



NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
**GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE STUDY**



(Revised 9 August 2011)

To help provide the highest quality graduate training and experience, the NMSU Department of Geography faculty has drafted the following set of guidelines for graduate study. Please read these carefully and clarify any administrative questions with Christopher Brown, Department Head or Dan Dugas, Graduate Advisor. We also suggest that you consult the Graduate School Guidelines document available online at [http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Current\\_Students.htm](http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Current_Students.htm) .

- 1) **Thesis Chairperson and Committee Membership** – Success in the graduate program is greatly enhanced by timely and logical selection of a thesis advisor and the assembly of a strong thesis committee. Students are required to select a thesis chair by the end of the first semester in the department and to round out the full committee membership by the end of the second semester in the graduate program. Selection of committee members should be based on guidance from the thesis committee chair, with the intention of developing the strongest committee possible to guide the student’s research.
- 2) **Degree Plan and Program of Study** – As noted in the Graduate School guidelines (posted at [http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Current\\_Students.htm](http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Current_Students.htm) ), all graduate students are expected to complete the “Application for Admission to Candidacy for Master’s Degree” (Program of Study)” after completing 12 credits. See [http://prospective.nmsu.edu/graduate/forms/Program\\_of\\_Study\\_Masters.pdf](http://prospective.nmsu.edu/graduate/forms/Program_of_Study_Masters.pdf) for this form, which details a student’s program of study, deals with deficiencies a student may need to address, and maps out course work supporting a student’s thesis research.
- 3) **The Thesis Proposal** – Although the thesis chair and committee guide the specifics of a student’s research approach and strategy and have the “last word” in this area, it is strongly recommended that students develop, refine, and base their research on a formal, written thesis proposal. The goal of Geography 501-Research Design and History of Geographic Thought, is to aid students in developing such a proposal. Students are strongly urged to use this class to develop a logical and defensible research proposal that will further guide their thesis research.
- 4) **Communication among the Committee** – The advisor-advisee relationship is similar to any other professional relationship, and clear communication concerning expectations, responsibilities, and obligations is key. The role of the thesis committee chair is to direct the thesis research. If students require clarification of general expectations, responsibilities, and obligations, or direction on specific technical issues, students should consult directly and promptly with the committee chairperson. If these discussions do not clarify the issues, students are to discuss the matter further with the Graduate Advisor. If the issue still cannot be resolved, the student should contact the department head. Our preference is that these

issues are resolved at the departmental level, but if students are not able to resolve issues at this level, an appeals process exists within the Graduate School; details on this are provided in the Regulation and Procedures section of the Graduate Catalog at <http://catalog.nmsu.edu/grad-2010-2011/2010-2011-nmsu-grad-catalog.pdf>.

- 5) **Graduate Assistantships** – The granting of either a Teaching Assistantship (TA) and or a Research Assistantships (RA) is based on the applicant’s qualifications. The Department’s intent is to provide four semesters of funding to graduate students in the department, subject to funding availability and adequate progress. The allocation of a TA or RA is based primarily on departmental teaching or research project needs, not on a students’ desire for the type of work they wish to do. ***Continuation of funding is contingent upon students adequately fulfilling their TA or RA duties, making adequate progress in their coursework, and making sufficient progress on their thesis research. The Geography Department will withdraw funding if these criteria are not met.*** Students working as TAs are primarily responsible to the faculty member with whom they are working. Students working as RAs are primarily responsible to the faculty member who is funding the research on which the students are working. In either case, the supervising faculty member evaluates whether or not the TA or RA is adequately fulfilling their duties. "Adequate progress" in coursework is defined as maintaining a 3.0 grade point average in all graduate work, **and** passing Geography 501-Research Design and History of Geographic Thought, **and** passing Geography 585-Advanced Spatial Analysis, **both with a grade no lower than a “B”**. "Sufficient progress on research" depends upon the timely completion of the goals outlined below in Section 7, "Thesis Research Timeline."
- 6) **Completion and Defense of the Thesis** – As students near completion of their research and the final defense of the thesis, it is important that they coordinate closely with the thesis chair. Several important milestones of this process are detailed below. Additional requirements are detailed in the Requirements for Enrolled Students section of the Graduate Catalog at: <http://catalog.nmsu.edu/grad-2010-2011/2010-2011-nmsu-grad-catalog.pdf>.
- Students are required to take and pass a final examination in accordance with the schedule provided by the Graduate School. It is the student’s responsibility to be sure that the form for scheduling this examination is submitted to the Graduate Student Services **at least ten working days prior to the proposed date for the examination**. This form also acts as the formal paperwork in support of the student’s thesis committee; the form is available at: [http://prospective.nmsu.edu/graduate/forms/ExamForm\\_Masters\\_revised.pdf](http://prospective.nmsu.edu/graduate/forms/ExamForm_Masters_revised.pdf).
  - Completion and distribution of the final draft of the thesis document to the thesis committee prior to the defense **is solely the student’s responsibility**. The student must ensure that each member of the examining committee receives **a hard copy** of the final draft of the thesis **no later than ten working days before the date of the final examination**. The format of the thesis must comply with the "Guidelines for Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation". These guidelines also contain detailed information on the thesis-approval process and binding; see <http://gradschool.nmsu.edu/Guidelines> for these details.
  - According to Graduate School policy, the student’s thesis committee is wholly responsible for the intellectual content and citation completeness of the thesis, and the

thesis editor/reviewer in the Graduate School is responsible only for formatting and pagination issues. The Style Sheet used by the Association of American Geographers (AAG) is the format and style sheet that is to be used by Geography graduate students in completing their final thesis documents, and the AAG Style Sheet in turn references the 15<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Chicago Manual of style. See <http://www.aag.org/galleries/default-file/ANNALSSTYLE SHEET.pdf> for details on the AAG Style Sheet and <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org> for details on the Chicago Manual of Style.

- Final preparation and submission of the final approved thesis to the NMSU Library is solely the student’s responsibility. The student must also submit an additional hardcopy of the thesis to the department for its archives. In addition to the Graduate School requirements for the thesis submission, the Department also has specific metadata requirements that must be met for thesis research done with GIS and remote sensing tools (see final page of this document). We also require that each student produce and turn in with their final departmental copy a digital copy of the thesis as a PDF file that will be archived on the departmental Web server.
- Students must also file an application for the degree or diploma. Details on this are provided in The Masters Degree section of the Graduate Catalog at <http://catalog.nmsu.edu/grad-2010-2011/2010-2011-nmsu-grad-catalog.pdf>; an on-line application form is provided at: <https://www.nmsu.edu/~registra/degree-app/>.

7) **Thesis Research Timeline** – The following timeline is a guide within which students should be working. We realize that students may at times deviate from this due to various factors beyond their control, but we expect that students work diligently to meet the milestones set below. Evaluation of whether or not a student is making adequate progress towards their thesis research depends upon the extent to which the student is meeting these milestones.

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**GRADUATE TIMELINE AND MILESTONES TO BE MET:**

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End of 1st semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful completion of Geography 501 or 585 with a grade of "B" or higher</li> <li>• Selection of Thesis Committee Chair</li> <li>• Preliminary topic area established</li> </ul>
End of 2nd semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful completion of both Geography 501 and 585, each with a grade of "B" or higher</li> <li>• Final thesis topic established</li> <li>• Thesis Committee membership finalized</li> <li>• Preliminary thesis proposal completed</li> <li>• Completion and filing of Program of Study form</li> </ul>
Summer after 1st year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field, archival, and other data compilation work underway.</li> </ul>
End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection and compilation complete</li> <li>• Data analysis and drafting of thesis well underway</li> </ul>
End of 4 <sup>th</sup> semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft of thesis document to Committee Chair</li> <li>• Revised draft completed, based on Chair’s comments</li> </ul>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revised draft to Committee, <u>with Chair's approval</u></li><li>• Execute paperwork for and schedule thesis defense</li><li>• Successfully defend thesis and complete thesis examination</li><li>• Finalize thesis revisions, consistent with Graduate School requirements on formatting and printing and the AAG Style Sheet</li><li>• Deliver copy of thesis data and metadata to the Thesis Committee Chair to obtain final thesis approval</li><li>• Turn in final approved copies to NMSU Library</li><li>• Turn in third copy to Geography Department along with metadata, if required.</li></ul> |
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**Closing Word** - The faculty in the Department of Geography at NMSU greatly value and are highly committed to the graduate experience. All of us will work very hard with you to insure the highest quality for this experience with the best outcome. We warmly welcome you to the Department of Geography and wish you a most successful experience here. Please let us know what we can do to help make your time here the best and most productive years possible.

**POLICY REGARDING A DATA CD FOR A MASTER'S THESES  
NMSU DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY**

If a graduate student within the NMSU Department of Geography undertakes a thesis involving the use of geographic information system (GIS) or remote sensing tools and data, the student must complete the following tasks to be granted a Master's of Applied Geography at NMSU:

1. Provide a data CD to the department secretary who will place it into the back of the department's copy of a student's thesis.
2. On the data CD, the following data sources must be included and documented:
  - a. All GIS and or/remote sensing data used in the thesis. These data should be in a form that would allow another researcher to replicate the research from the data collected.
  - b. Basic metadata files for each data source used in the thesis must be on the CD.
3. Working with the Director and staff of the Spatial Applications and Research Center (SpARC), place a copy of the thesis data and metadata files on the SpARC GIS server in a directory reserved for archiving thesis datasets.