

**Department of Environmental Studies
Program Overview**

Online Master of Professional Studies (MPS) in

**Environmental Leadership, Justice, and
Communication
&
Certificates of Advanced Study (CAS)**

*Environmental Leadership
Environmental Justice & Inequality
Science and Environmental Communications*

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

ESF offers three fully online Certificates of Advanced Study (CAS) as well as an online Master of Professional Studies (MPS). These programs are designed to accommodate the schedules of working professionals and non-traditional students. The Certificates of Advanced Study consist of three, 9-credit graduate credentials composed of three 3-credit courses each. To earn the online MPS in Environmental Leadership, Justice, and Communication, students complete the three certificates plus a 3-credit capstone project oriented towards their professional and/or civic objectives. There is no capstone project requirement for a CAS earned independently from the MPS.

These programs are offered through the Environmental Studies Department at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF). The New York State Education Department and the State University of New York establish policy for all graduate programs. Students in our Online and Certificate Programs should familiarize themselves with [ESF Graduate school policies](#), including policies on Graduate Transfer credit; ESF-credit requirements for MPS and Certificate programs; Enrollment / Re-enrollment policies for part-time study; and Graduation Requirements.

Please note that you must apply and be accepted into the specific program for which you wish to receive credentials or a degree. Please also note that up to 6 graduate credits (2 courses) can be transferred into a graduate program at ESF (if you take graduate courses as an undergraduate at ESF, then 9 graduate credits – 3 courses - can be transferred). This means that if you are taking a course as a visiting student and wish to enter a Certificate or the MPS program, you will need to apply and be admitted **before** you begin a third course for courses to fully transfer. Likewise, if you are in a Certificate program and wish to enter the MPS, you must apply and be admitted **before** you begin a third course.

Program descriptions, learning outcomes, and course offerings for each of the Certificates and the MPS can be found at the following links and in the [ESF College Catalog](#).

Certificate of Advanced Study in [Environmental Leadership](#)

Certificate of Advanced Study in [Environmental Justice and Inequality](#)

Certificate of Advanced Study in [Science and Environmental Communication](#)

Master of Professional Studies in [Environmental Leadership, Justice and Communication](#)

Program Elements

Major Professor

Each student in our Certificate and MPS programs is assigned a Major Professor (advisor) Each new student should communicate with their Major Professor the week prior to the start of classes to discuss their academic and career objectives and select courses for the first semester, share expectations and establish a schedule for the student's program plan In consultation with your Major Professor, substitutions for graduate-level coursework that supports the [Program Learning Outcome](#) can be considered via petition on a case-by-case basis.

Student Responsibility

Students are responsible for completing required forms and making all arrangements for the completion of the Capstone Project requirements. It is also the student's responsibility to understand program requirements and graduate school policies, and to research the available means of fulfilling them.

Steering Committee

Students pursuing the MPS degree will have a steering committee of at least two members, including at least one faculty member in the Department of Environmental Studies. Other members may include faculty from other departments or institutions, or other recognized professionals. The final committee needs to be approved by the Major Professor.

The Major Professor and one additional steering committee member are responsible for approving the Capstone Project and for overseeing the student's program, including confirming that the proposed Capstone Project is suitable and worthwhile. They will be available for periodic consultation on the student's progress and for review of the draft Capstone Project.

A Steering Committee is not required for a Certificate of Advanced Study completed independently of the MPS.

Capstone Project

The purpose of the Capstone Project is to provide students with an opportunity to summarize, integrate, and reflect on the coursework and other experiences in their graduate studies. The Capstone Project is the culmination of the student's MPS program and includes a one-hour Capstone presentation (including Q&A) delivered in a virtual or in-person format, or the equivalent to be agreed upon with your Major Professor.

Some students may wish to weave their Capstone Project together with an ongoing or newly developed Professional Experience that supports the application of Program Learning Outcomes. Although the Steering Committee will provide guidance and oversight on linking the Professional Experience to the Capstone Project, it is the student's responsibility to find, develop, and maintain the Professional Experience, as well as to ensure that the Capstone Project supports their professional obligations.

Capstone Projects earn 3 credit hours in the Environmental Studies Online MPS program. For Capstone Projects not linked to a Professional Experience, the student should register for EST 798,

Problems in Environmental Studies. For Capstone Projects linked to a Professional Experience, the student should register for EST 898, Professional Experience. The use of alternative courses to fulfill the capstone requirement can be considered via petition on a case-by-case basis.

Capstone Plan

Students must complete a plan for completing their capstone project no later than the second week of the final semester, in consultation with the student's Major Professor and Steering Committee. The Capstone Plan includes the following:

- Description of the proposed focus of the Capstone Project
- Reflection on how the Capstone Project aligns with at least two of the [Program Learning Outcomes](#)
- Description of how the Capstone Project aligns with the student's professional goals
- Proposed format (paper, website, video production, magazine, other)
- Approximate page length or other measures of student engagement, understanding that the final product should be around 20 single-space pages, or, if another format is chosen, represent a similar amount of effort
- Timeline for completion
- Proposed evaluation criteria to guide the Major Professor and Steering Committee member in assessing the Capstone Project

Program Assessment

The Department of Environmental Studies is committed to ongoing assessment and improvement of its academic programs. Accordingly, data are collected periodically at the beginning, end, and mid-points of this and other programs, with the purpose of contributing to the evaluation of program effectiveness.

Required Forms

MPS students must complete the following forms, available from the Important Forms and Documents page:

- [Form 2A](#) (Appointment of Major Professor/Steering Committee)
- [Form 3B](#) (Graduate Program of Study) - the sequence of courses to be completed and the student's plan for their capstone/Synthesis Project, developed with the Major Professor and Steering Committee and submitted for Department Chairperson approval by the end of the student's third semester

Sample Completion Timelines

Sample pacing options for completing the 9 required courses + Capstone. Specific courses can be moved around as preferred, but you should keep note of which courses are offered in which semester.

1. 3-Semester Plan

Term	Courses	Credits
Fall (Year 1)	EST 606, EST 608, EST 615, EST 640	12
Spring (Year 1)	EST 555, EST 612, EST 616, EST 635	12
Fall (Year 2)	EST 617 + Capstone	6
Total	9 courses + Capstone	30

2. 2-Year Plan

Term	Courses	Credits
Fall (Year 1)	EST 615, EST 617	6
Spring (Year 1)	EST 616, EST 612	6
Fall (Year 2)	EST 640, EST 606, EST 608	9
Spring (Year 2)	EST 635, EST 555, Capstone	9
Total	9 courses + Capstone	30

3. 3-Year Plan

Term	Courses	Credits
Fall (Year 1)	EST 640	3
Spring (Year 1)	EST 612	3
Fall (Year 2)	EST 606, EST 608	6
Spring (Year 2)	EST 555, EST 635	6
Fall (Year 3)	EST 615, EST 617	6
Spring (Year 3)	EST 616, Capstone	6
Total	9 courses + Capstone	30

4. 4-Year Plan

Term	Courses	Credits
Fall (Year 1)	EST 606	3
Spring (Year 1)	EST 612	3
Fall (Year 2)	EST 615	3
Spring (Year 2)	EST 555, EST 635	6
Fall (Year 3)	EST 640	3
Spring (Year 3)	EST 616	3
Fall (Year 4)	EST 608, EST 617	6
Spring (Year 4)	Capstone	3
Total	9 courses + Capstone	30

5. Undergraduate Advanced-Standing Options (4+1 / 4+2)

5a. "4+1" Option — Senior Year + One Year After Undergraduate (or One Year + Summer)

Term	Courses	Credits
Fall (Senior Year, Undergraduate)	EST 606	3
Spring (Senior Year, Undergraduate)	EST 612, EST 616	6
Fall (Year 1, Post-Undergraduate)	EST 608, EST 615, EST 617, EST 640	12
Spring (Year 1, Post-Undergraduate)	EST 555, EST 635	6
Spring (Year 1) or Summer (Year 1), Post-Undergraduate	Capstone — completed in Spring for a full 1-year finish after undergrad, or deferred to Summer for a lighter Spring	3
Total	9 courses + Capstone (3 taken as an undergraduate senior, 6 + Capstone after)	30

5b. "4+2" Option — Senior Year + Two Years After Undergraduate

Term	Courses	Credits
Fall (Senior Year, Undergraduate)	EST 606	3
Spring (Senior Year, Undergraduate)	EST 612, EST 616	6
Fall (Year 1, Post-Undergraduate)	EST 608, EST 615	6
Spring (Year 1, Post-Undergraduate)	EST 555	3
Fall (Year 2, Post-Undergraduate)	EST 617, EST 640	6
Spring (Year 2, Post-Undergraduate)	EST 635 + Capstone	6
Total	9 courses + Capstone (3 taken as an undergraduate senior, 6 + Capstone after)	30