

MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE

Consult the latest Bulletin of the Graduate Programs of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (<http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/>) for general regulations. The material presented here concerns procedures and requirements specific to the Department of Geology and Planetary Science.

ADMISSION

Prospective graduate students must fulfill the requirements for admission to graduate study in the Graduate Programs of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, described in the sections on Admission and Registration regulations in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Bulletin. Successful applicants to the Department of Geology and Planetary Science may be admitted with full graduate status or with provisional status, depending on the undergraduate major area of study and grade point average (GPA). Full graduate status may be offered to students who have completed an appropriate undergraduate program in one of the natural or physical sciences related to Geology and Planetary Science and who have received satisfactory grades (generally B or higher) in science and mathematics courses.

An applicant with a GPA below 3.0 may be admitted with provisional status. Students admitted with provisional status are not eligible for a teaching assistantship. Transfer from provisional to full status may occur upon formal recommendation of the Department following satisfactory completion four courses (twelve credits) for which graduate credit is earned with at least a 3.0 (B) average. To initiate change of status, the student's Initial or Major Advisor must complete a formal request to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies that the student be transferred to full graduate status.

READMISSION

A student who has not registered for at least one credit during a twelve (12) month period (without obtaining a formal leave of absence) will be transferred automatically to inactive status and must file an application for readmission to graduate study (and pay the application fee) before being permitted to register again. While on inactive status, a student is not eligible to use University facilities and should not expect to receive counseling by the faculty or active supervision by her/his advisor.

STUDENT ADVISEMENT

Initial Advisor. Upon admission to the Department, each graduate student will be assigned a faculty member who will act as her/his Initial Advisor. The Initial Advisor will be chosen by the Department from those in fields most closely allied to the expressed interests of the student at the time of admission. The duties of the Initial Advisor are to familiarize the student with the University and the Department, to recommend a course of study designed to prepare the student for her/his graduate program, and to assist the student in the selection of a field of research and in the choice of a Major Advisor. The student may change advisor at any time. If the student

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wishes to change advisor, he/she should gain agreement from the new advisor, inform the former advisor, and submit a written notification to the Graduate Administrator.

Major Advisor. After the student has identified a thesis topic or area of specialization, she/he should select a faculty member to become her/his Major Advisor. The Initial Advisor may be selected as the Major Advisor. It is recommended that this decision be made no later than the middle of the student's second term of study. The student should meet with the faculty member to discuss possible research projects, and request that the faculty member become her/his Major Advisor. Following the student's choice of an area of specialization and Major Advisor, the Major Advisor should indicate to the Graduate Administrator in writing acceptance of this role.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE

Course Requirements. The minimum course requirement for the M.S. degree is thirty (30) credits beyond the baccalaureate. A minimum of eighteen (18) credits must be from formal courses. These include lecture, laboratory, seminar, and topics courses, but not independent study or thesis research credits. At least twelve (12) of these credits must be numbered 2000 or higher and must be taken within the Department of Geology and Planetary Science. No course numbered below 1000 may be applied toward graduation requirements. A minimum grade point average of 3.0 must be maintained for all formal courses taken. Students with full graduate status will be placed on probation if the cumulative grade point average falls below the 3.0 level. Up to six (6) formal course credits may be applied toward graduation requirements for graduate course work completed in a graduate program at another accredited institution. Courses taken at the University of Pittsburgh while not enrolled in a graduate program do not count toward M.S. graduation requirements.

Colloquium. All students must register for and attend the weekly departmental colloquium (GEOL 2015) during each term of residence. Colloquium attendance registers will be maintained.

Statute of Limitations. Student requirements for the Master of Science degree must be completed within a period of four (4) calendar years from the student's initial registration for graduate study. Extension of the statute of limitations will be granted only for exceptional circumstances. The request must be approved by the student's Thesis Committee and the Graduate Committee and submitted to the Dean for final action.

Language Requirement. There is no language requirement for the M.S. degree within the Department of Geology and Planetary Science.

Initial Evaluation. An initial evaluation is required of all advanced degree candidates. The initial evaluation is designed to explore the student's basic knowledge of the geological sciences (and related fields) and to identify areas in which improvement is needed. The initial evaluation will therefore guide coursework. Within the Department of Geology and Planetary Science, the initial evaluation takes the form of a written test administered simultaneously to all new graduate students usually at the beginning of the first term of residence (typically late September).

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The examination will comprise questions contributed by Geology and Planetary Science faculty members and will cover topics taught within the Department. The Initial (or Major) Advisor will meet with the student within one (1) week after the examination and, if deficiencies are noted, will determine what remedial coursework is required. The advisor will prepare a written assessment summarizing the results of the examination and the meeting with the student. One copy of this report will be given to the student and another to the Graduate Administrator. Coursework suggested by the Initial (or Major) advisor must be completed with grades of A or B prior to the thesis defense.

Yearly Progress Report. Each student must submit a progress report form to the Graduate Administrator each Spring term (typically mid-to-late March). The form will contain a brief summary of academic and research progress, signed by the Major Advisor, and may include supplementary materials such as teaching evaluations or abstracts from professional meetings.

Thesis Committee. The student's Thesis Committee will consist of at least three persons responsible for scientific guidance and research oversight. The chair of the Thesis Committee is the Major Advisor of the student, and at least two other members must be graduate faculty from the Department of Geology and Planetary Science. Membership of the Thesis Committee is approved by the Department Chair and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies by submitting the appropriate form to the Graduate Administrator. The membership of the committee may be changed if appropriate or necessary, subject to the approval of the Department Chair and the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

A meeting with the Thesis Committee should be scheduled by the student for the end of the Spring term of the student's first year, preferably during late March or early April, and at least once a year thereafter. At the meeting, the student will provide a short overview of the research goals and objectives of her/his research. The presentation will be followed by a discussion of research directions and progress.

Graduate Committee Review. The Graduate Committee shall review the academic progress (completion of coursework, Thesis Committee formation, etc.) of each graduate student once a year, during the Spring term (typically late March or early April). Each review will consist of a brief meeting between the student and the Graduate Committee during which the annual progress report form will be discussed and the student may raise any concerns. The student's Major Advisor will not be present during the meeting. After review by the Department faculty and Chair, the recommendations of the Graduate Committee will be communicated in writing to the student. A copy of the written recommendation will be provided to the student and also to the Graduate Administrator. If the academic progress of a student is deemed unsatisfactory, probationary continuation or termination of enrollment may be implemented. A student may appeal the decision in writing to the Department Chair.

Thesis. Each M.S. candidate must prepare a thesis demonstrating successful completion of the research project as well as competency in the methods and techniques of scientific investigation in the field of her/his area of specialization. The thesis must be clearly, logically, and carefully

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written. The thesis should contain an introductory statement, including appropriate justification of the research, a description of methods and observations of the investigation, evaluation of the significance and meaning of the results, and a final summary. The Major Advisor must approve the content, format, and grammar prior to submission of the thesis to the Thesis Committee. The Major Advisor should also ensure that the thesis is in acceptable form before requesting review by the Thesis Committee members. The thesis must be submitted to each member of the Thesis Committee at least two (2) weeks prior to the thesis defense. The members of the Thesis Committee should review and edit the thesis prior to the final thesis defense. The thesis should serve as a source of publishable material, and all M.S. students must present research results at a meeting of a national or international scientific organization.

Application for Graduation. Each candidate for graduation must file an official Application for Graduation with the Office of Graduate Studies early in the term in which graduation is expected. Students are required to register for at least one credit in the term of graduation.

Thesis Defense. Each M.S. student must formally defend her/his submitted thesis. The student must provide notification of the defense at least two (2) weeks prior to the scheduled date to the Graduate Administrator, the Major Advisor, and each Thesis Committee member. The Graduate Administrator will then advertise the defense and notify the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies. The defense is a public meeting, and the notice should therefore list the title of the thesis and the time and location of the event.

The Thesis Committee conducts the defense of the thesis. The student will begin the defense with a summary of her/his research topic and results that shall not last more than thirty (30) minutes. Following the oral summary and a general question-and-answer period, visitors will be asked to leave and the student will then defend her/his research by answering questions posed by the Thesis Committee. Questions need not be confined to materials within and related to the thesis. The thesis will be formally accepted or rejected by the Thesis Committee at the defense and the committee will decide what, if any, revisions should be made. A report on the results of the defense and on acceptance of the thesis, signed by each member of the Thesis Committee, must be submitted to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies. Prior to submitting the report of the thesis defense to the Office of the Dean, the Major Advisor must ensure that the student has secured the necessary signatures on the form entitled "Checklist for Students Completing Requirements for an Advanced Degree" which then should be placed in the student's file.

The Major Advisor is responsible for final approval of the revised thesis. After completion of the revisions, one electronic copy of the thesis must be submitted to the University Library System according to the specific requirements of the University's Electronic Theses and Dissertations Online System (<http://www.pitt.edu/~graduate/etd/>). In addition, one hard-bound copy of the thesis is required for departmental files and another copy is to be given to the Major Advisor. Students must also submit all required forms and documents as specified in the Arts and Sciences graduation packet (available within the Graduate Studies Office, 5141 Sennott Square).