

**Geography Program
University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Department of Geosciences**

**Graduate Student Manual
Geography M.S.**

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Welcome to UMass Geography!

The academic field of geography spans and integrates the social sciences, physical sciences, and humanities. At UMass geography is part of the Department of Geosciences (the former Department of Geology and Geography), and the School of Earth and Sustainability in the College of Natural Sciences. The Geography Program provides graduate education in human geography, environmental geography, remote sensing, and GIS through an MS degree in Geography and a one year MS degree in Geography (concentration in Geographic Information Science and Technology (GIST)).

Geography faculty working from primarily social science, humanities, and GIST perspectives supervise advanced studies in human geography (Applegate, Bowlick, Gaubatz, Stevens, Vogel) focused on urban geography, political geography, economic geography, political ecology, cultural ecology, environmental history, conservation, sustainability, water resources, rivers and river basin management, energy transitions, migration, and GIST. Geography faculty working from physical geography and GIST perspectives also advise graduate students interested in graduate work in environmental geography emphasizing carbon cycling and in aquatic remote sensing (Yu). Our faculty have strong regional interests in the U.S., Canada, China, central Europe, Japan, and Nepal.

Please note that the Geography Graduate Program has two Graduate Program Directors (GPDs). Eve Vogel is the Geography MS GPD and Forrest Bowlick is the Geography MS (GIST concentration) GPD.

This manual provides graduate students in the Geography M.S. degree program with the information necessary to navigate the degree requirements. The manual includes all departmental forms and the Graduate School's degree eligibility form. Please use this manual, which provides program-specific information, in conjunction with the Graduate School's Graduate Student Handbook (<http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/handbook/>).

Please note that there are three Graduate Program Directors (GPDs) in the Department of Geosciences, one for the Geography MS, one for the Geography MS – GIST concentration, and one for Geosciences (including Geology). As a Geography MS student you will consult with and submit files to the Geography or Geography – GIST Graduate Program Director only.

All formal progress toward a graduate degree, except course work, is recorded on forms originating in the Department or in the Graduate School. You should make sure that any action (such as the selection of a guidance committee) is duly recorded by the Graduate Program Director.

You, the graduate student, are responsible for making sure that you have accumulated sufficient eligible graduate-level degree credits for the Geography MS degree path you have chosen, that they qualify as eligible graduate-level credits, and that you have submitted the proper forms along the way to the Geography Graduate Program Director.

Do not hesitate to ask your advisor or the Geography Graduate Program Director about any aspect of the requirements that lead to the M.S. degree.

Each entering student will be interviewed by the faculty and assigned a temporary advisor. You will work out with the advisor a proposed program of study. The thesis and non-thesis MS degree (but not the Geography MS (concentration GIST) degree) requires that students have a background equivalent to an undergraduate degree in Geography. If your degree is in another field, any deficiencies in your geography background will be identified at the beginning of your program during your entrance interview, and at that time the Geography faculty may require that you address these gaps with appropriate courses, independent studies, or TA work. Subsequently, your progress will be reviewed each semester by the Geography faculty as a whole.

The following Graduate School websites will be useful:

Graduate School webpage on degree requirements:

<https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/current-students/masters-degree-requirements-and-thesis-information>

Graduate Student Handbook:

<http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/current-students/graduate-student-handbook/1-enrollment>

University guidelines for preparing Master's theses:

https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/thesis_and_dissertation_guidelines.pdf

Electronic degree submission requirements:

<https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/current-students/masters-degree-requirements-and-thesis-information/electronic-thesis-submission-pro>

Degree checklist:

https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/checklist_for_masters_degrees.pdf

Choosing an M.S. Degree path in Geography

There are four paths to a Geography MS degree at UMass:

- (1) the MS degree with a thesis,
- (2) the MS degree via the non-thesis option, and
- (3) a one year Geography MS (concentration in GIST) degree
- (4) one year Geography MS (concentration in GIST) degree for UMass students choosing the "4+1" option as undergraduates (requirements are identical to the one year Geography MS (concentration in GIST) degree).

Applicants to the Geography graduate program choose either the Geography MS degree program, which offers thesis and non-thesis options, or the Geography MS (GIST

concentration) degree program. If, after enrolling, you wish to change between these degree options you should discuss this with your advisor first, and then with the Graduate Program Director.

In deciding between the different degree paths, keep the following general advice in mind and consult with your advisor and the Geography Graduate Program Director. The 1 year Geography MS (GIST concentration) is intended for those students who wish to prepare for a professional career in GIST. The Geography MS degree is designed to require two or more years of graduate studies under both the thesis and non-thesis options¹.

The thesis-based degree is recommended for most students and particularly for those who aim to continue to Ph.D. studies. It is appropriate for those with strong focused sub-discipline and research interests. The non-thesis option, which requires completion of a project of lesser scope than a thesis and successful passing of a General (Comprehensive) Exam (see below), is appropriate for those wishing to emphasize breadth of geographic and interdisciplinary knowledge in their graduate studies.

You should make a decision between the thesis and non-thesis option in consultation with your advisor,² form your committee (Form 1), and submit an approved thesis proposal or project proposal to the Geography Graduate Program Director no later than the end of your third semester in the graduate program (Form 2).

Thesis Option:

We encourage most students to work towards a thesis-based degree. The thesis option is particularly appropriate for those with strongly focused research interests and those who plan on further graduate studies beyond the MS degree. Under this option you focus most of your coursework on one or more sub-fields, themes, and methods which are pertinent to your thesis project. Your thesis topic is worked out in consultation with your advisor/MS committee chair and committee member(s). Different advisors have different expectations about thesis projects, and in general it is important to work within a subfield with which your advisor is familiar.

The degree requirements for the thesis option require forming a committee (Form 1), completing an approved thesis proposal (Form 2), delivering an informal lecture/talk on the thesis subject (Form 4), successfully defending your thesis (Form 5), and submitting your approved thesis to the Graduate School (see below).

¹ **Non-thesis 12 month MS:** students with a strong geography background may be able to complete the non-thesis option over the course of 12 months, provided they devote full time to that effort. Completing the degree in 12 months usually precludes the student from taking teaching assistantships or other time-intensive work.

² **Choosing an advisor:** you should formally ask a geography faculty member to be your advisor/MS committee chair during the second semester of your program. This person will not necessarily be the temporary advisor you were assigned during the first week.

During your final semester, just before completing the degree, you also must complete the Degree Eligibility Form and submit it to the Geography Graduate Program Director (see below).

Non-thesis Option:

Some students will wish to earn their MS degree through the non-thesis option. The non-thesis option enables you to expand the breadth and depth of your understanding of geography while also producing a Master's project and passing a general (comprehensive) examination on several geography subfields/themes. Typically a project is smaller-scale than a thesis. It can take several forms: a single major paper; a set of shorter, related papers, or a mapping/GIS project and associated project report. The general examination, usually taken during your final semester of the MS program, involves a written and/or oral examination on a set of subfields/themes.

This degree option requires you to establish two committees, a 2 faculty member project committee and a 3 faculty member examination committee, develop a project proposal and carry out the project, and pass the general examination.

During your final semester, just before completing the degree, you also must complete the Degree Eligibility Form and submit it to the Geography Graduate Program Director (see below).

Master's Degree Requirements: MS-Geography

- A background in geography equivalent to an undergraduate degree (Thesis and non-thesis MS degree students only)
- A minimum of 30 graduate credits
- A minimum of 22 of these credits must be in the field of geography or courses taken in cognate fields (if approved by the Graduate Program Director).
- Specific requirements:
 1. GEOGRAPH 604 Geographic Theory and Analysis:, a one-term seminar which should be taken during the first Fall semester in residence.
 2. Methodology and Techniques: One graduate course in methodology and techniques (not necessarily limited to courses offered in the Geography Program). Eligible courses include those primarily concerned with qualitative research methods, cartography, computer methods, statistics, survey research, geographic information systems, remote sensing, or photogrammetry. Other methodology

courses may be approved to meet this requirement upon request to the Graduate Program Director. This requirement may not be satisfied through an independent study.

3. Graduate Breadth Requirements: (9 units) In addition to fulfilling the Methodology and Techniques requirement, students must take three additional courses at the 600 level or above with three different Geography faculty members. These courses must be 3 or more credits each. A 500-level course may be substituted with permission of the student's committee chair and the graduate program director.

- Thesis credits: Up to 10 thesis credits (GEOGRAPH 699) can be used towards the MS degree if you choose the thesis option (see below). No thesis credits will be accepted under the non-thesis option or the concentration in GIST.
- Independent studies: If you choose the thesis option you may apply up to 6 independent study credits towards your degree, in addition to thesis credits. These may be earned through independent studies (GEOGRAPH 596, 696, 796). Under the non-thesis option, up to 12 credits may be earned in such courses (in the past these credit ceilings also included special topics courses (GEOGRAPH 597, 697, 797), but this is in the process of being changed in the degree requirements posted in the Graduate Bulletin).
- Transfer credits: The Graduate School has a number of rules regarding the use of transfer credits towards the 30 graduate credits required for the MS degree (see the Graduate School's guidance in *The Graduate Student Handbook*: <http://www.umass.edu/gradschool/current-students/graduate-student-handbook/2-educational-records>). The Geography Graduate Program Director, together with the Graduate School will determine the applicability of transfer credits to the specific requirements of the Geography MS degree. Note that credits transferred from another institution cannot be used to satisfy the University's requirement for graded credits. At least half of the credits for the degree must be taken as graded courses.

100-400 level credits: Courses with 100-400 level SPIRE designations are considered to be undergraduate courses and are not eligible for graduate degree credit. It may be possible for you to take 300-400 level courses for graduate degree credit if the instructor will arrange a 500-600 level SPIRE designation for you. This has to be worked out with the instructor. It is a good idea to first discuss this possibility with your advisor.

- 600-800 level credits: The Graduate School Regulations require that at least 6 credits be earned at the 600-800 level for the thesis option and 12 credits at that level for the non-thesis option.
- Grade point average: your grade point average (GPA) must be 3.0 or above.

- Thesis or project proposal (thesis and non-thesis options)
- Informal talk in a department seminar or a approved conference (thesis degree option only)
- Public thesis defense (thesis option only)
- General (Comprehensive) Exam with three faculty in three subject areas (non-thesis option only)
- Completion of thesis or project

General Chronology of Events in the Master's Program:

Arrival Interview

Either just before the beginning of the fall semester or during the first days of the semester you will have a chance to meet with the Geography faculty to introduce yourself and discuss your program. The purpose of this interview, which typically last about half an hour, is to share your interests and background with the faculty, who will then assign you a preliminary personal academic advisor and will also clarify any requirements they may assign you in order to address gaps in academic background. If your undergraduate degree is in a field other than geography, and if you did not have much coursework in geography and cognate fields you may be held to complete several undergraduate courses, undertake one or more independent studies, or TA an introductory level course.. These background studies will not count towards your degree credit requirements.

Meeting(s) with Your Advisor.

If your fall semester program schedule was not decided during the arrival interview you should schedule an appointment during the first week of the semester with your advisor. At this meeting you should develop a program of study and discuss what courses you should enroll during the current semester. You should meet with your advisor at least once a semester to discuss your progress towards your degree (you advisor will need to report this to the Geography faculty at the end of the semester) and to discuss your course schedule for the following semester. Please note that most faculty are on nine- month per year university contracts and often devote their summers and breaks to research and writing. The end of the semester, particularly spring semester, can also be a very busy time. Make sure that you understand your advisor's schedule and resolve any issues well ahead of deadlines requiring signatures or evaluation of your work.

Semester/Annual Review.

The Geography faculty review all graduate students' performance toward the degree at the end of each semester. The spring semester review serves as the annual review.

Thesis option:

Program of Study

Together with your advisor you will prepare a Program of Study during the first or second semester of your graduate studies. The Program of Study is a list of courses you plan to take to fulfill your MS degree requirements, fill gaps in your undergraduate geography background, and develop additional background and skills. In designing your Program of Study together with your advisor you may wish to incorporate independent studies on particular topics, and you can also include practicum credits (Geography 698) which you can use to work on a project or internship. Keep in mind that at least 12 credits of the total 30 must be numbered 600 or above.

Thesis Topic

You will choose your thesis topic in consultation with your advisor(s). Keep in mind that your thesis advisor may or may not be the same as the preliminary advisor you were assigned in your arrival interview. You will need to ask that person if s/he is willing to serve as your advisor (be sure to ask even if that person is your department-assigned preliminary advisor). You will then need to reach agreement on the thesis topic with your advisor and form your committee with the advisor's guidance before you begin to develop a thesis proposal. Your advisor may have ideas about your thesis topic, and you may as a result modify your earlier plans.

Thesis Committee

- Consult with your advisor about who else you may invite to join your committee. Typical committees have two members, but some have three. Your advisor will be the chair. Keep in mind that your thesis committee advisor does not have to be the same as your preliminary advisor.
- The chair of your committee must be a Geography faculty member. The second member is normally also a Geography faculty member or affiliate faculty member. A member of an outside department or program can be a member of your committee if that person is a member of the UMass graduate faculty and arrangements are made by your advisor and the Graduate Program Director for her/him to serve on the committee. Committee members can also be faculty at other universities, but the Graduate Program Director must make arrangements for them to be eligible to serve.

- You should form your committee during your second semester if not earlier, so that you have the committee members' advice for summer research and reading. The committee must be established no later than the end of your third semester in the program.

Once you have met with all prospective committee members and they have agreed to serve on your committee, you officially can constitute the thesis committee. This requires that the committee members sign **Form 1**, following which you submit it to the Graduate Program Director. The composition of the committee must be approved by the Geography Graduate Program Director and the head of the Department, and is then reported to the Graduate School.

Thesis Proposal

The thesis proposal is a key part of the degree program. To develop the proposal you will need not only to choose a theme in consultation with your advisor, but also make decisions about the scale of the project, the methods to be used, whether additional course work is needed before undertaking it, and establish a timeline for the project. This needs to be done before applying for funding for fieldwork (if necessary to your project) or completing an approved research protocol with the Institutional Review Board if your project involves research with people. Your advisor and the Graduate Program Director can give you further advice about the length, format, and content of your proposal.

You will work particularly closely with your advisor on developing your thesis proposal, while also keeping in touch with other committee members for their advice. When the proposal is developed to the point where it is satisfactory to your advisor, she or he will then authorize you to share it with the other member(s) of the committee. Faculty will normally return the draft proposal to you within three weeks. They may request revisions. Once you have revised the proposal to all committee members' satisfaction obtain their signatures on Form 2 and provide this form to the Graduate Program Director along with a copy of the thesis proposal.

The Graduate School requires that the approved proposal must be submitted to the Graduate Program Director at least four months prior to the your thesis defense date. Keep in mind that it may take some time to finish the thesis proposal to the satisfaction of your committee members. Multiple drafts are typically necessary.

The Thesis

Thesis research and writing takes place during the second, third, and sometimes part of the fourth semester of residence. You should continue to consult with your advisor throughout the research and writing of the thesis. The thesis is likely to undergo several drafts. It is a good idea to work from the outset with a format approved by the Graduate School. For guidance on formats see:

https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/thesis_and_dissertation_guidelines.pdf. This will save time later.

Once you complete the first draft of the thesis and submit it to your advisor she or he will take up to three weeks to read and comment on it. You will then make revisions and re-submit the revised thesis to your advisor. It is not unusual for this draft to be returned for still further revisions. Once your advisor approves a draft you can then circulate it to your other committee member(s). The other committee member(s) will take up to three weeks to read and comment on the thesis. When your committee members agree that your draft thesis is “defendable” you can schedule your thesis defense. To do this you need to agree with your committee members about the date and schedule it (be sure to arrange to reserve the room). At this point the thesis will likely not be in its final form, but it should be close. You will make final revisions on the basis of feedback you receive at the defense. Please be aware that writing, reading, and revision will usually take several months, so plan accordingly. Except in unusual circumstances, thesis defenses will not be scheduled after the first week in June or before the last week in August.

Public Lecture

You are required to give a presentation of his or her research at least once during your time as a graduate student. You can do this in a variety of venues in consultation with your advisor, including in a departmental talk series, a class, or at a conference. Students often fulfil the requirement through presentations in a department talk series, the regional geography conference (NESTVAL), or the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG). Other conferences may also be appropriate. Discuss this requirement with your advisor. Once you have given your talk you should complete **Form 3** and submit it to the Graduate Program Director.

Thesis Defense Preparation

The thesis defense is one of the highlights of the degree process. It is your opportunity to share your work with your committee and other faculty, students, and friends and to respond to critiques and benefit from feedback before completing final revisions to your thesis before filing it with the Graduate School. You must pass the defense in order to complete the degree.

- The thesis defense must be scheduled at least two weeks after approval of the thesis by all committee members. At this time be sure the room you prefer is available and reserve it.
- One week or more before the thesis defense, you must give scheduling information to the staff in the departmental office. Office staff will make up notices that will be posted and distributed to the department’s faculty. You must supply the following information: 1) thesis title; 2) your name; 3) date and time of defense, and 4) the

names of the thesis committee chair (advisor) and member(s).

- A paper copy of the thesis must be placed in the Department Office for perusal by the faculty one full week prior to the defense.
- You must complete **Form 5**, with all signatures, before the thesis defense and bring it with you to the defense.

You should prepare the title (signature) page of the thesis to meet the requirements of the Graduate School and bring this to the defense. Often committee members will want to sign the title page at the end of the defense, especially if they are likely to be away during the summer. Some committee members will want to wait to sign until after reading final revisions to the thesis. Be sure to print the signature page on the correct quality of paper. The specifications for the signature page are that the paper be acid-free, 20 lb. weight, white, 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Bring several copies of the signature page and have your committee sign each (it helps to have backups).

The Thesis Defense

Your thesis defense is a public event. You may invite friends and family if you wish. Often, besides your committee members, other Geography faculty will attend. Other graduate students will likely be there, as they are encouraged to attend to learn about your research and also about how a thesis defense is conducted.

Your committee chair will introduce you. You will then give a 15-20 minute presentation of the results of your thesis research. Most students give a Powerpoint presentation, although there is no requirement. You should consult with your advisor about the content of your presentation and practice it beforehand. Be mindful of the time, and be aware that often giving the presentation at the defense will take more time than your practice runs.

Following your presentation the members of your thesis committee will ask you questions, following which other members of the faculty and then other attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions.

The chair of the committee may then ask everyone except the committee to leave, following which your committee members may provide you with further feedback on the penultimate draft of your thesis and any issues that arose during your presentation and the following question and answer period.

After everyone has shared their comments and advice the chair will ask you to step out of the room and the committee members will then decide on whether or not you have successfully passed the defense. They will call you back to share their decision with you.

The defense is pass/fail. In the event of a failure you may be asked to defend again. Normally, however, candidates pass and then proceed to make final changes before submitting the thesis.

After the defense, you must obtain all committee members' signatures and submit **Form 5** to the Geography Graduate Program Director. The Geography Program Director will then prepare and submit the required memorandum to the Graduate School.

Submitting the Thesis

Following the defense you will make all final revisions suggested by your committee and then submit the revised final draft to your advisor. It is a good idea to schedule an appointment with her/him, if possible, so that you can go over the changes. At the defense or soon after it be sure to check with your committee members about whether or not they want to re-read your thesis after you make their suggested final revisions.

Once you have received your advisor's final approval to file your thesis you will submit it electronically to the Graduate School. The thesis format must conform to the Graduate School's specifications. For guidance see:

https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/sites/default/files/thesis_and_dissertation_guidelines.pdf

For further instructions on electronic submission requirements see:

<https://www.umass.edu/gradschool/current-students/masters-degree-requirements-and-thesis-information/electronic-thesis-submission-pro>

The Graduate School will also require one paper copy of the cover (signature) page of your thesis. The specifications for this are given above. You should deliver the original signed copy (make a photocopy first) to the Graduate Service Center.

Providing Thesis Copies

You must provide an unbound paper copy of the final thesis to the departmental office for the department's collection. The department will have it bound. It is a courtesy to also provide your committee members with a copy, which you can have bound at a copy shop.

Degree Eligibility Form

You must complete **Form 7**. Consult with your advisor before completing this form and submitting it to the Graduate Program Director. This form requires that you list chronologically all graduate courses which apply to your degree. The Geography Graduate Program Director will check these against university and program requirements, as will the Graduate School. You should prepare the form carefully, consulting your SPIRE record.

You must submit the form at least three weeks before the Graduate School's degree completion deadline date (which is typically several weeks before the end of the semester). This allows time for the Graduate Program Director to check that you have included all appropriate courses and met all degree requirements before signing the form, obtaining the signature of the head of the Geosciences Department, and submitting the form to the Graduate School.

Department Check-Out

When you have completed all other degree requirements you need to take a few final steps, complete **Form 9**, and submit it to the Geography Graduate Program Director:

- Clean out your desk and/or lab workplace
- Return any departmental equipment
- Return library books
- Hand in your keys to the Department Office Manager

The Non-thesis Option

Program of Study

Together with your advisor you will prepare a Program of Study during the first or second semester of your graduate studies. The Program of Study is a list of courses which you plan to take to fulfill your MS degree requirements, fill gaps in your undergraduate geography background, and develop additional background and skills. In designing your Program of Study together with your advisor you may wish to incorporate independent studies on particular topics, and you can also include practicum credits (GEOGRAPH 698) which you can use to work on a project or internship. Keep in mind that at least 12 credits of the total 30 must be numbered 600 or above.

Once completed your advisor will share it with the Geography faculty for their feedback.

It is important to understand that the Program of Study is not a rigid agreement. During your graduate studies you may find that courses you hoped to take are not available, that new courses are offered, or that you decide you wish to take additional courses in a particular area within geography or a cognate field. You may even find that your interests change during the course of your studies, and as a result you and your advisor can revise your Program of Study (keeping in mind degree requirements).

Project Committee.

During your first year of graduate studies, and no later than the end of your third semester in the program, you should form a committee. For the non-thesis degree option this will be referred to as your project committee.

Consult with your advisor about possible other committee members. Typical committees have two members. Your advisor will be the chair. Keep in mind that your thesis committee advisor does not have to be the same as your preliminary advisor. Your advisor may have recommendations about who the second member should be. Be sure to consult with your advisor before asking anyone else to serve on your committee.

The chair of your committee must be a Geography faculty member. The second member is normally also a Geography faculty member or affiliate faculty member. A member of an outside department or program can be a member of your committee if that person is a member of the UMass graduate faculty and arrangements are made by your advisor and the Graduate Program Director for her/him to serve on the committee. Committee members can also be faculty at other universities, but the Graduate Program Director must make arrangements with the Department and the Graduate School in order for them to be eligible to serve.

Once you have met with all prospective committee members and they have agreed to serve on your committee you can officially constitute the thesis committee. This requires that the committee members sign **Form 1**, following which you submit it to the Graduate Program Director.

Project Proposal and Project

In consultation with your advisor and other committee member(s) you will next develop a proposal for your project. The project can be a major paper, a set of papers, or a GIS, mapping, remote sensing, or other suitable project and accompanying report. Preparing your proposal may take several rounds of sharing drafts with your committee and then incorporating their feedback. Unless your advisor requests otherwise, you should first work with your advisor to develop a proposal that meets her/his approval and then circulate this to the other committee member(s). Once the project proposal is approved you will provide a copy of it and **Form 2** to the Graduate Program Director after obtaining the signatures of your project committee members.

Keep in mind that if your project does not involve producing a major paper or set of papers that you will need to complete an approved report on the project which provides some background on the topic/problem, the scope and methods of the project, and the project findings.

Examination Committee Selection

You should form your examination committee early in your second year of graduate studies. This committee has three members. Normally two of them are the members of your project committee, but this is not required. Consult with your advisor as to whom you might ask to be a member of your committee, keeping in mind that the composition of the committee will influence which three subfields/thematic areas you will be examined on. Each member of the committee will develop and administer a written exam on a subfield or thematic area and/or develop a set of questions on a subfield or thematic area which will be part of your oral exam. You will agree on the subfield or thematic area to be covered with that member of your committee.

Once you have recruited your examination committee members you should inform your advisor and submit **Form 4** to the Geography Graduate Program Director.

The General (Comprehensive) Exam:

The MS non-thesis exam is referred to as the General (Comprehensive) Exam. This is normally taken in the fourth semester of graduate studies. The exam may be written, oral, or a combination of the two. This is up to the committee members. In some cases different examination committee members may prefer different exam formats. Your advisor may discuss your preferences with you, but the committee members will decide the exam format and content. You should meet with each committee member to discuss the subfield or themes which she/he will be examining you on and obtain any offered guidance on preparing for the exam.

This exam is administered by at least three members of the Department Graduate Faculty. Two of these faculty must be Geography faculty. One member can be a non-Geography faculty member, such as a Geography affiliate faculty member from another Geosciences program or another department..

The exam must include questions from at least two subfields or thematic areas of geography. Each member of the committee typically designs and evaluates your performance on one part of the exam. The questions from each examiner can range across the fields of geography, but are typically focused on the field of expertise of the faculty member.

If the exam is a written one, each faculty member will prepare a set of exam questions and will evaluate your responses on that part of the exam. The length of each of the exam segments is up to that committee member to decide (3 hours is common). The chair of the committee is responsible for ensuring that the exam as a whole has adequate breadth and coordinating the examination. The committee as a whole will decide whether or not you have successfully passed the exam.

After the examination, fill out **Form 5**, obtain the required signatures, and submit it to the Graduate Program Director, who will prepare a memorandum for the Graduate School.

Project Submission

Your project must be evaluated and approved by your committee. The time-frame for completing and submitting the project (including drafts and the final version) should be agreed upon by the committee chair and member(s). The final version of the project, approved by the committee, should also be submitted to the Graduate Program Director together with **Form 6** at least one week before the Graduate School's degree completion deadline date (which is typically several weeks before the end of the semester).

Degree Eligibility Form

During the semester in which you intend to complete your degree you must also complete the Graduate School's Degree Eligibility Form (**Form 8**). Consult with your advisor before completing this form and submitting it to the Graduate Program Director. This form requires that you list chronologically all graduate courses which apply to your degree. The Graduate Program Director will check these against university and program requirements, as will the Graduate School. You should prepare the form carefully, consulting your SPIRE record.

You must submit the form at least three weeks before the Graduate School's degree completion deadline date (which is typically several weeks before the end of the semester). This allows time for the Graduate Program Director to check that you have included all appropriate courses and met all degree requirements before signing the form, obtaining the signature of the head of the Geosciences Department, and submitting the form to the Graduate School.

Department Check-Out

When you have completed all other degree requirements you need to take a few final steps, complete **Form 9**, and submit it to the Geography Graduate Program Director:

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- Return any departmental equipment
- Return library books
- Hand in your keys to the Department Office Manager

**Geography Program
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Department of Geosciences**

**Geography MS Degree Thesis and Non-Thesis Options
Flow Sheet and Checklist**

Note: Differences between thesis and non-thesis options are indicated in bold.

	Semester	Form	Form submitted to:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Appointment of Preliminary Advisor	1	-	-	
Program of Study	1 or 2	-	-	
Establish thesis or project committee	1 or 2	1	Graduate Program Director (GPD) and advisor	
Thesis or project proposal approved	2 or 3	2	GPD and advisor	
Complete classes, research, and thesis or project	3 to 4	-	-	
Thesis: Public Lecture	3 or 4	3	GPD and advisor	
Complete thesis or project	4	-	-	
Establishing the examination committee (non-thesis option)		4		
Thesis defense or comprehensive examination (non-thesis option)	4	5	GPD and advisor	
Signed signature form			GDP and Graduate School	
Thesis: file thesis	4	-	-	
Non-thesis: project completion form	4	6	GPD	
Degree eligibility form (thesis)	4	7	GPD	
Degree eligibility form (non-thesis)		8		
Department Check-out	4	9	GPD	

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MS Form #1 Establishing the Thesis or Project Committee

The thesis or project committee must consist of at least two members, with the chair being a member of the Geography faculty.

This form, with the signatures of all committee members, should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director with a copy to your advisor:

Student Name: _____

Thesis or Project Title _____

Chair _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Date submitted to the Geography Graduate Program Director

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MS Form #2 Committee Approval of Thesis Proposal or Project Proposal

The thesis or project committee must approve of the thesis proposal or project proposal prior to the commencement of work. Please note that, depending on the thesis or project topic, approval from the campus Institutional Review Board for research involving people may also be required prior to beginning research.

This form, with the signatures of all committee members, should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director with a copy to your advisor:

Student Name: _____

Thesis or Project Title _____

Chair _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Date submitted to the Geography Graduate Program Director

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MS Form #3 Public Lecture (Thesis option only)

The Geography MS Degree (thesis option) requires that a public presentation be given on the subject of the thesis. This can be fulfilled by a talk in a departmental forum, a lecture in a class, or an oral presentation at a conference. The chair of the thesis committee, by signing this form, certifies that the public talk was given in an appropriate venue.

This form, with the signature of your thesis committee chair, should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director with a copy to your advisor/thesis committee chair:

Student Name: _____

Thesis Title _____

Public Lecture title _____

Venue _____

Date _____

Thesis Committee Chair _____(signature)

_____ (print name)

Date _____

Date submitted to the Geography Graduate Program Director _____

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***MS Form #4 Establishing the Examination Committee
(non-thesis option only)***

The examination committee must consist of three members, all of whom should be Geography faculty, Geography faculty affiliates, or other faculty approved by the Geography Graduate Program Director.

This form, with the signatures of all committee members, should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director with a copy to your advisor:

Student Name: _____

Chair _____ (signature)
_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)
_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)
_____ (print name)

Date submitted to the Geography Graduate Program Director

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MS Form #5 Thesis Defense or General (Comprehensive) Examination

This form, with the signatures of all committee members, certifies that the degree candidate has successfully defended her/his thesis or passed the General Examination (non-thesis option only).

This form, with the signatures of all committee members, should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director with a copy to the committee chair/advisor. The thesis committee consists of two or more members (including the chair), the examination committee of three members (including the chair).

Student Name: _____

Thesis title (thesis option only) _____

Date of defense or completion of General Exam _____

Location (thesis defense only) _____

Committee members:

Chair _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

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MS Form #6 Project Completion (Non-thesis option only)

This form, with the signatures of all project committee members, certifies that the degree candidate has successfully completed her/his project.

This form, with the signatures of all committee members, should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director with a copy to the committee chair/advisor. The project committee consists of two or more members (including the chair)

Student Name: _____

Project title or description _____

Committee members:

Chair _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Member _____ (signature)

_____ (print name)

Date submitted to the Geography Graduate Program Director

SECTION C – To be completed by the degree candidate

To the best of my knowledge, the information given on this form is correct and complete.

Signature of Candidate: _____ Date: _____

After signing this form, give it to your Graduate Program Director for verification.

SECTION D - To be completed by the Graduate Program Director

The information furnished by the above named candidate in the _____ program has been verified from departmental records and the candidate has completed all program requirements.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name typed: _____

After signing this form, give it to the Department Head/Chair for recommendation of degree.

SECTION E - To be completed by the Department Head/Chair

I recommend that the above candidate be awarded the _____ degree at the _____ 20 _____ degree granting period.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name typed: _____

After signing this form, forward it to Graduate Student Service Center, 534 Goodell Building, by posted deadline.

INSTRUCTIONS

Type or print legibly all entries on this form.

Sections A, B and C are to be completed by the candidate; sections D and E are to be completed by the department.

For Section B, it is recommended that you obtain a copy of your transcript from SPIRE for reference:

- LIST ONLY THOSE COURSES THAT YOU WISH TO APPLY TOWARD YOUR MASTER'S DEGREE;
- List courses chronologically as they appear on the transcript;
- You may list current courses; simply leave the grade column blank.

The master's thesis is required to be electronically submitted either through the University of Massachusetts Amherst ScholarWorks website:

[ScholarWorks for M.A., M.S., M.F.A. \(Art and Theater\)](#) or
[ScholarWorks for M.F.A. \(English only\)](#)

You are responsible for submitting this form, your thesis and signature pages (as outlined below) to the Graduate Student Service Center by the posted [deadline](#).

Submission Requirements

- Master's Degree Eligibility Form
- Electronic file(s) delivered to the ScholarWorks website
- One signature page with original signatures on acid-free paper (white, 8 1/2" x 11")

SECTION C – To be completed by the degree candidate

To the best of my knowledge, the information given on this form is correct and complete.

Signature of Candidate: _____ Date: _____

After signing this form, give it to your Graduate Program Director for verification.

SECTION D - To be completed by the Graduate Program Director

*The information furnished by the above named candidate in the _____ program
has been verified from departmental records and the candidate has completed all program requirements.*

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name printed: _____

After signing this form, give it to the Department Head/Chair for recommendation of degree.

SECTION E - To be completed by the Department Head/Chair

*I recommend that the above candidate be awarded the _____ degree
at the _____ 20 _____ degree granting period.*

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name printed: _____

After signing this form, forward it to Graduate Student Service Center, 534 Goodell Building, by posted deadline.

INSTRUCTIONS

Type or print legibly all entries on this form.

Sections A, B and C are to be completed by the candidate; sections D and E are to be completed by the department.

For Section B, it is recommended that you obtain a copy of your transcript from SPIRE for reference:

LIST ONLY THOSE COURSES THAT YOU WISH TO APPLY TOWARD YOUR MASTER'S DEGREE;

List courses chronologically as they appear on the transcript;

You may list current courses - simply leave the grade column blank.

You are responsible for submitting this form, your thesis and signature pages (as outlined below) to the Graduate Student Service Center by the posted [deadline](#).

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MS Form #9: Departmental Checkout

Complete the form below, with all required signatures, and return to the Geography Graduate Program Director.

Student name: _____

- a. All Departmental equipment has been returned (if applicable)

_____ _____
Date: Committee Chair

- b. Office or other workspace has been cleared.

_____ _____
Date: Committee Chair

- c. All keys to the Department have been returned.

_____ _____
Date: Departmental Administrator

Date submitted to the Geography Graduate Program Director