

## General Info on Forms and Policy for GGS MS Thesis

### Terminology:

GGG: The Geography and Geoinformation Science Department, GGS office, GGS Graduate Coordinator, or Department Chair;

AOES: The Atmospheric, Oceanic & Earth Sciences Department (relevant to ESS MS only)

COS: College of Science, COS Graduate Office, COS Graduate Director, or relevant Deans;

Mason: George Mason University and the relevant parties at the university level.

### Notes:

1. If there is any inconsistency in this guideline vs. Mason/COS policies, the university/college policy should supersede the GGS policy. The [Mason Catalog](#) is the final standard for all policies. (AP.6.9).
2. Links provided here are for your information only. Due to website edits by Mason/COS administrators, GGS cannot guarantee all links are valid. If a link is invalid, please use the information provided to search for the correct links yourself. Most university forms are available at the [Registrar's website](#) (hopefully a long-standing link).

### Timelines:

Based on Mason policy ([AP.6.9.2](#)), MS students have a total of six years from the time of the first enrollment in a MS program to graduate.

In certain circumstances, a student may request time extensions beyond the 6-year time limit by one more year only. Students should check [Mason website](#) for details.

### Forms

There are three GGS forms required to record a student's progress and to collect information for the program assessment. The forms are discussed below. All forms can be found on the [GGG website](#) under Master's students.

- 1) **Master's Thesis Committee Designation Form:** This form should be done as early as possible, as it must be fully approved prior to any committee activities such as proposal approval. The committee will be chaired by a GGS full-time professor and must be composed of at least three (3) members including the committee chair. Please refer to the corresponding form for more information on the committee member requirements.
- 2) **Master's Thesis Proposal Defense Form:** The first task of your thesis committee is to approve your thesis proposal. A student can take the thesis credit (GGG 799 or Clim/Geol 799 for ESS MS) only after the committee approved the proposal and this form is filed.
- 3) **Master's Thesis Evaluation Form:** This form is collected for the program assessment purpose. This form should be submitted with the thesis signature page to the department for the department chair signature.

A thesis defense should be announced (via GGS and/or COS) two weeks (recommended) before the event. The announcement should include: thesis title, your name, target degree (specific), date, time and location. If you need help reserving a location, please work with [ggs@gmu.edu](mailto:ggs@gmu.edu). If you want the defense to be available via Zoom, please provide the link and meeting ID/password. The announcement should also include a list of the committee members and Chair (and/or thesis director), and the abstract.

The format of a thesis must be approved University and submitted before the University deadlines. The deadline for final submission to the library (the last step for a thesis) is set by the University. The dates

usually are the first Friday of December (for fall semester), May (spring), and July (summer) or **one week before that**. The format checking deadlines usually are one week before the submission deadlines.

Please check the library's [UDTS \(University Dissertation & Thesis Services\) Resources page](#) for guideline on format and deadlines, and other information.

Please note that a student must apply for graduation early in the semester in which they plan to graduate. Therefore, if you plan to defend your thesis in a specific semester, you should follow the University guidelines and deadline to apply. Details including the timeline and graduation process can be found on the [Registrar's website](#).

### **Special notes for MS thesis credit (799):**

- i) Please note that CRNs for GGS 799 are assigned to all GGS faculty serving as thesis committee chairs. Students should ask their advisors (the "instructor" of their 799) or email [enoyes@gmu.edu](mailto:enoyes@gmu.edu) for the CRNs.
- ii) Based on Mason policy, the first 799 must be with at least 3 credits. A special note on the course registration system: If you cannot register with the desired number of credits, please read the note from another student. "Students must go to the *Schedule and Options* tab. Then, under the *Hours* column, they should be able to click the number of hours and type in the desired number."
- iii) Students must take at least one credit of 799 in a fall/spring semester before graduation once starting with 799.

### **More information on advisor and thesis**

#### **1. On Potential Advisor:**

During your application, you should identify one or more faculty members with whom you like to work. Those faculty members are your potential assigned temporary academic advisor if you are admitted to the program. You may change your advisor any time after you start the study program.

#### **2. On MS thesis:**

If an MS student wants to choose the thesis option in any GGS MS program, the student should start thinking about the thesis as early as possible. The usual procedure should be:

MS thesis procedure (based on an email from Dr. Croitoru and modified by Ruixin Yang):

- I. Define a topic of interest and find a thesis director that shares that interest. Note that your thesis director does not necessarily need to be your academic advisor although that is often the case. The role of your academic advisor is to work with you towards finding the best thesis director for your work (which may be your academic advisor or another GGS faculty). Your thesis director must be full-time GGS faculty member.
- II. Develop a proposal with your thesis adviser.
- III. Recruit a thesis committee of at least 2 more faculty members in addition to the advisor. At least one of them should be full-time GGS faculty member. These faculty should, of course, have an area of expertise that would be of relevance to your thesis topic. Once the committee members are determined, you should submit the **Master's Thesis Committee Forms** available at

<https://science.gmu.edu/academics/departments-units/geography-geoinformation-science/advising-and-student-resources/forms>

- IV. Submit your proposal to the committee and get its approval. This step often includes a committee meeting in which you will present your proposal and receive feedback from your committee on how to proceed. After the successful defense, you should fill the **MASTERS THESIS PROPOSAL DEFENSE FORM** ([https://science.gmu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-02/ThesisProposalDefenseForm\\_Edited.docx](https://science.gmu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-02/ThesisProposalDefenseForm_Edited.docx)).
- V. Once your proposal is approved and the form is approved you can register for a GGS-799 with the thesis director you selected.
- VI. A student needs to register at least one credit of 799 each semester before successfully defending the thesis after the first 799 registration. At least three (3) 799 credits before formal defense. However, no more than 6 credits of 799 cannot be used toward an MS degree (AP.6.9.3 Master's Thesis).
- VII. A student needs to defend her/his thesis in front of the thesis committee. This defense must be open to the public. The student should prepare an announcement and send it to GGS department for distribution. The announcement should include MS program, student name, thesis title, thesis director, committee, abstract, location (or link for online one) and time for the defense. Details of the required elements could also be found at <https://science.gmu.edu/academics/advising-student-support/advising/defense-announcement-submission-form>
- VIII. Usually, the thesis is your last “course” for the MS program.

### **3. Full-time GGS faculty:**

One can find GGS faculty/staff list at <https://science.gmu.edu/academics/departments-units/geography-geoinformation-science/faculty-and-staff>. Full-time GGS faculty are those without any prefix in their professorship title such as “Research” or “Adjunct.”