

Department of Environmental Studies  
Graduate Handbook

**Master of Professional Studies (MPS)  
in Environmental Studies**

State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF)  
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# Introduction

Welcome to the Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in Environmental Studies at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF). We are delighted that you have joined our unique community of graduate students, faculty, and researchers who share a deep interest in environmental policy, communication, and decision-making.

The program offers students a focused, yet flexible, understanding of environmental issues, the problems that underlie them, and the paths that lead to sustainable communities. It is intended for a wide range of students, including those with undergraduate degrees in fields other than Environmental Studies.

The program facilitates student understanding of fundamental social, political, economic, cultural, and technological forces that drive environmental degradation as well as the application of emerging approaches that can foster sustainability. It does this by drawing on a range of frameworks from the social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. Coursework combines theoretical and applied approaches to areas such as environmental policy, environmental communication, sustainable communities, human behavior, collaborative governance, public participation, and environmental impact analysis.

The program prepares students to critically analyze and engage in emerging issues and problems related to environmental affairs and sustainability. As part of one of the world's foremost schools of environmental research and applications, the program is enhanced by ESF's diverse expertise in the natural sciences and engineering.

The New York State Department of Education and the State University of New York establish policy for all graduate programs. At ESF, the College Faculty has adopted a comprehensive set of Graduate Policies. These are published in the [ESF College Catalog](#) (Note that information on the Environmental Studies Graduate Programs begin on page 234). **While relevant graduate program information is summarized in this handbook, students should always consult the Graduate School [website](#) for complete information.**

# Requirements for the MPS Degree

## Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for enrollment in the MPS Environmental Studies program. It is recommended, however, that students entering this program have some academic background in Environmental Policy or Communication, and Environmental Science or Ecology.

## Major Professor

Each student is assigned a Major Professor (or sometimes, co-Major Professors) in conjunction with admission to an Environmental Studies MPS program. Each new student should meet with their Major Professor(s) during the week prior to the start of classes, to discuss their academic and career objectives. This will also be helpful in selecting courses for the first semester. The session also will allow the Major Professor(s) and student to share expectations for their academic relationship and establish a plan for the student's time in the program.

## Degree Planning and Graduate Program of Study (Form 3B-MPS)

**Planning:** In their first semester, students should work with their Major Professor to draft a plan for their time in the program, specific to their degree and goals. This plan provides an opportunity for students to consider their learning, experiential, and career interests and objectives and to create a sequence of courses and research agenda to help meet those objectives. It is suggested that this plan is documented so that updates can be made as a student's program evolves. While there are no department-wide requirements on the structure of this plan, students should check with their Major Professor(s) to see if they have a specific format for student to use. As part of these planning discussions, students and the Major Professor should also confirm their working styles, expectations, and goals are compatible. While rare, changing an MP is possible, but should be done as early as possible in the student's degree, and should be done in consultation with the graduate coordinator and/or the department chair.

**Form 3B-MPS:** Once their general plan is created, all ESF graduate students are *required* to prepare and submit Form 3B to ESF's Graduate School, which specifies the list of courses, seminars, and research credits necessary to meet degree requirements. This serves as a formal record of courses the student plans to take to meet their program requirements. The *Graduate Program of Study*, developed by the student with the advice and approval of the Major Professor and other members of the Steering Committee, must be submitted no later than the end of the student's third semester; however, earlier is preferable and advised. The Graduate Program of Study can be changed, with approval from the Major Professor and Steering Committee. The student's Major Professor should have access to an updated version, and each student is encouraged to maintain an updated personal copy.

## Steering Committee Formation (Form 2A)

**Form 2A:** Ideally, by the end of the first semester of study, the student and their Major Professor(s) should seek appointment of the student's Steering Committee, consisting of the

Major Professor and at least one other ESF faculty member or other qualified person. The latter may include faculty members from other institutions, or other recognized professionals in relevant fields. The Steering Committee guides the student's synthesis project and reviews any final products prior to the Capstone Seminar. The committee is formally established by completing and submitting Form 2A, which must be signed by the Graduate Coordinator or Department Chair and submitted to the ESF Graduate School.

## **Student Responsibility**

In addition to these aspects of advising, Major Professors will provide students with ongoing mentoring and assistance with course selection, capstone guidance, and career opportunities to help them meet professional goals. However, the onus is on the student to understand program requirements and to research the available means of attaining them. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and for meeting program requirements.

## **Advanced Standing**

- a. *Transfer credit.* Up to six (6) graduate course credit hours with a grade of "B" or better that have not been applied to another degree may be transferred via Petition. The Petition must include an attached syllabus (when possible), and a justification of how the course(s) are to be included on the student's *Graduate Program of Studies*. Petitions for transfer credit are submitted following matriculation.
- b. *Credit for prior experience.* Applicants with a minimum of three (3) years of full-time, post-baccalaureate professional experience directly related to the intended area of study may apply for 6 credit hours of advanced standing in the program. Partial credit for experience cannot be awarded. When awarded for prior work experience, the 6 credit hours are applied toward the synthesis requirement.

## **Program Requirements**

**Courses:** The MPS Environmental Studies degree program is a 30-33 credit-hour experience focused on advanced academic scholarship and its application to environmental affairs and sustainability. All courses are 3 credit hours unless noted otherwise.

**Synthesis:** This degree requires completion of a synthesis experience, often involving an individual or group-based professional internship. For guidance on internships, see Appendix A, on synthesis papers, Appendix B.

**Capstone:** Students completing the MPS degree are required to present a "capstone seminar" in their final semester. The student should work with their Major Professor and Steering Committee to schedule the capstone. The Graduate School will provide deadlines for setting up the Capstone Seminar each semester.

## Program Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete the Environmental Studies MPS program will be able to:

1. *Make a contribution to the practice of the discipline*
2. *Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills*
3. *Demonstrate knowledge of the social dimensions of environmental issues*

## The Core (12 credits)

Four courses cover the methodological and interdisciplinary scope of the field of Environmental Studies and demonstrate its applicability to problem analysis and the quest for sustainability. These courses provide a basis of common knowledge among students in the MPS program. All courses are 3-credits, unless noted.

### Required:

EST 600 Foundations of Environmental Studies (Fall)

*AND three of the following:*

*These are the recommended courses to help develop the fundamental knowledge and skill set for Environmental Studies. Alternatives may be considered in consultation with the student's Major Professor. Typically, they would include:*

EST 606 Public Perception and Communication of Risk, Science and Environment

EST 608 Environmental Advocacy Campaigns and Conflict Resolution

EST 610 Critical Climate Studies

EST 612 Environmental Policy and Governance

EST 613 Urbanization and the Environment

EST 615 Environmental Justice: Policy, Tools, and Society

EST 616 Global Perspectives on Environmental Justice

EST 618 Political Ecologies of Food & Agriculture

EST 624 Nature, Recreation, and Society

EST 635 Public Participation and Decision Making

EST 640 Environmental Thought and Ethics

EST 645 Mass Media and Environmental Affairs

EST 650 Environmental Perception and Human Behavior

EST 652 Sustainable Enterprise Management

EST 708 Social Theory and the Environment

EST 770 Regenerative Approaches to Sustainable Futures

### **Natural Sciences (3 credits)**

At least one graduate-level natural science course is required in order to enhance the student's existing knowledge. Alternatives may be considered in consultation with the student's Major Professor. Typically, this would be one of the following courses:

#### **Required – 1 course chosen from:**

EFB 518 Systems Ecology (4 credits)

EFB 523 Tropical Ecology

EFB 600 Toxic Health Hazards (4 credits)

EFB 611 Topics in Environmental Toxicology

EFB 623 Marine Ecology

EFB 650 Landscape Ecology

FOR 538 Meteorology

FOR 642 Watershed Ecology and Management

FOR 680 Urban Forestry

SRE 525 Energy Systems

SRE 535 Renewable Energy

### **Research/Technical Methods (3 credits)**

At least one research or technical methods course is required to provide skills necessary to apply environmental knowledge and pursue the synthesis experience for the MPS. Typically, this would be one of the following, but an *alternative course may be selected in consultation with the student's Major Professor*.

#### **Required – 1 course chosen from:**

APM 510 Statistical Analysis

APM 625 Introduction to Sampling Techniques

APM 630 Regression Analysis

APM 635 Multivariate Statistical Methods

ENS 519 Spatial Ecology

EST 550 Environmental Impact Analysis  
EST 570 Introduction to Personal Interpretation Methods  
EST 603 Research Methods and Design  
EST 604 Social Survey Research Methods for Environmental Issues  
EST 605 Qualitative Methods  
EST 617 Measuring Environmental Inequality  
EST 627 Environmental and Energy Auditing  
EST 671 Non-Personal Environmental Interpretive Methods  
EST 702 Environmental and Natural Resource Program Evaluation  
EST 705 Environmental Policy Analysis  
EST 709 Indigenous Research Methods  
EST 715 Community Based Participatory Research  
FOR 557 Fundamentals of Geographic Information Systems  
FOR 659 Advanced GIS  
LSA 500 Computer Graphics I  
LSA 501 Computer Graphics II  
LSA 552 Graphic Communication  
LSA 640 Research Methodology  
LSA 650 Behavioral Factors of Community Design  
SRE 679 Life Cycle Assessment

### **Generalized/ Thematic Area (9 credits)**

Three additional Generalized or Thematic courses are selected in consultation with the student's Steering Committee. These courses are used to prepare the student for capstone synthesis work and post-graduation work opportunities by developing enhanced knowledge of some aspect of Environmental Studies. Course selection is determined through the Graduate Program of Study; students will be encouraged to include courses in their plans of study that enhance their career goals. EST 898 may not be included as a Generalized or Thematic Area course.

### **Synthesis (3-6 credits)**

In order to synthesize and apply their knowledge of Environmental Studies, all students take 3-6 credit hours of one of the following:

EST 798 Problems in Environmental Studies (3-6 cr) [Synthesis Paper] (Appendix B)

EST 898 Professional Experience (6 cr) [Internship] (Appendix A)

Or successfully complete a group research project or internship via enrollment in a graduate-level course with such a focus (3-4 cr), such as EST 690, International Environmental Policy Consultancy.

# Typical Course Sequence

The following is a typical course sequence. Each student may tailor the specific courses and sequencing (within the limits of program requirements) to their own needs.

## Year 1 Fall

| Course Title                                  | Credits   |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|
| EST 600. Foundations of Environmental Studies | 3         |
| Core Course                                   | 3         |
| Research Methods Course                       | 3         |
| Natural Science Course                        | 3         |
| Thematic Area Course                          | 3         |
| <b>Total Semester Credits</b>                 | <b>15</b> |

## Year 1 Spring

| Course Title                  | Credits   |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Core Course                   | 3         |
| Core Course                   | 3         |
| Thematic Area Course          | 3         |
| Thematic Area Course          | 3         |
| <b>Total Semester Credits</b> | <b>12</b> |

## Year 1 Summer | Year 2 Fall

| Course Title                  | Credits      |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Synthesis                     | 3-6          |
| <b>Semester Total Credits</b> | <b>3-6</b>   |
| <b>Total Program Credits</b>  | <b>30-33</b> |

# Resources

## Departmental Staff

The Environmental Studies Office (106 Marshall Hall) maintains unofficial student records and a collection of course syllabi for reference. Time-relevant opportunities may be posted on the *ES-Grad-Announce* listserv or via the departmental Instagram page (@ESF\_Enviro\_Studies). It is not unusual for students to encounter problems of a personal or academic nature during their studies for which they require assistance. An early discussion of the situation and options is often the key to their resolution. Major Professors, the Graduate Curriculum Coordinator, and the Department Chair are available to facilitate this.

## Graduate Funding

The MPS Environmental Studies degree program is designed to be affordable, and many students in the program are self-funded. Institutional funding opportunities for the MPS are very limited.

# **Appendix A1. Internship Requirements**

## **Introduction**

These standards are established to ensure consistency in the work experience, workload, and performance of Master of Professional Studies degree candidates who elect to complete a high-quality, professional internship as partial fulfillment of their degree requirements. They also establish the responsibilities of the Department of Environmental Studies, the Major Professor, the internship sponsor, and the student's Steering Committee in establishing, monitoring, and evaluating the internship.

## **1. Standards/ Requirements**

- a) The purpose of the internship is to provide an integrative capstone experience. The internship should include an opportunity for the student to exercise individual responsibility and to demonstrate capability. Joint or individual assignments resulting in written reports are extremely desirable.
- b) Total credit hours required for graduation with the MPS are 30-33 hours, 3-6 of which are typically taken as part of the internship option.
- c) The internship experience shall be for a minimum of 30 hours/week, for 14 weeks. Typically, the internship should be completed over the course of the summer between the student's second and third semesters. The student's Steering Committee may approve an earlier internship if the core and at least 3 directly related areas of study courses have been completed.
- d) An internship cannot be undertaken at the place of regular employment of the student.
- e) The purpose of these requirements is to ensure a high-quality, professional internship. They are designed to neither unduly restrict internship arrangements nor introduce rigidity into the program. It is recognized that at times exceptions to these requirements may be desirable because of special circumstances. Exceptions may be requested through the petition process and will be given favorable consideration providing the objective of a high-quality internship is assured by the Major Professor and the student.
- f) It is desirable, but not required, that the internship be on a paid basis; this helps to ensure that all parties are committed to the effort.

## **2. Internship Plan**

The student must prepare an Internship Plan and have it approved by their Steering Committee prior to beginning the internship.

## **3. Memorandum of Agreement**

- a) A Memorandum of Agreement must be executed by the student, the Host Supervisor, the Academic Internship Supervisor (when other than the Major Professor), the Major Professor and the Graduate Curriculum Coordinator before the internship begins. The sponsor may require some additional form of agreement. The original goes to the student's Departmental graduate file, with copies to the sponsor, Major Professor, the student's Steering Committee and the student.
- b) The student must be assigned tasks appropriate for entry grade professional employees at the master's degree level. The internship should provide detailed experience in the field chosen by the student and agreed to by the student's Major Professor, Steering Committee, and employer. Importantly, completion of degree requirements is not based on having a job, but rather on the learning experience gained through the internship.
- c) The Memorandum of Agreement is intended to serve primarily as a communication device to ensure that all parties understand what's expected of them; it should not be construed as an irrevocable, formal contract.
- d) Any major change(s) from the conditions of the original Memorandum of Agreement will require the filing of an amended agreement with the appropriate signatures stipulated in part 3(a).

#### **4. Monitoring/Supervision**

- a) At least half of the student's effort will be of a professional nature which relates directly to the student's program.
- b) The student will have direct supervision.
- c) The student will have access to documents, meetings, field trips, etc., from which they may articulate the broader organizational context.
- d) The anticipated nature of the learning experience will be described in detail in Section 6 of the agreement, or in an addendum to the agreement, e.g., groundwater modeling, bill drafting, preparation of educational materials, designing a facility, analyzing a watershed, doing research, preparing reports, etc.
- e) The host supervisor will oversee the student's activities. A brief written report by the host supervisor on the student's work at the mid-point and end of the internship to the Academic Internship Supervisor (when other than the Major Professor) and Major Professor would be desirable.
- f) If feasible, the Academic Internship Supervisor or Major Professor, the host Supervisor and the student will meet before the internship commences, at the mid-point, and at the conclusion of the internship, to review the program and to ensure communication and understanding between the parties.

- g) The Major Professor should ensure that the student has the proper background to undertake the internship.
- h) Progress reports should be submitted biweekly to the academic host supervisor, Major Professor and Steering Committee members.

## **5. Student Reporting**

*Biweekly Progress Reports:* The purposes of these brief (3-5 pages and attachments) professional communications are to provide an opportunity for periodic reflective processing, and to inform Committee members of progress and problems/issues. Many students find that keeping a daily log/diary is helpful both in accomplishing their work and in subsequent writing. Although not required, some systematic form of daily recording is recommended.

Biweeklies are more than a laundry list of activities. They should selectively address those components of the upcoming Internship Report which includes description of the organization (early Biweeklies), and critical connection to course concepts and methods (later Biweeklies). For the student, a rough mock-up of the Internship Report can be assembled from the Biweeklies. For the faculty, the Biweeklies should provide windows of opportunity to communicate with the student, and to minimize "surprises" in the Internship Report.

## **6. Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the student to make all arrangements and to ensure that all requirements are met. The Major Professor is responsible for approving the internship program and for oversight of the student's program including assurance that the internship is suitable and worthwhile. The student's Steering Committee shall review the biweekly reports and draft internship report and make any appropriate comments and/or recommendations to the student and the Major Professor.

## Appendix A2. Internship Memorandum of Agreement

The memorandum of agreement is not a formal contract; rather it is a communication device to ensure that all parties understand what is expected of them.

The parties to this agreement, entered into on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, are identified as follows:

**Sponsor:** State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Syracuse, NY 13210

**Major Professor:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Host Supervisor:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Internship Supervisor:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Student:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The parties agree as follows:

1. The approximate duration of the assignment is \_\_\_\_\_  
beginning on \_\_\_\_\_ and ending on \_\_\_\_\_

**2. The student's work schedule will be:**

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**3. The student's work location will be:**

Name 

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Address 

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Telephone Number 

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**4. The student assigned by the Sponsor to the Host Supervisor shall be administratively responsible to the Host Supervisor.**

**5. The student's duties and responsibilities will include:**

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**6. Student Learning Objectives (Examples: Groundwater Modeling, Bill Drafting, Facility Design):**

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Biweeklies:

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Internship Draft:

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**7. The Host Supervisor:**

- A. Will be responsible for the student's employment, separation, fixing of hours of work, and other similar items associated with an employer-employee relationship.
- B. Shall provide:
  - 1) Technical direction and supervision.
  - 2) Office space, supplies, equipment, and other working tools and facilities necessary for the performance of the student's assignments, if not otherwise provided.
  - 3) Transportation of student from Host headquarters to workstations in the field.
- C. Will report to the Sponsor, as required, the time and the work accomplishments of the students.

Report Schedule:

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- D. Will provide the student access to documents, meetings, field trips, etc., from which the student may articulate the broader organizational context.
  - E. Will not make a cash contribution to the Sponsor.
- 8. The student shall meet the Host Supervisor's standards as to qualifications to utilize facilities and operate its equipment. Host Supervisor shall be the sole judge of the qualifications of the student in this respect.**
- 9. The Sponsor, on request of the Host Supervisor, will reassign or terminate the assignment of student provided by the Sponsor.**
- 10. The Major Professor and/or Academic Internship Supervisor will:**
- A. Approve the internship and oversee the student's progress.
  - B. Visit student intern on site (if location allows).
- 11. This Agreement may be amended by mutual agreement of the parties hereto.**

**12. ESF - an Environmental Studies Internship policy and requirements statement is included in this agreement by reference and is attached hereto.**

**13. Additional points:**

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Graduate Curriculum Coordinator (ESF)

Date

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Name and Title (Host Supervisor)

Date

---

Academic Internship Supervisor

Date

---

Major Professor

Date

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Steering Committee Member

Date

---

Student

Date

## Appendix A3. Guidelines for Internship Reporting

A professional internship provides the student with an integrative experience which allows the student to apply the knowledge and techniques learned from course work in the analysis and decision making for an environmental problem, issue, or situation. The institutional setting, the mission, ethic, and practice of the organization will have a profound impact on the methods used in approaching and resolving issues. Furthermore, in order to demonstrate the integrative nature of the experience the student must have substantial responsibility for production of a work product(s) that illustrates the technical and social integration required in assessing issues and problems and posing solutions or remedial action.

The College requirement for the internship is a professional report prepared in accordance with College standards. ESF Graduate Academic Policies require that:

The student must prepare a report satisfactory to the student's Steering Committee. The student's report on the academic, or professional, experience prepared and bound according to College standards, will be maintained by the individual Faculty.

- Office of Instruction and Graduate Studies, "Instructions for the Preparation of Theses, Projects and Reports."

Environmental Studies further requires that the report format must meet Departmental requirements, as detailed in this Handbook.

1. A rough draft of the report must be submitted to the Major Professor by the end of the semester in which the internship credit hours are taken in order to receive a Satisfactory grade ("S").
2. The general style manual for College reports is:  
*Chicago Manual of Style*. 2017. 17<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
3. Generally, internship reports should observe the following organization:
  - Title Page
  - Acknowledgements
  - Table of Contents
  - List of Tables
  - List of Figures
  - Summary with Key Words (format included here)
  - Introduction
  - Body of Text
  - References
  - Appendices
  - Vita (format included here)

*Alternatives to this organization may be authorized by the student's Steering Committee.*

4. The body of the report shall have five sections:
  - a. A comprehensive description of the organization of the internship institution from the perspectives of the core courses, reflecting studies of institutions, public participation, and decision making.
  - b. A summary of the major actual work conducted.
  - c. A critical comparison of the methods and processes used in relation to relevant concepts and approaches from the student's academic program.
  - d. Any completed work products or supporting materials to be included in the body of the report or as appendices.
  - e. Selected references.
5. The finalized internship report may be submitted in digital form.

# Format for Summary

Last Name, First, Middle Initial (Internship Title)

BODY OF SUMMARY

(May be double or single spaced)

DO NOT EXCEED 350 WORDS

Author's name in full

\_\_\_\_\_

Candidate for the degree of

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Major Professor

\_\_\_\_\_

Department

\_\_\_\_\_

State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
Syracuse, New York

Signature of Major Professor

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B. Instructions for Synthesis Projects**

The purpose of the Synthesis Project is to provide MPS students an opportunity to summarize, integrate and reflect on the coursework and other experiences in their graduate studies. The Synthesis Project is considered the capstone experience of the student's MPS program and requires the public presentation of a Capstone Seminar. An internship may be preferable when the student seeks professional and networking experience in the field of their choice. The Synthesis Project may be preferred when the student already has professional experience and wishes to synthesize information and concepts that have been gained in the MPS Program in order to apply them towards achieving their professional goals.

Synthesis Projects typically earn 3-6 credit hours in the Environmental Studies MPS program. For individually based Synthesis Projects, the student registers for EST 798, Problems in Environmental Studies, with their Major Professor. Alternatively, the student successfully may complete a group research project or internship via enrollment in a graduate-level course with such a focus. The synthesis project and associated credits usually are taken in the student's final semester.

For individual Synthesis Projects (EST 798), a Synthesis Plan must be completed no later than the second week of the final semester, in consultation with the student's Major Professor and Steering Committee. The Synthesis Plan includes the following:

- Description of the subject matter including topic headings,
- Nature of the learning experience e.g., groundwater modeling, participation observation, trend analysis, drafting of legislation, report preparation,
- Proposed format (paper, website, video production, magazine, other),
- Timeline for completion,
- Approximate page length or other measures of student's engagement in the project, and
- Proposed evaluation criteria

It is the responsibility of the student to make all arrangements for the completion of the Synthesis Project and Capstone Seminar requirements in a timely manner. The Major Professor and additional Steering Committee member are responsible for approving the Synthesis Project and oversight of the student's program, including that the Synthesis Project is suitable and worthwhile. They will be available for periodic consultation, review of the draft Synthesis product, and participation in the Capstone Seminar.