WVU Geography M.A. Degree Requirements

The Master’s Program in Geography at West Virginia University provides students with cutting edge training in the history and theory of geography, experience with advanced geographic research methodologies and specialized mentoring from faculty experts across three sub-disciplinary fields (Human Geography; Environmental Geography; Geographic Information Science). To earn a M.A. in Geography at WVU students must complete 30 credit hours of graduate courses (based upon the curriculum described below), form a committee of graduate faculty to supervise their study, write and defend a thesis or project proposal, and finally, write and defend a thesis or project.

- **Credit Hours:** Students are required to complete a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours in Geography at the 400 level or above. WVU requires that no more than 40% of the graduate degree credits be at the 400-level.

- **Grade Point Average:** Students must earn a minimum GPA of 3.0 overall, and of 3.0 in coursework applied to their graduate program.

- **Graduation Requirement:** Students have the option of pursuing a Professional Master’s Project or completing a Master’s Thesis. The M.A. thesis is an independent research project undertaken by the student. The thesis research should adhere to the following: 1) Demonstrate knowledge of the literature in the student’s chosen field, 2) Use data and methods appropriate to the research, and 3) Draw conclusions from the research endeavor. The Professional Master’s Project is designed for students interested in a more focused project than the traditional research thesis option. It is not recommended for students considering entering a Ph.D. program. The project option has strict deadlines; it must be completed in one semester and after the completion of GEOG 601 and either GEOG 603 or GEOG 701.

- **Thesis Proposal (for Thesis option):** MA students are expected to develop a written thesis research proposal either during the spring semester or, at the latest, during the summer after the first academic year. When the proposal has been completed to the satisfaction of the student’s advisor and thesis committee, the student will make an oral public presentation of the proposal, open to all students and faculty in the Geography program. The deadline for submitting an acceptable proposal to the student’s advisor and committee is October 1 of the student’s second year. An announcement of the student’s intent to present a research proposal must be advertised within the department at least two weeks prior to the presentation. The deadline for the public presentation of the proposal is October 31 of the student’s second year (unless there are scheduling conflicts). Thesis proposals are not normally scheduled between June 15 and August 15.

- **Project Proposal (for Professional option):** During the semester before the project is undertaken, the student must develop and present a written project plan to their Professional Masters project advisory committee. The project plan should include an objective, methods,
and timetable. No public presentation of the proposal is required. The student must make a written request to the Geography Graduate Coordinator for permission to complete the Geography Professional Masters Project course (Geog 780) no later than the end of the semester before the start of the semester in which the project is undertaken. The request should specify the date on which the committee accepted the proposal, and be endorsed by the student’s advisor. Not until the complete written request has been received will the Geography Graduate Coordinator issue a permit for the course. The student is required to have meetings with the advisor and committee at least two times over the course of the semester in which they are conducting the project.

- **Thesis/Project Defense:** The thesis/project defense occurs when the advisor and the committee agree that a defensible copy of the thesis/project is completed. The defense date must be advertised to the department at least two weeks in advance. Thesis/Project defenses are not normally scheduled between June 15 and August 15. In accordance with College requirements, original signatures are required on the shuttle sheet form specifying the outcome of the defense. Students should work with closely with their advisors to establish expectations for length and structure of the thesis/project.

- **Master’s Committee:** In year one, each student must form a graduate committee of a minimum of three graduate faculty. The committee are as follows:
  - The chair must be a faculty member of the WVU Geography program and a regular member of the WVU graduate faculty.
  - At least one of the two additional committee members must be a member of the WVU Department of Geology and Geography (either adjunct or regular faculty).
  - At least one of the two additional committee members must be a regular member of the WVU graduate faculty.
  - Students may change advisor or committee members only after consultation with the advisor and the Graduate Committee.

- **Additional Requirements:** The academic progress of every master’s student is reviewed each year. Students must submit a self-evaluation signed by their advisor by January 15. The Graduate Committee will conduct its annual review of students in February and communicate with students in March. Waivers to the M.A. deadlines, timing requirements, and other rules may be requested from the Graduate Coordinator. Waivers are only given under extraordinary circumstances.
• Required Deadlines:

**Thesis option**
First year
- Fall semester: File plan of study
- Spring semester: Form committee
Second year
- Fall semester: Written proposal given to committee by Oct. 1st and complete oral proposal by Oct. 31st
- Spring semester: Defend thesis by the end of semester

**Professional option**
First year
- Fall semester: File plan of study
- Spring semester: Form committee
Second year
- Fall semester: Professional option must be chosen by Oct. 1st. Get approval of written plan from the thesis committee and request permission from the graduate committee by the end of semester.
- Spring semester: Defend project by the end of semester.

• Curriculum Requirements

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GEOG 601</td>
<td>Geographic Traditions</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geographic Methods Course (Select one of the following)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEOG 603</td>
<td>Qualitative Research in Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEOG 701</td>
<td>Quantitative Spatial Analysis</td>
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<td>Geography Colloquium (1 credit per semester):</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEOG 600</td>
<td>Geography Research Colloquium (repeated)</td>
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<td>Geography Graduate Courses (GEOG 400+)</td>
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<td>General Electives</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEOG 780</td>
<td>Non-Thesis Project (Professional option)</td>
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<td>Graduate course: One additional elective (Professional option)</td>
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<td>GEOG 797</td>
<td>Research (Thesis option)</td>
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Total Hours 30

*The first version - Jan 31, 2019*