

FIU M.S. in Environmental Studies October 26, 2020



DEPARTMENT OF EARTH & ENVIRONMENT

M.S. Environmental Studies



Graduate Program Handbook

October 26, 2020

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Introduction

This handbook describes policies and procedures for the M.S. in Environmental Studies program offered by the Department of Earth and Environment at FIU. The Department of Earth and Environment offers the Master of Science (M.S.) in Environmental Studies degree to train students for work in the areas of environmental policy, natural resource science and management, and sustainable development. An emphasis of the program is the cultural and political milieu in which environmental issues of a region are embedded. The program is interdisciplinary in nature, and students are encouraged to take advantage of University-wide resources, programs, and courses in environmental issues, such as those in Public Administration, International Relations, Biology, Chemistry, Geosciences, Political Science, Economics, and Sociology/Anthropology.

As requirements and procedures change, the Handbook is updated and available at the Earth and Environment web site pages <http://earthenvironment.fiu.edu/programs/graduate/environmental-studies-grad-programs/>. It complements the general Graduate Policies and Procedures of the FIU University Graduate School (UGS) at <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/>, and additional rules and deadlines of the College of Arts, Sciences & Education at <https://case.fiu.edu/academics/graduate/index.html>. This handbook refers to current forms produced by the UGS and supersedes all previous editions of the handbook. Updated forms and current deadlines may be obtained from the University Graduate School web site at <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/>. Additional information on university regulations and course offerings may be found in the graduate and undergraduate FIU Course Catalogs at <http://catalog.fiu.edu/>.

It is the responsibility of every Environmental Studies master's student to be familiar with the policies and procedures within this manual and to use the forms, procedures, and deadlines of the University Graduate School and College of Arts, Sciences and Education.

Your progress towards the M.S. Environmental Studies degree is important to the Department. If at any time you have problems or questions that cannot be resolved with your Advisor, please do not hesitate to contact the Earth and Environment Graduate Program Director for help.

Note: Throughout this document, the word "term" refers to either the Fall semester, Spring semester or the Summer C term, which together make up the three terms of each academic year.

Master of Science Degree in Environmental Studies

The Master of Science degree is conferred upon successful completion of the requirements (listed below) of either the *Thesis Track* or *Non-Thesis Track* option of the degree program. The Thesis Track M.S. program is a traditional master's degree program that requires satisfactory completion of required course work, mastery of a subdiscipline of geoscience, and completion of an independent research project (the master's thesis). The Non-Thesis Track M.S. program is intended for working professionals whose careers will be advanced by a M.S. degree but who have work duties that do not allow them the research time to complete a master's thesis. Graduate Research Assistantships can provide financial aid in the form of a stipend and tuition waiver, and are generally not awarded to students pursuing the Non-Thesis Track M.S. Both tracks require completion of at least 36 credits of approved graduate-level coursework with a minimum GPA of 3.0. Up to 6 semester hours of graduate-level coursework earned as a non-degree seeking student may be applied towards the M.S. degree with the approval of the Graduate Program Director (GPD). Master's students must complete their degree requirements within six years (University Graduate School rule).

M.S. Thesis Track: Procedures and Regulations

Initial Advisement

At the time of application, each student should have formally chosen a thesis Advisor and a thesis topic. The thesis Advisor is a member of the Department and the FIU Graduate Faculty (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/facultystaff/#facultylist>). Please bear in mind that professors are not obligated to advise you, even if you are admitted and you would like to work with them. If you strongly prefer to work with a particular faculty member, you should make sure that they are willing to advise you before or shortly after you submit your application. In the event that you are admitted but have not identified an Advisor through your own discussions with faculty members, the GPD will assign you an academic advisor based on your scientific interests.

Before classes begin in your first term, you will meet with your Advisor to discuss your coursework. Also, at this time, you should begin discussing potential thesis topics and members of your Thesis Committee. Selection of a thesis topic and work toward a thesis proposal should begin as soon as possible. In addition to meeting with your Advisor, you should seek out introductory meetings with other faculty members of the department whose research fields are of potential interest to you, and who would serve on your Thesis Committee. You may change advisors if your interests change during the first term.

Course Requirements

ISC 6153	Environments of a Changing Planet	3
EVR 6377	Natural Resource Conservation and Policy	3
ISC 5151	Graduate Seminar	1
ISC 5150	Introduction to Research in Earth and Environmental Sciences	2
EVR 6971	Master's Thesis	6
Research Methods or Analysis Course		3
Electives		18
Total Credits		36

The research methods course and electives are selected in consultation with student's thesis advisor. Elective courses are chosen in one of several graduate concentrations and fit the student's thesis research. Additional Master's Thesis, Thesis Research, or Graduate Independent Study up to a **maximum total of 3 credits** may also be applied as elective credit. A maximum of six credit hours may be taken at the 4000 level, and a minimum of six credit hours of electives must be taken in Environmental Studies. Students must demonstrate a competency in Statistics (equivalent to two courses of undergraduate statistics, taken prior to the admission into the program, with a "B" or better grade in both courses, or one course of graduate statistics with a "C" or better grade). Additional course work may be recommended by members of the thesis committee.

Other specific graduation requirements include:

1. A minimum GPA of 3.0 in all coursework required for the M.S. degree.
2. Passing performance on the oral defense of the M.S. thesis proposal.
3. Completion and successful public defense of the M.S. thesis.

A **maximum of 6 semester hours** of graduate-level coursework may be transferred from another accredited university toward your M.S. credit requirements, provided you earned these credits within the 6 years prior to your enrollment at FIU, you earned at least a B for these credits, and the credits are considered acceptable as part of your academic program by your Advisor and the Graduate Program Director. No course counted toward a student's undergraduate degree may be included in that student's M.S. degree program.

The M.S. degree is a two-year program for a full-time student. Since a full-time student normally takes 9 credits of coursework each fall and spring term (the minimum necessary to maintain an assistantship) and 6 credits during the summer term, M.S. students may graduate with more than the required 36 credits. Once the student's master's thesis proposal has been successfully defended and form M-2 submitted to the Graduate School, students should enroll in EVR 6971 -Thesis credits. Once you begin taking Thesis, you should not register for Supervised Research or Independent Study except in unusual circumstances.

As noted in above, you must have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 to graduate from the M.S. program. Your GPA is based only on formal lecture and/or lab courses. If your GPA drops below 3.0 in any term, you will be put on *Academic Warning* by the College of Arts, Sciences & Education and any stipend support will be suspended until a plan for bringing up the GPA is worked out with your Advisor and filed with the UGS. Refer to the Graduate Catalog for information on the conditions for academic warning, probation and dismissal.

Thesis Committee and Research

Thesis research is the centerpiece of your M.S. degree. Students frequently underestimate the time needed to carry out their research and write the thesis. Thesis research should begin immediately in the first term, with at least background readings and discussions of these readings with your Advisor, and possibly preliminary lab and fieldwork. This early work will form the basis of your thesis proposal (see below). Your first summer will normally be the first opportunity to carry out research without concurrent coursework, and should be a time for significant progress. Your research will then continue concurrently with coursework during your second year. Ideally you should have all of your coursework completed by the end of your third semester, so that you enroll only in EVR 6971 Thesis credits in subsequent terms and complete your thesis without interruption.

Thesis research is conducted under the guidance of your Advisor with the help of your Thesis Committee. At the end of your first term or the first part of your second term at the latest, you should (with your Advisor's assistance and approval) appoint the members of your Thesis Committee by filing **Form M-1 Appointment of Thesis Committee**. The committee must consist of a minimum of 3 members (including your Advisor), at least two of whom must have terminal degrees in a field of Environmental Studies. All committee members must be members of the FIU Graduate Faculty (<http://gradschool.fiu.edu/facultystaff/#facultylist>). Additional members may be appointed; if they are not FIU Graduate Faculty, their CV must accompany Form M-1. Form M-1 should be submitted no later than the UGS deadline and should typically be submitted one term before Form M-2 (the Thesis Proposal) and at least 2 terms before the anticipated graduation date. Any subsequent changes to the makeup of the committee must be made with **Form M-1r Appointment of Revised Thesis Committee**.

The forms are obtained from the UGS website <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/students/-studentforms>. After obtaining all Departmental signatures, including the Graduate Program Director's, each form and any required attachments are given to the Graduate Secretary, who makes a copy for your file and submits them to the College of Arts, Sciences & Education (CASE) Dean's Office. The Dean's Office then signs and forwards the form to the University Graduate School. Each year the UGS and CASE publish specific deadlines for submission of forms and holding a thesis/dissertation defense. The CASE deadline is normally 1 week before the UGS deadline. The UGS dates are found at <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/calendar-deadlines/>.

Changing Your Thesis Advisor or Committee Members

If, subsequent to the submission of your thesis proposal, a committee member is unable to continue to serve, you must file **Form M-1r Appointment of Revised Thesis Committee**. This form will require the signatures of the leaving members and the new replacement members. The signatures of the faculty leaving the committee affirm that the reason for their departure is not related to any concerns regarding the quality of the thesis. The signatures of the faculty added to the committee affirm that they met with the student, reviewed and approved the proposal, and agreed to serve on the committee.

If you want to change your thesis Advisor after filing Form M-1, you must have approval from the Graduate Committee. Requests for a change of Advisor must be submitted in writing to the GPD, who organizes Graduate Committee meetings. You and your advisor should be in agreement before the request is submitted so that the approval is routine. If you and your Advisor disagree about the change, you should discuss it first with the GPD, and if unresolved at that point, discuss it with the Department Chairperson.

If diligent efforts fail to resolve a conflict about a change of Advisor, both sides will present a brief written summary of their case to the Graduate Program Director. Both sides will then present their case in a hearing before the Graduate Committee, who together will consider the situation and make a recommendation. A Committee member who is involved in the dispute will only present their case and not be allowed to vote. Tie votes will be decided by the Department Chairperson. Such a hearing is the very last resort in resolving a problem between a student and their Advisor, and will not be held unless all other avenues have been unsuccessful.

Thesis Proposal and Defense

During the second term but no later than the end of the third term (within the first calendar year) you should prepare and defend a proposal of your thesis research. For part-time students this defense should be no earlier than the completion of 9 credits of coursework and no later than the completion of 26 credits.

Your proposal should be developed in close consultation with your Advisor. The text of the proposal must be no longer than 10 double-spaced pages, excluding abstract and figures. The proposal should include an Abstract, Introduction, Proposed Research, Preliminary Data, References, figures and tables, based on your background research. Once your Advisor agrees the proposal is ready to defend, you will distribute a copy to each Thesis Committee member, and at that time schedule your presentation/defense. Copies of the proposal should be given to each committee member no later than **2 weeks** before the date of the proposal defense. Students must register for EVR 6971 Thesis credits beginning the semester **AFTER** they successfully defend their proposal. Once enrollment in Thesis credits is initiated, continuous registration for at least 1 credit hour

of Thesis each term (including the Summer C term) is required until the thesis is completed.

The thesis proposal is judged primarily on the following three criteria:

1. It addresses a scientific problem or issue of some significance.
2. The methodology is appropriate to the problem, and it is logically presented.
3. It is based on a sound understanding of coursework and the primary research literature.

The thesis proposal is presented at a short (about 30 minutes) public seminar, followed by questions from the audience. The student is responsible for arranging the time and place of the seminar, which can be scheduled with the Graduate Seminar instructor as part of the weekly Graduate Seminar, or as an independent seminar. At least one week in advance of the seminar date, an announcement of the seminar must be posted in the Department and a copy emailed to the GPD for email distribution. During the seminar, Thesis Committee members refrain from asking questions. Immediately after the seminar in a closed-door session, your Thesis Committee questions you in detail about your research plan and readiness to undertake the project. The committee will then excuse you from the room while they evaluate the research proposal and your defense of it. Possible outcomes of the proposal defense are: 1) pass, with little or no revision; 2) pass, with revision of the written proposal to the satisfaction of the committee; or 3) revision of the written proposal and resubmission for a second defense. The thesis proposal can be submitted for defense a total of two times; failure to pass results in termination of the program of study and of financial aid.

After the successful proposal defense, you file **Form M-2 Master's Thesis Proposal** with the College of Arts, Sciences & Education (CASE) and the University Graduate School (UGS). Form M-2 includes two attachments: 1) a **five-page** summary of the proposal plus References, and 2) a certificate of completion of training in the Responsible Conduct of Research. Consult the UGS guidelines for the five-page thesis proposal at <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/thesis-dissertation>. Register for the Responsible Conduct of Research training at <http://research.fiu.edu/rcr/>, and save a copy of the certificate. Submit the M-2 form and attachments to the Graduate Program Director for signature, and then to the department's Graduate Secretary, who will make a copy for your file. The Graduate Secretary submits it to the CASE Dean, who signs and forwards it to the UGS. Form M-2 should be submitted no later than the CASE deadline (<https://case.fiu.edu/academics/graduate/index.html>), at least one week before the UGS deadline, and at least one term before the anticipated graduation date.

For full-time students, it is important to defend the thesis proposal within the first year. Part-time students should defend the proposal before completing 26 credits. Failure to do so may result in loss of financial support and/or dismissal from the program.

Preparing the Thesis and Scheduling the Defense

Formal FIU guidelines for preparation of your thesis are found in the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Guide at <http://libguides.fiu.edu/etd>, and in the *ETD Preparation Manual* accessed at that web page. These guidelines must be followed exactly. Your thesis is submitted first to your thesis Advisor (wholly or in sections, depending on your Advisor's instructions to you). Your Advisor will require at least one cycle of revisions and improvements until a **high-quality and complete draft** is produced. Once your Advisor thinks the thesis is ready to present and defend, you will distribute copies to the other members of your Thesis Committee, and at that time schedule your thesis defense. You must provide copies of your thesis to your committee at least **5 weeks** before your defense date.

To schedule your defense, submit the signed **Form M-3 Preliminary Approval of Thesis and Request for Oral Defense** with a hard copy of the thesis and a copy of the Thesis Defense Announcement to the Graduate Secretary, who logs it in and submits it to the CASE and UGS. At the time Form M-3 is filed, the thesis must be complete and suitable for defense. **Form M-3 must be submitted at least 4 weeks before the date of the defense** or by the term's deadline, whichever is earlier. Post the announcement publicly in the Department (3rd floor of AHC5 and 3rd floor of PC) at least one week before the defense, and email a copy to the Graduate Program Director for e-announcements.

Closer to the date of your defense, it is recommended that you visit with each Thesis Committee member to discuss any comments or suggestions.

Many students underestimate the amount of time required to prepare the M.S. thesis. A general suggestion is to begin writing the thesis at least 6 months before the planned graduation date. Committee members and the Graduate Program Director cannot sign Form M-3 for an incomplete thesis, regardless of any impending deadline. Failure to consider this may result in the delay of your defense and graduation by one term.

Thesis Defense

At your thesis defense, you will present your results in a public talk of about 45 minutes, and answer questions from the audience, with Committee members refraining from asking questions at this time. After this open presentation and question/ answer period, your Thesis Committee will question you privately in more detail. You will then leave the room while they evaluate your written thesis and oral defense.

Possible outcomes are passing and failing (in which case the thesis requires major revision and a second defense must be scheduled.) Each Thesis Committee member signs the Final Electronic Thesis or Dissertation Approval (ETD) form when they evaluate the oral presentation as successful and they have reviewed and approved the thesis. This may be at the time of the defense if the committee member calls for only minor revisions, or it may be after the required revisions have been made. The Graduate Program Director signs the form after all committee members sign.

Recommendations to Facilitate Progress on Your Thesis

1. At your proposal defense, be sure there is clear agreement among your Committee Members about the requirements and expectations for your thesis.
2. In close consultation with your Advisor, conduct careful, quality research and writing.
3. Between your proposal defense and your thesis defense, keep your committee informed of your progress from time to time, especially if there are changes in the scope or focus of your work after the proposal defense. If you may be a bit unclear about what needs to be done to complete your thesis, or if you think that advice from your committee members is contradictory, you can schedule a committee meeting at any time when all can attend to review the issues.
4. Prepare well for your thesis defense. Construct an organized talk with clear visual aids. Practice the talk with your Advisor several times before your defense, trying to anticipate likely questions for which you can formulate answers in advance.

Submission of Thesis

After the thesis is revised and approved by all committee members, final copies must be prepared according to the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Guide at <http://libguides.fiu.edu/etd> and *Regulations for Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Preparation Manual* accessed on that web page. The signature page of the thesis lists your committee members; their signatures are optional but you might like to collect them for your own copy. One hard copy of the thesis, preferably printed out double-sided (for the CASE Dean's office), is submitted with the **Final Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) Approval form** and attachments including copyright release (if necessary) to the Graduate Secretary, who submits it to the college. After approval, the college may submit it to UGS or may contact you to take it to UGS. UGS will then send you an email with instructions for uploading the thesis electronically; the email is usually sent on the date of the deadline for the Final ETD Approval form. The UGS will carefully review the thesis, and format adjustments may still be required. Subsequently, the fully approved thesis is sent to the University Library. At least two hard copies are required for the Department of Earth and Environment: one for the departmental collection, and one for your Advisor. It is also common practice to offer a copy to each member of your Thesis Committee.

Graduation

The Application for Graduation must be filed electronically with the Registrar's Office near the beginning of the term in which you plan to graduate – see the current Academic Calendar for the deadline. Students who submit the Application for Graduation after the deadline will graduate the following term. Students who do not complete the degree requirements in the term for which they apply for graduation must re-apply and complete the requirements needed for graduation.

Milestones Chart for the M.S. Degree

A recommended timing of fulfilling the requirements for the M.S. thesis-track program is summarized below. An individual student's program may differ slightly. Be sure to retain copies of the M1-3 and ETD Approval forms for your records.

YEAR 1			YEAR 2		
Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer
Nominate committee (Form M-1)	Submit proposal (Form M-2)	Thesis research	Thesis research & coursework	Prepare thesis	Defend thesis (Form M-3)
ISC 5150 Introduction to Research in Earth and Environmental Sciences (2)	EVR 6377 Natural Resource Conservation Policy (3)	EVR 6971 Thesis credits or EVR 6970 Supervised Research (6)	Elective courses (6)	Submit draft to Advisor & Committee	Submit thesis and Final ETD Approval Form
Elective Courses (3-6), and/or Methods course (3)	ISC 6153 Environments of a Changing Planet (3)		EVR 6971 Thesis credits	EVR 6971 Thesis credits	EVR 6971 Thesis credits
Graduate Seminar ISC 5151	Methods course, Elective course or EVR 6970 Supervised Research (3)				

M.S. Non-thesis Degree Option

The non-thesis option provides working professionals the opportunity to pursue an advanced education that may benefit their career but does not require them to leave their jobs to attend full time or coordinate the extensive lab or field time typically required for the M.S. thesis. The non-thesis option also requires a minimum of 30 credits of coursework.

Admissions and Application Criteria

Students applying for the non-thesis M.S. track must meet the same qualifications as traditional M.S. applicants. Non-thesis M.S. students are not ordinarily awarded teaching or research assistantships.

Students who wish to switch to the non-thesis M.S. track from either the M.S. thesis track or the Ph.D. program must submit a written request for the change to the Graduate Program Director, who convenes a Graduate Committee meeting. The Graduate Committee either accepts or rejects the request in consultation with the student's major Advisor in the student's current program.

Advisor

New students in the non-thesis track select a major Advisor based on their scientific interests, subject to the agreement of that Advisor. If the student does not select a major Advisor, the Graduate Program Director will appoint one. The student may change Advisors if their interests change. The Advisor is responsible for seeing that the student's coursework fulfills the requirements for the degree. The student must have the course schedule approved by their Advisor each term. Whether the student chooses to do research or an internship, the Advisor must approve the quality of the completed project.

Course Requirements for the Non-thesis M.S.:

ISC 6153	Environments of a Changing Planet	3
EVR 6377	Natural Resource Conservation and Policy	3
EVR 5907	Research and Independent Study	3
ISC 5151	Graduate Seminar	1
ISC 6152	Advanced Graduate Seminar	1
	Quantitative Methods Course	3
	Electives	22
	Total Credits	36

The non-thesis M.S. is conferred when performance in all coursework is satisfactory, i.e., a grade of B or higher. Courses outside the department may be taken at the discretion of the Advisor. A *maximum of 6 hours of graduate-level coursework*, undertaken within the past 6 years, may be transferred from FIU or another accredited university toward the non-thesis master's credit requirements; the student must have earned at least a B on

these credits, and they must be considered acceptable by the Advisor and Graduate Program Director.

The student will choose one of the areas of concentration offered by the Department of Earth and Environment as their field of specialization. Courses in the designated specialization will constitute at least half of the required coursework (18 credits); courses in the field of specialization must have the approval of the Advisor. The remaining 9 hours of formal graduate coursework may be from within or outside the area of specialization, or from other related disciplines (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, etc.) with the Advisor's approval.

The remaining 3 credits of Supervised Research or Professional Internship may be satisfied in either of two ways:

1. The student may choose to take 3 credits of Supervised Research and write a research paper on a topic in their field of specialization to satisfy the course requirement. The topic of the research paper must be approved by the Advisor, and it must be graded by the Advisor and receive a grade of "B" or better to be accepted. In that case, the course will be assigned a "P" grade.
2. The student may choose to complete an internship in a company where they are employed in Geoscience-related work, and write a report on the work done in their internship. The internship must be approved by the student's Advisor, and the report must be graded by the Advisor and receive a grade of "B" or better to be accepted. In that case, the course will be assigned a "P" grade.

Students must make an oral presentation of their research paper or internship report to the Department. The announcement should be posted publicly in the Department at least one week before the presentation, and a copy should be emailed to the Graduate Program Director for electronic circulation to the department.

A minimum GPA of 3.0 in all coursework is required for the 36 credits toward the M.S. Environmental Studies degree. All courses for the non-thesis M.S. degree, except for the 3 credits of Supervised Research or Professional Internship, must be taken for a letter grade.

Required Forms

Non-thesis M.S. students are not required to file forms M1 – M3 or the final ETD Approval form. The student must complete the electronic Application for Graduation with the Registrar's Office before the deadline of the term in which they plan to graduate.

Additional Issues for M.S. Students

If questions about procedures or requirements arise but are not covered in this handbook, first seek clarification from your thesis Advisor, and then from the Graduate Program Director. In rare instances and in certain situations, the GPD may ask the Dean of Graduate Studies to waive degree requirements on behalf of a student.

Policies for International Student Visas

Issues for F-1 and J-1 students, which include employment, enrollment, and Falling Out of Status, are typically handled by the International Student Scholar Services (ISSS) office. Some of the policies are as follows:

1. *F-1 students* must always be enrolled full-time. The ISSS office has a 30-day window after the beginning of a term to report to the federal Immigration Department if a student has not enrolled full-time and/or reported to campus.
2. *Reduced Course Load* – An RCL form must be signed by the academic advisor and the basic reasons are: a) Academic Difficulty (1st term only), b) Medical Condition, c) Final Semester/Completion of Program, and d) Advancement to Thesis/Dissertation Segment.
3. *Falling Out of Status* – FIU is required to report any student who falls out of F-1 status to DHS – the Department of Homeland Security. The student must file for a Reinstatement in a timely manner if they have fallen out of status. Reasons for being out of status are: a) Less than full time enrollment (without authorization), b) Dropped class, c) Too many on-line classes so they can only enroll for a maximum of 3 online credits each term, d) Academic dismissal, e) Unauthorized employment (even a job that does not pay is considered unauthorized employment), and f) Not maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA.
4. *Employment* – For any type of employment, a student must continually maintain lawful F-1 status. Students are allowed a maximum of 20 hrs. per week. If a student falls out of status, he/she must stop work immediately. The student must obtain proper authorization before engaging in any off-campus employment; whether the employment is paid or unpaid, this offense can lead to deportation.

Financial Aid

Full-time graduate students in the Department of Earth and Environment may be self-supporting or may be supported partially or fully with some type of financial aid. Financial aid awards often include a stipend to cover living expenses and a waiver of tuition, but not a waiver of tuition-related fees or fees for health insurance, parking, etc. Types of financial aid include: Research Assistantships (RA), FIU fellowships or scholarships, state fellowships, external agency fellowships, and travel grants.

Research Assistantships

Research Assistantships are provided by the Department to support graduate studies of qualified students. The number of these assistantships is very limited and they are awarded on a competitive basis through research grants or contracts awarded to faculty, so you are required to conduct research on the funded project. In many cases, this work will form part of your M.S. thesis.

Research Assistantships (RA's) are normally awarded for the full period of study toward a degree (two years for a master's student), but are renewed each term subject to satisfactory performance in the degree program and continued availability of funding. Typically, the stipend awarded for an RA is \$15,000 per year, and an RA includes a tuition waiver for courses taken at the graduate level. Students in the non-thesis masters program are typically not eligible for assistantships.

In order to maintain a Research Assistantship, you must:

- 1) be registered full time: 9 credits of graduate-level courses each Fall and Spring term, and 6 credits in the Summer C term.
- 2) maintain a B (3.00) average: If you post a GPA below 3.0 in any term (regardless of your cumulative GPA), you will be placed on warning that your assistantship is in jeopardy. If you post a GPA below 3.0 (Academic Probation) in any term thereafter, you will lose your assistantship.
- 3) make satisfactory progress toward the completion of a thesis or dissertation.

Graduate studies are a full-time endeavor and students receiving assistantships are expected to apply all time not spent on their RA duties towards their academic and research program. All Research Assistants must agree not to accept employment outside the University unless written permission is obtained from the Department. They are expected to work on campus for the duration of their contracts (Fall, Spring, and Summer terms) unless they are performing off-campus research activities such as fieldwork, travel to conferences, etc. If you plan to be gone during any term for more than 1 week at a time while under contract, first get the approval of your Advisor.

Travel Grants

Students are encouraged to seek out and apply for grants to support fieldwork and travel to professional meetings. Below are listed the main sources of funding for travel.

- The College of Arts, Sciences & Education supports graduate student travel on a matching basis with the Department if the student is presenting their own research at a professional meeting, traveling for research-related reasons, or interviewing for a job. In those cases, the college awards up to \$200 once per year, which is matched by the Department. See the CASE web site <https://case.fiu.edu/academics/graduate/index.html> for details.
- The Graduate and Professional Student Committee (GPSC) of the FIU Student Government Association has a system of awarding funding for travel to conferences (up to \$500), and for research (up to \$500) or professional development (up to \$150). Students can apply once during the June 1 – May 31 funding year. Travel funds may not be used for lodging or meals. The deadline for application is 6 weeks before the date of travel, so application must be made well in advance of trips. See <http://gpsc.fiu.edu/> for all the details.
- Support for student travel to professional meetings also may be obtained by applying to professional organizations such as GSA, AGU, or AAPG.

Other Information

Annual Progress Reports to the Department and the College

All full-time and part-time students in the M.S. Environmental Studies program are required to submit an Annual Progress and Activity Report early each Spring term to the Graduate Program Secretary. The report is used in combination with a short meeting with several Graduate Committee members to evaluate your progress towards the degree, and to listen to and make recommendations for any concerns you may have. The report lists milestones achieved to date in the program and a description of coursework, research, and professional activities during the previous year (May 1 – April 30).

The report template is emailed by the Graduate Program Director (GPD) to students during the Spring term to complete. Students should review the report with their Advisor, who signs it and adds (optional) comments. The annual report is reviewed by the Graduate Committee members prior to the short (10-minute) meeting, so it forms the basis for an annual evaluation that is placed in your file.

The College of Arts, Sciences & Education (CASE) may also require annual evaluations of M.S. students by their Advisors in April. The student completes most of the CAS Master's Annual Review Form, and completes the rest with the Advisor who signs it. The student submits it to the Graduate Secretary, who collects them for submission to the CASE.

All students in the Program must maintain satisfactory progress towards the degree. Failure to meet established timetables for forming a Thesis Committee, formulating an acceptable Thesis proposal, and completing Thesis research all constitute unsatisfactory progress towards the degree. Students who fail to maintain satisfactory progress towards the degree may be subject to loss of financial aid and dismissal from the program.

Changing Programs

A fully admitted student may apply to change graduate degree programs (M.S. to Ph.D., Ph.D. to M.S., or between departments). A change of a graduate degree program is handled as a new application (except there is no fee) and is evaluated as such by the department. Applicants must meet all minimum requirements of admittance to the new degree program. All changes in program must be supported by the Student's Advisor, and approved by the Graduate Program Director and Graduate Committee, who also consider substitution of previously taken courses for required courses. A [Change of Graduate Degree Program](#) form must be filed with the University Graduate School.

Enrollment and Time Limit Requirements

Graduate students must maintain active status, which entitles them to use University resources. M.S. programs require continuous enrollment of at least 1 credit hour per term (including the summer term) to maintain active status in the program. International students and students supported with Research Assistantships are required to be enrolled full-time (9 credits in Fall and Spring, 6 credits in Summer C).

A lapse in enrollment for three consecutive terms requires the student to apply for readmission. A student who finds it necessary to be excused from registration in a graduate degree program for a semester or more must formally petition for a *Leave of Absence*, and medical insurance obtained through the university must also be considered. LORs must be approved by the GPD, CASE and UGS.

All requirements for the M.S. Environmental Studies degree, including successful completion of a thesis, must be completed within 6 years of first enrollment in the master's program. Students who do not complete their thesis within this time period may apply for an extension with an [Electronic Petition for Exception to Graduate Requirements](#), which is initiated electronically by the Graduate Program Director.

Contact Information

Contact Information

Department of Earth and Environment

Main office: AHC5 360 (front desk), 305-348-1930, <http://earthenvironment.fiu.edu/>

Chairperson: Dr. Leonard Scinto, AHC5 373, 305-348-1965; and scintol@fiu.edu.

Graduate Program Director: Dr. Assefa Melesse, AHC5 390, 305-348-6518, melessea@fiu.edu.

Graduate Secretary (your go-to person for grad student issues, e.g., GA contracts and travel): Ms. Gail Excell, AHC5 393, 305-348-1630, excellg@fiu.edu.

Office Manager: Ms. Caridad Machado, AHC5 378, 305-348-1908, machadoc@fiu.edu

Department Secretary: Ms. Kristen Davis, AHC5 front desk, 305-348-1930, krdavis@fiu.edu

Office Assistant: Mr. Javier Feito, 305-348-1930, jafeito@fiu.edu

Scientific Research Manager (manages supplies and computers for research labs, oversees PC 324 computer room): Mr. Andrew Joesoef, PC 314, 305-348-9997, ajoesoef@fiu.edu

Teaching Lab Coordinator for TAs teaching in the Natural Resource Science and Management track of the ESS PhD program): Ms. Seema Sah, OE234, 305/348-6136, <http://sahs@fiu.edu>

Teaching Lab Coordinator for TAs teaching in the Geosciences track of the ESS PhD program): Dr. K. Panneerselvam, PC342A, 305-348-1948, kpanneer@fiu.edu

College of Arts, Sciences & Education ECS 450, 305-348-2038, <https://case.fiu.edu/academics/graduate/index.html> Dean: Dr. Michael Heithaus
Associate Dean of Graduate Studies: Dr. Maureen Donnelly

University Graduate School, PC 230, 305-348-2455, <http://gradschool.fiu.edu>
Dean: Dr. Andres Gil

Other Useful Links

UGS deadlines for forms: <http://gradschool.fiu.edu/calendar-deadlines/>

College of Arts, Sciences & Education deadlines for forms (normally 1 week before UGS deadlines): <https://case.fiu.edu/academics/graduate/index.html>

International student services: <https://globalaffairs.fiu.edu/iss/>