

GEOGRAPHY

Degree Requirements

Master of Science (M.S.)

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Policies. (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/>)

Penn State’s graduate program in Geography works with incoming students to design programs tailored to their specific interests and needs. Thus there are few formal requirements and a maximum of opportunities for students to pursue their own interests under the guidance of the faculty. Each student’s work is supervised by his or her academic adviser and by a committee consisting of two additional members of the Graduate Faculty for M.S. students. The M.S. program is broadly based. It is designed to provide beginning graduate students with basic training in systematic fields, geographical theory, and research techniques.

The M.S. degree may be earned by completing a thesis or two papers. The thesis option requires completion of at least 30 credits at the 400, 500, 600, and 800 level, with at least 18 credits in the 500 and 600 series, combined. If the two-paper option is elected, the student must earn 35 credits at the 400, 500, or 800 level, with at least 18 credits at the 500 level. The master’s papers are usually expanded versions of course or semester papers that are of sufficiently high quality that they can be submitted to scholarly journals. At least one of the papers offered to fulfill the M.S. papers requirement must have been written in connection with a departmental course or seminar.

All M.S. students are required to enroll in the following courses during their first year of residence:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
GEOG 500	Introduction to Geographic Research	3
GEOG 502	Research Scholarship in Geography	3
Select at least three of the following:		3
GEOG 501A		
GEOG 501B		
GEOG 501C		
GEOG 501D		

All M.S. students are required to complete at least one seminar at the 500 level. Supporting courses are chosen in consultation with an entrance committee (in year one) or the adviser (in subsequent years).

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

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There are three paths to a Ph.D. One is a five-year Ph.D. with M.S. degree, which is available to students who enter Penn State Geography’s graduate program without a master’s degree. These students are on an accelerated schedule and earn an M.S. along the way to the Ph.D. The second is a four-year Ph.D., which is available to those students who have already received a master’s degree in another program either at Penn State or at another university. The third is an M.S.-to-Ph.D. path, which is available to Penn State Geography M.S. students who decide

either to continue into the Ph.D. program after they have started their master’s program, or to return for the Ph.D. after having graduated with the M.S. Students on this path are not accelerated and therefore will usually require two years to earn the master’s and four years to earn the doctorate.

There is no fixed number of credits; courses are prescribed according to the student’s prior experience and academic goals. A student’s Ph.D. committee can require reading knowledge and/or demonstrated working knowledge of a foreign language, specialized training in linguistics, or training in computer programming languages, depending on the student’s research interest.

All doctoral students are required to enroll in GEOG 500 and GEOG 502 during their first year of residence.