INTRODUCTION
Welcome to the Graduate Program in Geosciences at Utah State University! This handbook is a source of information about policies and procedures within the Department. Items in this handbook do not replace University or School of Graduate Studies policies and requirements.

CONTACTS
Your advisor is your primary resource in the Geosciences program. Others that will be able to help you are:
Department Head
• Joel Pederson, joel.pederson@usu.edu, 435-797-7097

Faculty Graduate Committee
• Tammy Rittenour, tammy.rittenour@usu.edu
  ○ in charge of new students, office assignments, scholarships, and funding

Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC)
• Kelly Bradbury, kelly.bradbury@usu.edu, 435-797-0515
  ○ help with most paperwork & general questions

Business Manager
• Hollie Richards, hollie.richards@usu.edu, 435-797-0660
  ○ any money questions, employee paperwork, and snarky remarks

Students are responsible for informing themselves of current polices and requirements.

Please refer to the USU General Catalog. Much useful information will be found at the School of Graduate Studies website under the “Current Students” tab.

The School of Graduate Studies will have most of the forms you will need.

Useful source of information, including details of the JSU Student Code, is found at Student Affairs.

The Equity Office covers discrimination & sexual harassment/misconduct. Contact them with any concerns.

GETTING STARTED AT USU
1. Plan on arriving on campus at least one week prior to classes starting
2. A month or more before the academic year begins (July), you will work with your advisor, the GPC, and Business Manager to set up your assistantship, courses and tuition, and insurance. Please keep your contact information current, as some communications are time sensitive.
3. You must register each semester prior to the Registrar’s deadline.
4. Much of the communications happen through email. Set up and use your USU aggiemail account. It is preferred for you to use firstname.lastname, but not required.
5. Desk and office space are provided. Most office space is in GEOL 402.
6. Your department mailbox will be located in GEOL 207, also known as the Oldham.
7. You will receive a set of keys and a building prox card. Key are picked up at the Key Office on the east side of campus. Students pay a one-time key deposit of $25 & prox deposit of $5, which is refunded when the keys are returned. Work with your advisor and Hollie to request the right keys.
8. Picture ID cards are gotten at the Taggart Student Center [TSC] room 212. Your ID card functions as your library, meal, activities, rec center, computer access, health center, and copy card.
9. Student parking passes are available at the Parking Office on the north edge of campus.
10. Lab Safety Training is done in two parts. The first part is online and must be completed before taking the second part in-person.

THE DEPARTMENT
Besides those listed above, the following are people in the department.

Faculty:
- Alexis Ault
- Carol Dehler, undergrad advisor
- Jim Evans
- Amy Hochberg
- Tom Lachmar, undergrad advisor
- Blair Larsen
- Dave Liddell
- Tony Lowry
- Dennis Newell, Safety Czar
- Tammy Rittenour, OSL lab
- John Shervais

Staff:
- Andrew Lonero, lab guru [Instrument Manager of Geochem & Isotope lab]
- Ellen Imler, staff assistant

ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>BNR</th>
<th>Biology &amp; Natural Resources Building</th>
<th>CAPS</th>
<th>Counseling &amp; Psychological Services</th>
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<td>CoS</td>
<td>College of Science</td>
<td>ESLC</td>
<td>Eccles Science Learning Center (location of CoS Dean's office)</td>
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<td>Travel Authorization Form [before travel]</td>
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<td>TSC</td>
<td>Taggart Student Center</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>College of Natural Resources</td>
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EXCEPTIONS & TIDBITS

- You are expected to attend the department's Speaker Series, which is held on Mondays at 3:30pm. Speakers are drawn from academia, industry, and government agencies. Broad exposure to the ideas and research of other geoscientists is a critical aspect of graduate training.

- You are strongly encouraged to attend other lectures and opportunities. Some industry recruiters will present about their companies. In order to support the Department and your classmates with career aspirations with those companies, a good showing is very important. Please make an effort to participate in such opportunities.
• Please **support your fellow graduates and attend their defense.** This is a great way to see what is expected and to learn a lot.

• **Science Unwrapped** is once a month on a Friday evening.

• Consider your program as a full-time job and be prepared to engage fully.

• Labs—Lab safety training is offered by OHS. Specialized training offered by Geosciences is required before using labs, including the rock saws.

• Computers—Let Hollie or Joel know if there is software that you require that isn’t currently on a department computer. They will arrange for IT to install it.

• Thesis formatting and content is important. A [publication guide](#) and word template is available on the SGS website.

**DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES**

**Field and Lab Equipment & Safety**

Most department equipment may be borrowed by students for their use in field work, research, or class activities. Different equipment is maintained by varying faculty & staff

• **General Field Equipment**
  - Field equipment items include basic Brunton Compasses, measuring tapes, shovels & picks, color charts, GPS units, and portable stereoscopes. There is also a significant store of camping equipment, field cooking equipment, water containers, etc.

• **Survey Equipment**
  - Total stations, survey-grade GPS units, high-precision RTK-GPS units are available. Some of these instruments are utilized by the entire department and for teaching. To request their use, please check with Joel Pederson.

• **Microscopes**
  - Binocular Microscopes and petrographic microscopes may be signed out for use in graduate student offices or research labs when not required for use in classes. Related equipment includes light sources, mechanical stages (with or without point-count gears), and a counter bank. Check with Dave Liddell about binocular scopes and John Shervais about petrographic scopes.

• **Other minor equipment**
  - Use of other equipment may be arranged by contacting the particular faculty or staff as listed below:
    - Rock crushers & grinder
    - Rock prep area, thin sections
    - Research scopes and mineral separation
    - Seismic, resistivity, magnetometer
    - Field XRF, magnetic susceptibility meter, gamma spectrometer

    | Equipment Description                               | Location | Contact         |
    |-----------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------------|
    | Rock crushers & grinder                              | 005A     | Alexis Ault     |
    | Rock prep area, thin sections                        | 004      | Kelly Bradbury, Carol Dehler |
    | Research scopes and mineral separation               | 117      | Alexis Ault     |
    | Seismic, resistivity, magnetometer                   | G006     | Tony Lowry      |
    | Field XRF, magnetic susceptibility meter, gamma spectrometer | G004A | Andrew Lonero   |
• Major Laboratory Instruments
  o Students wishing to use our XRD or XRF should contact Kelly Bradbury. Those interested in using the mass spectrometers and other capabilities of the GEO 115 geochemistry lab will need to work through Andrew Lonero.
  o For the USU Luminescence Lab or the Malvern particle-size analyzer, contact Tammy Rittenour.
  o They will keep track of user time/number of analyses for billing purposes. The instrument fee schedule is different for courses versus unfunded or funded research and is subject to change. Double check with Tammy or Andrew for current costs.

• Laboratory Safety & OSHA Standards
  o The department must comply with OSHA standards in storage and use of all chemicals, including dark-room chemicals, epoxy, hydrochloric acid, alcohol, and acetone.
  o Access to some lab areas is restricted.
  o Safety training and acknowledged receipt of Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are required in labs using chemicals.
  o Training is required for all users of our labs. Work with Dennis to get trained.

Travel Policies
• Travel Authorization/Travel Reimbursement (TA/TR)
  o If you are doing any travel related to University business, including attending conferences & doing fieldwork, you must complete the proper travel form at least two week in advance. For procedures and help starting the paperwork, visit Hollie or Ellen in the front office as soon as you know your travel will occur. The process can take time, and the form must be completed prior to travel for insurance purposes.

• Driving Training Certification
  o Students are often asked to drive a department, university, or personal vehicle for teaching or research purposes. You must complete the state mandated on-line driver training test before driving for any University purpose. (This isn't the same as a State of Utah driver's license.)
  o Make sure to complete all four steps of the process.
  o Forward the certificate you receive to Ellen.
  o The training must be renewed every two years.

• Vehicles
  o The department owns three vehicles, a river raft, and a trailer. The vehicles and trailer are parked in a fenced lot east of the Motor Pool building on 1500 North near 900 East.
  o As a TA you will be responsible for picking up and returning the vehicles. Be prepared to plan ahead. There is a department bike dubbed Trilobike that you can use or the bus system also sometimes helps.
  o Our fleet of vehicles was started by generous donations from alumni, and we need to keep them in good shape as long as possible.

• Driving Process
  o You will be given a pouch with the vehicle keys, gas card, and insurance/registration information, as well as a pre/post-trip inspection sheet.
  o Make sure the inspections are fully completed before and after each trip.
  o The beginning and ending mileage are critical for each trip. This information MUST be filled in.
  o After each trip, make sure the tank has no less than ¼ gas, and wash/vacuum as needed.
Once the vehicle[s] are returned to their parking spot, promptly return the key pouch and inspection sheet to the office.
- Parking tickets are the responsibility of the driver, not the department
- Poor driving may result in revocation of privileges.

- Other Notes
  - The department supports student travel to one professional meeting
    - You must present a poster or paper
    - You must also apply for additional travel funding from the School of Graduate Studies.
  - Do not work alone in the field. Notify contacts as to your whereabouts and timing [notify the department head is no one else is available].

**Keys and Building Security**
- Students are typically issued two keys and a prox card. Work with Hollie and your advisor to order them.
- One key accesses the specific office/lab space consented by your major advisor; the other is a sub-master that allows access to the following rooms: 401, 202, 102, 101. The prox card gives you access to the building after hours and on weekends.
- All members of the department with keys share in the responsibility for department security. Please make sure ALL unattended research labs and offices are kept locked.

**Geosciences Office—Supplies and Facilities**
- Office supplies are purchased with state funds and should not be taken for personal use.
- When a specific item is needed, but the office doesn’t have it in stock, talk to Hollie or Ellen about the possibility of ordering it.
- Do not take staplers, scissors, tape dispensers, or other office equipment out of the office. These items are maintained for the convenience of all.
- Letterhead is used only for official departmental correspondence and should not be used for any other purpose. Students may use letterhead for research-related or profession-level correspondence. Letterhead is digital, but USU watermarked paper can be accessed from the office through your advisor.
- When making copies for classes that you TA, use the code for that class, which is the four-digit course number. There is no pin for copies ever. If making copies for your research, or if you need to print to the larger printer, use pin 159.

**Geosciences Book Library & Map Library**
The department maintains a collection of geologic and topographic maps, with emphasis on the intermountain west. In addition, we have a collection of USU Geology Graduate theses, U.S. Geological Survey publications, various regional field guides & technical reports, and some scientific journals.

These rooms function as a branch of the greater USU Library system. Some holdings are Federal Depository holdings and are not the property of the Geosciences Department. In order to maintain its usefulness as a reference for all, it is critical that maps and volumes be properly returned for reshelving.
- The Map Library is in GEOL G138.
- There is not a dedicated librarian, so access must be somewhat restricted and focused on research and teaching purposes.
- The Book Library is in GEOL 203A.
- Access is limited to regular office hours (M-F, 8a-5p).
• Hard copies of all Theses & Dissertations from the Geo department reside in this library.
• There is a catalog to help find what you need in the Map room and Library.
• Books & maps must be signed out.
• If you somehow compromise the last copy of a given map or document, please notify the office staff so that replacements can be obtained.
• USU’s library has many electronic resources for when you are off campus, Articles, Digital Dissertations, GeoScienceWorld, GeoRef, & Scopus to name a few you should use.

Computer Facilities
The Department of Geosciences maintains banks of computers and printers for student use in the Oldham (GEOL 207), the graduate office area (GEOL 401), and in a grad lab (GEOL 114). These facilities are not supported by the computer fee collected at registration (which enables you to use other computer labs on campus), but instead by department funds only.
• ArcGIS computers are in GEOL 112.
• Structure-Tectonics map lab is in GEOL 303.
• For plotting large format maps & posters, the plotter in GEOL 401 is good for draft or documents that don’t need fancy paper. For other/final projects, use other plotter facilities on campus.
• When paper supply or toners get low, see Ellen in the Geosciences office for a new supply.
• All students are required to provide their own USB storage. The hard drives on departmental computers are used for operating system and software only.
• You cannot install software on general access department computers. If there is a program you need, talk to your advisor about having it downloaded.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT & RESIDENCY
Note: The Geosciences Department cannot pay for student body & course fees. Graduate students are responsible for paying their own. This also applies to 20% of the subsidized student insurance each semester.

Graduate Assistantships
• Graduate research and teaching assistantships, and their accompanying tuition waivers, are available to students in our Thesis program. Students in the AEG-MS program do not qualify.
• Graduate research assistantships (RAs) are awarded according to the funding secured for such by individual faculty members. RAs are to meet the research needs of projects and may or may not directly relate to a student’s thesis.
• Graduate teaching assistantships (TAs) are limited in number. They are distributed at the discretion of the department. As a general rule, they are not automatically renewed for successive years.
• Grad students with TAs and RA appointments must be registered as full-time grad students.
  ○ Minimum of 6 credit hours until the required number of coursework and Thesis-research credits are completed [30 credits for MS, 42 credits for PhD]
  ○ If necessary past that point, minimum drops to 3 credits [GEO 6990/7990 Continuing Grad Advisement]
• TA/RA appointments are typically for 50% time [20 hours per week]
  ○ You are a full-time student and a part-time university employee.
  ○ With a 50% appointment time, you may not accept additional university employment without permission of the School of Graduate Studies.
  ○ With an assistantship and being a full-time student, concurrent off-campus employment is very strongly discouraged.
• In order to gain continuing support beyond the second (MS) and third (PhD) semesters of study, you must have an approved Program of Study form on file in the School of Graduate Studies.

Advancement to Candidacy (PhD)
As an incentive for PhD students, the value of the base TA-RA assistantship is increased once you have officially advanced to candidacy: after your comprehensive exams and Dissertation proposal are complete.

Tuition Support
If you are receiving a graduate teaching or research assistantship, a graduate fellowship, or most scholarships, the University provides a non-resident tuition waiver your first year. Fellowships and scholarships may cover in-state tuition portion. The Geosciences Department helps accomplish this through research fund and donations from generous alumni.

Utah Residency
USU can only cover the relatively expensive nonresident tuition for the first 12 months of your program. If you are a U.S. citizen and not a formal resident of Utah, you must take the steps to gain formal residency in your first year here. This includes, but is not limited to, things like gaining a Utah driver license, registering as a voter in Utah, and providing financial and tax information. Information about the steps toward residency and the required application form are on the Admissions website.

Government Financial Aid
As a graduate student, you may apply for financial aid, including work study, even if you have a TA or RA. If you qualify and receive it, work study may be used in conjunction with an assistantship and has advantages for both the department and student.

Student Health Insurance
Full-time graduate students receiving graduate assistantship support are required to have health insurance. All enrolled graduate students, including those less than full-time or not receiving assistantship support, are eligible for this insurance at subsidized rates.
If you receive an RA or TA, we will enroll you in a subsidized student health insurance plan and you are assessed a relatively affordable fee during registration. If you prefer to be covered by other insurance, you must actively document that coverage and each semester waive the USU insurance plan via a website process at the beginning of each semester.

Department Funding Sources
The Geosciences Department has several named scholarships that can be awarded to graduate students in support of thesis field research. To qualify, you Program of Study form must be on file in the School of Graduate Studies. An application form is provided for submittal in the spring semester and selections are made late in the spring semester. Awards are usually on the order of $1000 but vary due to many factors. For more information, please refer to Appendix B.

Other Sources
• The School of Graduate Studies provides some travel support for meetings or conferences when you present. These funds are matched by the Department of Geosciences or your advisor.
• Professional organizations, such as GSA, AAPG, SEPM, & Sigma Xi, make competitive awards for thesis research. Grad students are encouraged to work with their advisors in seeking such support for their research. Most are designed to be undertaken in the first academic year of a graduate
degree program. In all cases, applications require information about the intended research design. For more information, see Appendix B.

- The USGS ED MAP program and the UGS provide thesis support for mapping investigations. If appropriate, work with your thesis advisor in seeking support from these sources.
- The National Science Foundation (NSF) provides Graduate Research Fellowships that can provide significant and prestigious financial support for research. These are very competitive and must be applied for immediately, in the first semester of a program. NSF also has various Dissertation Research Enhancement grants opportunities for somewhat later in a PhD student's program.

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

TA Assignments
Teaching assignments will not be the same for all; some may end up teaching more lab sections than others. Assignments are made with deference to class schedule. Every attempt is made to keep assignments equitable.

Typically, each full TA is assigned 3 two-hour labs for the same course, for a total of six contact hours per semester. In cases where the labs are three hours long, two lab sections would be assigned. In some instances, it may be necessary to make a mixed assignment between lab courses.

Most of your twenty hours per week as a TA consists of lab preparation time, office hours to meet with students, and grading lab assignments. On occasion, other tasks may be assigned, such as proctoring and/or grading exams, and/or providing other services to the department. Faculty course instructors should inform their assigned TA[s], as well as their lecture sections, of the teaching assistant's responsibilities.

You will be provided with a list of students registered for your lab section. Only those students on this list should be allowed in your lab and given lab materials. Any student not on a lab list must register for a lab section. Lab assignments or permission to add a lab section can be made only by the faculty instructor.

You may allow an occasional student to attend your lab for make-up purposes, but it is important that you do not exceed the room capacity under any circumstances. If the make-up is for a student that is not from one of your labs, communicate fully with the student's regular TA.

Performance
As a teaching assistant, you are a representative of this department. Act responsibly and dress appropriately for the classroom. You have a contractual responsibility to arrive prepared and on time for all labs.

Under no circumstances can the TA make the decision to cancel a scheduled lab. This is solely the responsibility of the supervision faculty instructor. If you must miss a lab, including for the purpose of a professional meeting, contact the faculty instructor well in advance to let them know about the situation. It is up to you to find a suitable replacement to teach your lab. Failure to meet an assigned lab without contacting the supervising faculty member could result in the loss of your Teaching Assistantship.

Upon completion of you lab, erase the whiteboard, close any open windows, turn off the lights and projector, return any borrowed chairs to their proper place, and return all lab materials to their proper storage place. If the projection screen and shades were lowered, raise them. If you have the last lab for the day, please lock the door when finished.

Sexual Harassment
As a teaching assistant, you are required to complete a workshop on prevention of sexual harassment. Teaching assistants are persons of authority in the classroom environment, and you are responsible for reporting incidents of sexual harassment to the faculty instructor and the Department Head immediately.
Teaching assistants should not tolerate sexual harassment in their classrooms, including harassment between students. Teaching assistants should not date or extensively socialize with students during the period in which they have grading or supervisory responsibilities over them. More information is available on the University's [page](#) for the sexual harassment policy.

**Teaching Evaluations**

It is recommended that each teaching assistant be evaluated early in the semester (after teaching three to four labs). An evaluation this early is meant to be a constructive exercise permitting you to modify your teaching techniques if needed. See Appendix A for a link to the form. The evaluation will be carried out in the lecture section by the faculty instructor, and the results discussed only between the instructor and the TA.

**Lab Materials**

Most GEO 1115 (Physical Geology Lab) materials are stored in room GEOL 202. Materials borrowed from this room must be returned immediately after your lab so that other TAs will have access to them. In fact, you may be sharing lab materials with one or two other lab sections of other classes meeting at the same hour. In general, each rock and mineral set should be shared between two students. For example, taking 12 sets will cover a class of 22 students with one set for the TA. The Geosciences Department has many impressive, large teaching specimens, stored in various places. You are encouraged to enliven your teaching by using these materials. Please inquire with the faculty instructor for the course about accessing these, and please return all specimens promptly.

All TAs are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the rock and mineral sets and map materials. If specimens have become sufficiently hand worm and dirty so that they are no longer representative or functional, they should be replaced. Check with the faculty instructor about finding appropriate replacement material before throwing anything away.

**Safety in the Lab**

You are expected to communicate to your students the reasonable precautions that must be taken in using lab facilities and materials. For example, the glass pallet used to test for hardness should be placed firmly on the table and not held in the hand. Also, at the start of each semester, acid bottles should be rinsed, re-labeled if needed, and refilled from the large bottle stored in the fume hood in room GEOL 115. Use only those hydrochloric acid bottles that are labeled clearly to show the contents to be diluted hydrochloric acid. Caution students that acid should not be placed indiscriminately on every specimen; when it is used, it should be blotted off or rinsed off.

If there is any possibility that a student has gotten acid in the eyes, immediately take the student to the eye wash station. Having a wet floor is that last concern—slam the handle and turn the eye wash on full. The student should be taken to Student Health Services [Medical Building, north of the stadium] immediately after a thorough washing.

**YOU NEED TO KNOW**

**Rights to Data**

The School of Graduate Studies requires the completion of "Authorship and Copyright" [paperwork](#) at the time of the Thesis defense. This form comes with the packet of materials for the defense, and it designates authorship, copyright restrictions, and ownership of the research results. Authorship of manuscripts for publication resulting from thesis research should be determined by mutual agreement between the
student, the thesis advisor, and the student’s graduate committee. We ask students to discuss authorship and ownership during their first year in residence in order to avoid confusion. Graduate students may not automatically be considered first author of all publications resulting from their thesis research. Research is commonly a component of a larger project funded by their advisor and involving additional students and/or other professional colleagues. Students may initiate a manuscript for publication, however circumstances may dictate that the student is unable to prepare a manuscript for publication in a timely fashion. Typically, submission of a manuscript to the advisor should occur no later than six months following completion of the degree program. If a manuscript is not forthcoming, the advisor may initiate the manuscript and/or may assume senior authorship.

Ownership of thesis-related research materials generally resides with the Department of Geosciences and/or the advisor. Representative rock samples and/or thin sections cited in a thesis should be left with the advisor or stored in the department thesis-specimen depository. Any thesis-related materials derived from externally-funded research projects must be retained by the advisor as the advisor is ultimately responsible to the funding agency.

If leaving residency before completion of all degree requirements, the student is required to deposit copies of pertinent thesis research documents (field notes, field maps, cross sections, thesis drafts, etc.) with the advisor.

**Intellectual Property**

Students who switch to a different advisor should expect to work on a different project after changing advisors. Research projects are rarely the intellectual property of a student.

**Conflict Resolution**

The Department of Geosciences has a well-deserved reputation for being a cordial environment. Unfortunately, disagreements between student and their advisors sometimes occur. The following is an attempt to clarify the procedure that should be followed in these circumstances. Please note that all parties involved in a conflict have an obligation to communicate about problems or potential problems early on and to actively work toward their resolution.

1. Issues of concern must be discussed by the student and the student’s advisor and then, if necessary, with the student’s thesis committee. Advisors and the thesis committees are likely to be in the best position to evaluate the technical aspects of the research project.
2. If problems still exist after discussions with their advisor and committee, the student should speak with the Faculty Graduate Committee. In this capacity, the Faculty Graduate Committee will try to be fair and listen (separately) to both sides of the disagreement and will then try to mediate an agreement between both parties.
3. If the Faculty Graduate Committee is unsuccessful in mediating the situation, the issues go to the Department Head, who will make a recommendation to both student and advisor/committee.
4. As a last resort, a student can go to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and request his/her intervention, as outlined in the “Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University”. Hopefully, any situation that develops within our department can be resolved before this step is called for.

**Leave of Absence**

The School of Graduate Studies requires that students submit a Leave of Absence/Continuous Registration form if there will be an extended absence. Extended leaves result in a fee upon registration.
MASTER OF SCIENCE (GEOLOGY) PROGRAM

MS Program Description and Requirements
The Geology MS involves advanced study and has a focus on original research. There are six specializations with the Geology plan-A graduate programs: 1) Geomorphology and Earth Surface Processes; 2) Geophysics; 3) Hydrogeology; 4) Petrology and Geochemistry; 5) Sedimentology and Paleocoeology; and 6) Structure and Tectonics.

Only the Plan A thesis option is allowed for the MS degree in Geology. Program Prerequisite: Completion of a BS or BA in geology, biology, physics, chemistry, engineering, or related field is required for matriculated status.

Although advanced courses should be selected primarily from Geology offerings, additional courses may be selected from other departments on campus relating to the Geosciences, such as Biology, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Mathematics and Statistics, Plants, Soils, and Climate, and Watershed Sciences.

Requirements
30 credits of graduate work are required for the MS degree, with at least 15 credits of coursework. The recommended distribution is about 20 credits of coursework and 10 credits of thesis. At least 9 to 15 credits of 6000-level geoscience courses are recommended for the degree program.

A 3.0 grade point average must be obtained in required coursework as listed on the Program of Study. Only two grades of less than B (C to B-) will be accepted as part of the required degree program as listed on the Program of Study. Thesis credits will be graded Pass/Fail only (i.e., no letter grade will be given). Graduate students using Department or University facilities and/or under Geosciences faculty supervision must register for a minimum of 3 credits every semester, up to and including the semester in which the thesis is cleared by the School of Graduate Studies. Registration is not required during the summer.

The Graduate Catalog currently states that a student must be registered for at least 3 credits the semester of a thesis/dissertation defense:

The semester a student defends (or redefends) a thesis, AEG paper, or dissertation, or takes final oral examinations, the student must be registered for at least 3 credits.

If a student has not completed all degree requirements by the end of the grace semester, the student must pay a $100 Late Completion Fee for each semester following the grace semester. If working with faculty involves more than routine submission of the thesis or dissertation to the assistant dean, registration for 3 or more credits is required.

The School of Graduate Studies changed this requirement, under certain circumstances. If a student has completed all coursework on an approved Program of Study, and if working with faculty involves no more than routine submission of the thesis or dissertation, the student will have to register for only one credit the semester of a thesis/dissertation defense. Keep in mind that if a student is registered for only one credit, the student will NOT be considered full time; the student will not be eligible to continue deferring repayment of some student loans, and an international student may not be in compliance with visa requirements.
Wording in the Catalog should reflect this change before the start of the fall semester. Be aware that by selecting to defend while registered for only one credit does not allow deferment of payments on student debt and may impact student’s visa if an international student. Consider this carefully and explore the option with advisor, if necessary.

The university requires students to be registered, if they use the library and buildings.

**Coursework Prerequisites**

Individual students may need to complete specific undergraduate coursework to prepare for their graduate program. In particular, these seven courses:

1. Introductory or Physical Geology with laboratory
2. Minerals and Rocks (Earth Materials)
3. Historical Geology
4. Sedimentation and Stratigraphy
5. Geomorphology
6. Structural Geology
7. Field Methods or experience

Decisions about any exceptions to these core prerequisites in a student’s graduate program are made by a student’s Advisory Committee in their first meeting. These undergraduate Geology courses cannot appear on the graduate Program of Study, nor can they be officially audited. Thus, completion of these prerequisites generally will be accomplished through lecture attendance and the passing of the regular exams in the courses.

**MS Time Line**

MS students should plan on finishing their degree program in two years. Logistics associated with field work may extend the time line somewhat. Maintaining matriculated status after three years is at the discretion of the primary advisor and Faculty Graduate Committee, based upon satisfactory progress.

*The School of Graduate Studies will only cover costs of nonresident tuition for the first academic year of your graduate program. Utah residency must be completed prior to the second academic year. If residency isn’t established by the start of the second academic year, student will be responsible for nonresident portion of tuition.*

The School of Graduate Studies has a 6-year limit for MS degree completion. Beyond this time, a student would need to re-apply to the program. Furthermore, after 8 years, coursework is retired and cannot be used towards a degree program without being recertified.

Graduate student research is commonly funded by agencies that require timely acquisition, analysis, and reporting of results. Students who fail to fulfill their funded research obligations in a timely, professional and satisfactory manner may be removed from the overall research project at the discretion of their academic advisor.

The following is a semester-by-semester timeline to be used as a guide for completing the Geology MS degree program in two years. Delaying off this schedule makes it very difficult to finish in two years:
Geology Masters Timeline

Fall Semester, Year One
___Meet early and often with advisor to define a research project.
___Discuss expectations of the Geosciences Department for graduate students with advisor after reviewing it. Sign the Geosciences Department Expectations Form upon completion.
___Submit signed Expectations Form to Grad Program Coordinator for department records.
___Establish thesis committee, submit Supervisory Committee Approval form to Grad Program Coordinator, who will forward it to the School of Graduate Studies.
___Have first thesis committee meeting, focused on your Program of Study and any prerequisites.
___Complete Program of Study for Master’s Degree form with committee and submit to Grad Program Coordinator, who will forward it to the School of Graduate Studies.
___Apply for funding for student grants [see Appendix B]. Be sure to verify deadlines well ahead of time.

Spring Semester, Year One
___Apply for research grant opportunities, if appropriate.
___Write Thesis Proposal draft with advisor mentoring; submit refined draft to committee.
___Revise and complete Thesis Project Approval form; submit to Grad Program Coordinator.
___Complete Thesis Proposal. Get committee signatures of approval on the form.
___Discuss authorship and copyright questions with advisor before beginning research.
___Complete and sign authorship form [see Appendix A].
___Examine copyright form and discuss with advisor [see Appendix A]. Do not sign until defense.
___Complete the College of Science annual IDP self-evaluation process.
___Complete the Geosciences department’s annual Progress/Self-Evaluation Form with advisor & committee.
___Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress/Self-Evaluation Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.

Summer Semester, Year One
___Communicate regularly and meet with your Advisor, when possible.
___Conduct thesis research. Apply for residency in the State of Utah, if not a resident.
___Register for minimum coursework required at the time [this varies].

Fall Semester, Year Two
___Continue research and begin writing thesis.
___Make 15-minute presentation during Speaker Series or at a professional meeting [poster presentations do not count for this].
___Hold committee meeting to appraise progress and discuss timeline for degree completion.

Spring Semester, Year Two
___Complete writing of thesis. Submit refined draft to committee and allow 2 weeks’ time for review.
    When approved by committee members, this becomes the “defense copy” of the thesis.
___With committee approval and signatures regarding timing, submit Appointment for Examination form to School of Graduate Studies. Forms must be submitted 2 weeks prior to the defense date requested.
___Defend thesis. Graduate student must be registered for at least 3 credits during the defense semester.
___Register for one credit once coursework outlines on the plan of study is completed.
___Make defense corrections to thesis.
___Submit committee-approved [signed] thesis to School of Graduate Studies for copy and format editing, along with the Authorship and Copyright form.
___Complete the Geosciences department's annual Progress Form with advisor/committee [if the committee has a draft of the thesis; this form is not required].
___Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.

**Summer Semester, Year Two**
___Make School of Graduate Studies edits.
___Submit “Application for Graduation” and other forms to School of Graduate Studies.
___Make final copies of thesis to be bound and deliver these along with binding fees and forms to the Merrill-Cazier library. [https://library.usu.edu/theses-dissertations/](https://library.usu.edu/theses-dissertations/)

**If Thesis Not Complete in Second Year**
___If all degree requirements are not completed by the end of the semester following the defense, then student must register for at least one credit the semester the final thesis is submitted. If not completed within one year of defense, thesis must be re-defended.
___Continue to make presentations to department or at a professional meeting once per academic year.
___Matriculated status may be changed to “non-matriculated” after three years, at discretion of academic advisor and Faculty Graduate Committee and based upon satisfactory progress.

**MS THESIS COMMITTEE**
Students are encouraged to establish their committees as soon as possible during their first semester, but the thesis committee must be established no later than the middle of the student's second semester on campus.

In consultation with advisor, select 2 or perhaps 3 other committee members, with one being from “outside” the topical specialty of your thesis. Two of the overall committee members must be from Geosciences (including Emeritus faculty) or other USU departments. One member can be from another institution, such as those with an adjunct appointment in Geosciences Department.

Faculty should be consulted about serving on the committee and their consent obtained. Complete the Supervisory Committee Approval form with all required signatures and submit it to the Grad Program Coordinator who will forward the form to the School of Graduate Studies. Advisor will need to ok this beforehand.

The thesis committee provides input in the process of course selection and thesis proposal construction. Once thesis research has been initiated, it is recommended that graduate students meet with their committee at least once a semester to discuss progress, problems, or deviations from the original thesis proposal.

At least one thesis committee meeting must be held within the regular nine-month academic year. At this meeting, the committee will evaluate progress toward completion of degree requirements. Failure of the graduate student to convene at least one thesis committee meeting within the regular nine-month academic year will be interpreted as a sign of unsatisfactory progress.

No changes in committee membership are permitted within six weeks of the thesis defense - this is requirement of the School of Graduate Studies.
THE MS PROGRAM OF STUDY AND COURSES

Once a thesis committee has been approved by the School of Graduate Studies, the graduate student should then meet with the advisor and committee members to determine and fill out a Program of Study for Master's Degree form, laying out a course of study appropriate for the intended thesis research. [https://gradschool.usu.edu/program-study] Once filled in, graduate student must notify by email the Grad Program Coordinator who checks them and forwards them on to be digitally signed and completed through the School of Graduate Studies.

MS students will not be allowed to receive Teaching Assistant support or in-state tuition waivers in their second academic year until the Program of Study is signed and filed at the School of Graduate Studies.

After the description at the top of the form in DegreeWorks, you should type in your research specialization. Remember, the Geology MS degrees have six specializations: 1) Geomorphology and Earth Surface Processes; 2) Geophysics; 3) Hydrogeology; 4) Petrology and Geochemistry; 5) Sedimentology and Paleocoeology; and 6) Structure and Tectonics.

The Program of Study represents a contract. If changes must be made later during the course of study, the form must be updated for the School of Graduate Studies or graduate student will not be able to graduate. This requires that advisor to approve the changes and have the Grad Program Coordinator send a memo to the School of Graduate Studies.

Distribution of Credits

- The recommended balance for the required 30 credits is about 20 credits of coursework and 10 credits of Thesis research. After the 30 credits are complete, any remaining credits until graduation must be Continuing Grad Advisement (GEO 6990).
- A typical summer industry internship at the MS level equates to 3 credits of Internship/Co-op Experience (GEO 6900)
- It is recommended that MS students take at least three, and preferably five, 6000-level courses to broaden their understanding of the various disciplines within geology and to ensure exposure to areas other than those directly related to their thesis research.
- No more than 12 credits of 5000-5999 level coursework may be used for a graduate degree.
- No more than 3 credits of 3000-4999 level courses may be applied toward the degree. These 3000-4999 level credits must be from outside your major area.
- You may not include the credit received for the TA training course [INST 7920] toward your MS degree.
- Following USU Grad Studies residency requirements, no more than 12 credits can be transferred from another institution. They must not have been used towards another degree.
- After the required credits for your Program of Study are complete, any remaining credits until graduation (3 credits are required the semester you defend) must be Continuing Grad Advisement (GEO 6990). These are not included in the Program of Study.
- In the summer, after a grace period of 21 days, graduate student will lose access to the library, some IT, and sports facilities. https://usu.service-now.com/usu/knowledge.do?sysparm_document_key=kb_knowledge.97572cce3d516104966c64aa561119c
  - If you need this access, please register for courses the following fall to keep your status active. If you have completed all your coursework, sign up for 1 credit of GEO 6990/7990 "Continuing Grad Advisement".
○ If this approach does not work, then certain fees must be paid up front for the summer. Graduate student will need to request that the specific fees that are required for the work be added. The Department will pay these fees. Please let the Graduate Committee, advisor, Grad Program Coordinator, and Department Head.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduate students using university facilities and/or under faculty supervision must register for a minimum of 3 credits per semester up to and including the semester in which the thesis is successfully defended. This applies only to the regular academic year, not summer. If a student is not using facilities or faculty time, the Grad Program Coordinator may write a request to School of Graduate Studies verifying this and waiving the 3-credit requirement, but the student will be subject to a $100 fee per semester. Following the thesis defense, registration policies of the School of Graduate Studies apply.

Appointment as a Teaching Assistant/Research Assistant requires 6 credits per semester until the ~20 credits of coursework on the “Program of Study” are completed. After that point, there is a 3-credit minimum enrollment.

Grades and GPA

Only two grades of less than “B” (e.g. “B-” to “C”) will be accepted as part of the required degree program as listed on the Program of Study. The School of Graduate Studies will not accept “D” grades. An overall 3.0 GPA must be obtained on required course work as listed on the Program of Study.

If graduate student falls below a 3.0 GPA, the School of Graduate Studies will place student on probation, and they cannot receive financial aid or TA funding. Student will have one semester to raise GPA and retain matriculated status.

Thesis research credits will be graded Pass/Fail only and are listed as Incomplete each semester they are taken. When degree program is complete, they are changed to Pass.

Only the pertinent member of the Faculty Graduate Committee can change these thesis-credit incompletes, as their “instructor of record”. Before changing the incompletes to Pass, the Faculty Graduate Committee must see and sign the “Exit Form for Graduate Students”, ensuring that any departmental equipment is checked back in, USU keys are returned, and etc.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF MS STUDENT PROGRESS

It is in the best interest of the student, advisor, and department to see that Master’s degrees are completed in a timely manner. Continuing TA support, tuition waivers, and other forms of financial support for students are contingent upon satisfactory progress towards the degree.

Review will be an ongoing process, and evidence of satisfactory progress includes:
   a) annual committee meetings (minimum)
   b) completion of the Program of Study
   c) thesis proposal
   d) annual presentations
   e) success in obtaining grant funding
   f) performance in graduate coursework
Unsatisfactory progress may be indicated through:
   a] failure to follow the graduate student time line presented above  
   b] unsatisfactory GPA and academic probation  
   c] your rate of progress in coursework  
   d] lack of thesis committee meetings  
   e] failure to make satisfactory progress on thesis research

If unsatisfactory performance is perceived by the thesis research advisor or Faculty Graduate Committee,  
the Faculty Graduate Committee will speak with the student and, if necessary, thesis committee. The  
Faculty Graduate Committee will then write a memo of notification regarding unsatisfactory progress for  
the student’s file and provide the student and advisor with copies.

If, over the semester following the above notification, the student continues to make unsatisfactory  
progress toward the degree [as determined by the advisor, thesis committee and Geology Faculty  
Graduate Committee], the student will be placed in non-matriculated status and the School of Graduate  
Studies will be notified. This ends the student’s participation in the Geology Graduate Program.

THE MS THESIS PROPOSAL

After deciding upon a particular research topic, the next step is to write a Thesis proposal. This should be  
completed as soon as possible. Creation of the Thesis proposal will help to focus and organize the  
research project, and the Thesis committee will be able to provide input during the writing and review  
stages of the proposal.

If the student and committee are in agreement, then the originally outlined project may be modified.

When the proposal is complete and the committee is ready to approve it, then the student must complete  
the Master’s Proposal Approval Form, which is sent around for signatures:  
https://gradschool.usu.edu/masters-thesis-project-approval/  
Please provide the Geosciences Grad Program Coordinator with a digital copy for your department file.

Format
   • The body of the MS thesis proposal should consist of pages of double-spaced text.  
   • In addition, there will be references, possibly tables or figures, and a schedule of tasks.  
   • The body of text should consist of the following parts at the minimum:
      1) INTRODUCTION  
         a] Project goals/hypotheses  
         b] Significance 
      2) BACKGROUND  
         a] Setting  
         b] Previous work—topical and regional literature review 
      3) METHODS  
         a] Field, laboratory, computational  
         b] Data analysis and synthesis  
      4) RESULTS [so far or anticipated]  
      5) SCHEDULE—semester-by-semester plan for completion  
      6) SUMMARY-- comments about important and feasibility of the project  
      7) REFERENCES--Include only those papers cited in the body of your proposal.
• Use the School of Graduate School format and style guide: https://gradschool.usu.edu/dissertation-thesis-format-style/
• In consultation with advisor, choose a geoscience journal whose format that can be followed with respect to citations. Geological Society of America publications are our default standard for style, and a style guide is available from them: https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Publications/Info_Services/Author_Info/
• When questions arise regarding style and format, discuss them with the editorial staff at the School of Graduate Studies.

Thesis Info
• Remember, the Thesis proposal is just that, a proposal. Do not attempt to write your entire Thesis at this time.
  ○ Communication between student, advisor, and thesis committee will help things to go more smoothly.
  ○ A key goal is to show that student has proficiency in the topic and techniques, knows why the work is important, and is prepared to do the work.
• In addition to a regular scientific abstract for your Thesis, USU now requires a “public abstract” as well. This is a non-technical summary of the work that can be read and understood by non-specialists. This is a skill that is increasingly important in the sciences.
• Tables and figures may need to be reduced but captions must remain full size and have the same size/style of print as the text.
• All section headings, figure and table captions, and plate titles must agree verbatim with the lists of same in the front of the thesis.
• Only references cited in the text should appear in the list of references. If a reference is important enough to list, it should be cited somewhere in the text.

ROLE OF THE ADVISOR AND THESIS COMMITTEE
Frequent communication with advisor is critical in structuring the thesis document.

Their role is to evaluate the methods, logic, synthesis of data, and conclusions. Preliminary drafts should be reviewed by the thesis advisor, not by the entire committee.

Once the thesis draft is in reasonable form, and with the advisor’s consent, the draft should then be reviewed by all committee members. This draft is not the defense copy.

Upon approving a thesis draft for defense, Thesis committee members, including the advisor, should be allowed at least two weeks for review of the draft. Committee members may refuse to review theses when other departmental or professional obligations conflict with a timely review.

Once approved by the committee, this becomes the defense copy. This version will not be returned to the candidate nor will any further changes be made in the thesis document by the candidate until after the defense. The committee must have the defense copy of the thesis at least two weeks prior to the defense. If there are photos, large plates, or appendices not quite ready for expensive duplication, at least one copy should be made available to the committee for the two-week period prior to the defense.

DEFENSE PREPARATION AND SCHEDULING
The thesis defense is often viewed as the last major hurdle on the path to receiving the MS degree. The length of student’s public presentation of the research should be about 30-40 minutes. This leaves time for
set up and questions afterwards, while still fitting within the 50-minute classroom timeslot that many
attendees will have available.

- Student is responsible for scheduling their thesis defense with the School of Graduate Studies after
  approval of their advisor and consultation with their committee.
- Remember that all committee members must have read the thesis before agreeing to schedule
  the defense.
- Scheduling requires paper work and signatures.

Multiple copies of theses, either defense copies or final versions, should not be run off on Department of
Geosciences printers and photocopiers.

**COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE AND BINDING**

After the Thesis signature page is signed by the committee, the process is turned over to the School of
Graduate Studies. Consult their webpage and materials to determine current practices are for scheduling
and reviewing theses, gaining the Dean of Graduate Studies signature, and graduating.

The Department of Geosciences still requests one bound copy of the thesis, many advisors request one,
and student may want a hardcopy. The library still provides a binding service as needed
([https://library.usu.edu/theses-dissertations/](https://library.usu.edu/theses-dissertations/)). The plates and figures to be placed in back pockets and
fold-out figures embedded in text must also be duplicated and fan-folded to a size appropriate for
binding.
MS-AEG PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS

The Applied Environmental Geology MS degree is a terminal degree program, requiring a combination of advanced courses selected from Geosciences offerings, as well as additional courses relating broadly to the Geosciences. The MS-AEG degree is also offered both through USU’s Statewide Campuses and Distance Education program: https://regionalcampuses.usu.edu/degrees/?id=35

The MS-AEG degree has two tracks: Energy and Environmental. Program Prerequisite: Bachelor’s degree in Geology, Earth Science, or related science discipline.

MS-AEG (non-Thesis) only; see graduate requirements in USU graduate catalog [https://geo.usu.edu/graduate-program/degree-requirements] for description of MS-AEG reports. The MS-AEG report is usually a review of literature, with conclusions drawn after conceptualizing an area of inquiry, planning a systematic search, and analyzing and critiquing the acquired information. The summary and conclusions developed should enhance knowledge in the discipline. MS-AEG reports should follow the same format specifications as theses and dissertations and are expected to reflect equivalent scholarship standards, even though they may be less intensive and do not demand original research as does an MS thesis. MS-AEG papers are defended, but are not reviewed by the School of Graduate Studies assistant dean or signed by the graduate dean.

MS-AEG students are rarely eligible for graduate assistantships or nonresident and instate tuition waivers.

Requirements

A total of 32 credit hours is required for graduation with the MS in Applied Environmental Geology. The distribution of this is 29-30 credits of coursework and 2 or 3 credits of thesis research to obtain the required 32 credits for the MS degree. Twelve or more credit hours should be in support courses outside of Geosciences. At least 16 credit hours should be in Geosciences, including thesis credits. Graduate students using Department or University facilities and/or under Geosciences faculty supervision must register for a minimum of 3 credits every semester, up to and including the semester in which the thesis is cleared by the School of Graduate Studies. Registration may not be required during the summer.

Only two grades of less than B (C to B-) will be accepted as part of the required degree program as listed on the “Program of Study for Master’s Degree.” A 3.0 grade point average must be obtained in required coursework as listed on the Program of Study. Thesis [MS-AEG report] credits will be graded P-F only (i.e., no letter grade will be given).

The MS-AEG program follows most of the same guideline as the Geology MS program described above. Below is only that information for the MS AEG degree that differs from the MS degree.
Coursework Prerequisites
As discussed in the Admission Requirements section above, individual students may need to complete specific undergraduate coursework to prepare them for their graduate program. In particular, MS-AEG students are expected to have 4 of these 7 core classes:

1) Introductory or Physical Geology with laboratory  
2) Minerals and Rocks [Earth Materials]  
3) Historical Geology  
4) Sedimentation and Stratigraphy  
5) Geomorphology  
6) Structural Geology  
7) Field Methods or experience

Decisions about any exceptions to these core prerequisites in a student’s graduate program are made by a student’s Advisory Committee in their first meeting. These undergraduate Geosciences courses cannot appear on the graduate Program of Study, nor can they be officially audited. Thus, completion of these prerequisites generally will be accomplished through lecture attendance and the passing of the regular exams in the courses.

MS-AEG TIMELINE

The MS-AEG program in Geology is designed to be completed in no more than two academic years. Maintaining matriculated status [i.e. within the degree program] after three years is at the discretion of the primary advisor and Faculty Graduate Committee, based upon satisfactory progress [see section below].

The School of Graduate Studies has a 6-year limit for MS degree completion. Beyond this time, one would need to re-apply to the program. Furthermore, after 8 years, coursework is retired and cannot be used towards a degree program without being recertified.

The following is a semester-by-semester timeline that can be used as a guide for completing the MS-AEG degree program in two years:

Fall Semester, Year One
___Meet early and often with advisor to define a focus for coursework and Report.
___Discuss expectations of the Geosciences Department for graduate students with advisor after reviewing it. Sign the Geosciences Department Expectations Form upon completion.  
___Submit signed Expectations Form to Grad Program Coordinator for our records.  
___Establish thesis committee, submit the School of Graduate Studies Supervisory Committee Approval form to Grad Program Coordinator [who will forward it to the School of Graduate Studies].  
___Have first thesis committee meeting, focused on Program of Study and any prerequisites.
___Apply for funding from student grants if appropriate for MS report and work. This application process starts in the late fall and concludes in the early spring.

Spring Semester, Year One
___Focus on coursework  
___Complete Program of Study for Master’s Degree form with committee and submit to Grad Program Coordinator [who will forward it to the School of Graduate Studies].  
___Complete Thesis prospectus, Get committee signatures of approval on the form.  
___Discuss authorship and copyright questions with advisor before beginning research.
Complete and sign authorship form. [https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/](https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/)
Examine copyright form but do not sign until defense. [https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/](https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/)
Complete the Geosciences department's annual Progress Form with advisor/or committee.
Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.

**Summer Semester, Year One**
Conduct further thesis literature review, take coursework if possible.
Apply for residency in the state of Utah if applicable.

**Fall Semester, Year Two**
Begin writing Report with mentoring from advisor.
Have committee meeting to appraise progress and discuss timeline for degree completion.

**Spring Semester, Year Two**
Complete writing of Report. Submit refined draft to committee and allow 2-weeks’ time for review. When approved by committee members, this becomes the “defense copy” of the report.
With committee approval and signatures regarding timing, submit Appointment for Examination [Nonthesis/MS] form to School of Graduate Studies. Forms must be submitted 2 weeks prior to the defense date requested.
Defend Report. Student must be registered for at least 3 credits the semester that the thesis is defended.
Complete defense corrections to Report and gain committee and Department Head signatures.
Make final copies of thesis to be bound, and deliver these along with binding fees and forms to the Merrill-Cazier library. [https://library.usu.edu/theses-dissertations/](https://library.usu.edu/theses-dissertations/)
Complete the Geosciences department’s annual Progress Form with advisor/or committee. If the committee has a draft of the thesis, this form is not required.
Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.

**If Thesis not complete in Second Year**
If all degree requirements are not completed by the end of the semester following the defense, then student must register for at least one credit the semester the final Thesis is submitted. If not completed within one year of defense, thesis must be re-defended.
Matriculated status may be changed to “non-matriculated” after three years, at the discretion of the major advisor and Faculty Graduate Committee, and based upon satisfactory progress.

**AEG-MS PROGRAM OF STUDY AND COURSES**
Once a Thesis committee has been approved by the School of Graduate Studies, the graduate student should then meet with the advisor and committee members to determine a course of study appropriate for the intended thesis research, and fill out the "Program of Study for Master's Degree" form. This form must be delivered to the Graduate Program Coordinator who will forward it to the School of Graduate Studies. This document and the associated signature page are completed in DegreeWorks within USU’s Banner system—[https://gradschool.usu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Entering-a-Program-of-Study-into-Degreeworks-10252016.pdf](https://gradschool.usu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Entering-a-Program-of-Study-into-Degreeworks-10252016.pdf). Once filled in, you must notify by email the Grad Program Coordinator who checks them and forwards them on to be digitally signed and completed through the School of Graduate Studies.

For the MS-AEG degree, 32 credits are required. Specifically, 29-30 credits of coursework and 2 or 3 credits of thesis research. Up to 12 non-USU transfer credits may be applied, if not utilized for a different degree.
See “Requirements” section above for more guidelines. For utilitarian purposes of filling out a semester’s credits only, the department’s weekly Distinguished Lecturer Series [GEO 6820] can be taken by Logan-campus residents for 1-credit.

For students accepted into the Distance Education MS-AEG program, a more prescribed list of suggested courses that are available can be obtained from the State-wide Campuses Distance Education program: http://distance.usu.edu/degree_programs/?_d=124

The Program of Study represents an agreement. If you must make changes later during the course of study, the form must be updated for the School of Graduate Studies or student will not be able to graduate. This requires that the advisor and the Geosciences Grad Program Coordinator approve the changes and send a memo to the School of Graduate Studies.

The registration requirements and GPA criteria for the MS-AEG degree are the same as those for the Geology MS degree program.

AEG-MS PROSPECTUS AND REPORT
Neither the prospectus nor the Report for the AEG-MS degree is the same as the proposal and Thesis conducted for the Geology MS. They reflect the same level of scholarship, but do not hinge upon conducting a major piece of original scientific research.

Note that the School of Graduate Studies Master’s Project Approval form is NOT required by Geosciences or conducted for the MS-AEG.

Prospectus
The prospectus is a preparation for undertaking a thesis Report, and it should be completed in the first year of study as a stepping stone towards writing the Report itself. The prospectus briefly describes the problem, background, methods, and analysis that will be employed. The MS-AEG prospectus is expected to be shorter than a full thesis proposal, focus more on the literature review and synthesis, and is on the order of 10 pages. The audience it is written for is the thesis advisory committee.

Report
The School of Graduate Research states that the MS-AEG report, “...is usually a review of literature with conclusions drawn after conceptualizing an area of inquiry, planning a systematic search, and analyzing and critiquing the acquired information. The summary and conclusions developed should enhance knowledge in the discipline.”

From the Department of Geosciences’ perspective, in addition to: a) a literature review; and b) the identification of a scientific problem; MS-AEG Reports should: c) report scientific data; and d) provide some analysis of those data. The data may be newly gathered by the student, or compiled from previous work into a coherent dataset. The analysis may, for example, be a first-order investigation of the trends or statistics of the dataset, especially utilizing computational tools.

Although not strictly required for the MS-AEG, go to the School of Graduate Studies forms webpage, and follow the current version of their Thesis Format and Style Guide.
COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE AND BINDING
After the Report is approved by the advisory committee, complete the degree following the information provided by the School of Graduate Studies: https://online.usu.edu/degrees/
Note that the School of Graduate Studies does not edit, sign, or require a copy of your Report.

Regarding binding your Report, the USU library’s policies are shifting away from requiring hardcopies. Yet, the Department of Geosciences still requests one bound copy, many advisors request one, and the student may want a hardcopy. The library still provides a binding service as needed—check with them for the latest guidelines.
Utah State University, Department of Geosciences
Graduate Handbook and Policies

Doctorate of Philosophy (Geology PhD) Program

PHD PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS
The Doctorate of Philosophy in Geology requires original research in a specific area of geosciences. The successful candidate must demonstrate a breadth of understanding in geosciences, as well as a depth of understanding in his or her chosen area(s) of emphasis. Dissertation research should be carried out over a significant period of time [i.e., at least one year or three semesters in residence]. This significant and original research must be presented in a written dissertation and defended in an oral examination. This work should be of such scope and quality that more than one journal or conference articles can be derived from it.

There are two program tracks for the PhD in Geology: academic and professional. The academic track is designed to prepare graduates for a career in academia or other teaching-related settings; it includes classroom teaching experience under the supervision of a faculty teaching mentor. The professional track is designed to prepare graduates for work in professional careers within extractive or environmental industries. It may include computational coursework relating to information systems or spatial analysis, and completion of an industry internship is encouraged.

Besides these two tracks, the PhD in Geology also shares the six specializations of the Geosciences MS graduate programs: 1) Geomorphology and Earth Surface Processes; 2) Geophysics; 3) Hydro-Geosciences; 4) Petrology and Geochemistry; 5) Sedimentology and Paleocology; and 6) Structure and Tectonics.

Similar information is in the university catalog at this link: https://catalog.usu.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=12&poid=9509&returnto=3829

Requirements
Graduate students completing a PhD in Geology must fulfill the following requirements:

Complete:
- at least 42 credits beyond your M.S. [including at least 15 credits of GEO 7970 dissertation/research]
- if entering with only a B.S., complete 72 credits of graduate coursework [including at least 21 credits of GEO 7970 dissertation/research].
- Each course must be completed with a minimum grade of B, and you must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.3.

Academic Track:
- Successfully teach one Geosciences course under the supervision of a faculty mentor, typically receiving 6 teaching internship [GEO 6900] credits.
- Coursework in pedagogy may be pursued, as approved by graduate student's dissertation committee.

Professional Track:
- Completion of professional internship program is encouraged, typically receiving 6 co-op/internship [GEO 6900] credits.
• Coursework developing computational skills may be pursued, as approved by graduate student's dissertation committee.

• Pass a written comprehensive examination showing depth and breadth of knowledge in Geosciences and the graduate student's area[s] of emphasis. The graduate student may be required to take additional classes to satisfy any conditions for passing the exam.

• Successfully complete a written dissertation research proposal and defend it during an oral comprehensive examination.

• The oral comprehensive exam will include questions of a deep and probing nature, and may range beyond the specialization of the dissertation proposal.

• Successfully complete and defend a written dissertation. The dissertation document may consist of several papers submitted or to be submitted for publication.

• The defense will be oral, including a public presentation of the work and successful closed-door defense to the faculty committee.

• If the candidate has not demonstrated adequate knowledge of a topic through the examination, the committee may require that specific conditions be met before completion of the examination, such as coursework or the retaking of the examination at a later time. If two or more committee members vote not pass, the committee may in its summary evaluation vote not pass, and the graduate student's program will be terminated.

Coursework Prerequisites
Individual graduate students may need to complete specific undergraduate coursework to prepare them for their graduate program. In particular, these seven courses:

1) Introductory or Physical Geology with laboratory
2) Minerals and Rocks [Earth Materials]
3) Historical Geology
4) Sedimentation and Stratigraphy
5) Geomorphology
6) Structural Geology
7) Field Methods or experience

Decisions about any exceptions to these core prerequisites in a graduate student's program are made by a graduate student's Advisory Committee in their first meeting. Furthermore, the Exam I Written comprehensive examination [see below] exists partly to help identify background coursework needs. These undergraduate Geosciences courses cannot appear on the graduate Program of Study, nor can they be officially audited. Thus, completion of these prerequisites generally will be accomplished through lecture attendance and the passing of the regular exams in the courses.
**PHD TIME LINE**

Graduate students who have already completed a MS degree should plan on finishing their PhD program in 3 to 4 years. Maintaining matriculated status after five years beyond the Master’s degree is at the discretion of the primary advisor and Faculty Graduate Committee, based upon satisfactory progress.

The School of Graduate Studies has an 8-year limit for PhD degree completion. Beyond this time, one would need to re-apply to the program. Also, after 8 years, coursework is retired, and cannot be utilized towards a degree program unless the courses are recertified.

Graduate student research is commonly funded by agencies that require timely acquisition, analysis, and reporting of results. Graduate students who fail to fulfill their funded research obligations in a timely, professional, and satisfactory manner may be removed from the overall research project at the discretion of their academic advisor.

The following is a semester-to-yearly timeline that can be used as a guide for completing the Geology PhD degree program in four years:

**Fall Semester, Year One**
- Meet with advisor often to define a research project.
- Discuss expectations of the Geosciences Department for graduate students with advisor after reviewing it. Sign the Geosciences Department Expectations Form upon completion.
- Submit signed Expectations Form to Grad Program Coordinator for department records.
- Establish dissertation committee, submit School of Graduate Studies’ Supervisory Committee Approval form to Grad Program Coordinator.
- Apply for funding from graduate student grants. This application process starts in the late fall and concludes in the early spring. Be sure to verify deadlines well ahead of time.

**Spring Semester, Year One**
- Have first dissertation committee meeting at start of semester, focused upon the Program of Study and any prerequisites.
- Apply for research grant opportunities, if appropriate.
- Begin writing dissertation proposal draft with advisor mentoring.
- Schedule a meeting with the Faculty Graduate Committee and advisor.
- Discuss authorship and copyright questions with advisor before beginning your research.
- Complete and sign Authorship Form. [https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/](https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/)
- Examine Copyright Form but do not sign until defense. [https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/](https://gradschool.usu.edu/forms/)
- Complete the first part of the Comprehensive Examinations for the Ph.D. [Part 1 of 3] this semester.
- Complete the Geosciences department’s annual Progress Form with advisor/or committee.
- Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.

**Summer Semester, Year One**
- After success in the written [Part 1-Exam 1 written] comps, complete with committee the Program of Study for Doctoral Degree form and submit to Grad Program Coordinator. Be sure to list your specialization.
- Conduct initial research while working towards the completion of the dissertation proposal.
- Apply for residency in the state of Utah if necessary.
Fall Semester Year Two
___ Have a committee meeting regarding the draft dissertation proposal and to schedule the Written Comprehensive Examination [Part 2 of 3, Written Exam part 2] early in the semester. If exam 1 indicated that some additional coursework or training is required, parts 2 and 3 of the Comprehensive Examination may be postponed.
___ With the mentoring of the advisor, apply for research funding opportunities, if necessary and appropriate.

Spring Semester Year Two
___ After Written Comps are done, complete the Dissertation Proposal.
___ Defend in the Oral Comprehensive Examination portion. This is part 3 of 3 in the Comprehensive Examination for PhD graduate students.
___ Revise and get Dissertation Proposal signed, provide copy to Grad Program Coordinator. At this time, the School of Graduate Studies Application for Candidacy form is submitted.
___ Continue dissertation research in earnest.
___ Make a 15-minute oral presentation during the departmental Speaker Series or at a professional meeting on the dissertation project. Poster presentations do not count for this requirement.
___ Complete the Geosciences department’s annual Progress Form with advisor & committee.
___ Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.

Year Three
___ Conduct dissertation research, and write dissertation or scientific manuscripts.
___ Hold a dissertation committee meeting to appraise progress and gain mentoring.
___ If in academic specialization, a graduate student may instruct an undergraduate course. If in professional specialization, an internship may be sought and conducted.
___ Complete the Geosciences department’s annual Progress Form with advisor/or committee.
___ Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.

Year Four
___ Complete dissertation research early in this academic year.
___ Complete writing of dissertation. Submit refined draft to committee and allow at least 2-4 weeks for review. When approved, this becomes the defense copy of your dissertation.
___ With committee signatures, submit Appointment for Examination form directly to the School of Graduate Studies. Forms must be submitted 2 weeks prior to the defense date requested.
___ Defend dissertation. Graduate student must be registered for at least 3 credits the defense semester.
___ Make defense corrections to thesis. Submit committee approved (signed) thesis to the School of Graduate Studies for copy and format editing, along with the Authorship & Copyright form.
___ Make School of Graduate Studies edits. Submit graduation forms to the School of Graduate Studies.
___ Complete the Geosciences department’s annual Progress Form with advisor/or committee. Once a draft dissertation is in hand, the progress form need not be completed.
___ Sign and submit a digital copy of Progress Form with Grad Program Coordinator upon completion.
___ Make final copies of thesis to be bound, and deliver these along with binding fees and forms to the Merrill-Cazier library.  https://library.usu.edu/theses-dissertations/

If Thesis not Complete in Fourth Year
___ If the dissertation is not submitted to School of Graduate Studies and all degree requirements are not completed by the end of the semester following the defense, then the graduate student must register for at least one credit the semester that the final dissertation is submitted. If it is not completed within
one year of the defense, it must be re-defended.
___Continue to make presentations to department or at a professional meeting once per academic year.
___Continue to discuss progress with advisor and committee. Complete annual progress form.
___Matriculated status may be changed to non-matriculated after five years, at the discretion of the major
advisor and Faculty Graduate Committee, and based upon satisfactory progress.

**PHD DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to establish their committees during their first semester, but
the dissertation committee must be established no later than the graduate student’s second semester on
campus. The dissertation committee provides input in the process of course selection, design of the
research and the Dissertation proposal, and conducts most of the comprehensive examination process.

In consultation with advisor, select at least 4 other committee members. Three members total are required
to be from within the Geosciences Department, including emeritus professors. At least one member of the
committee is required to be outside the Geosciences Department. These outside committee members
may be from other USU departments or from other institutions, such as those with an adjunct appointment
in our Department.

Faculty must be consulted about serving on the committee and their consent obtained. Complete the
Supervisory Committee Approval form with all required signatures and submit it to the Grad Program
Coordinator who will forward the form to the School of Graduate Studies. As with all forms, verify with
advisor that the form is ready to be initiated.

No changes in committee membership are permitted within six weeks of the dissertation defense - this is a
School of Graduate Studies requirement.

Once dissertation research has been initiated, it is recommended that graduate students meet with their
committee once a semester to discuss progress, problems or deviations from the original proposal.

At least one dissertation committee meeting must be held within the regular nine-month academic year.
At this meeting, the committee will evaluate progress toward completion of degree requirements. Failure
of the graduate student to convene at least one thesis committee meeting within the regular nine-month
academic year will be interpreted as a sign of unsatisfactory progress.

**PHD PROGRAM OF STUDY AND COURSES**

Once a dissertation committee has been approved by the School of Graduate Studies, the graduate
student should then meet with the advisor and committee members to determine an initial course of study
appropriate for the intended thesis research. After the second semester, when the Written Comprehensive
Exam is complete, the graduate student and committee will formally fill out the Program of Study for
Doctoral Degree. This document and the associated signature page are completed in DegreeWorks within
USU’s Banner system—follow the instructions on the Grad School’s website [https://gradschool.usu.edu](https://gradschool.usu.edu). Once filled in, graduate student must notify by email the Grad Program Coordinator who checks them and
forwards them on to be completed through the School of Graduate Studies.

After the description at the top of the form in DegreeWorks, graduate student should type in their research
specialization. The Geosciences MS degrees have six specializations: 1] Geomorphology and Earth Surface
Paleoecology; and 6] Structure and Tectonics.
PhD graduate students will not be allowed to receive Teaching Assistant support or instate tuition waivers after their third semester unless the Program of Study is signed and filed at the School of Graduate Studies. Exceptions must be appealed at the discretion of the Geosciences Faculty Graduate Committee.

The Program of Study represents a contract. If changes need to be done during the course of study, the form must be updated for the School of Graduate Studies or graduate student will not be able to graduate. This requires that the advisor and the Geosciences Grad Program Coordinator approve the changes and inform the School of Graduate Studies.

Distribution of Credits
The balance of coursework and dissertation research credits in a graduate student’s program of study is tailored to each student’s needs. This is ultimately the decision of the graduate student’s advisory committee, and is recorded in the Program of Study for the School of Graduate Studies.

As a general guideline, of the 42 credits required (if an M.S. has been completed), there will be about an equal balance of coursework and dissertation research credits, with a minimum of 15 credits of dissertation research. Most coursework should be at the 6000-level and above (excluding GEO 6900, 7970, and 7990), with 9 or more at the 7000-level. Avoid having more than 12 credits of coursework numbered below the 6000 level.

If starting from a B.S., of the 72 credits required, at least 21 should be dissertation research, 21 coursework at the 6000-level and above (excluding Geo 6900, 7970, and 7990), and 12 or more at the 7000-level. Avoid having more than 21 credits below the 6000 level.

No more than 3 credits of 3000-4999 level courses may be applied toward the degree. These 3000-4999 level credits must be from outside your major area.

Following USU School of Graduate Studies residency requirements, no more than 12 credits can be transferred from another institution. They must not have been used towards another degree, nor be more than 8 years old.

For utilitarian purposes of filling out a semester’s credits only, the department’s weekly Distinguished Lecturer Series (GEO 6820) can be taken for 1 credit.

Depending upon whether you are undertaking the Academic versus Professional track, you will include GEO 6900 credits for either teaching a course or conducting an industry internship. A typical summer industry internship or a semester’s teaching experience at the PhD level equates to 6 credits of Internship/Co-op Experience [GEO 6900]. The School of Teacher Education and Leadership [TEAL] and Department of Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences [ITLS] here at USU offer several courses useful for pedagogy and technological training.

After the required credits on the Program of Study are complete, any remaining credits until graduation must be Continuing Grad Advisement [GEO 7990]. These are not included in the Program of Study.

Registration Requirements
Graduate students using university facilities and/or under faculty supervision must register for a minimum of 3 credits per semester up to and including the semester in which the dissertation is successfully
defended. This applies only to the regular academic year, not summer. If a graduate student is not using facilities or faculty time during the academic year, the Grad Program Coordinator may write a request to the School of Graduate Studies asking to waive the 3-credit requirement, but the graduate student will be subject to a $100 fee per semester. Following the thesis defense, registration policies of the School of Graduate Studies apply.

Appointment as a Teaching Assistant/Research Assistant requires 6 credits per semester until the Program of Study is completed. After that point, the 3-credit minimum enrollment may be satisfied by registering for GEOL 7990, Continuing Graduate Advisement.

Grades and GPA
Only two grades of less than a B (e.g. B- to C-) will be accepted as part of the required degree program as listed on the Program of Study. The School of Graduate Studies will not accept D grades. A 3.0 GPA must be obtained on required course work as listed on the Program of Study. If a graduate student's GPA falls below a 3.0, the School of Graduate Studies will place the graduate student on probation, which disqualifies them to receive financial aid or TA funding. A graduate student has one semester to raise their GPA and retain matriculated status.

Dissertation research credits will be graded Pass/Fail only, and are listed as Incomplete each semester they are taken. When the degree program is complete, the grades are changed to Pass.

Only the pertinent member of the Faculty Graduate Committee can change these thesis credit incompletes, as the instructor of record. Before changing the incompletes to Pass, the Faculty Graduate Committee must see and sign the Exit Form for Graduate students, ensuring that any departmental equipment is checked back in, USU keys are returned, and etc.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PHD GRADUATE STUDENT PROGRESS
Review of progress will be an ongoing process, and evidence of satisfactory progress includes: a) at least annual committee meetings and associated memo from your advisor; b) the completion of the Program of Study; c) dissertation proposal; d) annual presentations; e) success in obtaining grant funding; and f) performance in graduate coursework.

Unsatisfactory progress may be indicated through: a) failure to follow the graduate student time line presented above; b) unsatisfactory GPA and academic probation; c) your rate of progress in coursework; d) lack of thesis committee meetings; d) failure to make satisfactory progress on thesis research.

If unsatisfactory performance is perceived by the thesis research advisor or Faculty Graduate Committee, the Geosciences Faculty Graduate Committee will speak with the graduate student and, if necessary, the committee. The Faculty Graduate Committee will then write a memo of notification regarding unsatisfactory progress for the graduate student's file and provide the graduate student plus advisor with copies.

If, over the semester following the above notification, the graduate student continues to make unsatisfactory progress toward the degree (as determined by the advisor, thesis committee and Geosciences Faculty Graduate Committee), the graduate student will be placed in non-matriculated status and the School of Graduate Studies will be notified. This ends the graduate student's participation in the Geosciences Graduate Program.
PH.D. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS
The Geosciences Department graduate program requires all Ph.D. graduate students to pass both written and oral comprehensive examinations in order to advance to candidacy for the degree. The purpose of these 3 examinations is to ensure that a graduate student is academically prepared to conduct Doctoral-level research.

The comprehensive examination has two written parts and one culminating oral examination that are taken at different times. These are called exam 1, 2, and 3, for simplicity.

Exam 1: Written survey of knowledge in the geosciences
The first written examination is called exam 1 and should be administered in a graduate student's second semester at Utah State University so that any deficiencies identified can be addressed in a timely manner by coursework, independent study, or the retaking of all or part of the examination. A key objective of exam 1 is to identify any deficiencies and areas that need strengthening with coursework or research experience as the graduate student embarks on their research and plan of study. A poor performance on exam one could lead to unsatisfactory status.

The Exam 1 written comps are specifically useful for identifying coursework that is needed, and any graduate coursework or out-of-the-discipline coursework identified as a condition should be included on the subsequent Program of Study form, which is completed as soon as possible after the exam. Undergraduate Geoscience deficiencies cannot be included in the Program of Study.

Exam 2 and 3: Written detailed questions from the committee
Exams 2 and 3 should be completed in a graduate student's second year, in concert with the research proposal.

The oral comprehensive examination should occur no later than the semester following the completion of the written comprehensive exam (typically in the second year). The oral exam hinges upon a presentation and defense of the research proposal. Thus, the research proposal must be completed and approved by the committee concurrently. Upon successful completion of the oral comprehensive examination, the graduate student officially advances to candidacy for the Ph.D.

WRITTEN COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
The two parts of the written comprehensive exam are distinct in timing and purpose. The written exam 1 examines the candidate’s breadth of knowledge in the overall Geosciences and is administered largely by the Faculty Graduate Committee. The written exam 2 examines the candidate’s depth of knowledge in his or her specialties and is conducted by the graduate student’s advisor and committee.

Exam 1 written exam
The format is an ~8 hour closed-book exam, usually split into more than one day and comprising of 5-10 questions. It is the responsibility of the Faculty Graduate Committee to organize the comprehensive examination and solicit questions from the faculty in general, such that a reasonable mix of questions are assembled. These questions would be ones that a strong graduate student could answer after completing Physical and Historical courses.

To evaluate the exam 1 part of the Written Exam, a member of the Faculty Graduate Committee, the primary advisor, and one other member of the graduate student’s dissertation advisory committee form an examination panel. This panel utilizes the Results of Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination: Written Exam 1 form.
Exam 2 written exam
The format may vary depending upon advisor preference, but is typically an open-media, take-home examination, comprising 4-7 major questions or educational tasks, with a time limit of approximately one week at the discretion of the examination committee. The written questions will be solicited from the candidate’s committee members by the Dissertation Committee Chair (primary advisor). These questions are to be used to aid in the writing of the Dissertation proposal, evaluate the depth of the candidate’s knowledge within their area of research, and identify any conditions that need to be met to complete the examination.

The graduate student’s dissertation committee members evaluate the written exam, then record the results using the Results of Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination: Written Exam 2 form. Based upon performance, the committee or committee members may choose to vote conditional pass, and then identify those conditions to be met. If two or more committee members vote not pass, the committee may in its summary evaluation vote not pass, and the graduate student’s program will be terminated.

ORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION PROPOSAL PRESENTATION
The Ph.D. graduate student will prepare a professional presentation based upon their dissertation research proposal, to be given to their examination committee only. This should focus upon their research design, and it may be 30-60 minutes in length. Following upon this presentation, the examination committee will ask questions about its content, as well as deep and probing questions about the research topic under consideration.

The specific purpose of the oral comprehensive examination is to ensure the candidate’s knowledge of their research area and the soundness of their research proposal and research design. It has the additional purpose of providing an important exercise in professional verbal communication in the sciences, which should be well organized, concise, and rigorous.

The examination committee records its evaluation on the Results of Ph.D. Comprehensive Examination: Exam 3 form. If two or more committee members vote not pass, the committee may in its summary evaluation, vote not pass, and the graduate student’s program will be terminated.

Based upon performance in the oral comprehensive exam, the committee or committee members may choose to vote conditional pass, and then identify those conditions to be met.

ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY
Once both the written and oral comprehensive exams have been successfully passed (excluding any coursework conditions listed on the graduate students Program of Study) and the dissertation proposal is complete and signed by the committee, then The School of Graduate Studies’ Application for Candidacy form can be filled out. This must be signed by the primary advisor and the Geosciences Department Head.

PHD DISSERTATION PROPOSAL
The Dissertation Proposal should be a major focus of the first three academic semesters. Creation of the research proposal will help the graduate student to focus and organize their project, and their dissertation committee will be able to provide input during the writing and review stages of the proposal. The proposal is an agreement between the graduate student and their advisory committee that the research is of an appropriate nature and the methods described are adequate. This provides a safeguard
against excessive additions or changes during the research project. Research projects commonly evolve and change. If the graduate student and committee are in agreement, then the project may be modified.

As with most aspects of working on their PhD, communication between their advisor, and their advisory committee will help things to go smoothly.

Format
The body of the Dissertation Proposal should be similar in scale, style and rigor to an NSF proposal. The identification of an important problem and a research design to address it is fundamental to Doctoral-level work. The proposal may have on the order of 15-30 pages of text, including initial research or analytical findings. In addition, there will be references, tables and figures.

NSF-style proposals are a pertinent and available model, that will be needed in future proposals during a professional research career. Here are some themes good NSF proposals illustrate:

1) Write information at a synthesis level for other colleagues who are authorities. When writing a background review, assume the reader has basic knowledge, distill the essence of it, and get to the important nuances for the particular problem.

2) Write with great concision, edit and shorten. For example, cite only the salient references, not a comprehensive history of them.

3) Readers will look to see if the research goals are clearly linked to the components of the research design. The research design should explicitly and convincingly address the questions and broader problem.

4) The broader problem and the importance of the work are as important as the nuts-and-bolts. Convincing a reader that the work has a critical place in a grander context of knowledge may increase the possibility of funding. This will help to exhibit mastery of a field.

Upon completion of your Dissertation Proposal and comprehensive exams, graduate student will complete the Doctoral Application for Candidacy, which is forwarded by the Grad Program Coordinator and sent around for signatures.

NOTE: Although the School of Graduate Studies does not require approval, or a copy, of the proposal, please provide the Grad Program Coordinator with a digital copy of the proposal for the department file.

PHD DISSERTATION

Format
Use the School of Graduate School format and style guide: https://gradschool.usu.edu/dissertation-thesis-format-style/

In consultation with advisor, choose a geoscience journal whose format that can be followed with respect to citations. Geological Society of America publications are our default standard for style, and a style guide is available from them: https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Publications/Info_Services/Author_Info/

In addition to a regular scientific abstract for the dissertation, USU now requires a public abstract as well. This is a non-technical summary of the work that can be read and understood by non-specialists. This is a skill that is increasingly important.
ROLE OF THE ADVISOR AND DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Frequent communication with an advisor is critical in successfully completing a PhD. Their role is to evaluate the methods, the logic, synthesis of data, and conclusions. Preliminary drafts should be reviewed by the dissertation advisor rather than by the entire committee. Graduate students should be aware that the form, content of a dissertation, and the level of expectation by an advisor vary for any number of reasons. Different kinds of research problems and methodologies that may be applied, changes in faculty, different abilities of graduate students, access to data, funding, etc.

Once the dissertation draft has been reviewed and corrected initially, then with the advisor's consent, the draft can then be reviewed by all committee members. This draft is not the defense copy.

Upon approving a dissertation draft for defense, committee members, including the advisor, should be allowed at least 2 to 4 weeks for review of the draft. Committee members may refuse to review theses when other departmental or professional obligations conflict with a timely review.

Once approved by the committee, this version of the dissertation becomes the defense copy. This version will not be returned to the candidate nor will any further changes be made in the document by the candidate until after the defense. The committee must have the defense copy at least two weeks prior to the defense. If there are photos, large plates or appendices not quite ready for expensive duplication, at least one copy should be made available to the committee for the two-week period prior to the defense.

DEFENSE PREPARATION

The dissertation defense is viewed as the last major hurdle on the path to receiving your degree. The length of the public presentation of the research should be about 30-40 minutes. This leaves time for set up and questions afterwards, while still fitting within the 50-minute classroom timeslot that many attendees will have available. There are things that can be done now to help avoid conflict and tension during the last few weeks of writing, revising, and defense preparation.

The graduate student is responsible for scheduling the defense with the School of Graduate Studies after approval of their advisor and consultation with their committee. Remember that all committee members must have read the dissertation before agreeing to schedule the defense.

Multiple copies of the Dissertation, either defense copies or final versions, should not be run off on Department of Geosciences printers and photocopiers.

COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE AND BINDING

After the Dissertation signature page is signed by the committee, the process is turned over to The School of Graduate Studies. Consult their webpage and materials to determine current practices are for scheduling and reviewing dissertations, gaining the Dean of Graduate Studies signature, and graduating.

Regarding binding a Dissertation, the USU library's policies have shifting away from requiring hardcopies, and instead the Grad Program Coordinator uploads an adobe pdf version along with a signed submission form. The Department of Geosciences still requests one bound copy, many advisors request one, and you may want a hardcopy yourself. The library still provides a binding service as needed—check with them for the latest guidelines. The plates and figures to be placed in back pockets and fold-out figures embedded in text must also be duplicated and fan-folded to a size appropriate for binding.
APPENDIX A

Department and University Forms

- Leave of Absence/Continuous Registration
- Student & Advisory Expectations
- Utah Residency
- Appointment for Examination
- Record of Examination
- Plan B Report/Creative Project Submission
- Thesis/Dissertation Format & Style and Electronic Publication Approval
- Authorship & Copyright
- Program of Study
- Supervisory Committee Approval
- Master's Thesis/Project Approval
- Application for Candidacy (PhD)
- Appointment for Examination
- Record of Examination
- Progress Form
- Field Research Safety Plan
APPENDIX B

Scholarship, Grant, & Fellowship Opportunities
(links updated 2019)

No Deadline
National Speleological Society: Research grant
   -- https://caves.org/committee/rac/researchgrants.shtml

Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]
   -- https://www.epa.gov/careers/fellowships-scholarships-and-post-doctoral-opportunities

Fall Deadlines
Association of Women Geoscientist: Student Travel Award
   -- http://awg.org/images/awards/AWG_Sand_Student_Research_Award.pdf

Sigma Xi: Grants-in-Aid
   -- https://www.sigmaxi.org/programs/grants-in-aid/apply

National Science Foundation: Graduate Fellowships
   -- http://nsfgrfp.org/

American Association of Petroleum Geologists [AAPG]: Grants-in-Aid
   -- https://foundation.aapg.org/grants-in-aid-program

Spring Deadlines
Society for Sedimentary Geology [SEPM]: Student Assistance Grants
   -- https://www.sepm.org/Apply-for-a-Student-Assistance-Grant

American Geosciences Institute: Wallace Woman’s Scholarship
   -- https://www.americangeosciences.org/workforce/harriet-evelyn-wallace-scholarship

Geologic Society of America [GSA]: Research Grants
   /grants/gradgrants.aspx

The Tobacco Root Geological Society: Field Scholarship
   -- https://www.trgs.org/apply-for-scholarships

Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists: Norman H. Foster Scholarship
   -- https://rmagfoundation.org/scholarships/norman-h-foster-memorial-scholarship/

Desert Research Institution: The Jonathan O. Davis Scholarship
   -- https://www.dri.edu/education-and-outreach/student-programs/graduate-scholarships/189-
   jod-scholarship

Association for Women Geoscientists [AWG-SLC]
   -- https://www.petersons.com/scholarship/awg-salt-lake-chapter-slc-research-scholarship-
   111_189692.aspx

Society of Exploration Geophysicists: Scholarships
   -- https://seg.org/Scholarships

Evolving Earth Foundation: Research Grants
   -- https://www.evolvingearth.org/grants/
Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists: Scholarships
  --https://rmagfoundation.org/scholarships/

Wyoming Geological Association: Scholarships and Fellowships
  --https://wyogeo.org/scholarships/

Sigma Xi Grants-in-Aid
  --https://www.sigmaxi.org/programs/grants-in-aid/apply

Association for Women Geoscientists Research Scholarship [SL Chapter]

The GDL Foundation: Scholarships & Fellowships
  --http://www.gdlfoundation.org/

National Speleological Society: Ralph Stone Student Grant
  --http://caves.org/committee/rac/ralphstone.shtml

Colorado Scientific Society: Research Grants
  --http://coloscisc.org/grants/

SEPM Rocky Mountain Section: Research Grants
  --https://www.rmssepm.org/scholarship-application

College of Science & School of Graduate Studies: Seely-Hinckley Grad Scholarship
  --https://qcnr.usu.edu/intranet/awards/grad_seely_hinckley

Society of Petrophysicists & Well Log Analysts (SPWLA): Scholarships & Grants
  https://www.spwla.org/SPWLA/Foundation/Grant_and_Scholarship_Applications/SPWLA/Foundation/Grant_and_Scholarship_Applications.aspx?hkey=8ca674ce-92bc-410a-a90f-5ea70abc00a

Four Corners Geological Society: Graduate Grants
  --https://fourcornersgeologicalsociety.org/scholarships/

Summer Deadlines

USU GRCO: Research Grant
  --https://gradschool.usu.edu/grco/
DEPARTMENT OF GEOSCIENCES SCHOLARSHIPS
Summary of Criteria (amounts approximate)

Peter R. McKillip Memorial Scholarship—$1000
Developed in honor of Peter by his advisor Jim Evans, Susanne Janecke, and friends of Peter. The award will go to a graduate student who, like Peter, has a strong academic record and is not already well funded. Need and demonstrated interest or aptitude in other fields, such as the arts, humanities, community service, or music may be used as a secondary selection criterion.

Robert O. Oaks, Jr. Scholarship—$1000
Developed to recognize Bob’s dedication and excellence in teaching and challenging all his students. The scholarship will assist undergraduate and graduate students who are nearing the completion of their degrees. In order to be considered, graduate students must have completed their thesis or dissertation proposals and be in the final stages of writing their thesis or dissertation. Undergraduate student applicants must be Geology majors in good standing, within 20 credits of graduation and have a minimum 2.2 GPA. All students must demonstrate financial need and have completed a majority of their course work as determined by their advisor. Recipients must agree to remain enrolled in their respective degree program and remain in residence, defined as actively pursuing completion of their degree on one of USU’s campuses.

Kim R. Robeson Memorial Travel Award—$800
Developed in honor of Kim by his adviser Jim Evans and by Susanne Janecke. The award provides support of non-class-related trips for graduate students, including trips organized by student groups, particularly to help with expenses for groups of students involved in laboratory or field research.

Beryl O. & Tura H. Springer Memorial Scholarship—$1000-1500
Established by Jerry R. Springer in 2006 to honor the strong heritage of mining in the Springer family and the Springer family legacy which spans five generations at Utah State University. This award supports graduate and undergraduate geology majors. Undergraduates must have at least Junior-level standing. Recipients must demonstrate excellence in academic achievement.

J. Stewart Williams Graduate Fellowship—$1000
Developed to honor the memory of this former faculty member, department head, and graduate dean. The endowment provides support for summer research expenses incurred by graduate students. In order to be eligible for this award, graduate students must be in good standing with a minimum 3.0 GPA, have completed & submitted a fully-signed thesis committee form, have completed & submitted a fully signed-program of study form, and have completed & submitted a fully-signed thesis proposal by May 15.

Summit Fund
Started by Susanne Janecke & Jim Evans, Angela Isaacs, Caleb Pollock, and other alumni. The fund supports two efforts—The Craig Forster Lecturer and scholarships for graduate students. To be eligible for the Summit Scholarship, graduate students must be in good standing with a minimum 3.0 GPA, have completed & submitted a fully-signed thesis committee form, have completed & submitted a fully-signed program of study form, have completed & submitted a fully-signed thesis proposal, and made satisfactory progress toward their research and coursework.