SDSU Geography Department

Master's Student Handbook

Fall 2019
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Overview of the Master’s Program

Graduate study at San Diego State University has long been characterized by a close, collegial working relationship between students and faculty. A flexible curriculum, complemented by careful advising, permits the Department to design a program tailored to the educational goals of each master’s candidate. San Diego State University now offers three Geography degrees at the master’s level: Master’s of Arts (MA) in Geography, Master’s of Science in Geographic Information Science (MS-GIS), and Master’s of Science in Watershed Science (MS-WS).

All three degree programs consist of two main components: coursework, and a thesis, which includes a proposal, proposal defense, final defense, and final thesis document. The thesis research is guided by a Thesis Advisor and a three-member thesis committee. The thesis is considered the main focus of the program, and provides training in how to produce geographic knowledge and how to present that knowledge professionally in oral and written form.

For more information regarding requirements and student’s responsibilities, check the graduate bulletin: [http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/bulletin/](http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/catalog/bulletin/)

Timeline of Events

The following is a rough timeline illustrating the stages a student should reach in order to complete the program within two years.

**Fall Year One**
- Classes: GEOG 701 and three (3) or six (6) additional units (be sure to have 15 units in Year One)
- Work toward thesis: Research ideas; Literature research; Thesis Advisor meetings

**Winter Break Year One**
- Work towards thesis: Continue with research ideas and literature reviews

**Spring Year One**
- Classes: GEOG 700 and three (3) or six (6) additional units (be sure to have 15 units in Year One)
- Write research proposal using GEOG 700 and Thesis Advisor input
- **Administrative:**
  - File a signed Program of Study form with Graduate Coordinator by April 15.
  - **File Progress Report Form** (must be filed to continue in the program/receive assistantship); and
  - If you defend your proposal in the Spring semester, file the Proposal defense form (found on the Department’s website)
  - If taking special studies courses (797 or 798), complete Special Studies Agreement
Summer Break
- Work towards thesis: Begin thesis research; Begin writing

Fall Year Two
- Classes: Six (6) or nine (9) units (must total 15 units in Year Two)

  ** Note: some scholarships require that you be “full time enrolled”, which means that you must enroll in either 9.0 units OR in at least one unit of GEOG 799 in *both* fall and spring semesters. If you do not follow this during registration, you could lose the scholarship. This is only for certain scholarships (Mcfarland, Greenwood, etc), not for GA or TA appointments.**

  - **Work towards thesis**: Continue thesis research; meet with Thesis Advisor
  - Administrative:
    - Review POS to make sure it matches the courses you are taking.
    - File Thesis Committee Form, obtained from Graduate Division.
    - File IRQ form if doing research involving human subjects. Consult your Thesis Advisor for details.
    - Confirm on webportal that you have Advanced to Candidacy (12 units of program completed, GPA ≥ 3.0, and POS approved by University).
    - If taking special studies courses (797 or 798), complete Special Studies Agreement with your Thesis Advisor.
    - Complete proposal and defense (and defense form) if not completed in Year One

Winter Break Year Two
- Continue thesis research and writing

Spring Year Two
- Classes: GEOG 799A and three (3) or six (6) additional units
- Complete thesis research; Complete thesis; Thesis Advisor meetings
- Administrative:
  - Review POS to make sure it matches the courses you are taking
  - If taking special studies courses (797 or 798), complete Special Studies Agreement with your Thesis Advisor.
  - Apply/file for graduation
  - Complete thesis according to revisions suggested by committee
  - After defending thesis and finalizing the thesis document, fill out Report on Final Thesis Defense Form (file with Graduate Division) and Completion of Thesis in Approved Format (file with Department)
  - File Thesis with Montezuma Publishing
  - Graduate!

Summer Continuation (if necessary)
- Classes: GEOG 799B
• Work towards thesis: Complete thesis research; Complete thesis

• Administrative:
  o Apply/file for graduation
  o Complete thesis according to revisions suggested by committee
  o After defending thesis and finalizing the thesis document, fill out Report on Final Thesis Defense Form (file with Graduate Division) and Completion of Thesis in Approved Format (file with Department)
  o File Thesis with Montezuma Publishing
  o Graduate!

***PLEASE PROVIDE GRADUATE COORDINATOR WITH COPIES OF ALL FORMS SENT TO GRADUATE DIVISION***

The department expects full-time students to complete the program within two years. Seven years is the maximum time allowed for completion of all degree requirements.

**Notes Regarding ALL (M.A. and M.S.) Graduate Courses**

1. Some courses are only offered in the fall, some only in the spring, and some in alternate years.

2. Students may take additional courses that are not on their Program of Study; these courses will appear on a student's transcript but are not required for graduation.

3. Grade point average (GPA) of at least **3.0** must be maintained in all courses listed on the POS as well as all courses (300 level and above) taken at SDSU. If an individual's GPA is below 3.0, they are at risk of losing their assistantship. A GPA of at least 2.85 must be maintained in all courses on the graduate record in order to graduate. If a student receives a grade below 2.85 on a course in the POS, they must repeat that course or a close equivalent.

4. When taking Special Study and/or Research Courses (797 or 798), you must complete the Department of Geography’s Special Study/Research Registration form. If you do not complete the form, you will not receive credit for your course.
Milestones of the Master's Degree

Program of Study

The first official step on the road to the Master's degree is to file a Program of Study (POS), which is a list of courses that constitutes a contract between the student and the University indicating which classes the student will take to complete the requirements for his/her Master's degree. Before completing the POS, students should meet with their Thesis Advisor to discuss options for coursework.

The POS form, signed by both the Thesis Advisor and the Graduate Advisor, should be submitted to the Department Coordinator by April 15th of your first year. Then, the Graduate Coordinator will submit the POS on-line. ** Students holding department assistantships will not have their assistantships renewed unless their POS forms have been turned in on time.

The most common reasons for rejection of the POS are 1) more than thirty units are listed and 2) failure to include all the catalog requirements. Catalog requirements are courses that are listed as required in the annual SDSU Graduate Bulletin, as summarized on the POS forms (see Forms section in this Handbook).

If you need to change the list of courses on your POS in the second year, you need to:
1. Fill out a revised Departmental POS form (See Forms in this Handbook), which must be signed by your Thesis Advisor and the Graduate Advisor. The form must include totals of units A-C as applicable; it is the student's responsibility to make sure that all degree requirements are met by the revised POS.
2. Once the Departmental POS form has been approved by the Graduate Advisor, submit the “Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements” form online, available on the Graduate Division website ([https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students/forms](https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students/forms)).

*Please note: courses that have been included in the POS and have already been completed cannot be removed from the POS, regardless of the grade received. If you believe you will be taking courses that are not on your POS during the semester, please make sure to submit a change form as soon as possible, before the semester has started, or the course may not count towards your completion of the POS.*

Thesis Proposal

The first step in the thesis proposal process is selection of a topic, followed by selection of the Thesis Committee. This process begins in the first semester and should be completed by the second semester of the program. The Thesis Committee includes the Committee Chair (the Thesis Advisor), and a minimum of two other members, one of whom needs to be outside the Geography Department. See FAQ 3.4 for information on who can serve on the Thesis Committee.

After selecting members of the Thesis Committee a Thesis Proposal document is prepared.
that outlines the planned research project. This process of composing the Thesis Proposal is generally started fall of the student’s first year and continued in GEOG 700 (offered in the Spring). Per department rules, the thesis proposal has a 10-page maximum limit, not including references and figures.

Students working with human or animal subjects need to apply for clearance from the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) (or IACUC for animal research) before finalizing the proposal and prior to performing research involving human subjects. For those doing research involving human subjects, advancement to candidacy cannot occur until IRB or IACUC paperwork has been submitted. Consult your Thesis Advisor for details.

**Thesis Proposal and Defense**

The Thesis Proposal Defense occurs after the Thesis Proposal document has been approved by the Thesis Advisor. It is an official defense that includes a meeting of all committee members. Following the successful defense of the thesis proposal, all members of the committee must sign the Completion of Proposal Defense Form (see the Forms section of this Handbook). The Thesis Proposal Defense should occur in spring of your first year. Note that the official Committee Packet from Graduate Division can only be completed in Fall of your second year, but you should defend your proposal before submission of the Packet.

**Advancement to Candidacy**

When 12 or more units from the student’s POS have been completed with an average GPA of B (3.0) or better, students are eligible for Advancement to Candidacy for the Master’s Degree. Advancement happens automatically if the student has a POS on file and has completed the required coursework at GPA 3.0 or better.

**Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee Signature Packet**

In the Fall semester of the second year, students need to obtain an Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee Signature Packet (hereafter "Thesis Committee Packet") from Graduate Division. This will normally happen after the Thesis Proposal Defense.

The Thesis Committee Packet can be obtained only from the Graduate Division and must be signed by all Thesis Committee members and the Graduate Advisor, and then filed with the Graduate Division. Please note the form has two parts, including a signature page, and a copyright agreement with your thesis chair. You must fill out the form completely or the paperwork will be delayed. All students must also fill out the IRQ form found on Graduate Division’s Research Affairs website.

The student must file the Thesis Committee Packet in order to be eligible to enroll for three units of Master’s thesis research (799A) in spring of their second year. The schedule number for 799A may be obtained from the Graduate Division only after the Thesis/Project Committee Signature Form has been approved. You may either walk
over to Graduate Division or call their office to receive the schedule number.

Note that enrollment in 799A or 799B (thesis research extension) is considered a full course load for veteran’s benefits, Navy Contract employment, and student financial aid. A letter to this effect can be obtained from the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Division and Research.

**Thesis Document, Presentation and Defense**

The student prepares a final thesis document in consultation with the Thesis Advisor and Thesis Committee. The Department of Geography has its own guidelines for formatting of the thesis; the student does not need to adhere to the Montezuma Publishing requirements, except for the preliminary pages (see FAQ 5.3). Please consult your Thesis Advisor for details. Formatting suggestions and MS Word Templates, including for the preliminary pages, are available at: [https://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesisanddissertation/formatting](https://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesisanddissertation/formatting)

Upon approval by the Thesis Advisor, the student arranges a time for the Thesis Presentation and Defense. Then, the thesis document is distributed to each member of the Thesis Committee, at least two weeks in advance of the Thesis Presentation and Defense. When all Committee members agree that the thesis is ready for the presentation and defense, it is the student’s responsibility to consult the Department of Geography Graduate Coordinator to schedule a room for the Presentation and Defense, and if needed, arrange for a laptop computer and projector with the Department of Geography office. **Typically, the student should plan to have a final thesis document ready to circulate to the Thesis Advisor no later than 4 weeks prior to the defense in order to receive feedback from both the Thesis Advisor and the Committee.** For a May graduation, this typically requires the student to have a final version ready for the Thesis Advisor to review by the end of March or early April. Leaving less time for the Committee to review the document will increase the risk of not graduating in a given semester.

The thesis presentation and defense involves two-steps. First is the presentation to the department (not to exceed 30 minutes) followed by a brief question and answer section. Second, immediately following the presentation, the Thesis Committee meets with the student for the defense. Following the defense, the committee provides a recommendation on both the defense (pass/fail) and the thesis document (no revision needed, minor revisions, major revisions, fail). At the Defense, the Committee may elect to sign the Thesis Signature Page, depending on the Committee deliberations.

**Final Thesis Document Preparation**

Once the revised thesis document has been approved by the Thesis Advisor, the Thesis Advisor signs the *Thesis Signature Page* and the *Completion of Thesis in Approved Format* and the student takes that form to the Graduate Advisor. The *Report of Final Examination or Thesis Defense* is then submitted to Graduate Division online by the Graduate Advisor. The student then turns in a pdf of the final thesis document and Thesis Signature Page to Montezuma Publishing.
Critical Deadlines and Graduation

Graduation is not automatic upon filing the thesis. Students need to obtain an application for graduation from the Graduate Division office, submit it to the cashier’s office and pay the required fee. **You must apply for graduation early in the semester in which you plan to graduate, and you must be registered in 799 (A or B) in the semester in which you plan to graduate. Check the current Graduate Bulletin for deadlines.**

**Summer Graduation:** If graduation in May of the second year is not possible, you must:

1. Re-apply for graduation.
2. If you have completed all courses in your POS, you must register for at least one unit of 799B in the semester in which you plan to graduate.

**Note:** If you still have coursework remaining on your POS as of the summer of your second year, you must be continuously enrolled until those courses are completed, but you may apply for a leave of absence for 1 (and only one) semester. **You must apply for the leave on WebPortal *before* the semester that you will take the leave, or you will be withdrawn from the program and would need to reapply.** For more information, see the Leaves of Absence section of the [Graduate Bulletin](https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students).

The deadlines for filing for graduation, and for filing the thesis manuscript change each semester. The dates are published in each semester’s class schedule and the Graduate Bulletin, and are on: [https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students](https://grad.sdsu.edu/current_grad_students)

***Walking at Commencement: Only students that will be defending their thesis no later than the end of the summer are permitted to walk at Commencement. If they have not completed the thesis defense by the end of the semester, they are required to get the approval of the Thesis Advisor, indicating they will finish by the end of the summer.***
Summary of Student Responsibilities

It is the student's responsibility to take care of the following:

- Read the SDSU Graduate Bulletin for any graduate student requirements.
- Notify the Department as well as Admissions and Records of any changes in name, address, e-mail or phone number.
- Keep overall GPA at 3.0 or above.
- Fulfill course requirements for specialization (M.A. or M.S.).
- File the paperwork for your POS and obtain approval to change it, if necessary.
- Select a Thesis Committee, and do the paperwork involved.
- If applicable, file the paperwork and obtain approval from IRB (Institutional Review Board) before collecting data for your thesis.
- Successfully defend your proposal, and conduct your thesis research.
- Write up your thesis in an appropriate format and successfully defend it.
- Know the required steps and forms to be completed for the thesis.
- Obtain forms and signatures for all steps of the thesis.
- File for graduation early in the semester in which you plan to graduate.
Frequently Asked Questions

1.0 Requirements

1.1. Can I transfer credits for courses taken elsewhere to my SDSU program?
SDSU limits transfer credits to 9 semester units. Also note that during your first year in our
program you must file an Official Program of study approved by the department Master’s
advising committee. Transferring units is not automatic; they must be approved as
appropriate to the Official Program of study.

1.2. Are there any particular classes I should take during my first year in the
graduate program?
Yes, Geography 701 (Fall) and 700 (Spring) are required. All MA/MS students must take
these two classes.

1.3. Can I bypass the Master’s program and enter directly into the Ph.D. program?
We generally require that a student hold a Master’s degree before entering the Ph.D.
program. Many of our incoming Master’s students come in with the expectation of
eventually working on the doctorate. We believe that working on a Master’s degree
provides important training for subsequent doctoral research. Any inquiries regarding the
doctoral program should be directed to:

Professor Fernando Bosco
Department of Geography
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA 92182-4493.

1.4. How long do most students take to complete their Master’s degree?
Ideally, the program is designed to take 2 years.

1.5. If I maintain a full-time job during the day, can I reasonably expect to get through
the program taking night courses, exclusively?
Most students who have attempted this never came close to completing the program.
Furthermore, most of the classes you may need to take may never be offered at night. Think
very carefully before deciding to do this.

1.6. Is there a time limit for completion of the Master’s program?
Yes. All students must complete the degree within seven years of matriculation.

2.0 Program of Study and Course Requirements

2.1. What is the program of study (POS)?
The POS is a list of courses that you will take in order to graduate with the MA/MS degree.
Some courses in the POS are mandatory for all students (e.g. 700, 701, 799A), while many
are elective. See the POS forms in the Master’s Handbook for the requirements for your
specific degree program (MA, MS-GIS, MS-Watershed).
2.2. I took some of the courses required for my degree while I was an undergraduate at SDSU (e.g. GEOG 511, which is required for MS-Watershed). Will they count towards my MA/MS degree?
If you filed for concurrent graduate credit while in your last semester as an undergraduate then the course would be footnoted in your undergraduate record and it will also be carried over into your graduate record. The course would be listed twice on the transcript; once under your undergraduate record and once under your graduate record.

If you did not file for concurrent graduate credit then you would need to make up the 3 units associated with the POS requirements in order to achieve the 30-unit total. The Graduate Advisor (Biggs) determines whether to 1) waive to content and have you take another course towards your POS requirements or 2) recommend that you retake it based on the grade earned or if you need to take it as a graduate student and be required to perform at the graduate level, since some courses require additional tasks/homework/papers for graduate students.

2.3. What happens if I need to revise my POS or don’t take one of the courses in my POS?
Before you take a class that is not on your POS:
1. Fill out a new Departmental POS form (select the appropriate form for your Degree), and have it signed by both your Thesis Advisor and the Master’s Program Advisor (Biggs). Clearly indicate which course will be removed by crossing it out using Track Changes or a pen, and adding the new course in a line below the dropped course. Note that if you take a new course without checking with the Thesis and Program Advisors to make sure it meets program requirements, you may not meet the requirements to graduate.
2. Once the form is approved by the Master's Program Advisor, submit a Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements form, which you initiate online and is then signed by the Departmental Graduate Advisor.

2.4. Can courses taken through Open University or another university before I started the MA/MS program count towards my MA/MS degree?
Student are eligible to take courses through Open University as long as they are not matriculated into the University and have those courses count towards their POS requirements or possible pre-reqs should the student be admitted at a later point. Any course that is taken through Open University appears on the SDSU transcript so, if the student does poorly while taking Open University courses the SDSU cumulative GPA will be impacted. Students are limited to a maximum of 9 Open University or other university units for a 30 unit POS; this total includes a combined total of courses coming from another institution and Open University. Should the student include an Open University course on the POS, the 7-year deadline by when they must complete their degree requirements begins with the Open University course that is on their POS and not when they were admitted to the MA/MS program.

Open University courses count towards the GPA requirements, program requirements, unit requirements, and time to graduate as they basically are SDSU courses but are being paid
through the College of Extended Studies should the student have missed admission deadlines, are trying to bring their GPA up prior to being considered for admission, or have pre-reqs and are not wanting to wait until the next admission cycle.

2.5. I have outside employment that is related to my MA/MS degree, and will not be a GA or TA. Can my paid work count towards course credit using GEOG 596, 797, or 798?

Job experience or current employment does not merit academic credit. However, if an employer along with faculty supervisor allow a student to perform a project at work outside of work hours, that could be considered. The student would have to propose a project and the content and contact hours would need to be approved by the department. The project would need to be a separate project/work with substantial time to work on the project outside of the student’s work hours and duties. The project cannot include a student’s current work duties and cannot be performed during work hours. The project would have to be evaluated by the supervising faculty, who would determine if it merits academic credit and the number of credit hours that would be allocated. Depending on the project, the supervising faculty member would determine if the department would count it as a 596, 797 or 798 course. Lastly, there would need to be some sort of contract with the supervising faculty member that outlines the objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment, which will be used to determine credit/grade, time spent on project and meeting with supervising faculty, and assignments.

3.0 Advancing to Candidacy and Thesis Proposal Defense

3.1. What does it mean to “advance to candidacy” and how do I do it?
Advancement to candidacy means you have completed one year of coursework, maintained a 3.0 GPA, and can now formally declare your thesis committee with the Thesis Committee Form. You advance to candidacy once you a) submit your Program of Study to the Geography Department coordinator and b) finish at least 12 units of coursework with a 3.0 GPA. Most Geography Master’s Students will have completed 15 units by the end of their first year. The official advancement to candidacy in WebPortal occurs in the summer after your first year, usually by July.

3.2. When do I find members for and convene my thesis committee?
You should start forming your thesis committee by consulting with your Thesis Advisor in your first two semesters. You can convene your thesis committee for your thesis proposal defense anytime after your first semester. Do not wait until you have advanced to candidacy and get the Thesis Committee Form to form and consult with your committee.

3.3. What forms do I need to create my thesis committee?
You will need the Thesis Committee Packet, which includes the “Appointment of Thesis Committee/Project Form”. Students are only able to obtain and officially file the Thesis Committee Packet after they have Advanced to Candidacy, which usually occurs during the summer after the first year. This is a restricted form and may be mailed upon request or
picked up by students in the Graduate Division. This form must be approved by the Graduate Division before students will be allowed to enroll in Thesis 799A.

3.4. **Who should be on my committee?**
The committee is normally composed of two members from the Geography Department and one member from another department (e.g. Geological Sciences, Anthropology, etc). In some cases the committee can have a fourth person, but note that this can complicate scheduling of the Proposal and Final Thesis defenses. The committee members are determined by the student consulting with the Thesis Advisor.

3.5. **Can someone who is not full-time faculty at SDSU be on my committee?**
If the prospective committee member is adjunct faculty in a department at SDSU, that person can serve as the third member on your committee. If they are not adjunct faculty at SDSU, the person could only serve as a fourth member of the committee, and would need approval via the Petition for lecturers, Adjuncts, and outside experts without SDSU affiliation to serve on Thesis committees.

3.6. **Does the Thesis Committee Packet need to be completed and signed before I defend my thesis proposal?**
No. The Thesis Committee Form will only be issued to you by Graduate Division after you advance to candidacy, which usually happens in summer after your first year. You are strongly advised to defend your thesis proposal in spring of your first year, before you are able to obtain the committee Form and Packet. Have the committee sign the Department Proposal Defense form when you defend your proposal in the spring of your first year, and Thesis Committee Form in the fall of your second year after you have advanced to candidacy.

3.7. **Can I defend my proposal and thesis in the same semester?**
Yes, pending approval of your thesis advisor, though this is strongly discouraged because it gives inadequate opportunity for the committee to have meaningful input to your thesis, and puts you at risk of the committee not approving of your study design, which could delay completion of the thesis.

3.8. **What form should I bring to my proposal defense?**
Print out and bring the “Completion of Thesis Proposal Defense” form to your thesis defense, and give the signed form to the Program Coordinator.

4.0 **Defending your thesis and graduation: Deadlines**

4.1. **When and how do I register for 799A?**
799A is typically taken in the spring semester of your second year. **You must have obtained your Thesis Committee Packet from Graduate Division (SSE-1410) and completed and submitted it to Graduate Division in order to enroll in 799A.** It is not required to have defended your proposal in order to register for 799A, but it is highly encouraged to defend your thesis proposal in spring of your second year.
4.2. **What are the deadlines to apply to graduate?**
The deadlines to apply for graduation are posted at Graduate Affairs. Note that for spring and summer graduation, the deadline for application to graduate can be as early as January.

4.3. **What is the deadline to submit my thesis for graduation?**
See Montezuma Publishing. The “Publication Deadline” is the most important. The “Submission” deadline does not apply to Geography students, whose advisors and not Montezuma Publishing approve the final thesis content and format.

4.4. **The Graduate Division website has a deadline for “Last day to report Final Comprehensive Exam”. Is that relevant to me?**
No. That deadline is only relevant for students doing Plan B (Exam), while all Geography students are in Plan A (thesis).

5.0 **Defending the thesis: Forms and procedures**

5.1. **What forms do I need to have ready going into my final thesis defense?**
You should have the signature page of your thesis with you, since all committee members need to sign that form. The other forms (Completion of Thesis in an Approved Format, Report on Final Thesis Defense Form) will be signed after you submit your revised thesis document to your committee chair and/or thesis committee.

5.2. **I defended my thesis, and my committee signed my thesis signature page. Now what do I do?**
1. If your committee requested revisions to the thesis document, you must complete those revisions to the satisfaction of your advisor and/or thesis committee, depending on what was agreed upon at the defense.
2. Once your revisions are complete and the final format of your thesis PDF document is approved by your committee, have your main thesis advisor sign the “Completion of Thesis in an Approved Format” form.
3. Submit the signed “Completion of Thesis in an Approved Format” to the Master’s Advisor (Dr. Biggs).
4. Submit a hardcopy of your signature page to Montezuma Publishing.
5. Email a PDF of your thesis to Montezuma Publishing (thesis@aztecmail.com). See Montezuma Publishing for details.

5.3. **Does my final thesis document have to be approved by Montezuma Publishing (MP), and does it have to follow their formatting guidelines?**
No and no, except for the preliminary pages. Your thesis advisor is responsible for approving your thesis in its final format, except for the preliminary pages (Title page through Acknowledgements), which need to follow MP’s requirements. Formatting suggestions and templates are available at https://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesisanddissertation/montezumaformatting.
6.0 Graduation delay and Leave of Absence

6.1. I thought I was going to finish in the spring but I will instead finish in summer. What do I need to do?
You will have to enroll in at least one unit of 799B during the summer, and reapply to graduate in summer. To do so, go back into your WebPortal account and “transfer” your application for Spring to Summer (August) and repay the $55 fee.

6.2. I will take more than one additional semester to graduate (e.g. fall of 3rd year, etc). Do I need to apply for a leave of absence? Do I need to be continuously enrolled in 799B every semester until I graduate?
If you don’t finish and graduate in the spring semester of your second year, you must register in 799B the semester you plan to graduate and reapply to graduate (see previous question). Students who have completed all of the coursework on their POS and only have to complete their thesis are eligible to enroll in 799B through the College of Extended Studies, and so do not need to file for leave of absence and do not have to enroll in 799B continuously, only in the semester they plan to graduate. Students would only need to apply for the leave of absence if they planned on enrolling for 799B through main campus. As long as you plan on registering through Extended Studies, you do not need to file for a leave of absence.
The Handbook for New Graduate Students has information regarding leave of absences policies.

6.3. What is leave of absence? Do I need to apply for one, and if so, how?
A leave of absence occurs when a student needs to take a semester off of their graduate program and has not completed all of the courses on their Program of Study. Students may request no more than four semesters of leave of absence during their time at SDSU. If a student needs more than four leaves or if they do not file for a leave of absence, they will either have to remain continuously enrolled e.g. in 799B, or reapply for admission to the program. See the previous FAQ and the Graduate Handbook for details on how to apply. Note that starting in Spring 2019, application for leave of absence is done online through their webportal account.

7.0 Financial Support

7.1. What are the sources of funding for new graduate students?
We have new openings each year for about 12 Graduate Assistants who receive funding for assisting faculty members in their teaching and research.

7.2. Out-of-state students: How do I establish residency, and where can I go for help?
For help and more information on residency. Become familiar with the list of acceptable evidence to establish residency. Some useful tips: print all documents and keep them in a safe place together. Before mid-September of your first semester, obtain a California driver’s license or ID card, register to vote (online) and change your address with the post office (online). A copy of your lease is very useful, and be sure you are no longer claimed by your parents on their tax documents. You will need to file and provide a California tax
return, form 540. Make photocopies of everything, and toward the end of the spring semester bring them to the Office of the Registrar along with their application.

7.3. **What scholarships are available to Geography Master’s students?**
Master’s level students are eligible to apply for four Geography Scholarships that reward excellent academic progress and/or achievements:

- Alvena Storm Memorial Scholarship (for all Master’s students)
- McFarland Scholarship (demonstrated financial need is an additional requirement of this scholarship)
- Ned H. Greenwood Award Scholarship (for Master’s students specializing in physical geography)
- William & Vivian Finch Scholarship (for Master’s students with interests in remote sensing)

These scholarships are competitive and are administered through the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (OFAS). The scholarships have different requirements and students are required to submit a separate application for each scholarship they wish to be considered. Scholarships’ applications are typically due early in the spring semester and the winners are announced towards the end of the academic year. Awards are often disbursed to students by OFAS at the beginning of the next academic year (fall semester). Technically this means that Master’s level students should apply for these scholarships during their first year in the program, so that they can benefit from the scholarship during their second year. Explanations of the requirements and application instructions for these four scholarships.

In addition, the department offers a number of scholarships—awards, including awards for students with interests in GIS, Cartography, Children and Social Geography, and Human Geography. The department also offers one or more scholarship—awards that recognize students’ service and citizenship to the department. These scholarships—awards are administered internally, and do not require an application to OFAS or to the department. Deserving students are selected by deliberation and a vote of all the faculty in the department. These scholarships—awards are made possible by generous yearly contributions and gifts from donors; availability may vary from year to year.

7.4. **When will I be notified of your decision regarding my application for a Graduate Assistantship?**
We will start to make awards around mid-February. Awards are competitive, based on the undergraduate record, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, and compatibility between an applicants academic strengths and assistance needs of the department.

7.5. **I have missed the January deadline for Graduate Assistantship applications. Do you accept late applications?**
We don’t accept late applications. Some hourly work is sometimes available linked to faculty grants and contracts.
Forms

The forms below may be found either on the geography department website or on the graduate division website. Please check the appropriate website for the latest edition of each form.

*Please give the Graduate Programs Coordinator copies of all forms submitted*
# Program of Study Master of Arts

**Geography Department**  
**MA program**  
**Program of Study (POS)**

NAME: __________________________________________________ RED ID: _________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year, semester</th>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>B-Units</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Sem: Development of Geographic Thought</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>700</td>
<td>Sem: Geographic Research Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y2S</td>
<td>799A</td>
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**Note:** No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798.

*GEOG 700, 701, AND 799A ARE REQUIRED*  
Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

__Student Signature__  
__Date__

__Thesis Advisor signature__  
__Date__

__Graduate Advisor signature__  
__Date__
Sample 1

**Geography Department**
**MA program**
**Program of Study (POS)**

NAME: __________________________________________________ RED ID: _________________________

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**TOTALS:** 30 27 24

**Note:** No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798.

*GEOG 700, 701, AND 799A ARE REQUIRED* Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

---

**Student Signature**

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**Thesis Advisor signature**

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**Graduate Advisor signature**

---
Sample 2

Geography Department  
MA program  
Program of Study (POS)

NAME: __________________________________________________ RED ID: _________________________

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<th>Year, sem</th>
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**TOTALS:**  
30 24 24

**Note:** No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798. Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

______________________________  _________________________
Student Signature  Date

______________________________  _________________________
Thesis Advisor signature  Date

______________________________  _________________________
Graduate Advisor signature  Date
## Program of Study Master of Science GIScience

### Geography Department

#### MS-GIScience

#### Program of Study (POS)

**NAME:** ________________________________________________  **RED ID:** ____________

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<tr>
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<td>Sem: Geographic Research Design</td>
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**TOTALS:**

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<th>Total units</th>
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**A: Geography Units**  Min = 24

**B: 600/700 Units**  Min = 15

**C: 581-585**

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<td>683-688L, 780</td>
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</table>

**Notes:** No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798.

*GEOG 700, 701, AND 799A are required courses for the degree*

**You may petition to have a course counted toward C units provided the material is applicable toward your concentration.**

Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

---

**Student Signature**  **Date**

**Thesis Advisor signature**  **Date**

**Graduate Advisor signature**  **Date**
Sample 1

Geography Department
MS-GIScience
Program of Study (POS)

NAME:__________________________________________________  RED ID:__________________________

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<tr>
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<th>Course #</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>A-Units</th>
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<th>C-Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Sem: Development of Geographic Thought</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y1F</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>Int. Remote Sensing of Environment</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y1S</td>
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<td>Sem: Geographic Research Design</td>
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<td>Special Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y2F</td>
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**TOTALS:** 30 27 18 15

Notes: No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798.

-GEOG 700, 701, AND 799A are required courses for the degree*
**You may petition to have a course counted toward C units provided the material is applicable toward your concentration.**
Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

Student Signature ____________________________ Date ________________

Thesis Advisor signature ____________________________ Date ________________

Graduate Advisor signature ____________________________ Date ________________
### Sample 2

**Geography Department**  
**MS-GIScience**  
**Program of Study (POS)**

NAME: __________________________________________  RED ID: ____________________

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year, sem</th>
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<th>Units</th>
<th>A-Units</th>
<th>B-Units</th>
<th>C-Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y1F</td>
<td>701</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Y1S</td>
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<td>Data Management for GIS</td>
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**TOTALS:** | 30       | 27       | 23       | 16      |

**Total units** | 30       |

**A: Geography Units** | Min = 24 |
**B: 600/700 Units**  | Min = 15 |
**C: 581-585**        | Min = 15 |
**589, 591-594**      |         |
**683-688L**          |         |
**780**               |         |

**Notes:**  
No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798.  
*GEOG 700, 701, AND 799A are required courses for the degree*  
**You may petition to have a course counted toward C units provided the material is applicable toward your concentration.**  
Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

---

**Student Signature**  
**Date**  

---

**Thesis Advisor signature**  
**Date**  

---

**Graduate Advisor signature**  
**Date**
Program of Study Master of Science Watershed Science

Geography Department  
MS-Watershed Science  
Program of Study (POS)

NAME:__________________________________________________  RED ID:__________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year, sem</th>
<th>Course #</th>
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<td>511</td>
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<tr>
<td>Y1S</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>Geographic Research Design (required)</td>
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<td>799A</td>
<td>Thesis (Required)</td>
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Total units: 30

A: Geography Units Min = 21
B: 600/700 Units Min = 15
C: 511 (required) and 6 units from 576, 581-585, 589, 591-592, 683-688L, 780 Min = 9

Note: No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798. GEOG 511, 700, 701 and 799A are required courses for the degree; if you have taken 511 you should take another methods course.  
**You may petition to have a course counted toward C units provided the material is applicable toward your concentration.**

Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

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### Geography Department
**MS-Watershed Science**  
**Program of Study (POS)**

NAME: ____________________________________________________  RED ID: ___________________

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<td>Y2F</td>
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<td>Y2S</td>
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**TOTALS:** 30 24 21 12

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<th>Total units</th>
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<td>A: Geography Units</td>
<td>Min = 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>B: 600/700 Units</td>
<td>Min = 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>C: 511 (required) and 6 units from 576, 581-585, 589, 591-592, 683-688L, 780</td>
<td>Min = 9</td>
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</table>

**Note:** No more than 6 combined units of 797 and 798. GEOG 511, 700, 701 and 799A are required courses for the degree; if you have taken 511 you should take another methods course.

**You may petition to have a course counted toward C units provided the material is applicable toward your concentration.**

Students with state-funded GA or TAships should have 6 units one semester and 9 the other for both years.

---

**Student Signature**  
**Date**

**Thesis Advisor signature**  
**Date**

**Graduate Advisor signature**  
**Date**

26
Petition for Academic Adjustment (to be submitted online)

Form found on Graduate Division Website:
http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/gra/adjust_academic_requirements.aspx?

Petition for Academic Adjustment: Sample 1 (to be submitted online)

San Diego State University
Division of Graduate Affairs
SSE 1410  (619) 594-5213

Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements for the Master’s Degree

(TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY)

RED ID

Degree (e.g., MA, MS, MBA)  Major (and concentration/specialization, if applicable)

Last Name  First  MI

Street Address  Apt.#

City  State  Zip Code  Telephone No.

STUDENT REQUEST
State request and provide explanation/reason for request. For example, if modifying your Official Program of Study indicate course(s) to be added/dropped, specify deadline extension for incomplete(s), list course(s) added to improve GPA on your Official Program of Study, list additional units to replace expired units, and list course repeat(s).

Drop GEOG 740. Add GEOG 760 to Program of Study.

Student Signature  Date

DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL
☑ Approved  ☐ Denied

Comments

GEOG 760 has more appropriate content.

Allen Hope
Graduate Adviser (Print Name)  Signature of Graduate Adviser  Date

DIVISION OF GRADUATE AFFAIRS

☐ Approved  ☐ Denied

Comments

Graduate Dean/Designee Signature  Date

Protected Level 2 Document ~If found, please return form to the Division of Graduate Affairs

~ CHECK YOUR WEBPORTAL FOR UPDATES TO YOUR STUDENT RECORDS ~
Petition for Academic Adjustment: Sample 2 (to be submitted online)

San Diego State University
Division of Graduate Affairs
SSE 1410  (619) 594-5213

Petition for Adjustment of Academic Requirements for the Master’s Degree

(TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY)

RED ID

Degree (e.g., MA, MS, MBA)  Major (and concentration/specialization, if applicable)

Last Name                  First               MI

Street Address

City                        State       Zip Code       Telephone No.

STUDENT REQUEST
State request and provide explanation/reason for request. For example, if modifying your Official Program of Study indicate course(s) to be added/dropped, specify deadline extension for incomplete(s), list course(s) added to improve GPA on your Official Program of Study, list additional units to replace expired units, and list course repeat(s).

Add GEOG 596: GIS Programming with Python to core requirement for M.S. GIS Degree.

Student Signature       Date

DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL
☑ Approved          ☐ Denied

Comments

GEOG 596: GIS Programming with Python satisfies core requirement. Material is appropriate.

Allen Hope

Graduate Adviser (Print Name)  Signature of Graduate Adviser       Date

DIVISION OF GRADUATE AFFAIRS
☐ Approved          ☐ Denied

Comments

Graduate Dean/Designee Signature       Date

Protected Level 2 Document – If found, please return form to the Division of Graduate Affairs

3/13

~ CHECK YOUR WEBPORTAL FOR UPDATES TO YOUR STUDENT RECORDS ~
Department of Geography Special Study/Research Registration Form

Geography 797 Research        # of Units  1☐2☐3☐   Schedule # ________
Geography 798 Special Study   # of Units  1☐2☐3☐   Schedule # ________
Geography 890 Ind. Study Doc. # of Units  1☐ 2☐3☐6☐   Schedule # ________
Geography 897 Doc. Research   # of Units  1☐2☐3☐6☐   Schedule # ________
Geography 899 Doc. Dissertation # of Units  1☐2☐3☐6☐   Schedule # ________

Semester ______________________

Name ____________________________________________
  Last                              First                        MI

Email ____________________________  Red ID # ______________________

Telephone ____________________________  Home                        Cell/Work

Title of Project ____________________________

BRIEF OUTLINE OR ASSIGNMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Approval: ____________________________  Project ____________________________
  Supervising Faculty Signature      Date     Student Signature

Grade:  ☐RP (Incomplete)  ☐Credit  ☐No Credit

*Student and Faculty member must complete an Incomplete Agreement Form before assigning the RP grade.
Completion of Thesis Proposal Defense

Geography Department
Master’s Program

Completion of Thesis Proposal Defense

<table>
<thead>
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Thesis Title

Date of Proposal Defense (Month, Day, Year)

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<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
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<td>Additional Member</td>
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Completion of Thesis in Approved Format: Submit to Graduate Advisor

Geography Department  
Master’s Program

COMPLETION OF THESIS IN APPROVED FORMAT

NAME:

____________________________________________________________________

THESIS TITLE:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

The above thesis has been completed and formatted in its final form for submission to Montezuma Publishing:

____________________________________________________________________

Student Signature  Date

____________________________________________________________________

Thesis Advisor Signature  Date

***IN ORDER TO HAVE THE GRADUATE ADVISOR SIGN THE REPORT OF FINAL EXAMINATION(S) OR THESIS DEFENSE FORM, YOU MUST HAVE THIS FORM COMPLETED***

Source:
Financial Aid and Scholarships

Master's level students are eligible to apply for four Geography Scholarships that reward excellent academic progress and/or achievements, including but not limited to:

- Alvena Storm Memorial Scholarship (for all Master’s students)
- McFarland Scholarship (demonstrated financial need is an additional requirement of this scholarship)
- Ned H. Greenwood Award Scholarship (for Master’s students specializing in physical geography)
- William & Vivian Finch Scholarship (for Master’s students with interests in remote sensing)

These scholarships are competitive and are administered through the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (OFAS). The scholarships have different requirements and students are required to submit a separate application for each scholarship they wish to be considered.

Scholarship applications are typically due early in the spring semester and the winners are announced towards the end of the academic year. Awards are often disbursed to students by OFAS at the beginning of the next academic year (fall semester). Technically this means that Master’s level students should apply for these scholarships during their first year in the program, so that they can benefit from the scholarship during their second year. For more information on SDSU Scholarships, please visit their website: https://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/faodad/webss$scholarshipSearch

In addition, the department offers a number of scholarships-awards, including awards for students with interests in GIS, Cartography, Children and Social Geography, and Human Geography. The department also offers one or awards that recognize students’ service and citizenship to the department. These awards are administered internally, and do not require an application to OFAS or to the department. Deserving students are selected by deliberation and a vote of the entire faculty in the department. These awards are made possible by generous yearly contributions and gifts from donors; availability may vary from year to year.

A number of funding opportunities are highlighted on the Graduate Division website http://grad.sdsu.edu/funding/funding_opportunities. Of particular note: Graduate Equity Fellowship applications are due September 14, 2018. This is a fellowship for Master’s students who are California residents, have a 3.00 GPA, and demonstrate a financial need. Please direct eligible students to this web page to obtain an application.
Contact Information

Graduate Advisor for the Master's Program

Dr. Trent Biggs  594-0902*  tbiggs@sdsu.edu

Graduate Administrative Coordinator

Candra Young  594-8555  candra.young@sdsu.edu

Other Resources

Admissions and Records  594-6871
Campus Information  594-6551
Disabled Student Services  594-6473
Financial Aid  594-6323
Graduate Division  594-5213
Housing Information  594-5742
International Student Center  594-1982
Student Financial Services  594-6422

*For general questions or concerns, please email the Graduate Administrative Coordinator or Graduate Advisor.