

Frequently asked questions: Current students, Master's in Geography

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Advancing to candidacy and thesis proposal defense

Q: 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 assemble your thesis committee. 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. Most Geography Master's Students will have completed 15 units by the end of their first year.

Q: When do I find members for and convene my thesis committee?

You should explore options for your thesis committee with your advisor in your first two semesters. You can convene your thesis committee for your thesis proposal defense anytime after your first semester.

Q: Can I defend my thesis proposal, even if I haven't submitted the Thesis Committee Form?

Yes. 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 may defend your thesis proposal before this, and have the committee sign the form in the fall of your second year.

Q: 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 result in your thesis.

Defending your thesis and graduation: Deadlines

Q: What are the deadlines to apply to graduate?

The deadlines to apply for graduation are posted at <http://aztecgrad.sdsu.edu/gra/Default.aspx>.

** Note that for spring and summer graduation, the deadline for application to graduate can be as early as January.**

Q: What is the deadline to submit my thesis for graduation?

See <http://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesis1/ThesisDeadlines.aspx>. The “Final deadline” is the most important. The “Without Risk” deadline does not apply to Geography students, whose advisors and not Montezuma Publishing approve the final thesis content and format.

Q: 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). The deadline for the “Report of Final Examination or Thesis Defense” form is the same as the Montezuma Publishing Deadline.

Q: There are two deadlines listed for Deadlines on Montezuma Publishing and on the Graduate Division website. One says “Final Deadline” and the other “Last day to submit”. What do those two deadlines mean?

The first deadline, “Final Deadline” is to graduate in that same semester, while the second one, “Last day to submit”, is to graduate in the subsequent semester, but without having to register for 799B. If you file by the “Last day to submit” you’ll need to reapply for graduation but would not have to take 799B.

Defending the thesis: Forms and procedures

Q: 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.

Q: 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 advisor, have your main thesis advisor sign the Completion of Thesis in an Approved Format form.
3. Fill out the “Report of Final Examination or Thesis Defense” form but do not have it signed by your thesis advisor. Bring the signed “Completion of Thesis in an Approved Format” form and the unsigned “Report of Final Examination or Thesis Defense” form to the Master’s Advisor (Dr. Biggs) for signature.
4. Submit the “Completion of Thesis in an Approved Format” form to the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Geography Department.
5. Submit the “Report of Final Examination or Thesis Defense” form to the Graduate Division.
6. Submit a hardcopy of your signature page to Montezuma Publishing.
7. Email a PDF of your thesis to Montezuma Publishing (thesis@aztecmail.com).
See <http://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesis1/ThesisDeadlines.aspx> for details.

Q: 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, see <http://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesis1/Formatting.aspx> for details), which need to follow MP’s requirements. Formatting suggestions and templates are available at

<http://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesis1/Formatting.aspx>). Note that you do *not* need to follow the instructions at <http://www.montezumapublishing.com/thesis1/Procedures.aspx>.

Q: 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.