

# Geography Graduate Student Handbook

## Part 2. Guide to the Geography program – nuts and bolts

Part 2 is intended to provide Geography graduate students with established practices and tips towards their degrees. The UWM Catalog is the official document of requirements, and this guide provides information not specified in the catalog. No part of this document shall supersede the content of the catalog. Any feedback to this document should be directed to the graduate program chair.

### 1. Coursework and progress to completion

Graduate students should carefully follow the coursework requirements as specified in each program catalog: [Master of Arts](#); [Master of Science](#); [Ph.D.](#) They should consult their advisor to decide which courses to take in each semester once the course schedule is released. Since some courses are offered regularly and some are not, it is suggested that students and advisors make a tentative 2-year plan and adjust as necessary.

#### A. Semester-by-semester guide to completion

The following table provides an **example** of a semester-by-semester guide to completion for MA/MS students. Individual plans must be established and adjusted in consultation with the advisor.

Semester	Thesis option	Non-thesis option	Professional GIS track
<b>Fall year 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Develop research ideas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> </ul>
<b>Spring year 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Establish the research plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Establish the plan for the capstone project (internship or research papers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Establish the plan for the capstone project (internship or research papers)</li> </ul>
<b>Fall year 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Execute the research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Execute the capstone project plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Execute the capstone project plan</li> </ul>
<b>Spring year 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 890</li> <li>• Execute the research</li> <li>• Write the thesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 999 or 798 or 889 as applicable</li> <li>• Execute the capstone project plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 798</li> <li>• Execute the capstone project plan</li> <li>• Write the final paper</li> </ul>

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- Present at the colloquium
  - Write the final paper
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The following table provides an **example** of a semester-by-semester guide to completion for Ph.D. students. Individual plans must be established and adjusted in consultation with the advisor.

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Things to do</b>
<b>Fall year 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Develop research ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Spring year 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Develop research ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Fall year 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Develop the research plan</li> </ul>
<b>Spring year 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take courses</li> <li>• Develop the research plan</li> <li>• Apply for the Doctoral Preliminary Exam in the <a href="#">Online Doctoral Milestones System</a></li> </ul>
<b>Fall year 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May register for GEOG 999 at 1 cr only if taking the preliminary exam</li> <li>• Take the preliminary exam and defend the dissertation proposal</li> <li>• Present the proposal at the colloquium</li> </ul>
<b>Spring year 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 990 (3 cr)</li> <li>• Conduct research</li> </ul>
<b>Fall year 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 990 (3 cr)</li> <li>• Conduct research</li> </ul>
<b>Spring year 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 990 (3 cr)</li> <li>• Conduct research</li> </ul>
<b>Fall year 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 990 (3 cr)</li> <li>• Conduct research</li> <li>• Present the research at the colloquium</li> </ul>
<b>Spring year 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take GEOG 990 (3 cr)</li> <li>• Defend the dissertation</li> </ul>

#### B. Example course plans for MA/MS students

These tables are **examples** of the course schedule for MA/MS students. The examples are based on the latest information on course offerings, such as, how often they are offered and in which semester. Therefore, students should check each semester's course offerings carefully and consult their advisor to personalize the schedule.

Please note that GEOG 870 and 810 are offered every other year. Therefore, if either course is offered in your first year, you must take it to finish on time.

a) MA/MS with standard track

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Courses</b>	<b>Credits</b>
<b>Fall year 1</b>	GEOG 726 GEOG 870	7
<b>Spring year 1</b>	GEOG 747 Elective 1 Elective 2	10
<b>Fall year 2</b>	GEOG 810 Elective 3 Elective 4	9
<b>Spring year 2</b>	GEOG 890 (or another capstone)	4
<b>Total credit</b>		30

b) MS with GIS Professional Track

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Courses</b>	<b>Credits</b>
<b>Fall year 1</b>	GEOG 726 Elective 1	7
<b>Spring year 1</b>	GEOG 747 GEOG 704 GEOG 705	12
<b>Fall year 2</b>	GEOG 826 Elective 2	7
<b>Spring year 2</b>	GEOG 798	4
<b>Total credit</b>		30

C. Exceptions to the policy

When a student cannot meet a particular policy, an exception may be granted based on the nature of the situation. An exception to the department policy is handled internally by the graduate program chair. An exception to the Graduate School policy is handled by the Graduate School via the graduate program chair.

a) Exception to the department policy

If a student wants to request an exception to the department policy, they should file a petition to the graduate program chair after consulting their advisor. The petition consists of a brief letter explaining the rationale and any supporting documents. The

petition will be approved or denied by the faculty during a department meeting. The graduate program chair will notify the student of the decision after the meeting.

◆ Example: a Ph.D. student wants to have a waiver of GEOG 726 because they already took a similar course at a previous school. Then the student needs to attach the syllabus of the course to the petition letter.

#### b) Exception to the Graduate School policy

If a student wants to request an exception to the Graduate School policy, they should file a [request for exception](#) form to the graduate program chair after consulting their advisor. Once the completed form is submitted to the graduate program chair, they will decide whether to support the request. If the request is supported by the graduate chair, they will explain the decision in section II of the form and forward it to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will make the final decision and notify all parties involved.

◆ Examples: academic leave of absence; a Ph.D. student registering for 1 cr more than once; an MA/MS student switching to a different capstone course during the semester

## 2. Teaching assistantships

Continuing students should apply for funding (e.g., TAship) for the next academic year by completing a financial support application [form](#). The graduate program chair will make a call for application during the fall semester. Continuing students are subject to annual evaluation by the faculty, which occurs around the end of each academic year, and the evaluation result will be a factor in the funding decision. MA/MS students in good standing are typically funded for two years. Ph.D. students in good standing are typically funded for five years.

Specific TA assignments for the next semester will be announced by the Department Chair towards the end of each semester. Due to the uncertainty in personal situation, enrollment, etc., the announcement may be delayed, and the assignments are subject to change.

The Geography Department's [TA handbook](#) provides a comprehensive guide to the TAship, including roles and responsibilities, advice and tips, and resources. All TAs are expected to read and refer to the handbook.

## 3. Graduate student departmental service positions

Graduate students are encouraged to participate in the Department's activities as active members of the Department. One way to do so is by assuming a service position including

the graduate student representative. The graduate student representatives work as liaisons between students and faculty. They attend departmental meetings, organize social activities, and advocate the interests and concerns of graduate students. Typically, there are two concurrent graduate student representatives serving a one-year term each.