the Graduate College not later than the last day of instruction of the 2nd semester of enrollment (see section on selecting an advisor and thesis committee).

### **During All Semesters Prior to the Final One**

Each student is expected to register for a minimum of three semester hours of graduate credit each semester (summers excluded). However, students intending to compete, defend, submit a thesis to the Graduate College, and /or graduate during the summer term must be registered for a minimum of 3 credits. Students who hold graduate assistantships are required by the Graduate College to register for a minimum of 6 semester hours of credit each semester; the department of Geoscience recommends that graduate assistants register for 9 credits, including thesis credits, each semester.

Graduate students who are working on the thesis during their graduation semester may register for 3 credits, provided they are not supported by graduate assistantship. However, if the student does not graduate in that semester, they may have to appeal for the Graduate College to add 3 credits and pay a late fee. Important thesis information is available in the "Academic Policies" section of the Graduate Catalog. Students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment while working on their degree.

### **During the Final Semester**

Each student must (1) apply for graduation and pay fees prior to the deadline listed in the class schedule for each term; (2) allow at least two weeks for the committee to examine the thesis, prior to scheduling the final examination (thesis must be submitted to the committee no less than eight weeks prior to the last day of instruction in the term in which the student will graduate). (3) obtain a statement from all committee members that they are satisfied with it and deem the written thesis defensible prior to scheduling the defense. See Graduate College website about defense information; (4) schedule the final examination (defense) with the committee; (5) deposit a copy of the defensible thesis in the Department office or in publicly-accessible virtual storage at least one week prior to the exam, and notify the faculty of its presence and the date, time, and place of the exam; (6) pass the final examination no later than three weeks before the end of classes; (7) submit two unbound copies and a PDF of the thesis (one on high-quality paper) to the Department office staff; and (8) follow the Graduate College requirements and timelines for submission of final documents .

Students who are graduating with an M.S. degree are encouraged to participate in the university commencement ceremony. However, you may not participate in commencement prior to completing all degree requirements.

Students are advised to determine these deadline dates, verify them, and mark them on a calendar. Students must be highly organized during their final semester. The most difficult deadlines for most M.S. students to meet are (1) the completion of a defensible draft of the thesis and (2) the completion of the thesis for deposition in the Graduate College. Students must remember that they are not working on this alone and are relying on the efforts of four other very busy people: the committee. Therefore, students must discuss plans with the committee early.

## Degree Program Benchmarks

### Selection of Thesis Advisor

New M.S. students generally enter the program after consultation with a faculty member who agrees to be the advisor. During a student's graduate study, the student or the advisor may choose to discontinue the relationship. Depending on the timing or cause for this change, the student may have to also change thesis topics and resubmit a new thesis proposal to their committee. Such changes are unusual, but do occur due to illness, sabbatical leave, or other problems. A change of advisor or any member of the committee must be approved using the Change in Advisory Committee form. No changes may occur during the final semester of the M.S. program, except in case of unforeseen emergencies; a desire to graduate by a particular semester deadline does not constitute an emergency.

### Courses and Plan of Study

It is strongly suggested that M.S. students establish and submit the Plan of Study Part I and II forms to the Graduate College during their 2nd semester. The Plan of Study Part II outlines the courses the student will complete for the M.S. degree. It is required by the Graduate College that this be done prior to completing 16 credits of course work toward the degree. Plan of Study Part I and II cannot be submitted until Appointment of Faculty Advisor or Appointment of Advisory Committee form. Part II is downloaded from the Degrees Directory, completed by the student, and uploaded into the Grad Rebel Gateway Part I form. The Degree Program does not include deficiencies listed at the time of admissions, although a student must take those classes.

The Plan of Study must include 30 credit hours of graduate course work, some of which may be transferred from other colleges. They must include GEOL 701, GEOL 795, and six hours of GEOL 797 (thesis). A student may enroll for more than six credit hours of GEOL 797, but a maximum of six can be counted on the Plan of Study. All other course work must be 600 level or above to count toward the M.S. degree. M.S. students may take graduate-level courses offered by departments other than Geoscience. However, only a maximum of 6 non-Geoscience courses may be used toward a M.S. degree program.

A thesis proposal must be written by the student and approved by the Department. An approved abstract of the thesis project and a course of study must be submitted to the Graduate College as part of the Thesis Prospectus at the same time the Degree Program is submitted. Both the Prospectus and the Plan of Study forms must be submitted to the Graduate College before the end of the second semester. Any changes in Degree Program or thesis must be approved in advance by the student's committee and filed with the Graduate College.

A student's committee should meet in the second semester to hear a formal presentation of the proposal and to discuss the project, after having received the written proposal for comments at least one week prior to the meeting. Following the committee meeting, a student should revise the proposal, following the suggestions of the committee members.

The written thesis proposal, when approved by the student's committee, must be duplicated and deposited in the department office or in a publicly accessible virtual drive for a two-week period excluding holidays and summer. The student must notify the Geoscience faculty in writing that the proposal has been deposited for their review. Any faculty member may notify the student's committee in writing of any suggestions or why the faculty member does not believe the proposal should be approved. If a request for discussion is not received within two weeks, the proposal is automatically approved. If any individual's objection to a proposal cannot be satisfied through the committee, the objection must be brought before the graduate faculty of the Department.

The adviser and the advisory committee should assist students in writing concise proposals and should consider proposals carefully before endorsing them. The proposal must outline the problem(s) concisely and clearly, with a statement of the problem(s) or hypotheses to be addressed and the importance to the discipline, proposed methods of approach, and expected results or contribution to Geoscience. A thesis proposal submitted by a M.S. student in the Department of Geoscience should normally include a 250-word abstract, and a main proposal body that clearly and concisely defines the problem to be solved and hypotheses to be tested. The text may include preliminary results from the student's, advisor's, or others' work, but should not contain final data sets. A complete proposal will typically consist of about 3000 words in the main text (exclusive of Figure Legends, tables, and references cited). The text should be double spaced with standard margins, in a readable 10 to 12-point font (e.g., Times New Roman). The proposal should be sufficiently well documented with citations from pertinent literature to assure the faculty that the student is aware of the work of other investigators in the proposed and related fields. The references cited section should be in Geological Society of America Bulletin format (see guide for authors of GSAB at [www.geosociety.org](http://www.geosociety.org)). It is recommended that students use an appropriate citation



software package, like RefWorks, available for free through the UNLV Library website, or commercial software like EndNote. Typically, the bibliography of a complete proposal will include at least twenty citations, but more is common. All proposals must include a realistic budget and time schedule.

### Thesis Proposal Suggested Format

1. Cover Sheet required, with approval signatures of all Advisory Committee Members (See Appendix 1 for an Example)
2. Abstract - 250 words.
3. Main proposal text:  
The text should clearly contain the following components:
  - a. What is the hypothesis to be tested or geologic problem to be solved? Simply generating new data that does not solve a geologic problem is rarely enough to justify proposed work.
  - b. Why is the subject significant?
  - c. How will the hypothesis be investigated, or the geologic problem be solved?
  - d. Figures pertinent to the proposal, either in-line inside textboxes with legends, or after References Cited.
4. References Cited
5. Estimated Budget
6. Estimated Time Schedule

### Proposal Defense Examinations

The Department of Geoscience requires the successful completion a thesis Proposal Defense Examination. To schedule the Proposal Defense Examination, the student will consult with the committee to establish mutually convenient times; plan far in advance as it may be difficult to find a mutually acceptable time. For the oral examinations, allow for a two-hour period, although the actual duration may be more or less. The Graduate College requires a unanimous decision by the committee to pass the proposal defense exams. Students must be enrolled in the semester in which they defend the proposal. The Proposal Defense Examination is usually completed prior to the end of the second semester. The Graduate College requires that this exam be taken at least three weeks before the end of the semester. The Proposal Defense Examination focuses on the thesis proposal and the student's ability to perform the research. It includes a formal oral presentation of the student's thesis proposal (about 25 minutes long), research to date, and questions by the thesis advisory committee on the thesis topic. After the committee agrees that the student has passed the Proposal Defense and have made all necessary revisions to the proposal, the committee will sign, and the student will submit, the Department Proposal Defense Form. Final copies of the proposal, including the signed cover sheet, should be deposited with the Departmental Office after being successfully defended.

### Thesis Preparation

M.S. students should have extensive discussions with their advisor and possibly their committees before embarking on writing a thesis. Every advisor follows a different procedure depending on the project undertaken and the capabilities of the student. Remember that a thesis need not be a long document. Each thesis should include a short introduction and conclusion, and one published/ submitted /or to be submitted paper. The Geoscience Department faculty will consider manuscripts suitable for submittal to a journal for a M.S. thesis. The writing style should be equivalent to a professional journal: the department requires GSA Bulletin format style for non- manuscript theses. Recently completed theses can be used as guides but realize that they are of variable quality.

The advisor should have up to two weeks to read and comment on each draft of the student's work. Remember that the faculty members have other teaching and research commitments, and other graduate students. Each student must be prepared to make numerous revisions quickly and return the revised drafts to the advisor until achieving a draft that the advisor deems acceptable to be distributed to the committee members. Depending on the advisor's comments, it may be helpful to set a tentative defense date with all committee members to obtain a realistic view of their schedules. At this time, the M.S. student should advise committee members that they may soon receive a draft of the thesis. Committee members may outline their time constraints to the student (i.e. meetings, field trips, etc.). The Graduate College representative committee member may choose to see the first draft or perhaps only the defensible copy: ascertain their input and keep them appraised as appropriate. Once a student's committee has read the thesis, which includes nearly final figures, maps, and text, they may suggest revisions and wish to see revised drafts before they move to approve it as a defensible thesis. Any suggested revisions should be discussed with the committee members and advisor. It is the



obligation of the committee chair to reconcile differences of opinion. This is achieved most constructively through meetings of the candidate with the committee.

Students writing a thesis as a manuscript to be submitted to a journal for publication must have the thesis reviewed and approved by the thesis committee prior to submitting the manuscript to the journal. Committee approval may require editing and revisions. Two weeks should be provided to the committee to review the manuscript.

Once the committee has deemed a draft as defensible, the student must make any final changes and notify the Graduate College of the examination date at least two weeks prior to the exam. Further, the defense draft should be displayed in the Department office or in a publicly accessible virtual drive for one week prior to the final examination. This copy should be the final version, free of grammatical and typographical errors. Be sure to notify the Department faculty members in writing of its presence, and ensure that the date, time, and place of the exam are posted. While the thesis is available for review in the office, the student should make final preparations for the final exam.

Students must adhere to the Guide to Preparing & Submitting a Thesis or Dissertation manual from the Graduate College's web page or the Graduate College will not accept the thesis. Questions may be addressed to the student's adviser or the Thesis Director at the Graduate College.

## Thesis Defense

For guidance, we suggest that students have a completed first draft of the text, figures, and maps to the advisor no later than February 1st for May graduation, no later than March 1 for an August graduation, and no later than September 1st for a December graduation. A student's advisor may have read sections of text prior to those dates, but these deadlines are aimed at a completed draft. The regulations for the final examination, or defense, for Masters candidates are discussed in the Graduate Catalog and should be read by every candidate. The Department adheres to the general guidelines of the Graduate College. The exam must occur no later than three weeks before the end of classes in the semester in which the student wishes to graduate. It should not be scheduled during school holidays, weekends, or the summer unless all committee members agree in advance. The composition of the committee shall not be changed to facilitate scheduling during these periods.

In detail, the format of the final examination in Geoscience is as follows. During the time in which the final exam is scheduled, the candidate presents, in a professional manner, an oral summary of the thesis stressing the major conclusions of the research. The presentation should be about 25 minutes in length and may not exceed 45 minutes. This presentation must be open to a public audience, including non-graduate faculty, students, and interested people from the community. All members of the Advisory Committee must be present during the oral defense. Following the presentation, the public audience may ask questions related to the thesis. During this time, the graduate faculty and particularly the examining committee should refrain from questioning the candidate. At the end of this brief discussion period, the public audience will be excused. As specified in the Graduate Catalog, the candidate will be fully examined with only graduate faculty members present unless the student's committee has unanimously approved the presence of other individuals. It is during this questioning period that the student must be able to defend the findings and methodology of the thesis and to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of a broad field of study as well as a detailed understanding of a more limited field.

After completion of the question-and-answer period, the student will be dismissed, and the examination committee will evaluate the student's performance with the advice and consultation of any other graduate faculty members that may be present. As noted in the Graduate Catalog, *"The advisory committee must unanimously pass the student. If the committee votes unanimously to fail the student or the vote is not unanimous to pass, the student, in conjunction with his/her advisor, may request the committee to administer a second examination. The student must wait at least three months before taking the second examination. The Department may require additional course work, substantial reworking of the thesis or whatever is believed necessary to prepare the student for the second examination."* At the conclusion of the committee's deliberation, the committee should complete and sign the "Culminating Experience Results" form electronically for the Graduate College and discuss their conclusions with the student.

To prepare for this examination, a student is advised to review all graduate course work, all details of the thesis, and all current literature related to the thesis and their field of interest. The committee will be examining to ascertain whether the student has developed a sufficient foundation with both depth in their research and breadth in Geoscience. The student may be called upon to extend one's knowledge beyond "what one knows" by testing the use of sound scientific reasoning, or the candidate may be asked to state an opinion regarding particular papers or theories to test whether the candidate

possesses the ability to be critical of our science. An M.S. student should be in his/her most alert and educationally honed state to pass this final examination, which is only in part a thesis defense.

After passing the final exam (which includes the defense of research), where yet other changes to the thesis maybe suggested, the final document should be quickly prepared. Present this document with additional cover sheets to all committee members for their final approval and signature. Upon passing the final exam, the student must make any needed changes in the thesis and submit the final document to the department and to the Graduate College. The student must also verify at this time that the Graduate College holds a "Final Examination / Culminating Experience Results" form that should have been submitted after the exam was passed and the final draft was approved. If they do not have this form, the student must see that it is submitted immediately, or the student will not graduate.

A copy of the thesis must be provided to the Graduate College in the format and on the timeline, they require in the final form at least two weeks prior to the end of instruction within the term in which the student will graduate. The Graduate Dean must give permission for extension of this deadline in writing. The Department strongly recommends adhering to the deadline and only under exceptional circumstances will it support the request to the Dean. Please see the Graduate College Website for full information.

In addition, the Department requires an unbound copy, and a digital version, be submitted to the office staff. The print copy should be on high-quality paper. It will remain in the Department office for immediate use and distribution. It is considered proper conduct to also give a bound copy to the advisor at this time. The Department usually pays the cost of binding departmental copies.

### **Application for Graduation**

If a student applied for spring graduation and missed the deadlines, the student must reapply for August or December graduation and pay additional fees. If it is anticipated that a student will not finish in time for a spring graduation, then the initial filing should be for August. Functionally, this change only provides an extra month to work on the thesis. The student must discuss the expected schedule of events with the committee, and they must approve it. It is best if final exams for fall graduation can be taken prior to the end of the spring final exam period and a final draft of the thesis is ready for the committee to sign shortly thereafter. Remember, the University does not employ faculty members during the summer, and many are away at meetings or doing field research on externally funded grants.

Students may not participate in Commencement prior to completing all degree requirements.

### **Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan and Procedures**

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are required to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form. [Formerly known as the Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead.

Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each student's submitted IDP and provide acknowledgement that they have reviewed the IDP.

Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner.

Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data are also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

### **Additional Program Information Financial Support**

Financial support may be obtained from a variety of sources: (1) Assistantships granted by the Graduate College upon the recommendation of the Department, (2) Fellowships and Scholarships awarded by the Graduate College or UNLV, (3) Fellowships, Scholarships, and Assistantships sponsored by extra-university individuals and organizations that are awarded directly by the Department, Desert Research Institute (DRI) or other institution, (4) grants-in-aid of research awarded by on- and off-campus organizations, (5) Research Assistantships provided to support funded research, and in rare cases (6) student can be admitted as self-funded. New students desiring financial support as a Teaching or Research Assistant must have applications on file in the Graduate College by February 1st in order to be considered for support during fall semester

and students wishing to be supported in spring semester must have applications on file by October 1st of the preceding year. Continuing students with existing financial support who desire to have their support renewed must notify the departmental Graduate Coordinator. It is the responsibility of the M.S. student to follow all guidelines related to their financial support.

### **Teaching Assistantships**

The Graduate College allocates state-funded graduate assistantships to the colleges, which are then distributed to the departments. Because the Geoscience Department has a small number of these assistantships, positions are commonly used for M.S. students teaching in undergraduate laboratory sessions. Once students have applied for the assistantships, it is the responsibility of the Department to recommend to the Graduate College which applicants should receive available positions. The initial award of an assistantship does not assure the recipient of continuous support until a degree is attained. However, the Department attempts to continue support for initially funded M.S. students for two academic years under the conditions that a student performs duties satisfactorily, as determined by the student's academic advisor, thesis committee, or T.A. supervisor (e.g. the GEOL 101 coordinator or class Professor), and maintains satisfactory academic progress, and as long as the department has positions and funds. The expected performance of Graduate Assistants is described subsequently. See the Graduate Catalog for additional guidelines on assistantships.

### **Fellowships**

UNLV fellowships available to M.S. students are awarded by the Graduate College and the UNLV President's Office. Applications are typically due in the Graduate College or President's Office around December 1st but please check the specific deadlines on the Graduate College website official dates. Students who receive these awards usually have a 3.5 minimum GPA, high scores on the GRE and strong letters of support from faculty. If awarded a fellowship, a student receives a full academic- year stipend and tuition waiver, must enroll for at least 9 credit hours each semester of the Fellowship year, and must devote full time to academic studies. Additional guidelines for fellowships are listed under Scholarships in the Graduate Catalog and on the UNLV web pages.

### **Research Assistantships**

Research Assistant positions are typically funded by extra-university agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, through grant applications by Geoscience faculty members, but are administered through the Graduate College. The duties are controlled directly by the grantee, usually a graduate faculty member. The grantee and the Graduate Program Coordinator review graduate applicant files and the work of continuing students in the field of interest and select awardees. These positions carry the same rules and regulations as Teaching Assistantships, but the type of work required depends on the research project. The student is directly responsible to the grantee whether in the Department or at research units such as DRI. Students working as Research Assistants may work directly on their thesis project but commonly may work on research not directly related to their thesis. Because of the uncertainties of extra-university funding, Research Assistantships maybe granted on a semester-by-semester basis. See the Graduate Catalog for more guidelines.

### **Other Financial Support**

Funding is available from a variety of other sources to supplement student income and to defray some of the costs of thesis research and preparation. Students may apply for scholarships through the Graduate College. Students must submit the FAFSA form to Financial Services each year in order to be considered for these scholarships. The UNLV Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) awards grants-in-aid of research twice a year. Students must contact the organization directly. Additional forms of financial aid are listed in the Graduate College website.

Additional sources of funding include Sigma Xi, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG), the Society of Sedimentary Geology (SEPM), and the Geological Society of America (GSA), all of which award grants-in-aid of student research in Geoscience. The student should independently seek information regarding these applications from on-line resources. Many awards require a project proposal, and deadlines occur throughout the year.

Scholarship money is also available within the Department. These awards are typically given to students in the earlier stages of their program (i.e., approximately the initial year for M.S. students) and are intended primarily to support fieldwork and data collection phases of research. Award of these scholarships is based on a balance of academic performance, research progress and financial need. Scholarships are designed to provide partial support; students are expected to also pursue other funding. To be eligible for one of these scholarships, a M.S. student must file a departmental application and have filed a FAFSA with financial services. Other requirements are spelled out on the application form. For questions related

to scholarships communicate directly to the faculty chair of the committee. The deadline for applying is approximately November 6 for the following year.

## **Academic Policies**

### **Graduate Student Responsibilities for Deadlines and Forms**

The Department of Geoscience adheres to the academic policies outlined in the Graduate Catalog and each student should be thoroughly familiar with them. Further, students must inform themselves of and adhere to the Department of Geoscience M.S. policies, guidelines and degree requirements as described in this document. The Graduate College maintains an online Calendar containing relevant dates. Students will be dropped from the program and separated from the Graduate College if they fail to fulfill these requirements.

### **Adherence to Student Academic Misconduct Policy**

A key policy that all graduate students in Geoscience must adhere to is the current Student Academic Misconduct policy available on the website of the Office of Student Conduct. This adherence includes in all drafts of the proposal and thesis: there are no circumstances in which the student can waive adherence to this policy. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in disciplinary action, including and up to separation from the program, even if the infraction is claimed to have been unintentional. Students should also be aware that it is illegal in Nevada (NRS 200.650) to surreptitiously record conversations without the full consent of others (e.g. Advisory Committee). No recordings shall be made of any advisory or committee, or other meetings as applicable, without the full consent of the involved parties.

### **Required and Expected Performance of Graduate Assistants**

Details regarding Graduate Assistantships (Teaching and Research Assistantships) are outlined in the Graduate Website and the Graduate Assistant handbook, and students are responsible for knowing the requirements and expectations. Graduate Assistants are required to begin work from one week prior to the start of fall classes through the end of fall semester final exam week, and from the day after the New Year's holiday through the end of spring semester final exam week. Graduate Assistants should expect to work on average 20 hours per week.

New Graduate Assistants are expected, as part of their contractual obligations, to attend all orientation events that pertain to them (the Graduate Program Coordinator will notify them in advance). These sessions are offered at the beginning of each fall semester. If a student is supported as a Teaching Assistant they must maintain timely and responsive contact with the professor in charge of the assigned class and with the Graduate Program Coordinator of the Department who may assign additional tasks within the scope of the T.A. position. Research Assistants must contact the graduate faculty member in charge of funding the assistantship. Research Assistants are guided by the same rules and regulations as Teaching Assistants, and consequently they may be asked to perform departmental duties as well as research.

Graduate Assistants, and especially Teaching Assistants, are expected to act professionally while representing the Department of Geoscience and UNLV. Failure to act professionally could result in an unsatisfactory semester evaluation. Examples of professional behavior include arriving on time to all classes and teaching assignments, presenting a professional demeanor and appearance, professional use of NSHE facilities and resources, and providing full attention to students and to the assistant's contractual obligations.

### **Course Grades**

Satisfactory progress includes maintaining a minimum of a 3.00 GPA in all graduate-level courses. One grade of B- is permitted in the courses listed on the Degree Program if the overall graduate GPA remains  $\geq 3.00$ . Receiving two grades of B- or one grade of C+ or lower will place a student on academic probation even if the GPA remains above 3.00. The student will be removed from probation when the C+ or one B- is replaced with a B or higher grade in that course or that course is replaced on the degree program with a course having a grade of B or better, providing the GPA remains above 3.00. Receiving two grades of C+ or lower during the period of M.S. study will be grounds for automatic separation of the student from the M.S. program after being placed on probation.

Any grade of incomplete received by an M.S. student must be completed within one year or the grade will automatically be changed by the Registrar to an F. If two I grades are received, the student will be put on probation. If there are extenuating circumstances, an extension may be received in writing from the Graduate Coordinator or Department Chair, with approval of the Graduate College.

## Student Progress Evaluations

Each student fills a semester progress report that is reviewed by their advisor after the end of each semester. The objective of these semester reports is to acknowledge significant honors and awards, recent research advances, and to convey to the student their overall progress as a graduate student and GA. Students should be familiar with both the Graduate College and the Departmental policies that the faculty will follow in making their decisions. Any incomplete tasks/classes or unsatisfactory remarks must be addressed.

If a student is making unsatisfactory progress, the student may be put on probation and subsequently separated from the program. The problems or requirements stated in the letter to the student must be corrected or fulfilled during the first semester of probation. If they are not, or if there is further unsatisfactory progress during any subsequent semester, the student may either be placed on a second semester of probation, during which time the student is not eligible for an assistantship or scholarship from the department or university, or, at the discretion of the student's advisor and/or committee, the student may be requested to be separated from the program. In the former case, if at the end of the second semester of probation the student's progress remains unsatisfactory, then the student will be separated from the program.

If a student regards the faculty's decision or treatment as unjust, a request may be made of one's advisor, the Department Chair, or the Graduate Program Coordinator to call a meeting of the graduate faculty. The student will present the case in writing to the faculty one week prior to the meeting and may choose to be present at the beginning of the meeting for discussion of the situation. The graduate faculty members will deliberate the case without the student being present and, within one week, render their decision in writing. If a student continues to reject the faculty's findings, an appeal may be submitted to the Graduate College. Additional guidelines on Probation and Separation can be found in the most recent version of the online Graduate Catalog.

## Professional Code of Ethics

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the graduate catalog. Geoscience students are expected to behave in a professional and ethical manner. In addition to Graduate Policy and the UNLV Student Code of Conduct, examples of Professional Codes of Ethics include those of the American Geophysical Union, the American Geosciences Institute, and the Geological Society of America ([AGU](#), [AGI](#), and [GSA](#)).

## General Timeline Summary

Event	Timing	Required Documentation
Select Advisor	First semester	Email documentation that resides with the advisor
Complete GEOL 701	Fall semester of 1 <sup>st</sup> year	N/A
Select Master Advising Committee	Before the end of the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester	Appointment of Advisory Committee Form
Complete GEOL 795	Spring semester of 1 <sup>st</sup> year	N/A
Thesis proposal defense	Before the end of 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	N/A
Apply for graduation	Before the end of the 4 <sup>th</sup> semester	Apply for graduation in MyUNLV (Student Center under the "Other Academics" drop-down menu).
Dissertation Defense	After approval of full Advisory Committee. Ideally during 4 <sup>th</sup> semester	Culminating Experience Results
IDP reports	Every year	Sent by graduate college
Semester progress report	Every semester	Sent by graduate coordinator



## University Resources

### [Leadership and Professional Development Academy](#)

The goal of the Professional Development Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

### [Academic Success Center](#)

The goal of the Academic Success Center is to help students do well academically and complete their studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing, career exploration and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

### [Alumni Association](#)

With an alumni base 120,000 strong, the UNLV Alumni Association offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

### [Commencement Office](#)

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the commencement office is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for graduation on time and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College Student Services Team and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College RPC Team

### [Office of Diversity Initiatives](#)

The vision of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

### [Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#)

The DRC is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

### [Office of International Student and Scholars](#)

International Students and Scholars (ISS) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

### [Jean Nidetch Women's Center](#)

The Jean Nidetch Women's Center is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

### [The Intersection](#)

The Intersection is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

### [UNLV Libraries](#)

UNLV Libraries has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

### [Graduate & Professional Student Association \(GPSA\)](#)

The Graduate & Professional Student Association serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility has a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

### [Office of Student Conduct](#)

The Office of Student Conduct is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the UNLV Student Code of Conduct by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

### [Military and Veteran Services Center](#)

The Military and Veteran Service Center is staffed with veterans and GI Bill-experienced staff to assist more than 1,000 veterans, dependents, active-duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

### [The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#)

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

### [Writing Center](#)

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the Online Writing Lab (OWL) page.

## University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the [Graduate Student Handbook](#), and following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)



- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the online reporting form at [Title IX Reporting Form](#), by email at [titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu), by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Student Handbook](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Progression and Completion Policies \(listed alphabetically\)](#)

In addition, the Graduate College website contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

## Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
April 2020	Ganqing Jiang	Update policies and information
March 9, 2021	Matthew Lachniet	Reorganization to GC Template and editing, faculty vote to approve unanimous
March 28, 2023	Arya Udry	Reorganization to GC Template and editing, faculty vote to approve unanimous

# **Appendix 1: Proposal Cover Sheet Example**

Thesis Proposal

**Insert Title Line 1 Insert**

**Title Line 2**

Student Name

Previous earned degree, Institution, semester, year

Advisory Committee Dr. First name Last name (Chair) Dr. First name Last name (Member) Dr. First name  
Last name (Member)

Dr. First name Last name (Graduate College Representative)

