

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE (GPES)

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The [Graduate Program in Environmental Science \(GPES\)](#) supports interdisciplinary environmental research and teaching at SUNY ESF and offers unique graduate programs that serve the needs of our students. GPES is comprised of faculty from each of the seven departments at SUNY ESF who understand the importance of interdisciplinary collaborations to characterize, understand, and address critical environmental problems. GPES is centered on three Research Areas: (i) Climate and Energy (CE); (ii) Ecosystems: Land, Water and Air (ELWA); (iii) Policy, Planning, Communication & Society (PPCS); and (iv) Indigenous Studies. Research Areas are designed to group faculty around broad research and teaching themes. Prospective students identify potential Major Professors within one of these Research Areas when applying to the program.

Requirements

GPES offers Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Master of Science (MS), and Master of Professional Studies (MPS) degree programs. Each of these degree programs is briefly described below. Note that GPES has minimal course requirements which allow students to design a program that satisfies their research and professional needs. The minimal requirements for all GPES degrees (described below) are one social science/policy course, one natural or physical science course, one methods/tools course, and the GPES Orientation seminar. This contributes to a multidisciplinary foundation and allows students, working with their major professor and steering committee, to design a program that fits their research and professional needs.

Ph.D. in Environmental Science

The PhD degree is a research focused degree program. The PhD degree requires a minimum of 60 graduate credits, of which 30 to 48 credits are coursework and 12 to 30 credits are for the PhD dissertation. Credit hour requirements within these ranges are developed in consultation with a student's steering committee. Graduate credits earned for a previous master's degree program that are applicable to a student's doctoral program of study are determined on an individual basis by the student's steering committee.

In consultation with their steering committee, a student may request to take the PhD Candidacy exam after completion of a majority of their graduate coursework. The purposes of the exam are to assess the student's depth and breadth of knowledge in Environmental Science and their understanding of the scientific process. The PhD degree culminates in a PhD dissertation, a public capstone seminar presentation, and a PhD defense involving the candidate's steering committee.

M.S. in Environmental Science

The Master of Science in Environmental Science is a 30 credit program with **two distinct tracks**: a **thesis option** and a **non-thesis option**, allowing students to select the pathway that best aligns with their academic goals and career plans.

Thesis track

- **Course credits:** minimum of 18 credits coursework, not counting the seminar credits
- **Master research credits:** minimum of 6 credits of ENS 899 Master Research
- Successful presentation and thesis defense.
- Students pursuing the thesis options must submit the research proposal typically by the end of the 2nd semester.

The M.S. student presents a thesis proposal to the major professor and committee who will guide completion of the research and writing of the thesis.

Non-thesis track

- **Course credits:** 27 credits of which up to 3 credits can be seminar credits
- **Culminating experience:** 3 credits of ENS 899 Master Research or ENS 898 Professional Experience

The non-thesis M.S. requires a project (typically 3-6 credits of Master's research or professional experience such as an external internship) in addition to 24-27 credits of graduate coursework (including species research topics and at least two seminars).

Concurrent Degree

Some students may elect to pursue multiple graduate degrees concurrently. Students in concurrent degree programs may "double count" 8 credit hours toward their M.S. degree.

M.P.S. in Environmental Science

The MPS degree is aimed at professional applications of environmental knowledge, allowing students to develop skills to aid their professional development. The MPS degree is focused on coursework rather than research. It is a non-thesis degree program that involves either an internship or a synthesis paper focused on the student's professional interests. The MPS degree requires a minimum of 30 graduate credits, of which 24 to 27 credits are coursework and 3 to 6 credits are for either an internship or synthesis experience. Applicants with a minimum of three (3) years of post-baccalaureate full-time professional experience directly related to the intended area of study may petition for 6 credit hours of advanced standing in the program.

Synthesis Requirements

Students select either an internship (3 to 6 credit hours) or prepare a synthesis paper (3 to 6 credit hours). All students must present a capstone seminar in their final semester and submit a written Capstone report documenting their research or internship experience. The length, depth, and format of the report is at the discretion of the student's supervisory committee.

Concurrent Degree

Concurrent degree students may "double-count" 8 credit hours toward their MPS degree.

CAS in Indigenous Peoples and the Environment

The Advanced Certificate in Indigenous Peoples and the Environment explores foundational skills and knowledge in partnering with Indigenous Nations for environmental research, conservation, and restoration. As the need for environmental professionals to work respectfully and meaningfully with Indigenous Nations is increasingly recognized, the certificate prepares students to engage across multiple worldviews and ways of knowing, in alliance with Indigenous Nations and with an understanding of and respect for their sovereignty and rights.

Coursework builds foundational skills in analyzing the impacts of colonial and decolonial forces on land and resources, articulating the value of Indigenous knowledge systems, and understanding Indigenous-led conservation and co-management. The certificate comprises nine credit hours offered in-person at the Syracuse campus.

Developed and guided by SUNY ESF's Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, a nationally renowned center in Indigenous-led environmental conservation, restoration, and research, the certificate supports those interested in advancing research and the caretaking of our environment in partnership with Indigenous Nations.

All students take
EFB 605

EST 709

EST 715