

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEW MEXICO DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY

AY 2020-2021 Edition

The New Mexico Doctoral Program in Geography (NMDPG) is designed to train students in both basic and applied geographic research, with a topical focus on human-environment interactions. This program is unique because it is a consortium between two universities. This means that policies of UNM'S Office of Graduate Studies and NMSU'S Graduate School together establish the general requirements for the NMDPG, which also has program-specific requirements for all students.

Coursework Requirements

General Requirements

All students must complete:

- at least 48 credit hours of graduate coursework.
- at least 18 credit hours of graduate coursework after completion of the Master's degree.
- at least 24 credit hours of graduate coursework at the home university.
- at least 18 credit hours of graduate coursework in UNM or NMSU courses numbered 500 or above.
- at least 18 hours of dissertation credits, which are in addition to other coursework requirements (GEOG/GESP 699 at UNM, or GEOG/GESP 700 at NMSU).
- at least three hours of graduate credit in the semester in which the comprehensive examination is taken.
- at least one hour of graduate credit in the semester in which they complete degree requirements.

Students must maintain a GPA >3.0 while enrolled in the program. No more than 6 credit hours of coursework can count toward the degree with the grade of C, C+, or CR. Courses offered only on a CR/NC basis and required by the graduate program are excluded from this limitation [CR grades from Spring 2020 also do not count toward this limit.] No coursework with a grade lower than C can count toward the degree.

Finally, no more than 50% of the required course credits may be taken with a single faculty member. Course work that has been completed for the Master's degree is included in this limit.

Specific Requirements

The following coursework requirements apply to all students in the NMDPG. However, some requirements may be waived for incoming students based on prior coursework or expertise. Students should consult their academic advisor to determine whether to petition for a waiver. All waiver requests must be made within the first semester of the Ph.D. program and must comply with general coursework requirements. The NMDPG Steering Committee, which is composed of three geography faculty members from NMSU and three from UNM, evaluates and decides upon waiver requests.

Type	Specific Courses	Credit Hours	Notes
Core courses ^a	GEOG/GESP 601	3	Required for all students during Semester 1
	GEOG/GESP 602	3	Required for all students during Semester 2
	GEOG/GESP 603	3	Required for all students during Semester 3
Electives	GEOG/GESP courses	21-27	Specific courses must be approved by the student's advisor on the Program of Study.
	Non-GEOG/GESP courses	12-18	Specific courses must be approved by the student's advisor on the Program of Study.
Dissertation	GEOG/GESP 699 or 700 ^b	18	Up to 6 credit hours may be taken on the non-home campus.
	Total	66^c	

^a Core courses must be completed with a grade of B or higher.

^b Dissertation credits may be taken only after the completion of 36 credit hours of core courses and electives. Dissertation credits at UNM are in the catalog as GEOG 699; at NMSU, these credits are GEOG 700. [A potential problem that may emerge: Students with NMSU as home campus may encounter problems if enrolled in UNM's GEOG 699, because the NMSU catalog specifies that dissertation credits must be at the 700 level.]

^c At least half of all non-dissertation credits must be taken at the home university. Courses taken through cross-enrollment are not home-campus credits.

Programmatic Requirements

Students in the NMDPG must successfully complete non-coursework requirements that show achievement of core program competencies (provided below) and completion of the dissertation project. These milestones—Qualifying Examination, Comprehensive Examination, Dissertation Proposal Defense, and Dissertation Defense—are components of the general graduate programs requirements established at both UNM and NMSU.

All general graduate program requirements apply to all students in the NMDPG. In case of direct conflict between campus requirements, the home-campus requirement applies; no conflicts have been identified. For general requirements at NMSU, see the “Doctoral Degrees” section in the [Las Cruces Academic Catalog](#). For general requirements at UNM, see the section entitled “The Doctoral Degree” in the [UNM Catalog](#). Students must complete all reporting and administrative requirements of their home-campus administration, meaning specifically the NMSU Graduate School or the UNM Office of Graduate Studies. The Coordinator of the Doctoral Program in Geography, a staff person at UNM, will assist students in identifying and completing administrative requirements for degree completion.

The non-coursework requirements of the NMDPG are the following, listed in expected order of completion.

By the end of semester 1

- Identify a geography faculty advisor on the student's home campus who is willing and able to provide guidance through the program, recommend coursework, and supervise the student's dissertation research.

By the end of semester 2

- Complete and pass the Qualifying Examination, which assesses general knowledge of geography and professional readiness for advancement in the Ph.D. program. Before this exam, a student must provide the Ph.D. Program Steering committee: 1) a draft program of study designed to provide a pathway to achieving the core program competencies (provided below); and 2) an extended abstract (500-1000 words) of an *intended area of research* for the dissertation project. A student must collaborate with their faculty advisors to complete the draft program of study, while the abstract should be the student's independent work. The abstract provides a basis for the NMDPG Steering Committee to assess a student's readiness to pursue the intended area of research, and to develop feedback and guidance to the student on coursework or other preparations that may improve the student's capabilities in the intended research focus.

By the end of semester 6

- Assemble and gain approval of a five-person Committee of Study who will oversee the student's Comprehensive Examination and dissertation research (including the Dissertation Proposal Defense and Dissertation Defense), under the direction of the student's faculty advisor. This committee must include their faculty advisor, at least two other geography faculty members from the home campus, and at least one geography faculty member from the non-home campus. The home-campus Graduate Program Director must approve the Committee of Study, in compliance with any general campus requirements. A student's Committee of Study shall fulfill the roles defined in the NMSU catalog for the "Doctoral Graduate Committee", and in the UNM catalog for the "Doctoral Committee on Studies", "Comprehensive Examination Committee", "Dissertation Committee", and "Final Examination Committee". Membership on the Committee of Study can be changed following the general guidelines of the two universities.
- Complete and pass the Comprehensive Examination, which assesses broad knowledge of geography and achievement of core program competencies (provided below). The Comprehensive Exam is conducted by the Committee of Study, under the direction of the student's faculty advisor. The Comprehensive Exam includes two components: a written examination, which assesses a student's progress toward core program competencies (defined below) based on topical content aligned with the student's area of study; and an oral exam, in which a student discusses their written responses with the Committee of Study.
- Complete and pass the Dissertation Proposal Defense, which assesses the soundness of the proposed research project, and the student's readiness to undertake the project. The Dissertation Proposal Defense must be held no more than one year after the completion of the Comprehensive Exam. Upon completion of the Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Proposal Defense, a student may apply for doctoral candidacy.

No more than 5 years after completion of the Comprehensive Examination

- Complete and pass the Dissertation Defense, through which the Committee of Study assesses the soundness of the completed research project, and the student's

understanding of the project's results and significance within relevant academic fields. One component of Dissertation Defense is a presentation of the results of the dissertation project in the UNM or NMSU colloquium series.

Core Program Competencies

Students who complete the program are expected to achieve specific academic competencies, through the completion of coursework and independent research under the direction of their faculty advisor. One purpose of the Qualifying Exam is to guide the student in developing a program of study that will result in achievement of program competencies. These core program competencies are:

- Analyze and interpret spatiotemporal patterns and processes of human activity and organization with respect to their political, economic, cultural, social, and/or historical dimensions. (Human Geography)
- Analyze and interpret spatiotemporal patterns and processes of climate, biota, water, soil, and/or landforms. (Physical Geography)
- Analyze and interpret the social and biophysical processes that produce human-environment interactions, and make reasonable predictions about the impacts of changes in socio-ecological system components across space and through time. (Socio-Ecological Systems)
- Identify and describe geographic epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies, and evaluate their suitability for answering different research questions. (Geographic Theory and Methods)
- Read, analyze, and interpret topographic and thematic maps. (Map Use)
- Create functional and aesthetically pleasing maps. (Cartography)
- Integrate spatial concepts, tools of representation, and reasoning processes to solve spatial problems. (Spatial Thinking)

Students normally exhibit achievement of these competencies through completion and passing of the Comprehensive Examination, although a Committee of Study, in consultation with the NMDPG Steering Committee, may determine that a student has exhibited achievement through coursework or, rarely, in some other manner.

To exhibit achievement of these competencies, students must show basic knowledge of all competencies. "Basic knowledge" is evident if the student shows the abilities to apply, in given contexts, concepts and/or techniques that have been supplied to him/her, and to perform sound analyses of these contexts based on the identified concepts and/or techniques. Each Committee of Study must apply this description of "basic knowledge" to assess Comprehensive Examination responses and to evaluate a student's record more broadly, in order to determine if a student has exhibited achievement of these competencies whether in the Comprehensive Examination, coursework, or some other manner.