GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK
DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Science that Shapes Our World

REVISED FALL 2020

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Department Mission Statement

The Department of Geological Sciences is committed to field-based and lab-based teaching and research. We strive to be one of the top departments in the nation at which to earn undergraduate and MS degrees in the geological sciences as a foundation for a career in industry, government, or academia. We are dedicated to a greater understanding of Earth processes through research, service to the geosciences, and outreach to the general public and K-12 classrooms.

Department Values Statement

The Department of Geological Sciences will orient its activities around the following valued concepts and activities. These are our collective values; each faculty member is involved in many of them, but no one faculty member is expected to be involved in all of them. We value:

- Field-based and lab-based teaching.
- Undergraduate and graduate student learning through student research.
- Increasing understanding at all levels about Earth resources and processes.
- Functional analytical laboratories in our department.
- Research on significant geologic problems worldwide.
- Research on the geology of New Mexico as part of the land grant mission of New Mexico State University.
- Communicating research results to other scientists and the general public.
- Service within the department, college, and university that moves us towards our mission.
- Service to the geologic community that supports research and publication.
- Activities that promote awareness and understanding of Earth processes and resources in the general public.

Department Diversity and Inclusion Statement

Everyone should have the opportunity to reach their goals, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, creed, religion, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identify or expression, disability, veteran status, marital status, medical condition, pregnancy, education, class, political affiliation, or parental status. A career in the geosciences is a great path to social mobility and we welcome students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds. We will make every effort for our department, our courses and our activities, to be open to all.

Graduate Program Goals

The MS Geology Program has three goals. Progress towards these goals is assessed in our outcomes assessment program.

- Students have the ability to identify and solve a research problem and to present the results of that research to other geologists.
- Students attain a fundamental knowledge in the field of geological sciences.
- Students will have an overall positive experience in the NMSU MS Geology program.

PROGRAM OF STUDY AND DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Course Work

A candidate for a master's degree must complete a minimum of 30 graduate credits, including a minimum of 6 credits for thesis. No more than 5 thesis credits may be taken in any one semester. A thesis proposal must be approved by the advisor and the candidate's committee before registering for thesis credits. At least 15 credits must be earned in courses numbered 500 or above, and at least 15 credits must be earned in geology. Students on assistantship are expected to register for (second year only) and attend (all semesters) the department's colloquium.

Graduate students must be enrolled in at least 9 credits to have a TA or RA. First-year students take must three classes each semester. In the second year, students generally take two classes the third semester and one class in the fourth semester, although that could be switched to one in the fall and two in the spring. Thesis credits (GEOL 599) and colloquium (GEOL 501) are added to bring the total to nine credits. Graduate students may not register for thesis credits until the thesis proposal is completed and on file in the department office. Students who have not finished in four semesters must register for one thesis credit every non-summer semester, including the semester of their defense. Students must be registered for one thesis credit if they defend in the summer. A student who fails to register for thesis credits is considered to be withdrawn from the university, must formally reapply for admission to the program, and must satisfy the requirements in effect at the time of reapplication.

An undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher is required by NMSU to have a TA position; RA and non-teaching graduate assistantships can be held by incoming students with lower GPAs with approval of the advisor. A graduate GPA of 3.0 or better is required to maintain a teaching or research assistantship. In NMSU's fractional grading scheme, a B- counts for 2.7 grade points, not 3.0.

Satisfying Undergraduate Deficiencies

Students admitted to the MS program may have some course deficiencies, which are defined by the student and graduate advisor during registration for classes in the student's first semester.

Deficiencies in geology classes (Optical Mineralogy, Geochemistry) can be taken as graduate-level sections of NMSU undergraduate classes. One non-geology undergraduate deficiency (i.e., chemistry, math, physics) may be taken in place of one graduate class. Other non-geology deficiencies must be taken either as a fourth class during the semester or during the summer.

Thesis

The thesis is the most difficult and time-consuming project in the MS degree program. Its purpose is not simply to be an exercise, but rather to prepare students to make similar reports in the future, whether in the business world, regulatory or resource industry, or academia. There are three major steps in completing the thesis: the thesis proposal, writing the thesis, and the thesis defense. These are explained in more detail in later sections.

Completion of Thesis in a Reasonable Time

The MS degree at NMSU must be completed within seven years (or eight successive summers) of entering the program. Course work older than seven years at the time of the thesis defense will not be counted towards the program requirements.

Graduate assistantships, either teaching, research, or a combination, last for two years (four consecutive semesters). Thus it, the goal is for graduate students to complete their course work and theses in the fourth semester or the summer after the fourth semester.

THESIS ADVISOR

In general, students have a good idea of who they will be working with when they are accepted into the program. If not, the thesis advisor should be selected in the first few months of the first semester with the goal of completing the thesis proposal at the end of the second semester.

It is possible to change thesis advisors with agreement of both advisors, the student, and the department head. The thesis project stays with the advisor, so changing advisors results in beginning an entirely new project, including a new thesis proposal.

If the thesis advisor goes on sabbatical, they are expected to maintain regular communication with their graduate students so that student progress is not negatively affected by the sabbatical.

If a professor chooses to leave NMSU before a graduate student has defended, arrangements will be made to ensure that the student has opportunity to complete and defend the thesis. Examples include moving the student to the professor's new university and continued advising by the professor after retirement.

SELECTION OF THESIS COMMITTEE

The thesis committee consists of the advisor plus two additional members from the Department of Geological Sciences. The student and advisor work together choose faculty members who have expertise in your field. For example, a thesis on deformed sedimentary rocks would benefit from having a structural geologist and a sedimentologist on the committee. The committee is usually established around the time that the thesis proposal is being edited. The appropriate procedure is for the student to formally ask the committee member if they are willing to serve on the committee. In some cases, such as sabbaticals, the faculty member may decline. The defense committee consists of the thesis committee plus an additional member from a different department who serves as the Dean’s Representative for the defense. The Dean's Representative is selected by the student and advisor when the student is setting a defense date, thought this committee member can be selected sooner and be involved more directly in the research if the student and advisor choose.

PACING YOURSELF

Most students underestimate the time that it will take to complete a project. This is especially true of things like petrography and lab analyses, but also pertains to mapping, measuring sections, and reviewing the relevant literature. Writing is a task too often saved for the very last part of the degree effort; rarely is enough time allotted to this part of the job.

This is a guide for making timely progress towards thesis completion. Ideally, the thesis is defended in the fourth semester. The Graduate School deadlines can be found on the calendar on the Current Students tab on the graduate school web page.

First Semester

Students need to have their undergraduate institutions send a final, official, transcript to the NMSU Registrar.

Students enroll in courses only after seeking advice from the graduate advisor or potential thesis advisor. An advisor, thesis committee, and thesis project should be chosen before the end of the first semester. After choosing a thesis project, begin a literature search and preliminary lab and/or field work. Use part of the Winter Break if possible.

Second Semester

By the first month of the second semester, students should submit a thesis proposal to their thesis advisor and each committee member for approval. The thesis committee must approve the proposal before students are allowed to enroll for thesis credits. The absolute deadline is the end of the add-drop period in the beginning of the third semester. However, finishing the thesis proposal in the second semester leaves the summer for making progress on thesis research.

The New Mexico Geological Society, Geological Society of America, American Association of Petroleum Geologists, Sigma Xi, and other institutions support student research. The deadlines for these proposals are early in the spring semester (late Jan/early Feb). Usually these proposals require letters of recommendation from the thesis advisor and one other faculty member; students need to give these people at least a week to get this together, because faculty are writing letters for several students (see below).

During the remainder of the second semester, work should continue on the approved thesis project.

Third and Fourth Semesters

Work on the thesis project should proceed in earnest in the third and fourth semesters. The goal is to hold the defense towards the end of the fourth semester or in the subsequent summer.

Semester Before Defense

If requested, students should submit parts of the thesis to the advisor for review. Students will submit a draft to the thesis committee only after advisor's approval.

Semester of Defense

The Application for Diploma form should be filed before the end of the first week of classes during the semester of the defense. Check graduation deadlines calendar on the Current Students tab on the Graduate School website. If not done previously, a complete first draft of the thesis should be

submitted to the advisor by the end of the first month of the semester. Theses typically go through multiple drafts, especially if they are poorly organized during the first submission.

The form for scheduling the oral exam (thesis defense) must be submitted to the Graduate School (see deadlines). It is the student's responsibility to obtain and file this form with all required signatures.

Non-Performing Graduate Students

The Department has procedures in place to support graduate students in their third+ years. Every year, starting in the student's third year, the student will meet with their committee to discuss challenges and strategies to overcome them. The goal of the meeting is to move the student closer to degree completion. The meeting may be held remotely if the student no longer lives in Las Cruces.

Sometimes students stop working on their theses. Non-performance is defined by failure to register for one thesis credit each fall and spring semester (thesis credits during the summer are not required unless the student is defending their thesis in the summer) or receiving a No Progress grade for GEOL 599 (thesis credits). The first non-performance event results in the student being placed on Provisional Status. Students on Provisional Status have one more semester to complete their thesis.

Non-performance for a second semester results in dismissal from the program. If extenuating circumstances exist, the student can petition the advisor and the Department Head for an extension of one semester at either the provision or the dismissal stage.

THESIS PROPOSAL

Process

The thesis proposal is intended to help the graduate student understand the thesis topic and the work necessary to complete the thesis. It also serves as a mechanism to bring everyone involved in the thesis (student, advisor, and thesis committee members) into agreement concerning the direction and scope of the thesis project.

The thesis proposal must be signed by the three geology faculty members and be on file in the department office before thesis credits may be taken by the student. The proposal will be written (see below for formatting and advice) after discussions between the student and advisor. The advisor will edit the proposal, and after revision, the proposal will be given to the committee.

The committee and student will have a short meeting during which the student give a short presentation and answer questions from the committee members. The student will then revise the proposal and, after the advisor signs it, the committee will sign the proposal. A copy will be given to each member of the committee, and one copy will be put into the student's file in the main office.

Content

A thesis proposal usually runs 7-10 pages (double spaced) plus figures. Use GSA formatting for headers and references. Include the following sections:

Introduction

Geologic Setting

Objectives

Methods

Significance

Work schedule

References

Read the section in this document about how to write a good introduction. Be extremely careful with referencing; a common mistake is to include statements about previous work that are not referenced. Also, check your reference list. Commonly there are references missing and references that are in the list but not in the proposal. Also common are references in the figure captions that are not in the reference list.

Most figures that created for the proposal will be used in the thesis, so they might as well be well drafted the first time. Direct scans from papers are not as good as a new figure that created based on the publication figure. Also, original student figures are better than figures that advisors made 10 years ago that are recycled into your proposal. Having >10 figures is unnecessary, but having only two or three is likely to be insufficient.

Preliminary data can be included, but in general do not feel the need to put all new work into the proposal. Many projects have no data when the proposal is written. The proposal is important! It is carefully read by the entire committee, and they all have to sign it. An example title page is at the end of this packet.

See the end of this handbook for a template for the thesis proposal cover sheet.

COLLOQUIUM

Graduate students are required to give a colloquium, as part of the department's colloquium series, as a progress report on their thesis research. This should happen in the student's second, third, or fourth semester. The presentation should be 20-30 minutes long. Following questions from the audience, the student and committee will discuss the thesis. The purpose of this discussion is to involve the committee in the research project and to make recommendations to the student and the project.

Application for the Degree

The process, forms, and deadlines necessary to apply, defend, and complete a thesis can be found on the calendar on the Current Students tab at the Graduate School website. Briefly, the steps are:

- complete an Application for Degree through my.nmsu.edu;
- Submit the Final Exam Form for thesis;
- Hold and pass the defense;
- Submit the thesis electronically for format review.

Scheduling the Defense

The thesis advisor decides when the thesis is ready to be read by the committee. At this point, the thesis should be a complete and polished document. The thesis must be given to the committee seven (7) working days prior to the thesis defense (not counting the day of the defense). There is a form that needs to be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks before the exam. Make sure that all departmental committee members and outside member agree on this date. This agreement represents a significant scheduling challenge, especially during the summer months. A typical defense lasts between 2-3 hours, so choose a start time that is no later than 2 pm. If this is not possible, the defense must be rescheduled for a later date.

Suggested revisions will be provided to the student by the committee members at the defense. The thesis advisor has the final say in whether or not the changes must be made.

Writing the Thesis

Graduate School Guidelines

Guidelines for thesis format are published online here.

Department Guidelines

Tables and references for geology theses use the Geological Society of America style. Details can be found by following the formatting in any recent paper published in the *GSA Bulletin,* or *Geology*.

Time Management Strategies

Writing a document as large and complex as a MS thesis can be a daunting task. Here are several strategies that have worked well for graduate students:

- Discipline yourself to write a little every day. Start with 30 minutes. Writing 30 minutes, 5 days per week, will result in more progress than writing all Friday afternoon every week. This is because the ideas stay fresh in your mind from one day to the next, but fail to stay in mind from week to week. As you become more disciplined, write for longer periods each day.
- Pre-writing should consume 50-75% of the total time you will spend writing your thesis. Pre-writing includes:

- All tables;
- All figures—at least first drafts;
- A ridiculously detailed outline for the entire thesis.

Use the pre-writing stage to organize the entire thesis in your mind. This is where the thinking really happens, and it is sufficiently complex to make it hard to organize and write concurrently. So don't try. The outline should be detailed at the paragraph level, with the bullets containing all of the information in each paragraph. The great thing about an outline is that it is easy to add or move information as you continue.

- Outline the Introduction, Conclusions, and Abstract last. Start with Background, Methods, and Results.
- When you have all your tables, all your figures, and all the content you want to write, you are ready to start writing. All you have to do is put all the information in the outline for each paragraph into complete, coherent sentences. If you have outlined well, this step is actually easy and can be fun.

Sections of the Thesis

Acknowledgments

Keep this professional, avoid using the word "Thank", for example, say "*** provided assistance with mineral separations, and *** assisted in the field. It is implied that you are thanking people, and if you say thanks each time it gets redundant. Don't forget to mention Lee!

Abstract (see below: focus on results, not background material; 350 word limit)

The main content of the thesis is divided into various sections; common choices are listed below. Use sections rather than chapters. The main difference is that in sections, the tables and figures are numbered sequentially throughout the thesis using sections, but sequentially through each chapter (Figure 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, etc.). Using sections is much easier. Use a page break to begin each major (Level 1 section).

Introduction (see below: include brief review, findings/significance, and organization of the thesis)

Regional Geology

Methods

Results (Avoid interpretation of your results in this section)

Discussion (Interpretation of data; avoid repeating your data presentation)

Conclusions

References: cited references only. Do not include references to personal communications and unpublished data.

Appendices (Best for multi-page tables and supplementary information, such as details of methods. Label them Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.; Continue pagination from main part of text.)

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a topic that has come under intense discussion at the University in the last couple of years. It constitutes academic misconduct and can be cause for dismissal from the university. To avoid plagiarism, be sure to cite all ideas and illustrations that are not your own. If you modify a drawing, you can use the phrase "modified from Johnson et al. (2009)," for example. For descriptions of what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid the problem, the library has a good website: http://lib.nmsu.edu/plagiarism/.

THESIS DEFENSE

Purpose

The thesis defense serves several purposes. It provides the student the opportunity to present their research in detail to a geologic audience. This provides closure on the thesis project and also prepares the student for similar presentations in industry or academia. In addition, the defense includes an oral exam that provides the evidence with which the committee members will decide whether or not the student has demonstrated knowledge and skill commensurate with a MS in Geology from NMSU.

Procedures

The defense consists of two sections: a public presentation of the thesis research with a question and answer session, and a private oral examination by the defense committee. The thesis presentation should be 35-45 minutes long, and the student should be prepared to answer questions from the audience. After the public presentation, the student will be asked to leave the room for a few minutes while the committee fills out required paperwork. The oral examination can cover the thesis and class work. After the oral examination, the student will be asked to leave the room again while the committee deliberates. Three outcomes are possible: 1) pass, 2) fail, and 3) adjourn. If the student fails, he/she may be granted a second examination after waiting a semester upon recommendation of the advisor and approval by the Graduate Dean, or he/she may be excluded from the program. A decision to adjourn means that the examination must reconvene within three weeks.

How to Pass Your Defense

The thesis defense is different for every student because each thesis project is unique. This makes it difficult to specify the criteria with which the faculty determine whether a student passes or fails the examination. However, the department uses these guidelines:

- A student must do well on two of the three parts of the thesis defense (written thesis, defense presentation, answers to committee questions).
- The scope of the project and difficulty of the techniques used should be considered.

- There are three important components to a successful thesis: 1) the student must collect or acquire data that are related to a problem or hypothesis; 2) the student must understand the data, including any data treatment methods; and 3) the student must interpret the data at a reasonable level.

Outcome Assessment

The Department's Outcome Assessment program for the MS Geology is a tool used by the faculty to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program and to continually improve the program. Information gathered in the assessment is used only to evaluate and improve the department, and has no impact on the evaluation of any student. The assessment consists of two parts. First, the faculty on the thesis committee complete a questionnaire after the thesis defense that evaluates the student's performance on the thesis, defense presentation, and general geologic knowledge. The second part is an exit questionnaire completed by the student after a successful defense. The student's advisor will provide the questionnaire at the defense, and the department head will not sign the final grade form until he/she has received the completed questionnaire. The questionnaire covers many aspects of the MS Geology program.

Scholarships and Grants

Scholarships are available through the Department. These are announced in April at the departmental awards ceremony and awarded at the beginning of the fall semester.

Every graduate student is awarded a $200 one-time scholarship in their first semester with the intent that these fund will help start thesis research by funding field work or preliminary analyses. The scholarship will decrease the amount of tuition owed to the university unless the student has completely paid tuition. In this case, the student will receive a check.

NMSU's scholarship system is called $cholar dollars; you must be enrolled in order to be awarded a scholarship. You can sign up starting 1 October at scholarships.nmsu.edu. Other grants are available through GSA, NMGS, and AAPG, and other foundations. Do some research and be sure to follow all the instructions. These deadlines are generally in late January/early February.

Writing letters of recommendation takes time, and you should make it as easy as possible for those helping you get grants and fellowships, get into grad school, etc. Always provide all of the instructions to the faculty member helping you write letters, and do not make the faculty member search the web to find out these details. Email is usually better than finding someone in the hallway, as professors are apt to forget about the encounter by the time they make it back to our office. Always include a deadline and email a reminder to the faculty member a few days before the deadline.

Departmental Policies

Annual Evaluation of Graduate Students

Each graduate student is evaluated by the faculty at the December faculty meeting. Performance in class, as a teaching assistant, and on the thesis project are all discussed. The advisor provides the student a summary letter, with a copy in the student's file.

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to continue in the program. If the cumulative GPA drops below 3.0, the student may continue for an additional semester upon recommendation of the advisor and approval by the Graduate Dean. The department may ask a student to leave the program if the cumulative GPA drops below 3.0. In addition, lack of progress on thesis research or lack of appropriate attention to TA duties may lead to loss of funding or removal from the program.

Safety Training

All graduate students are required to take three NMSU safety trainings in their first semester: *Defensive Driving. Employee Safety/Loss Prevention & Control,* and *Laboratory Standard*. In addition, students working in laboratory settings may be required to take additional trainings by their advisors (radioactive materials, laser safety, X-ray safety, etc.).

Department Vehicles

The department has three field vehicles: 1999, 2009, 2016.

Graduate student use of the 1999 suburban.

Graduate students may use the 1999 suburban (only) for thesis-related or course-related research. The tank must be filled at the student's expense before the vehicle is brought back to the University. Permission from the department head, through the secretary, is required each time a graduate student uses the 1999 suburban. Once permission is given, students must reserve the 1999 suburban on the sign-up calendar. The credit cards in the vehicle are available to students for emergencies only, and not for routine fueling.

Safety.

Seat belts must be worn by all passengers at all times. Drivers must be awake and alert. If you get sleepy, stop and change drivers. Set the cruise control at 75 on the highway. Remember that it seems like you are going slower than you really are in a large vehicle and that you are an ambassador for NMSU in the department vehicle.

Alcohol and Drug Use.

The department has a zero tolerance policy for driving NMSU vehicles after drinking or using drugs. It is also not allowable to transport alcohol/drugs in university vehicles. If a department vehicle is to be taken to an event at which alcohol will be served, a designated driver must be chosen for the vehicle prior to the trip. Department vehicles may be used to transport faculty and students to the NMGS spring meeting, provided a designated driver is chosen prior to leaving campus. Department vehicles may NOT be used to transport faculty and students to events following the official conference (e.g., the fish fry).

NMSU driving privileges will be revoked for faculty and students who violate this policy.

Potential damage to life, health, and property caused by driving under the influence is very large. Thus, any individual who observes others violating this policy are required to report their observations to the department head or dean.

Pre-trip preparation.

The vehicles are used on highways, paved roads, and dirt roads. Wear and tear is to be expected. Anyone wanting to drive a department vehicle must inspect it before and after use. This practice accomplishes two things. First, the progress of normal wear and tear can be monitored so that problems can be fixed before they become too expensive or safety issues. Second, the department can recognize drivers who fail to treat the vehicles with respect. The department will cover the costs of normal wear and tear, and recognizes that vehicle problems grow so that the person who is driving when failure occurs is in no way responsible for the problem. Such incidents will be covered by the department. However, the department needs to be able to recognize drivers who repeatedly cause more than normal damage and/or wear to the vehicles. Permission to use the vehicles will be revoked for such drivers.

Vehicle assessment forms are available on the administrative assistant's door; the vehicle must be inspected before leaving campus. Upon return to campus, the vehicle must be inspected again, and the form must be completed and given to the administrative assistant no later than the day after travel. ***The vehicle assessment forms are compared to the sign-up calendar. Failure to complete and turn in the vehicle assessment form will result in loss of permission to use the vehicles.***

Department Laboratories

The Department houses a number of laboratories that are supervised, and funded, by various faculty members. The department encourages graduate student use of all labs. Access to lab use is through the faculty member in charge of the lab. The labs, and their supervisors, are:

- Clean lab: Frank Ramos
- Field equipment: Reed Burgette
- Geochem lab: Nancy McMillan
- Laser-Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy lab: Nancy McMillan
- Mass spectrometry lab: Frank Ramos
- Microscope and point counting lab: Nancy McMillan and Brian Hampton
- Mineral separation lab: Jeff Amato
- Rock crushing and grinding lab: Brian Hampton
- Rock preparation lab: Brian Hampton

Working in Community Lab Spaces

Most of the laboratories in the department are used by many people; thus, no one has the luxury of using all the available space for indeterminate lengths of time. Here are a couple of ideas to remember that will minimize conflicts and maximize everyone's efficiency.

1. Always label your samples with your name and the sample number. Even if a sample is drying in a fume hood, be sure that it is well-labeled.

2. Be respectful to others who also need to use the space. Put away your samples as soon as reasonably possible; do not leave them sitting out on counters for weeks. Samples have been lost and misplaced because they were left on counters for long periods and eventually had to be moved by someone else.

3. Clean up after yourself. We should all have the goal of leaving a work area cleaner than it was when we started using it.

Behavior and Conflict Issues

When behavior and conflict issues arise, it is best to try to resolve them as soon as possible. However, if problems persist, talk with the department head about the problem, who can solve the problem or help you access university resources.

Keys

Graduate students are provided with access to the building, the computer lab, and the microscopy lab through their NMSU ID card, and a key to GN 116/118 without charge. Access to additional labs can be added to the proximity card. Talk with the administrative assistant or department head for access.

Photocopying and Plotting

There is no charge for black-and-white or color work-related photocopies. Please keep color copies to the minimum necessary because the department is charged for them. Personal copies are highly discouraged.

Graduate students may copy their thesis on the departmental photocopier, but must supply their own paper for the final copy. All color copies are billed at $0.15 per page.

For work-related posters, faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students may print one copy of the poster and one half-scale copy for proof-reading at no expense each academic year (July – June). All additional posters, of any size, cost $40 each.

Plates and maps for graduate student theses may be printed on the plotter, at $40 each.

Laser printers are available in the graduate student office and in the computer room, with free access. Please be responsible and print only what is necessary. Printing personal items not related to course work or research is not allowed.

Leave and Vacations

As a graduate student, there are no formal leaves and vacations. Fall break, winter break, spring break, and summer are all great times to make significant progress on thesis research. Check with your advisor for their advice for working when classes are not in session.

Computer Lab

The Departmental computer lab is community space; treat it with respect. Do not save your work on the lab computers; use an external hard drive.

As You Graduate and Leave

Congratulations! You are finally reading this section because you have successfully defended your thesis, taken all of your classes, and are ready to graduate. Please complete the following tasks before you depart.

Lab Decommissioning

Now that you are moving on, another graduate student is going to use the lab space you occupied. Make sure that all of your belongings are cleared out of the lab and that all of your samples are labeled and properly stored. Have a discussion with your advisor about where to store the samples. If you have generated any hazardous waste, dispose of it according to NMSU regulations.

Keys

Return keys to the administrative assistant.

Electronic Copy of Your Thesis

In 2019, NMSU moved to electronic copies of MS theses. However, the Department requires a hardbound copy for the Geology Library. In addition, you and your advisor may want bound copies.

The Department will make the hardbound copies for you. You must provide:

- A single pdf file that contains the entire thesis;
- Prints of any large plates that will be in pockets in the back. You may print them on the department's plotter at the cost of $40 per sheet.
- Payment of $30 per hardbound copy; minimum cost is $30 (one hardbound copy for the department).
- Addresses where you would like your copy sent, if applicable.

Outcomes Assessment Questionnaire

Remember to complete the Outcomes Assessment Questionnaire; the department head will not approve your final thesis grade until the questionnaire is turned in.

Contact Information

We want to keep in touch with you after you graduate! Please give the administrative assistant your email address and phone number. And remember to send regular updates about your life to geology@nmsu.edu. Thanks!

Check Out Form

Obtain the Check Out Form from the administrative assistant. All the items must be complete before the Department Head will sign the thesis grade form.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATEMENT

New Mexico State University, in compliance with applicable laws and in furtherance of its commitment to fostering an environment that welcomes and embraces diversity, does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical contition, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, spousal affiliation, or protected veteran status in its programs and activities, including employment, admissions, and educational programs and activities. Inquiries may be directed to the Executive Director, Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator, Office of Institutional Equity, P.O. Box 30001, 1130 E. University Avenue, Las Cruces, NM 88003; 575-646-3635; equity@nmsu.edu.

NMSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities upon request. To request an accommodation, please contact Student Accessibility Services, Corbett Center Student Union, Room 208, Las Cruces, NM 88003; 575-646-6840 or sas@nmsu.edu or the Office of Institutional Equity, O'Loughlin House, 1130 E. University Avenue, Las Cruces, NM 88003; 575-646-3635 or equity@nmsu.edu. One week advance notice is appreciated. To request this document in an alternate form, please contact Student Accessibility Services, Corbett Center, Room 208, 575-646-6840 (V/TTY) or sas@nsmu.edu.

Example of Thesis Proposal Cover Sheet

THESIS TITLE—BE SPECIFIC BUT NOT TOO WORDY

Thesis Proposal for the Master of Science Degree,

Department of Geological Sciences, New Mexico State University

Las Cruces, New Mexico

Your Name Here

Month, Year (when proposal was completed)

Approved by Advisory Committee Members:

Advisor's Name, Thesis Committee Chair

Committee Member's Name, Thesis Committee Member

Committee Member's Name, Thesis Committee Member