



SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOREST SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

College of the Environment

Graduate Student Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

This Graduate Student Handbook provides essential information regarding requirements and policies for School of Environmental and Forest Sciences (SEFS) graduate programs, along with important University of Washington, Graduate School, and College of the Environment policies and resources. SEFS graduate programs are governed by the UW, the UW Graduate School, and the College of the Environment, and ***all graduate students are responsible for making themselves aware of and complying with current UW, Graduate School, College of the Environment, and SEFS policies and procedures.*** In addition to this handbook and online resources, the Office of Student and Academic Services (SAS) is located in Anderson Hall 130. David Campbell, the Graduate Advisor, can be contacted at davidc23@uw.edu or 206-543-7081.

It is particularly important that graduate students become familiar with the UW Graduate School's [General Graduate Student Policies](#), along with Graduate School requirements and policies for [Master's degrees](#) and [Doctoral degrees](#). All students are subject to the [UW's Student Conduct Code](#) and [Academic Misconduct Code](#).

Graduate program requirements and policies specific to SEFS are described below.

SEFS Graduate Program Requirements and Policies

Graduate degree programs in SEFS are governed by the UW Graduate School and College of the Environment, and SEFS has specific policies and procedures for the graduate degrees granted by SEFS. In addition to the UW Graduate School and College resources, the Office of Student and Academic Services, the Supervisory Committee Chair, and the Supervisory Committee members are all important resources for students. In consultation with the SEFS Director and Associate Directors, the [Graduate Program Coordinator](#) provides overall coordination of graduate activities in the School.

Supervisory Committee

The Supervisory Committee guides a student through their degree program, including identifying and planning appropriate coursework, monitoring progress, and completion of final thesis, dissertation, or project. Upon admittance to SEFS, MS, MFR, and PhD students are assigned a temporary Supervisory Committee Chair. MEH students are assigned a permanent Supervisory Committee. Students should use the first 1-2 quarters to meet faculty members, establish their Supervisory Committee, and refine their Program of Study. [Establish a permanent Supervisory Committee or change membership](#) online.

Master's Degree (MS, MEH, MFR) Supervisory Committee

1. The Committee Chair must have a SEFS primary faculty appointment and a UW Graduate Faculty Appointment.
2. The majority of members must have a UW Graduate Faculty appointment.
3. All master's committees require a minimum of 2 members, with 3 members recommended.

Doctoral Degree (PhD) Supervisory Committee

1. The PhD Committee must conform to the requirements in [Graduate School Memorandum #13](#).
2. The Committee Chair must have a SEFS primary faculty appointment and an "Endorsement to Chair" filed with the Graduate School. Affiliate Faculty may serve if they meet the conditions required by the Graduate School.
3. PhD Committees require a minimum of 4 members (with 5 members recommended), and the PhD Reading Committee requires 3 members.
4. The majority of members must have a UW Graduate Faculty appointment.
5. A minimum of 2 members must hold a faculty appointment in SEFS, defined as a full appointment, joint appointment, or adjunct appointment.
6. Only one non-UW outside member may be officially appointed. Students must have the outside member submit a CV to Student and Academic Services to be placed in the student file. Adjunct and Affiliate faculty are not considered outside members.
7. A [Graduate School Representative](#) (GSR) is identified by the student and must not have a conflict of interest with the Chair. The GSR must have a UW Graduate Faculty appointment and cannot have any appointment in SEFS. Potential GSRs can be located using the [Graduate Faculty Locator](#).
8. PhD Supervisory Committees (including the GSR) must be officially appointed at least 3 months prior to scheduling the Qualifying Examination.

Program of Study

MS and PhD students, with the help of their Chair and Supervisory Committee, identify planned coursework for the degree and note it on the [Program of Study Form](#), which is used to track student progress and to ensure that all coursework and other degree requirements are met. The MEH and MFR degree program coursework requirements are more defined and structured. Links to Program of Study forms for all degrees, along with other resources, may be found on the [SEFS website](#).

The Program of Study form, signed by the Supervisory Committee Chair and Committee members, should be submitted by the end of the 2nd or 3rd quarter of study (check your specific degree requirements). Students should consult with Student and Academic Services as early as possible *before* the quarter of anticipated graduation to ensure that all deadlines and requirements will be met. At the beginning of the quarter of anticipated graduation, Student and Academic Services performs a degree audit to verify that all necessary degree requirements are either completed or in progress.

Transfer Credit

[Transfer credit policies](#) are determined by the Graduate School. With approval from the Supervisory Committee and Graduate Program Coordinator, master's degree (MS, MEH, and MFR) students may petition for permission to transfer the equivalent of a maximum of 6 quarter credits of graduate-level course work taken at another recognized academic institution. Transfer credit may not have been used to satisfy requirements for another degree.

For PhD students, with the approval of the Supervisory Committee and Graduate Program Coordinator, an appropriate master's degree from an accredited institution may substitute for up to 30 credits toward the total credits for the PhD. PhD students are admitted to SEFS with a wide variety of backgrounds, and although 30 credits may be substituted, the Supervisory Committee ultimately determines the coursework that the student is required to complete before the Qualifying and General exams are taken.

DEGREE CHECKLISTS

Master's Degree Checklist

- 1. Establish Permanent Supervisory Committee.** See policies above.
- 2. Submit Program of Study Form.** See policies above.
- 3. Annual Committee Meeting.** Students are required to hold a Supervisory Committee meeting *at least* once every academic year. If no defense is scheduled, then the student should prepare a one-page status report before the meeting summarizing the following:
 - Achievements during the preceding year (coursework and research)
 - Plans for coursework and research during the coming year
 - Any funding received during the preceding year and funding anticipated in the coming year.

The annual meeting is recorded on the Program of Study form and the report is placed in the student's file.

4. MS Proposal Defense. MS (not MEH or MFR) students are required to prepare a written proposal document describing their proposed research and to make an oral presentation of their proposal, in advance of conducting their research. The proposal development, review, and revision process provides an opportunity to receive critical feedback from the committee, and the successful oral proposal presentation and defense is recorded on the Program of Study form. The master's research proposal is often presented in a public setting, and details of the proposal defense title, date, time and place should be sent to the Graduate Advisor at least 2 weeks in advance of the proposal defense.

5. SEFS 600 and SEFS 700 credits. Students enroll in SEFS 600 when they are designing their research proposal and gathering and analyzing data. Students enroll in SEFS 700 when they have successfully defended their research proposal and are primarily writing their thesis.

6. MS Thesis Defense. The Supervisory Committee determines when the student has completed the program requirements, including a written thesis document, and is ready to present research findings (the thesis defense). It is the student's responsibility to: a) schedule the thesis defense at a time when all Supervisory Committee members are able to attend; b) reserve a room for the defense; c) inform the Graduate Advisor of the defense details; and d) to obtain and bring the Warrant (see #8) to the defense. [Rooms may be reserved](#) in Anderson, Winkenwerder, or Bloedel Halls. At least 2 weeks in advance of the defense, the student should email a notice to the Graduate Advisor, indicating the thesis defense time, location, title, and a brief abstract, which will be publicized to the SEFS community. The thesis defense presentation is open to the public. Following the presentation and public discussion, the student meets privately with the Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee discusses the merits of the thesis, documents any required changes prior to final acceptance, and determines the final outcome of the defense by signing the Warrant document.

7. MEH/MFR Internship or Capstone Project and Presentation. The MEH/MFR student's Supervisory Committee determines when the student has completed the program requirements, including a written final report, and is ready to present their Internship or Capstone project. The MEH/MFR presentation can be open to the public but students are not required to present in a public setting. It is the student's responsibility to obtain and bring the Warrant (see #8) to the final project presentation for Supervisory Committee signatures.

8. Applying to Graduate. All master's degree students (MS, MEH, and MFR) must complete a [Master's Degree Request](#) through the Graduate School. The Graduate School will provide the Office of Student and Academic Services with a Warrant, which the student picks up and brings to the defense or final project presentation.

9. Submission of Thesis to the Graduate School. Master of Science (MS) students, but not MEH or MFR students, must [upload their final thesis document to the Graduate School](#) by the last day of the quarter. A Supervisory Committee Approval Form, also available on the Graduate School website, must be signed by all committee members and uploaded along with the thesis. This form is signed by all committee members when a final version of the thesis is made available to them. If the thesis is not submitted by the last day of the quarter, a Graduate Registration Waiver must be paid in order to graduate and arrangements must be made with the Graduate School to submit a late thesis.

10. Checkout of SEFS. Please make sure to return keys, clean out mailboxes, office and lab spaces, and other administrative tasks. The Office of Student and Academic Services provides information on how to participate in SEFS and UW Graduation events.

Doctoral (PhD) Degree Checklist

1. **Establish Permanent Supervisory Committee.** See policies above.
2. **Submit Program of Study Form.** See policies above.
3. **Annual Committee Meeting.** Students are required to hold a Supervisory Committee meeting *at least* once every academic year. If no defense is scheduled, then the student should prepare a one-page status report before the meeting summarizing the following:
 - a. Achievements during the preceding year (both course work and research)
 - b. Plans for course work and research during the coming year
 - c. Funding received during the preceding year and funding anticipated in the coming year.

The meeting is recorded on the Program of Study Form and the report is placed in the student's file.

4. **SEFS 600 and SEFS 800 credits.** Students enroll in SEFS 600 when they are designing their research proposal and gathering and analyzing data. Students enroll in SEFS 800 when they have passed their General Examination and are primarily writing their dissertation.
5. **PhD Examinations.** SEFS PhD students are required to take 3 examinations during the course of their program: the Qualifying Examination, the General Examination, and the Final Examination.
6. **Qualifying Examination.** All SEFS PhD students must pass a SEFS Qualifying Examination **before** taking the General Examination. The purpose of the Qualifying Examination is to establish whether the student meets the academic and scholarly standards that are expected of PhD students and to determine the student's strengths and weaknesses. The Qualifying Examination is administered, recorded and monitored by SEFS; it is not a Graduate School examination.

SEFS PhD students are required to pass or conditionally pass the Qualifying Examination by the end of the 9th calendar-year quarter of their PhD program. If a student does not pass or conditionally pass the Qualifying Examination by then, the student will be considered to be making unsatisfactory progress as described in [Graduate School Memo 16](#), and will be placed on academic probation during the next quarter they are enrolled. If a student on academic probation does not pass or conditionally pass the Qualifying Examination, the student will be placed on final probation during the next quarter. Students on final probation will be dropped from the program if they do not pass or conditionally pass the Qualifying Examination during their final probation quarter. Students have the right to petition for an extension to the deadline due to extenuating circumstances. Petitions must be filed with the SEFS Graduate Program Coordinator prior to or during the student's 9th calendar-year quarter.

Procedures for the Qualifying Examination include:

- A. The Supervisory Committee must be established at least 3 months prior to scheduling the Qualifying Examination, and the student should begin scheduling the examination at least 2 months before the examination is taken. The [PhD Qualifying Examination Form](#) is available on the SEFS website. The PhD Qualifying Examination Committee is chaired by a member of the student's PhD Supervisory Committee. The Chair of the PhD Supervisory Committee is permitted to serve as the chair of the PhD Qualifying Examination Committee, but is not required to do so. The GSR is encouraged but not required to attend.
- B. There are two parts to the Qualifying Examination, written and oral. The format for the Qualifying Examination is at the discretion of the Examination Committee, and there are two potential formats for the written portion: 1) Questions given to the student by each committee member, designed to test general knowledge of selected disciplines; and 2) A research proposal on a topic outside the student's specific field of interest or dissertation topic. In consultation with the Examination Committee, students may have up to 4 weeks to complete the written part of the exam.
- C. The oral part of the examination is scheduled for a date after the written examination materials are submitted to the Examination Committee members. The oral examination may cover questions not answered completely in the written examination, or other areas at the discretion of the Committee. A minimum of 3 faculty members must participate in the oral examination.
- D. Immediately following the oral examination, the committee discusses the written and oral examination results. On the same day as the oral examination, the student receives an oral report from the Examination Committee Chair regarding its deliberations and the examination outcome (pass, conditional pass, conditional fail, fail), along with a signed copy of the Qualifying Examination Report form. The student will receive a brief (1-page) written summary report from the Chair of the Examination Committee of the deliberation and outcome within 5 working days. This report will be attached to the Qualifying Examination Report form and placed in the student's file.
- E. If the student does not pass the examination, a re-examination is allowed 1 quarter later; only one re-examination is allowed.

7. General Examination. The General Examination is a presentation and defense of the student's dissertation research proposal and includes a written (research proposal document) and oral (research proposal presentation and discussion) part. The General

Examination is a Graduate School required exam that is recorded at the Graduate School and advances a student to Candidacy (PhC).

SEFS PhD students are required to pass the General Examination by the end of the 13th calendar-year quarter of their PhD program. If a student does not pass the General Examination by this time, the student will be considered to be making unsatisfactory progress as described in [Graduate School Memo 16](#), and will be placed on academic probation during the next quarter they are enrolled. If a student on academic probation does not pass the General Examination, the student will be placed on final probation during the next quarter. Students on final probation will be dropped from the program if they do not pass the General Examination during their final probation quarter. Students have the right to petition for an extension to the deadline due to extenuating circumstances. Petitions must be filed with the SEFS Graduate Program Coordinator prior to or during the student's 13th calendar-year quarter.

Procedures for the General Examination include:

- A. In consultation with and review by their Supervisory Committee members, the student prepares a research proposal document that includes the following sections: introduction and rationale, objectives, research questions and hypotheses, methods, expected results, literature cited, budget, and appendices (if needed). The page limit is 30 double-spaced typed pages. When the Supervisory Committee determines that the research proposal is ready to present and defend, the General Examination is scheduled.
- B. The General Examination may be scheduled only if (i) the student has completed at least 60 credits, some of which may be taken the quarter of the exam; (ii) the student has completed at least 18 credits of graded coursework at the 500 level and above; (iii) the student has passed the Qualifying Examination; and (iv) all members of the Supervisory Committee agree that the student's written research proposal is ready to defend.
- C. The student [schedules the General Examination](#) online through the Graduate School, and the Graduate School provides the Office of Student and Academic Services with a Warrant, which the student picks up and brings to the General Examination.
- D. At least 2 weeks in advance of the exam, the student should email a notice to the Graduate Advisor, indicating the exam time, location, title, and a brief abstract, which will be publicized to the SEFS community. The proposal presentation is open to the public.
- E. The student presents their research proposal (30-40 minutes) and answers questions in a presentation open to faculty, students, staff, and the public. The Supervisory Committee Chair, Graduate School Representative, and at least 2 other committee

members must be present at the oral proposal defense. Following the presentation and public discussion, the student meets privately with the Supervisory Committee. The Supervisory Committee discusses the merits of the proposal, documents any required changes prior to final acceptance, and determines the final outcome of the exam by signing the Warrant document.

- F. If the student does not pass the General Examination, the Supervisory Committee signs the Warrant, indicating that student will be re-examined after 1 quarter. The same procedure described above is followed for re-examination. Students not passing a re-examination are dismissed from the graduate program.

8. Final Examination. The Final Examination, or dissertation defense, is a public presentation of the results of the student's research. The Final Examination is a Graduate School required exam.

Procedures for the Final Examination include:

- A. Appoint the [Doctoral Reading Committee](#). The Reading Committee is appointed to read and approve the dissertation. Students [establish their Reading Committee online](#) by selecting “NEW Committee” and indicating that it is a Reading Committee. Once this is posted in SEFS, it will be posted to the Graduate School.
- B. [Schedule the Final Examination](#) online through the Graduate School. The Graduate School will provide the Office of Student and Academic Services with a Warrant, which the student picks up and brings to the Final Examination. A Final Examination may be scheduled only if i) the student passed the General Examination in a previous quarter, ii) a Reading Committee is officially established with SEFS and the Graduate School, and iii) the Reading Committee has read an entire draft of the dissertation and members of the Supervisory Committee agree that the candidate is prepared to take the Final Examination.
- C. At least 2 weeks in advance of the exam, the student should email a notice to the Graduate Advisor, indicating the exam time, location, title, and a brief abstract, which will be publicized to the SEFS community. The dissertation presentation is open to the public.
- D. At least 4 members of the Supervisory Committee (including the Chair, Graduate School Representative, and 1 additional Graduate Faculty member) must be present at the Final Examination and sign the Warrant if the Final Examination is satisfactory. If the Final Examination is unsatisfactory, the Supervisory Committee may recommend that the Dean of the Graduate School permit a second examination after a period of additional study.

9. Submission of Dissertation to the Graduate School. Students must [upload their final dissertation to the Graduate School](#) by the last day of the quarter. A Reading Committee Approval Form, also available on the Graduate School website, must be signed by all of the Reading Committee members and uploaded along with the dissertation. If the dissertation is not submitted by the last day of the quarter, a Graduate Registration Waiver must be paid in order to graduate and arrangements must be made with the Graduate School to submit a late dissertation.

10. Checkout of SEFS. Please make sure to return keys, clean out mailboxes, office and lab spaces, and other administrative tasks. The Office of Student and Academic Services provides information on how to participate in SEFS and UW Graduation events.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

SEFS is committed to promoting respect for the rights and privileges of all, understanding and appreciating human differences and the constructive expression of ideas. We actively advocate for diversity in our faculty, staff and students. Feel free to contact the [SEFS Diversity Committee](#) for more information, or refer to the [College of the Environment](#) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion resources.

Students who anticipate or experience barriers to learning or full participation in a course based on a physical, learning or mental health disability should immediately contact the instructor to discuss [possible accommodation](#)(s). If a student has, or thinks they have, a temporary or permanent disability that impacts their participation in any course, please contact [Disability Resources for Students](#) (DRS) at: 206-543-8924 V / 206-543-8925 TDD or uwdss@uw.edu.

Bias, Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Students who believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran should refer to the [Resolution of Complaints Against University Employees procedure](#) contained in the University of Washington *Administrative Policy Statement*.

The College of the Environment provides extensive resources on [Bias Incident, Non-Discrimination, and Sexual Harassment](#).

Academic Grievance Procedure

Graduate students who believe they have been subjected to unfair treatment in the administration of academic policies may, with some exceptions, seek resolution of their complaints under the Graduate School's [Academic Grievance Procedure](#).

Petition to Change Program Requirements

To petition for a change in the degree program requirements, students must submit a [Graduate Program Requirement Petition Form](#). Petitions may include (1) requests to be waived from a course requirement (2) requests for course substitutions; and (3) requests to include a course as a restricted elective. Petitions and accompanying materials must be submitted prior to the quarter during which the waived course, substituted course, or additional course is taken. Although support from the Supervisory Committee Chair is a required element of the petition process, final decisions are made by the SEFS Graduate Program Coordinator.

Academic Performance and Progress

The UW Graduate School requires that all work for the master's degree be completed in a 6-year calendar period. All work for a PhD must be completed in a 10-year calendar period. **This**

includes absences of any kind including formal on-leave quarters. In addition, transfer credits must also have been taken within these 6- or 10- year deadlines. A student may petition the Graduate School for an extension if the student has valid reasons for delay and can demonstrate satisfactory progress toward completion of program requirements. Students who are beyond these deadlines may be placed on Academic Probation.

The [UW Graduate School defines](#) unsatisfactory progress and outlines the actions that may be taken to help a student return to satisfactory progress. A graduate student may be considered to be making unsatisfactory progress for two reasons: low grade point average or lack of progress toward a degree, regardless of grade point average. **To remain in good standing, a graduate student must maintain a 3.0 grade-point average, both cumulative and each quarter.** Based on the recommendation of the Supervisory Committee or the Graduate Program Coordinator, the student may be given a warning or placed on probation if they are not making satisfactory progress. At SEFS, a graduate student on final probation is not eligible for SEFS fellowships or SEFS teaching assistantships.

Continuing from MS to PhD

SEFS students that have completed the MS degree and wish to begin a PhD program at SEFS must submit the following materials at least one quarter before they would like to change status: (1) a Statement of Purpose from the student explaining their reasons for continuing on to the PhD program, (2) a letter of support from the proposed Chair of the student's PhD Supervisory Committee, and (3) two additional letters of support from proposed members of the student's Supervisory Committee. No Graduate School application is required as long as the student plans to go directly into the PhD program after completing the MS. If any quarters (except Summer Quarter) lapse between the end of the MS and the beginning of the PhD, the student must reapply both to the Graduate School and SEFS. Decisions are made by the SEFS Graduate Program Coordinator.

Students currently in a SEFS MS program that wish to switch to a PhD program without completing the MS must submit the following materials at least one quarter before they would like to change status: (1) a Statement of Purpose from the student explaining their reasons for switching to the PhD program and their intended dissertation research topic, (2) a **strong** letter of support from the proposed Chair of the student's PhD Supervisory Committee that clearly justifies the switch including, but not limited to, how the switch is in the best interest of the student, and (3) two additional letters of support from proposed members of the student's Supervisory Committee. Decisions are made by the SEFS Graduate Program Coordinator.

Students currently in a MS program that wish to switch into a MFR/MEH program (or vice versa) must submit the following materials at least one quarter before they would like to change status: (1) a Statement of Purpose from the student explaining their reasons for switching to a different degree program, (2) a letter of support from the Chair of the student's

Supervisory Committee that clearly justifies the switch including, but not limited to, how the switch is in the best interest of the student, and (3) two additional letters of support from proposed members of the student's Supervisory Committee. Decisions are made by the SEFS Graduate Program Coordinator.