

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Academic Year 2023-2024

Website:

http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/degrees/science/environmental_science.html

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Updated: 1 August 2023

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

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SECTION I. MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Congratulations on your acceptance to the Master of Science in Environmental Science program at TAMUCC. Students engaged in graduate studies are expected to educate themselves and be informed about university, college, and program policies regarding their graduate study. This handbook is a start – it gives general guidance to students enrolled in this graduate program. It contains information about the role of the graduate committee, the degree plan, thesis vs. professional options, course of study, and best practices to guide you towards successfully completing your degree. Graduate students are also urged to consult the online TAMUCC Graduate Catalog as a resource for policy, procedures, and requirements. Graduate students are also urged to consult the Master’s Student Handbook, Graduate Teaching Assistant Guide, Master’s Forms, and other resources posted online by the College of Graduate Studies at http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/current_students/masters_students.html. If you are unsure or need guidance about anything, feel free to ask. Best wishes for success in your graduate studies.



- *Dr. Jennifer Smith-Engle, ESCI Graduate Program Coordinator*

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SECTION II. FACULTY AND STAFF

The faculty engaged in the Environmental Science M.S. Program are affiliated with various departments within the College of Science and Engineering. They may participate in the program by teaching courses or by chairing, co-chairing, or serving as members of Environmental Science graduate committees. A listing of the faculty, their research interest, and contact information is posted at: <https://www.tamucc.edu/science/roster.php?program=esci>

Other important contacts are as follows:

Environmental Science Program Graduate Coordinator – Dr. Jennifer Smith-Engle,
jennifer.smith-engle@tamucc.edu, NRC-3502, 825-2436

Administrative Assistant, Dept. PENS – Alessandra Garcia,
alessandra.garcia@tamucc.edu, NRC-3500, 825-2814

Academic Advisor, College of Graduate Studies – Teri Ruiz,
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Chair, Dept. Physical & Environmental Sciences (PENS) – Dr. Richard Coffin,
richard.coffin@tamucc.edu, NRC-3506, 825-2456

Dean, College of Science – Dr. F. Eloy Hernandez,
florencio.hernandez@tamucc.edu, CI-350 177, 825-2349

Associate Dean, College of Science – Dr. Barbara Szczerbinska
barbara.szczerbinska@tamucc.edu, CI-350, 825-3916

Dean, College of Graduate Studies – Dr. Karen McCaleb,
karen.mccaleb@tamucc.edu, FC-177, 825-3881

SECTION III. LEARNING OUTCOMES

The purpose of graduate education is to provide advanced and specialized training beyond the baccalaureate program. Graduate study should strengthen your academic and professional competence, develop your capacity for independent study, familiarize you with the techniques of past and current research, and enable you to relate your research to the investigations of other scholars and derive significant implications from that relation.

The **Mission** of the Master of Science program in Environmental Science is to provide a rich and rewarding setting in which students and faculty can develop and communicate innovative and practical solutions to present and future environmental challenges, with a focus on urban and coastal issues.

Graduates of the Master of Science program in Environmental Science will demonstrate the following **learning outcomes**:

- Possess a broad understanding of environmental science.
- Possess enhanced knowledge of a specific area of environmental science, including relevant scientific literature, related to their thesis or professional paper.
- Be able to accurately describe and assess environmental research both orally and in writing.

The **goals** of the program are to:

- Develop graduates who are fully prepared to face current and future cultural, political, economic and scientific environmental challenges;
- Foster an environment that nurtures research and scholarly activity through interdisciplinary approaches;
- Foster an environment that promotes education and services from the regional to international level.



As a graduate student you must assume greater responsibility and exercise more individual initiative than you probably did as an undergraduate. Graduate students must do more intensive and extensive reading. The graduate faculty place greater emphasis on productive research, employ seminar methods more frequently, and expect greater class participation.

Graduate study in environmental science involves more than passing a given number of courses with acceptable grades and meeting minimum requirements. You must display continued intellectual growth and scholarly commitment to successfully complete the graduate program.

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Program Admission Requirements

The Environmental Science Graduate faculty considers applications for the degree program as they are completed. Admissions to the program is decided independently of funding awards (see section on “Financial Support” in this Handbook) and applications must apply separately for any financial assistance (scholarships, assistantships). University processing of



admissions documents can take some time; therefore, applicants should submit all documents well in advance of the semester in which they wish to enroll. **Before you apply, first contact members of the program faculty and identify a faculty member willing to serve as your Graduate Advisor.** Applicants will not be admitted to the program without a Graduate Advisor.

1. A completed university Graduate Application with essay of at least 300 words describing educational and career goals, interests within the field of environmental science, and identification of the faculty member who has agreed to be your Graduate Advisor,
2. At least three letters of evaluation,
3. Transcripts of all previous undergraduate/graduate work (including transcript evaluations of all work done at foreign institutions),
4. For international applicants, refer to additional requirements as noted in the International section of the graduate catalog.

Additional documents (such as a curriculum vita) may be submitted as well. The application process, including all steps, can be found [here](#). It is your responsibility to make sure that your application is complete by the deadline, or the Admissions Committee cannot consider your application. Consult the College Academic Advisor or the Environmental Science Graduate Program Coordinator to determine program admissions standards.

University regulations allow students in Non-Degree-Seeking status to take up to nine semester hours or one semester of graduate coursework (whichever comes sooner) before being formally admitted to a graduate program. But do not delay applying simply because you are allowed to begin coursework before being admitted. Apply for program admission as soon as you decide to pursue graduate study, for several reasons. First, it gives you assurance about whether graduate courses you took prior to program acceptance will apply towards your degree plan. Only those students admitted to the program have Graduate Advisors and only those students may assemble

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and meet with a Graduate Committee, a committee of faculty and possibly other professionals, who guide your course of graduate study.

The Graduate Committee helps the student formulate an official degree plan, and your Graduate Committee may or may not approve all elective graduate courses you may have taken before you were admitted to the program. If you are completing graduate coursework prior to formal program acceptance, you may be unsure of receiving approval for certain elective courses. In this case, prudent advice is to take required core courses. Second, generally only students officially admitted to degree programs are eligible for teaching assistantships or graduate scholarships.



If you delay applying to the program, you may lose out on the opportunity for such valuable financial support. Third, you might not be accepted to the program after your semester of effort, and it is wisest to know this up front.

Fast Track Graduate Admission

The university allows the opportunity for high-achieving undergraduate TAMUCC students to count a select number of graduate credits toward their undergraduate degree and thereby obtain a graduate degree at an accelerated pace. Details about this opportunity are posted at:

<https://catalog.tamucc.edu/undergraduate/science/fast-track/fast-track-environmental-science-bs-ms/>

and the Academic Advisor and ESCI Undergraduate Program Coordinator can guide undergraduates who are interested in this option. Planning for this option should begin as soon as possible in the student's undergraduate career.

Program Admission Deadlines

Program admission deadlines are as follows:

Domestic Students

- Fall: July 15
- Spring: November 15
- Summer I: April 15
- Summer II: May 15

International Students

- Fall: May 31

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- Spring: September 1
- Summer I or Summer II: February 1

Admission Review Process / Timeline

Once the graduate application is complete, it is reviewed and voted on by the graduate faculty of the Environmental Science Program. The application review process may take one to several weeks, but significant delays can result if the applicant has failed to identify a willing Graduate Advisor. The College of Graduate Studies will notify the student of acceptance.

SECTION IV. ACADEMIC PROGRESSION

Program Degree Requirements

The Master of Science in Environmental Science degree requires 36 semester credits of graduate level coursework. Degree requirements are described below.

Thesis and Professional Options

Students in this program must choose between Thesis Option and Professional Options. Select your option before you begin graduate study, based on your personal circumstances and objectives in pursuing graduate work. Changing options during one's graduate career, particularly from Professional Option to Thesis Option, may significantly lengthen the time needed to complete the degree.



Students selecting the **Thesis Option** take fewer designated electives and complete a master's thesis. The purpose of the thesis is to demonstrate your competence to investigate a research topic and to report the findings with full documentation in a readable scientific style. Thesis research affords you the opportunity to become an expert in a specific area of environmental science and to produce research results of publishable quality. Through thesis research you can develop a better appreciation of what constitutes valid research design, methodology, statistical analysis, and conclusions. If you plan further graduate study by completing a doctorate, consider the thesis option since some doctoral programs require completion of a master's thesis first.

The **Professional Option** is best if you prefer exposure to a wide range of areas of environmental science through additional elective coursework and completion of a short independent research project focused on a narrower topic. This option may also be best if employment concurrent with graduate study precludes you from completing more time-consuming thesis research. All Professional Option students complete and present a professional project (through the graduate course entitled, Directed Research), which is of smaller scale than a thesis.

Degree Requirements (Thesis, Professional Options). The degree requirements for the two options differ slightly. The **Thesis Option** consists of 36 semester hours of coursework including a thesis. The **Professional Option** consists of 36 semester hours of coursework including a professional project.

Undergraduate leveling work, even if prescribed by your Committee, will not count towards the 36 semester hours of graduate coursework required for the ESCI MS degree. At least 24 of the 36 semester hours must be taken at A&M-CC. Also, at least 24 of the 36 hours must be taken after you were admitted into the program, unless you transferred from another graduate program at A&M-CC into the Environmental Science program.

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Students entering the program must follow one of the two curricula listed below:

<u>Thesis Option*</u> :		Sem. Hrs.
ESCI 6101	Environmental Research Seminar	1
ESCI 6203	Professional Skills for Scientists	2
MATH 6315	Statistical Methods in Research I	3
Choose One:		
BLAW 5330	Environmental Law and Policy <i>or</i>	3
ESCI 6302	Federal Environmental Laws and Regulations <i>or</i>	
ESCI 6360	Coastal Management and Ocean Law	
Electives in specialty area (to be chosen in consultation with a student's advisory committee). At least 9 hours must be from BIOL, BIMS, CHEM, CMSS, ESCI, FAMA, GEOL, MARB, or PHYS.		18
ESCI 5392 Thesis I: Thesis Proposal <i>and</i> ESCI 5393 Thesis II: Thesis Research <i>and</i> ESCI 5394 Thesis III: Thesis Submission		<u>9</u>
Total		36

<u>Professional Option*</u> :		Sem. Hrs.
ESCI 6101	Environmental Research Seminar	1
ESCI 6203	Professional Skills for Scientists	2
MATH 6315	Statistical Methods in Research I	3
Choose One		
BLAW 5330	Environmental Law and Policy <i>or</i>	
ESCI 6302	Federal Environmental Laws and Regulations <i>or</i>	
ESCI 6360	Coastal Management and Ocean Law	3
Electives in specialty area (to be chosen in consultation with a student's advisory committee). At least 9 hours must be from BIOL, BIMS, CHEM, CMSS, ESCI, FAMA, GEOL, MARB, or PHYS.		24
ESCI 5397	Directed Research	<u>3</u>
Total		36

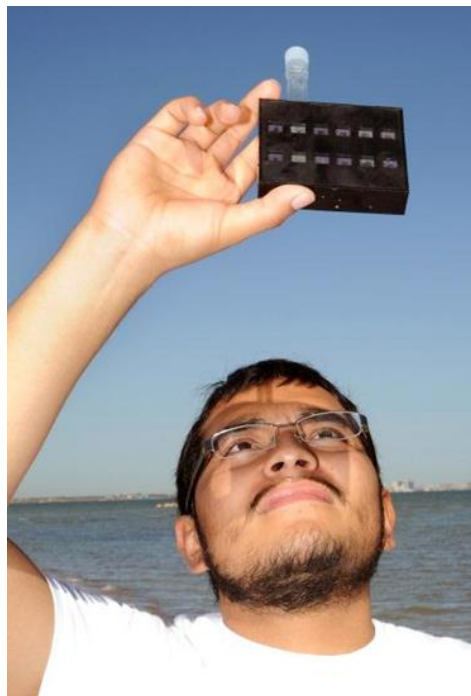
*Core requirements may be substituted if a student can demonstrate equivalent competencies.

Students may apply up to six hours of ESCI 6596 Directed Independent Study towards the elective hours required by either option.

Suggested Course of Study

Meet with your Graduate Advisor before the beginning of your first semester of graduate work to identify courses appropriate to the first semester of graduate work. Work with your Graduate Advisor to identify other persons best suited to serve on your Graduate Committee. You must hold a Graduate Committee meeting, complete a tentative degree plan, and advance to degree candidacy by the end of your second long academic semester.

Graduate students complete most required Core Courses during their first year of study and may or may not take several electives during that year. In certain circumstances you may postpone completion of the Core Courses so that you may take a particular elective, but first consult your Graduate Advisor. Both professional-option and thesis-option graduate students continue taking elective or remaining core coursework during the second year of graduate study.



(Thesis Students) Enrolling in Thesis I/II/III. Thesis students should tentatively identify a thesis topic by the end of their second semester of graduate work. The first summer following the first two semesters of graduate work is an opportune time to begin reconnaissance fieldwork or lab work and library research on the thesis topic and you may enroll in ESCI 5392 (Thesis I) and complete a Thesis Proposal that summer or the following fall semester.

Enrollment in any Thesis course requires approval from your Graduate Advisor to the Office of the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences and takes place through that office. Once you confer with your Graduate Advisor on registering for these courses, the Graduate Advisor emails the department administrative assistant your name, student identification number, term, course, title, and course name so the administrative assistant may create a specific section for you. This should be done at least two weeks prior to registration. Once the section is created, the administrative assistant gives you authorization to enroll in that section. You then enroll yourself to finalize registration.

Enroll in ESCI 5392 (Thesis I: Thesis Proposal) when you and your Graduate Advisor mutually decide on a research topic. Your Graduate Committee must sign the completed Thesis Proposal before you can earn a letter grade for ESCI 5392. If you do not complete the proposal by the end of the semester your Graduate Advisor will award a non-punitive grade of “IP” (In Progress). You must enroll again in ESCI 5392 until you complete the proposal and then you will receive a letter grade for the course. See Section XIII (Guidelines for Preparation of the Thesis Proposal and Thesis Manuscript) for more information on proposal format and official proposal approval.

Enroll in ESCI 5393 (Thesis II: Thesis Research) only after your thesis proposal is completed to your Graduate Committee’s satisfaction, and you are ready to begin your thesis research. Enroll

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in ESCI 5394 (Thesis III: Thesis Submission) for the semester in which you plan to complete the thesis manuscript. Research and writing the manuscript often overlap and may occur simultaneously or the process may extend beyond two semesters. Therefore, as appropriate, you may enroll in ESCI 5393 and ESCI 5394 simultaneously or enroll for additional semesters of ESCI 5393 or 5394 as needed to complete the project. The prerequisite to ESCI 5393 or ESCI 5394 is that your completed thesis proposal, signed by your committee, is filed with the Academic Advisor.

If you do not complete the work required in any of the thesis courses, you will receive a mark of IP (In Progress). This mark indicates that at the conclusion of the semester that course was still in progress. IP is a permanent notation that does not affect the grade point average. To receive a qualitative grade, you must register for the same course in the subsequent semester, paying the appropriate tuition and fees. This will cause you to enroll in more than nine hours of ESCI 5392/5393/5394 in total, to earn the requisite nine hours of thesis credit with assigned letter grades.



Thesis Option students must be enrolled in ESCI 5394 in the graduating term unless the thesis has already been submitted.

(Professional Students) Enrolling in Directed Research. As they advance through the curriculum, Professional Option students should work with their Graduate Advisor and Graduate Committee to identify an appropriate professional project. Enrollment in ESCI 5397 Directed Research requires approval from your Graduate Advisor to the Office of the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences and takes place through that office. Once you confer with your Graduate Advisor on registering for these courses, the Graduate Advisor emails the department administrative assistant your name, student identification number, term, course, title, and course name so the administrative assistant may create a specific section for you.



This should be done at least two weeks prior to registration. Once the section is created, the administrative assistant gives you authorization to enroll in that section. You then enroll yourself to finalize your registration.

The completed professional project should be summarized in a documented, scientific paper of professional appearance. Circulate a draft of the professional project paper to your Graduate Committee for their input and edits. After you have received their comments and made the final edits, distribute the completed approved professional paper (electronic distribution is fine) to your Graduate Advisor and Graduate Committee for their records. You will present the project formally at a project defense, similar to the thesis defense.

Time to Obtain the Degree. Most students take two to three years to complete all requirements for the M.S. degree in environmental science. The length of time depends on amount of prerequisite coursework needed, concurrent employment or other commitments which may not allow students to devote full time to graduate study, and thesis choice (a topic which is well-defined, narrow in scope, does not require development of untested techniques or technologies, and does not entail long-term sampling will be completed faster), among other factors.

The Graduate Advisory Committee

How to Select a Graduate Advisor. Your Graduate Advisor, the faculty member who primarily guides you through your course of study and graduate research, will also chair your Graduate Committee. You must identify a faculty member willing to serve as your Graduate Advisor **before** you apply for admission to the Environmental Science Program.

Do not confuse the term “Graduate Advisor” with another person, “Academic Advisor.” The Academic Advisor is a professional staff member who assists with the processes associated with your degree plan. On behalf of the College Dean, in the graduation clearance process, the Academic Advisor will review your degree plan and record on file for verification of program and university requirements. Should you have any questions on university processes, or resources at A&M-CC, contact the Academic Advisor for clarification or guidance.

Composition of the Graduate Committee. Requirements for composition of a student’s Graduate Committee vary between graduate programs. Within the Environmental Science Program, a Graduate Committee must have at least three members, including the Graduate Advisor (who is your Graduate Committee Chair). At least one of the other committee members must be a full-time Environmental Science faculty member. You may find a list of the Environmental Science faculty linked to the ESCI Program website at:



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<https://www.tamucc.edu/science/departments/physical-sciences/environmental/index.php>

(select "Environmental Science Faculty"). Additional Graduate Committee members may be affiliated with a related TAMUCC discipline, or may be qualified individuals within or outside the TAMUCC community who must hold Graduate Faculty status to participate in your Graduate Committee. Your Graduate Advisor will initiate steps as needed to obtain Graduate Faculty status for such persons.

Once you (the graduate student) and your Graduate Advisor agree on the membership of the committee, it is your responsibility to contact each prospective individual and ask that person to serve. **Thesis Option** students must file a **Form A: Thesis Advisory Committee Appointment Form** (http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/contact_us/forms.html#collapse3) with the College of Graduate Studies prior to formal Advisory Committee (ie, Graduate Committee) appointment.

Attempt to meet with your Graduate Committee to prepare your degree plan no later than the end of the second long academic semester after your initial enrollment. Meet with them sooner or more often if appropriate.

Role of the Graduate Committee. Your Graduate Committee directs your degree plan, thesis or professional project research and manuscript preparation, and oral examination. Your Graduate Advisor provides primary guidance in constructing the degree plan, thesis or professional project selection and research, and submits all necessary paperwork from the Graduate Committee to specified university offices. The Graduate Advisor and Graduate Committee approve elective coursework if you wish to apply it to the total semester hours required for the degree. Beyond these functions, your Graduate Advisor and Graduate Committee members should serve as valuable mentors. Remain in close contact with your Graduate Advisor and Graduate Committee members during your graduate study and thesis or professional project research.

Degree Plan

Preparing a Degree Plan. The goal of the first Graduate Committee meeting is to allow you to introduce yourself and your academic and career interests to your committee members, and to work with them to devise a degree plan (that is, a roadmap) outlining your environmental science course of study. It is good to be well organized because it is the first picture that most committee members will have of you. Also, this saves your committee members time so they can focus in the meeting on discussing more important things such as your proposed research. Degree plans for the ESCI MS Thesis and ESCI MS Professional Options are available online at <https://www.tamucc.edu/science/departments/physical-sciences/environmental/environmental-science-ms-degree-plans.php>

and it is recommended that you bring copies of the appropriate degree plan, with the initial data already entered, to this committee meeting.

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During the first meeting with your Graduate Committee, give your committee a summary of all scientific/technical courses taken, both undergraduate and graduate. It is helpful to bring copies of your transcripts for this. Explain your academic and career interests and goals within the broad field of environmental science. Explain possible research projects you may be considering. Bring a one-page summary of the proposed research and a timeline, if you are far enough along in your studies that you can prepare these.



Also bring copies of any key papers related to the project if not all committee members are familiar with the subject. Then, with the help from the committee, suggest an Emphasis Area or Track (see next section) to serve as the focus for all your subsequent coursework and thesis research (if applicable). The graduate committee identifies areas in which you need additional coursework (including prerequisite work), approves elective courses, recommends possible thesis or professional project topics, and formulates a tentative degree plan.

Your committee may require you to do leveling coursework if they feel you are inadequately prepared to complete the required core courses or graduate level work in your desired Emphasis Area or Track. You generally cannot receive graduate credit for taking an undergraduate course as leveling work. If your committee prescribes leveling work, plan to do it immediately or risk significant delays in completing the graduate program.



Your and your committee prepare the Tentative Degree Plan and at the close of the meeting, you, or your Graduate Advisor forwards it to the Academic Advisor, who reviews and converts it to the appropriate digital format and then files it with the College of Graduate Studies. If the student changes electives or clarifies an elective on the plan, an email from the Graduate Advisor will suffice to document approval of the change. If a student has an exception or waiver to the Plan, a separate form for approval is submitted to document this. The College of Graduate Studies circulates the Official Degree Plan to your Graduate Committee members for signatures.

Emphasis Area or Track. You must declare an Emphasis Area or Track for your graduate studies on the Degree Plan. Marine Policy and Human Dimensions is one possible track; another is Coastal and Marine System Science. These are described in further detail below.

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The *Emphasis Area* is a word or phrase which best expresses the intended focus of your graduate studies within the broad field of environmental science. Define an Emphasis Area, with assistance from your Graduate Advisor and Committee, and then state it on your degree plan. There is no established list of Emphasis Areas from which to choose. Rather, you uniquely formulate an Emphasis Area based on your own academic or career interests. “Biology” is an example of an Emphasis Area which is so broad as to be meaningless; better Emphasis Areas (not an exclusive list) include “contaminants,” “environmental regulations,” “coastal systems,” “hydrogeology” or “habitat management.”



Other Emphasis Areas are possible as approved by your Graduate Committee. You should be able to justify how your electives and your thesis or directed-research project produce a coherent graduate program focused around the Emphasis Area or Track. Designated electives must receive the approval of a student’s Graduate Committee. Electives from the natural sciences, computer science, geographic information science, mathematics, political science, public administration, business law, or other areas may be approved.

The *Marine Policy and Human Dimensions Track* is a good choice for students with an interest in studying the application of environmental science to ocean/coastal policy and human societies. The track provides an understanding of the physical and biological coastal environment and its interaction with human behaviors and policies. This transdisciplinary program is designed to prepare students to work with a wide variety of marine and coastal constituencies to translate sound environmental science to public policy. Suggested electives include:

- ESCI 6340 Ocean Resources
- ESCI 6345 Living with Coastal Hazards
- ESCI 6360 Coastal Management and Ocean Law

The *Coastal and Marine System Science Track* is appropriate for students who may wish to apply selected Coastal and Marine System Science courses to the M.S. degree in Environmental Science, as approved by the student’s Graduate Committee.

Advancement to Degree Candidacy. Graduate students who have met with their Graduate Committee and have a degree plan on file are considered **degree candidates**. You must have advanced to



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degree candidacy by the end of your second long academic semester of graduate study following your admission to the program.

Choosing a Thesis Topic (Thesis Students)

One of the hardest aspects of graduate education is choosing a thesis topic worthy of investigation. Seek input on possible research topics from your Graduate Advisor and try yourself to conceive a study. When choosing a research topic, consider:

Cost. The cost of the project, both to you and the university, is the most important consideration. If the cost is high the likelihood of funding is low, you probably cannot complete the project.

Facilities. If the proper facilities and equipment are not immediately available, do not depend on them in time to complete your research. Your Graduate Committee will know or can determine what equipment is in the university inventory.

Time. A research problem for the M.S. degree is ordinarily completed within two years. Regard with caution any project which requires more time.

Expertise. Undertake a project only if the university library or Graduate Advisor has access to the pertinent literature. Similarly, avoid a project in which your Graduate Advisor lacks competence, experience, or interest.

Feasibility. Examine the project critically to ensure that you can collect the data necessary, samples are available in sufficient numbers, in general you are not dependent on others to obtain your data, and you can collect and analyze the data within your limits of time, financial support, and abilities.

Other Options. Prepare a contingency list of secondary projects related to the proposed project in case the proposed project falls through.

If the proposed project meets the above criteria and your Graduate Advisor agrees to sponsor the research, begin the Thesis Proposal.

Thesis Proposal (Thesis Students)

The Thesis Proposal is an organized description of your planned thesis research. The thesis proposal succinctly narrates the nature of the problem to be examined, status of previous or current research relating to the subject under consideration, research method, and importance of the projected work. If you are going to conduct thesis research, be aware that you must file [specific forms](#) in a timely manner. Section VIII discusses the format for the thesis proposal.



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Approval of Thesis Proposal. Submit a draft copy of the complete proposal, as outlined in the previous section, to your Graduate Advisor. This process may require several revisions, so start it as soon as possible. After the proposal meets your advisor’s approval, provide one copy of the proposal to each of your Graduate Committee members to review. After you have made their



requested changes and the committee is satisfied that all aspects of the proposal are in order, deliver the final Thesis Proposal to your Graduate Advisor. The advisor and the Graduate Committee members sign the title page. Then, make paper or electronic (i.e., pdf) copies of the now-signed Thesis Proposal for your Graduate Advisor and two Graduate Committee members, and submit a signed electronic copy of the proposal to the Academic Advisor.

Submit the signed Thesis Proposal to all persons noted above on or before the last day of final exams. Your Graduate Advisor will assign a letter grade for ESCI 5392 (Thesis I: Thesis Proposal) only after the entire Graduate Committee signs the proposal.

If you cannot complete the proposal by the deadline, your Graduate Advisor will assign a mark of “IP.” Enroll again for ESCI 5392 the next semester so that you can complete the proposal and receive a letter grade for the course. Enroll in ESCI 5393 (Thesis II: Thesis Research) only after you have completed the Thesis Proposal. **Only in exceptional circumstances may you begin a thesis research project or utilize A&M-CC equipment for thesis research before the Graduate Committee approves the proposal. The Graduate Committee must approve such exceptions.**

Thesis Manuscript (Thesis Students)

Once you have completed the thesis research, analyze the data, organize the research into a meaningful format, and explain it in a written narrative. The written narrative follows a style and format standard to scientific papers. For additional guidance on the format for the Thesis manuscript, consult the College of Graduate Studies at http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/current_students/masters_students.html

Style and Format. You may choose between two models of organizing the thesis, the traditional model, and the journal manuscript model. The traditional model presents the thesis research in a single, cohesive manuscript. Information is presented sequentially, and no section stands alone as a publishable document. The journal manuscript model presents the thesis research as several discrete articles, each appropriate for submission to a journal, unified in the thesis document. In the latter, information may be repeated as necessary between articles so that each article can stand



alone as an academic work. Presentation of the thesis research through the journal manuscript model significantly reduces the work needed to submit articles to professional journals for publication. Whether you choose the traditional or journal manuscript model, follow the style and format of your selected Format Journal(s) for headers, punctuation, citation of references, bibliography, and other details except where specifically noted in guidance provided by the College of Graduate Studies.

Submitting the Manuscript. When you are satisfied with your finished draft of the thesis, submit it to your Graduate Advisor for review/editing. Respect your advisor's time: submit a draft as perfect as you can make it (grammatically correct, spell-check everything, and include your planned illustrations). Your Graduate Advisor will critically examine the manuscript for scientific content, errors in grammar and punctuation, wordiness, terminology, soundness of scientific reasoning, and accuracy.



Your Graduate Advisor will suggest changes, additions, and deletions that will better organize and clarify the manuscript, then return the corrected document to you and ask for a copy for revision.

You may consider yourself a good writer and thus may be taken aback when your advisor suggests numerous changes. Editing and revising are a normal part of the professional writing process, and the best writers edit and revise extensively. Use this as an exercise to improve your professional writing skills. Submission, review, and revision of the manuscript continue until the Graduate Advisor considers your manuscript satisfactory.

Next, circulate copies of the approved rough draft to each Graduate Committee member. Each committee member then edits the manuscript. Let your advisor review their suggested changes and discuss each suggested change together. Your Graduate Advisor may ask you to revise and resubmit the document accordingly. If your Graduate Advisor does not agree with a committee member's suggestion, your Graduate Advisor should, in your presence, reach a compromise with the committee member.

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

Manuscript Rejection. Any member of your graduate committee can reject the thesis at any state of the submission and approval process. Rejection of the manuscript can occur for many reasons, including (but not exclusively) that it:

- Does not confirm to the required format.
- Is poorly written or contains an excessive number of grammatical or spelling errors.
- Describes scientific data inconsistent with the research project approved in the thesis proposal.
- Contains errors, inappropriate data analysis, erroneous conclusions, or other scientific inaccuracies.
- Contains plagiarized work

The thesis is made available to the research community through the ProQuest/UMI ETD Administrator. Consult the College of Graduate Studies regarding the thesis submission process and deadlines. Thesis binding is optional and is also handled through the ProQuest/UMI ETD Administrator.



Professional Paper (Professional Students)

Unlike the thesis, the professional paper does not require completion of a written project proposal prior to initiating the project, and guidelines for the format of the professional paper are far less prescribed. The document should include a signature page with standardized information. See Section VIII for further discussion of the format of the professional paper.

Plan to produce an electronic version of the final professional paper for your Graduate Advisor and Graduate Committee members. You may also opt to produce a hardcopy of the completed paper, bound in soft-cover with tape or spiral binding.

Upon approval of your final professional paper, submit copies (hardcopy or electronic) to your Graduate Advisor and your other Graduate Committee members. You or your Graduate Advisor should submit an electronic image of the signature page (with all signatures of your Graduate Committee) to the Academic Advisor.

Publishing the Thesis/Professional Paper

The thesis and professional paper do not constitute “published works,” but the graduate faculty anticipate that students will submit theses and excellent professional papers in the proper format to scholarly journals for publication. If the Graduate Advisor or another faculty member significantly contributed to the research or manuscript writing, list that person as a co-author of the published article. Both you and your Graduate Advisor should agree about the authorship (keep in mind that the faculty members are supposed to assist you to a certain degree as part of their professional requirement).

Seriously consider co-author status if the faculty member:

- Supported you on the work through a grant awarded as a result of the faculty member’s authorship of a grant proposal.
- Did a significant portion of the field or laboratory work with you or before you began the project.
- Assigned you some aspect of a much larger research project already underway.
- Contributed materially to the research in any other way.

Always acknowledge your Graduate Advisor and members of your Graduate Committee, other faculty members who assisted, and A&M-CC in the publication. It is courteous to acknowledge persons who supported in any major way including moral support, lab/field assistance, and financial assistance.

Culminating Event/Exit Requirements

Graduate Defense. All graduate students must present their Thesis or Professional Project research orally during a Graduate Defense open to all faculty and students. Schedule your Graduate Defense to take place during your last semester of graduate work. It should, if possible, precede the final oral examination. Deadlines are noted below.

The Graduate Defense consists of a formal oral and visual presentation of the results of the student’s research or some pertinent aspect of the research and should bear the aspect of a formal scientific presentation. The defense should review parts of the thesis or professional paper such as the background and relevance of the research, a brief discussion of the methods used, a summary of the results, and an explanation of the conclusions. Professional-quality visual aids should complement the oral presentation. As a general rule, the oral presentation should not exceed 30 minutes. This allows a similar period for questions and answers at the end.



This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master’s Student Handbook](#).

Prepare and submit a formal announcement of the defense to your Graduate Advisor for approval at least two weeks prior to the defense date. It is your responsibility to contact each Graduate Committee member and arrange a time for the event.

Section VIII of this Handbook gives an example of an appropriate format for a Graduate Defense notice. Post your defense notice as an E-mail to as many of these listservs as possible, at least one week before your defense date:

escistu-list@listserv.tamucc.edu

escifac-list@listserv.tamucc.edu

COS-list@listserv.tamucc.edu

You cannot post to a listserv if you are not subscribed. Your Graduate Advisor, or the Coordinator of the ESCI Program, can assist you in posting the announcement on various listservs.

Thesis students must also submit a “Preliminary Agreement to Schedule the Defense/Final Examination” Form B (available on College of Graduate Studies website) no later than 5 days before the defense so that notice of your defense will be posted to the College of Graduate Studies website.

All members of the Graduate Committee must attend the thesis or professional project defense. Environmental science graduate students are encouraged to attend as many environmental science graduate defenses as possible.

Comprehensive Oral Examination. Both Thesis and Professional Option environmental science graduate students must pass a comprehensive oral examination. The comprehensive oral examination is a means of determining the scope of your understanding of the principles and broad aspects of environmental science. The oral examination forces you to review and synthesize all material from your past graduate courses. If you properly prepare for your exam, relationships between once separate and distinct courses begin to appear and you can assimilate broad concepts from isolated facts. **Thesis students should refer to College of Graduate Studies deadlines for completion of the comprehensive oral exam. Professional Option students should adhere to Environmental Science Program deadlines for the oral exam which are April 15, July 15, and November 15 for the spring, summer, and fall graduations, respectively.**

Format and Scope of Comprehensive Oral Exam. Consult with members of your Graduate Committee about the topics and types of questions they might include in your exam. There are several ways to review for oral exams and you should probably use a combination of methods. Study of old course notes and exams is useful, especially those courses taught by members of your graduate committee; also review course textbooks and study a comprehensive text such as used in an undergraduate environmental science course.

During the initial stages of the exam, the Graduate Committee will usually ask you to give a brief personal history and reasons (goals) for desiring the M.S. degree. The committee will then ask you to briefly review the research methods and conclusions of the thesis, if there was one. Following this, the committee will ask questions of three main types: (1) those concerning specific
This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

aspects of all graduate coursework undertaken for the environmental science graduate program; (2) those concerning specific aspects of your emphasis area and thesis (if there was one); (3) those concerning broad concepts of environmental science, including a familiarity with the literature and appropriate professional societies.

Your Graduate Committee will decide whether you have passed the comprehensive oral exam. If you are a Professional Option student, your Graduate Advisor will notify the Academic Advisor of the results of the final oral exam. For Thesis Option students, the Graduate Advisor must complete and submit a College of Graduate Studies form “C” to document that the Oral Exam has been passed. If you fail the exam the committee will discuss with you their assessment of your performance. If you fail you may retake the exam only once again, and only after an interval of at least four months.

SECTION V. COURSE OFFERING SEQUENCE

FALL	SPRING	SUMMER I	SUMMER II
	ESCI 5350 – Fundamentals of Physical Oceanography (On demand)		
ESCI 6101 – Environmental Research Seminar			
	ESCI 6203 – Prof. Skills for Scientists		
ESCI 6130 – Oil Spill Mgt. Lab	ESCI 6130 – Oil Spill Mgt. Lab	ESCI 6130 – Oil Spill Mgt. Lab (On demand)	ESCI 6130 – Oil Spill Mgt. Lab (On demand)
ESCI 6170 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Lab	ESCI 6170 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Lab	ESCI 6170 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Lab (On demand)	ESCI 6170 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Lab (On demand)
ESCI 6230 – Oil Spill Management Theory	ESCI 6230 – Oil Spill Management Theory	ESCI 6230 – Oil Spill Management Theory (On demand)	ESCI 6230 – Oil Spill Management Theory (On demand)
ESCI 6270 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Theory	ESCI 6270 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Theory	ESCI 6270 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Theory (On demand)	ESCI 6270 – Hazardous Waste Treatment Technologies Theory (On demand)
ESCI 6302 – Federal Environmental Laws and Regs	ESCI 6302 – Federal Environmental Laws and Regs (On demand)	ESCI 6302 – Federal Environmental Laws and Regs (10-Week format) (On demand)	
	ESCI 6310 – Fundamentals of Remote Sensing (On demand)		
	ESCI 6332 Advanced Wetlands and Water Quality (On demand)		
ESCI 6360 – Coastal Management and Ocean Law			

Courses not listed here but included in the university catalog are offered on sufficient demand. See University Catalog for schedule of courses offered by other departments.

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

SECTION VI. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Here are final suggestions to help you optimize your graduate experience.

Join Professional Organizations. Student memberships in professional organizations are often available at reduced cost. Attend conferences and workshops to network and keep abreast of developments in your area. Present a paper or poster when possible (you may obtain university funding for travel and meeting registration costs if actively participating rather than simply attending such events). Your ability to attend international or national meetings may depend heavily on funding availability but consider local, regional, and state events as more feasible options.

Interact with Other Graduate Students. Graduate education is not a solitary endeavor. Make opportunities to introduce yourself to other graduate students and offer to assist them with their research in the field or laboratory. Beyond generating camaraderie, this will give you a more comprehensive understanding of specific issues and problems in environmental science, expose you to a broad array of lab/field techniques, suggest ideas for your own research and may gain you reciprocal lab and field assistance when needed to carry out your own investigations.

Connect to Helpful Listservs. Communications within A&M-CC are largely via listservs. A general description of all university listservs is posted at: <http://listserv.tamucc.edu/mailman/listinfo>

To subscribe to any listserv, follow the link given on the webpage above to find the list of all listservs at TAMUCC. Then locate the particular listserv you wish to subscribe to and subscribe directly from the web.

Most Environmental Science graduate students receive timely news and email updates on program seminars, jobs, internships, scholarships, research assistantships, new courses, and other opportunities through the **Environmental Science Program Student Listserv** (escistu-list@listserv.tamucc.edu).

Another useful listserv is the **College of Science Graduate Student Listserv** (cos-grad@listserv.tamucc.edu) which posts information of general interest to College of Science graduate students.

You will undoubtedly find other listservs useful and should subscribe to and monitor them to remain knowledgeable and updated.



This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

SECTION VII. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Science Teaching Assistantships. A limited number of science teaching assistantships are available. University regulations require that you must be accepted as a graduate student to be considered for these assistantships. You are also required to enroll for at least nine semester credit hours in any long semester, and three semester credit hours in the combined summer terms, for terms in which you hold the teaching assistantship. Applications are available online; see <http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/> (select “Student Information” then “Graduate Funding Opportunities”). The duration of an assistantship is normally two full semesters (fall and spring) although based on department need, a limited number of assistantships may be for only one semester. Assistantships are renewed annually. You may normally receive teaching assistantships for up to two years.



Other Teaching Assistantships are available as well. Consult the University Core Curriculum Program Office for information about Core Curriculum assistantships. Consult other departments for information about teaching assistantships within those departments.

Research Assistantships. A limited number of research assistantships are available through research institutes and centers, and individual faculty members; consult institute and center directors and individual faculty members to identify these funding sources. Some graduate research assistantships are administered through the College of Science; see <http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/> (select “Student Information” then “Graduate Funding Opportunities”).



Exemption from Higher Out-of-State or Foreign Tuition Rates. If you receive a 50%-time (20 hours/week) teaching assistantship or research assistantship you may be eligible to pay tuition at Texas Resident rates, even if you are an out-of-state or foreign student. Such reduction is determined by application. To apply, complete a Graduate Assistant Exemption form at: https://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/forms/TA_RA_waiver_request.php

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

Loans and Scholarships. Consult the Office of Financial Assistance for information regarding student loans. Most Graduate Scholarships for College of Science students are administered through the College of Science; see <http://www.sci.tamucc.edu/> (select “Student Information,” then “Graduate Funding Opportunities”). The College also routinely distributes information about many scholarships awarded by private organizations.

Agency Internships. A limited number of student internships are available with state or federal natural resource agencies. Generally, more advanced (second or third year, rather than first year) students are placed in these positions. Consult the Director of the Center for Coastal Studies about availability of these positions (Phone (361) 825-2736; Office Location in Carlos Truan Natural Resource Center Suite 3200).

Outside Employment. The University Office of Career Services can assist you in finding employment in the community and in preparing for careers upon graduation. Subscribing to listservs (see Section VII, Student Development section of this Handbook) and networking with fellow graduate students and faculty will also help you find employment.

SECTION VIII. FORMAT FOR THE THESIS PROPOSAL, THESIS, PROFESSIONAL PAPER AND GRADUATE SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT

Thesis Proposal Format. A thesis proposal must include the following sections, in this order:

- a. **Title Page.** Appendix I is an example of a correctly spaced title page.
- b. **Background and Relevance.** This section at the beginning of the proposal summarizes (with appropriate literature citations) all past and present research pertaining to each aspect of the research objectives. This section should explain why the proposed research is necessary.
- c. **Purpose.** Explicitly state the purpose of the research project (e.g., to determine the effect of local discharges of oilfield brines on adjacent populations of estuarine benthic invertebrates). The purpose statement should reflect the environmental question(s) that the research is designed to answer, rather than the method used to conduct the research. For example, “to measure salinity” is not a sound purpose for proposing research. But, if the research is to discover (or attempt to discover) new methods of analysis, collection, etc., then it is acceptable to list methods to be tried.
- d. **Study Site.** If the planned research will take place in the field, show the study site location via a map. Briefly characterize the physical or biological attributes of the site. Omit this section if inapplicable to the proposed research.
- e. **Methods.** Describe the methods and materials that you will use to meet each research objective. Describe in detail any special items that must be purchased or constructed to complete the research. If lengthy descriptions or drawings are necessary, describe the equipment fully in an appendix.
- f. **Timetable.** Estimate the time schedule for research and academic work. Establish tentative deadlines for completion of data-gathering for each research objective. Take into account coursework demands as you plan your fieldwork, field trip schedules, etc. State an estimated completion date for data gathering and a graduation date. Present your timetable in tabular format.
- g. **Budget.** Include an accurate assessment of the expenses incurred during the research project. The budget should clearly define the expenses the University covers and the costs you will incur. Include financial or other support obtained from other governmental or private resources. Explain each item in the budget in the “Methods” section of the proposal. For example, do not include the cost of crab traps in the budget unless the “Methods” section describes the specific rationale for crab traps. Divide the budget into four subsections and present it in tabular form (Table I, Appendix I):
 - a. **Equipment.** Include cost figures for each piece of non-expendable equipment that you must purchase to support your research. Do not include purchase costs for equipment already available for use at A&M-CC, but make sure that such equipment is operational and available for your use. Obtain permission before using University equipment and expendables.
 - b. **Expendables.** Estimate costs for all supplies, chemicals, or other items to be exhausted during the research project. All items currently in stock must be replaced. Include the replacement costs. Expendables include items such as microscope slides, test tubes, chemicals, cotton, jars, vials, etc.
 - c. **Operational Expenses.** Include expense estimates for data collection. Include the costs of travel, boat rental, and other expenses. The use of university vehicles and boats requires approval by (a) the Field Trip Coordinator and Department of Physical and Life Sciences Chairperson, or (b) the research institute or center director with oversight over that vehicle.
 - d. **Document Preparation.** Include cost estimates for all aspects of preparing the proposal and thesis. The College of Science and the Department of Physical and Life Sciences will not bear any costs involving the preparation or reproduction of the proposal or thesis.
 - e. **Literature Cited.** The Literature Cited section includes the complete citation of each article referred to in the proposal. Follow the bibliographic format of the Format Journal you have selected. See Appendix I.

The following two pages contain example formats for the Title Page for the Thesis Proposal and the Budget for the Thesis Proposal.

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

Example of Title Page for Thesis Proposal:

THE TENTATIVE TITLE SHOULD APPEAR IN ALL CAPITALS
AND BE CENTERED

Prepared by
YOU A. STUDENT
MONTH, 20__

For
The Graduate Committee
Environmental Science Program
Texas A&M University -Corpus Christi
Corpus Christi, Texas

Approved: _____
Dr. A. Marsh, Chairperson

Dr. O. Shinn, Member

Dr. C. Gull, Member

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Format: Title of Journal used as format.

TABLE I. *Proposed budget for You A. Student's thesis research project.*

Budget Item	Cost (\$)		
	A&M CC	Personal	Other*
Equipment Cryostat Light Meter, Photographic Spotting Scope, 45X	\$1900	\$30.00 \$100.00	
Expendables Petri dishes, disposable Filter paper Microslides and cover glass* Ethyl Alcohol, Reagent	\$60.00		\$23.00 \$27.00 \$80.00
Operational Expenses Travel, Data Collection Boat Rental	\$80.00	\$320.00	
Preparation of Documents Thesis Expenses Publications and Reprints	\$300.00	\$200.00	
Subtotals	\$2,340.00	\$600.00	\$130.00

*Funds provide by student Grant-in-Aid-of-Research from Sigma Xi

Thesis Format. Follow the Thesis Formatting Guidelines posted by the College of Graduate Studies at http://gradcollege.tamucc.edu/current_students/dissertation_thesis.html

You may write the Thesis in a traditional format, or in the format of one or several journal articles (this latter format is intended to speed up submission for publication). Make all narrative material of the thesis clearly understandable to the reader through careful, well-organized writing, meaningful figures and tables, and adequate utilization of references. Several publications available in the A&M-CC library answer specific questions regarding the style of scientific writing, including the Council of Biology Editors (CBE) Style Manual, the United States Government Printing Office Style Manual, and others.

When writing the thesis proposal and thesis, students will follow the general format and style of the most recent issue of a **Format Journal**, ie a respected scholarly journal in the field of your research. Your committee must approve your Formal Journal choice before you begin to write the manuscript.

The sections of the thesis are generally ordered as follows: Title/Approval page, Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Figures, List of Tables, Acknowledgements, Text (including Literature Cited), Appendices. If following a journal format, you may place separate, appropriate Literature Cited sections and Appendices relevant to that paper, at the end of each paper.

Consult the College of Graduate Studies for examples of preliminary pages of the thesis. Templates are available [online](#) for the title, copyright, and committee member pages. Thesis pages for which examples are provided include those listed below.



Title Page Example

Copyright Page Example

Committee Member Page Example

Abstract Page Example

Dedication Page Example

Acknowledgements Page Example

Table of Contents Page Example

List of Figures Page Example

List of Tables Page Example

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

Professional Paper Format. The Environmental Science Program has not established detailed guidelines for format of the professional paper to be completed for the Professional Option, for the nature of the projects vary widely. If your project lends itself to a journal manuscript format as described above for the thesis, then consider that as it may quickly enable you to submit the paper for publication. Some projects are performed for a natural resource agency and follow a format prescribed by that agency.

In any case, include a title page (or establish a separate signature page for this) which includes spaces for signatures of your Graduate Advisor and Graduate Committee members. The following page presents an example format for the Title Page for the Professional Paper.

Example of Title Page for Professional Paper:

THE TENTATIVE TITLE SHOULD APPEAR IN ALL CAPITALS
AND BE CENTERED

By

YOU A. STUDENT
MONTH, 20__

A Professional Paper Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Texas A&M University -Corpus Christi
Environmental Science Program
Corpus Christi, Texas

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Dr. A. Marsh, Chairperson

Dr. O. Shinn, Member

Dr. C. Gull, Member

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

Graduate Seminar Announcement. The Graduate Seminar (also called the Graduate Defense) should clearly identify degree program, student's name, title of the presentation, date/time/location of the Seminar, abstract, and any other particulars. It may be necessary to host the meeting via Zoom if the student or any Graduate Committee members cannot attend in person, and you may offer a Zoom option in any case to permit others to attend more easily. If there is a Zoom option, include the Zoom link on the Graduate Seminar Announcement so that others in the campus community can attend this way if desired.

The following page contains an example format for the Announcement for the Graduate Seminar (to be used by both Thesis and Professional Option students).

Example of Announcement of the Graduate Seminar:

GRADUATE SEMINAR NOTICE
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE PROGRAM
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI

SUBJECT: Official Title of Your Thesis or Professional Project
SPEAKER: You A. Student
GRADUATE ADVISOR: Dr. Pectin A. Clamshell
COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Dr. Hermit Crabb, Dr. Pippi Plover
DATE: Tuesday, March 15, 20__
TIME: 3:00 p.m.
PLACE: Center for Instruction, Texas A&M-CC
Room 109
ZOOM LINK: (Optional)

ABSTRACT

The abstract of your thesis or graduate project should appear here (shortened version if necessary). An abstract of 50-200 words length is recommended for inclusion in Graduate Seminar Notice.

*[NOTE: Students or their Graduate Advisors should distribute this notice electronically to faculty members and graduate students involved in the Environmental Science program. Post it to listservs such as the **escifac-list**, **escistu-list**, and **cos-list listservs**.]*

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

SECTION IX. GENERAL INFORMATION

This section of the handbook includes standardized information about rules and policies pertaining to graduate education at Texas A&M University. It is not intended to be comprehensive. You are strongly encouraged to read the sections of the catalog pertaining to graduate students, which will provide more detail and additional topics that may impact you. You will also find information about your program.

Graduate Admissions

To be admitted to a program of graduate study, an applicant must hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution of higher education in the United States or an equivalent foreign institution. (*Note: The requirement to hold a bachelor's degree does not apply to students enrolling in the RN-MSN option in nursing.*) Decisions concerning admission to graduate study are based on all admission criteria. To be considered for a graduate program, a minimum last 60-hour GPA of 2.5 is required. Some programs may have higher GPA requirements; review specific program information in the graduate catalog or elsewhere in this handbook. All applications must be made through [Apply Texas](#). For more information about the application process, visit the [Application Process](#) page on the CGS website or see the Catalog, [Graduate Admissions section](#).

Enrollment Status

Graduate students should be aware of their enrollment status, as it may impact financial aid, veteran's benefits, or other important aspects of graduate life. In addition, international students have specific requirements about enrollment status. Enrollment status for graduate students is as follows:

Full-time graduate student	Fall or spring term = 9 hours Combined summer terms = 6 hours
Three-quarter-time graduate student	Fall or spring term = 7 hours Combined summer terms = 5 hours
Half-time graduate student	Fall or spring term = 5 hours Combined summer terms = 3 hours

Continuous Enrollment

The University does not have a continuous enrollment policy for master's students. However, students should be aware of their own program's requirements, which may differ from general University requirements. Master's students should also know that if they do not attend for two years, they will be required to reapply to the University. Students should consider applying for a leave of absence (see below), especially if the time-to-degree and recency of credits and requirements will be impacted by a needed absence.

Leave of Absence

Students experiencing life changing or catastrophic events should consult with their program coordinator and/or department chair and request a [Leave of Absence](#) in writing from the College of Graduate Studies using the [Request for Leave of Absence form](#). A student who is in good

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standing may petition for a leave of absence of no more than two full academic terms. The maximum number of leave of absence requests permitted in a program is two. A request for a leave of absence requires approval in advance by the faculty advisor, Program Coordinator, College Dean, and Graduate Dean. If the Graduate Dean approves the petition, the registration requirement is set aside during the period of time of the leave. Students should be aware that leaves of absences require suspension of all activities associated pursuit of the degree. See the catalog for more information.

Maximum Course Load

Graduate students may not register for more than 12 hours in a regular semester, 6 hours in a single session of summer school, or 12 hours in the combined summer session (not including Maymester) without the approval of the appropriate college dean. See the [Maximum Course Load](#) section in the catalog.

Repetition of a Course

There are specific policies about repeating courses for higher grades, including the provision that graduate students may retake a maximum of two courses during graduate study at the University. Each course may be repeated only once. Some courses may be repeated for multiple credit if those courses are so designated in the course description and approved by the faculty or program advisor as designated by their college. Complete catalog information may be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog.

Time Limit to Degree

The requirements for a master's degree at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi must be completed within seven years subsequent to admission to the program. The seven-year period begins the first semester of enrollment and is calculated from the date of degree conferral. Credit that is more than seven years old will not be counted toward a master's degree. Exceptions will require strong justification in writing from the student requesting the exception as well as submission of a revalidation plan. Credits earned at another university are not eligible for an exception. Written approval from the major department chairperson, the dean of the college offering the degree, the Graduate Dean, and the Provost are required. See the revalidation process below.

Revalidation of Courses Beyond Degree Time Limit

In order to revalidate dated courses, students should carefully attend to information in the catalog (see [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog. Revalidation requests should be made using the [Revalidation Request Form](#).

If your program has shorter time-to-degree limits, it may impact recency of credit and other timelines. See program information in this handbook or seek information from your Program Coordinator.

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

Academic Requirements for Graduate Work

Good Standing. Graduate Students, including degree-seeking, certificate-seeking, and non-degree-seeking students are considered in “good academic standing” if they maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average (GPA) on all graduate course work and earn a grade of S (Satisfactory), IP (In Progress, or CR (Credit) on all course work that does not affect GPA. A higher GPA may be required by some programs. In such cases, the higher standard will be substituted for 3.0 in all other matters related to good academic standing. A complete discussion of academic requirements including but not limited to scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal may be found in the [Graduate Academic and Degree Requirements](#) section of the catalog. For information regarding the effect of scholastic probation and enforced withdrawal, see the [Financial Assistance Suspension Policy](#) in the Tuition, Fees, & Financial Assistance section of the catalog.

Texas 99 Hour Rule

The Texas State Legislator enacted a rule that provides that students at all state universities with over 99 doctoral hours may be subject to the payment of nonresident tuition. A student will generally be able to study at TAMU-CC full-time for five complete academic years, including summers, before being affected by the 99-hour rule. For students staying beyond five years, in a number of cases there is still the possibility of a programmatic or individual exemption from the rule. For more information, contact your Program Coordinator.

Academic Integrity

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, which include but are not limited to illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, plagiarism, or collusion in any of these behaviors. All students should familiarize themselves with the full Academic Integrity Policy as well as the processes and procedures used to address violations thereof. You can find additional information in the [Academic Integrity](#) section of the catalog. Students can also access University Rules and Procedures [13.02.99.C0.04](#): Student Academic Misconduct Cases.

Additional Information

Information, policies, and procedures about tuition, fees, financial assistance, scholarships, and other topics important to graduate students can be found in the catalog. In addition to the catalog, web pages for offices and services on campus provide expanded information, forms, and contact names/phone numbers. Some of those webpages include the following:

[College of Graduate Studies](#)

[Office of Student Financial Assistance](#)

[Office of International Education](#)

[Scholarships](#)

[GROW](#)

[Assistantships](#)

This handbook is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Graduate Catalog](#) and the College of Graduate Studies [Master's Student Handbook](#).

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