

The following changes, additions, and subtractions occurred after the 2010-2011 handbook was published in September 2010. If you began the program in Fall 2010, please use the handbook, coupled with this document, to learn the policies of the MES program as they apply to your start year.

1. Throughout the document, please change all references from a 12-credit thesis to an 8 or 16 credit thesis.

2. In the “Degree Requirements Section” please change the following sentence:

“MES students are required to successfully complete a total of 72 quarter-hours of credit, including 28 core credits in sequence, 32 elective credits, and 12 thesis credits. The first three core courses carry eight units of credit, the fourth core course carries four units, and electives normally carry four units.”

to this sentence:

“MES students are required to successfully complete a total of 72 quarter-hours of credit, including 32 core credits in sequence, 24 elective credits, and 16 thesis credits (students may also choose an 8 credit thesis, which changes the elective credit total to 32 credits). The core courses carry eight units of credit and electives normally carry four units.”

3. In the “Thesis” Section, please add the following:

Thesis Basics

Students must finish all four core classes as well as 16 credits of electives before beginning their thesis project. A major requirement for satisfactory work on the thesis is timely completion. Students are required to finish their thesis in the Winter and Spring quarters of their final year, and thesis presentations are scheduled for the end of Spring quarter. In certain cases, with permission from the student’s reader, a student may extend thesis work through the following Summer quarter or Fall quarter. Failure to complete on time may result in a report of No Credit, and will require the student to re-enroll in thesis credits the following Winter and Spring quarters to work on a new thesis. Students who are allowed by their reader to continue work on their thesis project after registering for their total number of thesis credits are required to take an additional two credits each quarter that involves faculty effort until completion; this includes the quarter in which the thesis is submitted and the final public presentation is made. The extra thesis credits taken do not count toward the student’s degree.

Thesis Prospectus

A final, approved prospectus (signed by you, your reader, and the MES Director) that outlines your thesis research plan is due in the MES office by the beginning of the winter quarter in which you start your thesis.

Thesis Workshop

Students are required to attend a thesis workshop led by an MES faculty member. The workshop is typically scheduled for Tuesday evenings during winter and spring quarters, and provides a structured environment for thesis preparation, research, and writing. The workshop is intended to help you prepare and finish your thesis by the end of spring quarter. It provides a chance to meet regularly with the workshop faculty for advice. Students should also meet with their reader on a regular basis during

Winter and Spring quarters. The thesis evaluation by the student's reader includes reference to student attendance and participation in the workshop.

Critical Initial Choices

Choosing a Reader

A key decision regarding thesis work is your choice of faculty advisor, or "reader." The reader is selected for (1) her/his expertise on the topic you wish to explore, (2) personal compatibility with you as a student, and (3) availability during the time you are working on your thesis. Your reader will advise on content and methodology, and will also read and critique your drafts. The reader also writes your thesis evaluation and awards final credit. This person will become your most important faculty colleague in this process, and you should meet regularly.

During the Case Studies core class, you will indicate preferences for a reader. Your reader will be a member of the MES faculty unless otherwise arranged by the MES Director. Once students have indicated their preferences, MES faculty members work collaboratively to decide on reader assignments. In this process, every effort is made to match you with your first choice for reader, while also balancing faculty workload. To assist with making your decision, you are encouraged to begin talking about your project at any time with potential readers.

The Research Question or "Thesis"

One of the most difficult but important aspects of thesis work is taking a great idea and turning it into a focused project that can be completed within acceptable time constraints.

During your MES studies prior to thesis, you have examined a broad array of environmental issues from a number of perspectives. Now it's time to get specific.

Your goal should be to develop a concise research question, or thesis statement, that defines as precisely as possible what your thesis will be about. Your reader will be able to help you to decide when your research question is focused enough and likely to lead to a completed thesis.

The research question or thesis statement will need to be specified in your Thesis Prospectus, which will be given to you during Case Studies.

Your thesis requires that you engage in research on a topic of real-world interest and consider its political, economic, and scientific aspects. The topic may be one that you first identify when you prepare to register for thesis, or may be a topic of long-standing interest to you that you have already begun to research.

For your thesis, you can choose to engage in fieldwork, data collection, and analysis, or you can choose to analyze an existing body of information from a new perspective. The new perspective might derive from integration of information not previously recognized as relevant to that topic, reassessment of some existing controversy or topic in the light of new data, evaluation of the success (or lack thereof) of some environmental policy or action, or other thoughtful consideration of an environmental problem or solution presented in a new light.

This research is conducted independently by you with the support and guidance of your reader, and requires a scope of work that can be completed in two quarters. The thesis is written in a structured workshop setting during winter and spring quarters of your final year.

You should consult with faculty members and/or the MES program director about your thesis options as you approach completion of sufficient credits for beginning thesis work, normally in the fall of your second or third year in MES for full-time and part-time students, respectively. A lot of this consultation occurs during the fourth core class – Case Studies.

It may help you in your thesis search to look at past MES theses. Completed theses of MES graduates are on the shelves (before 2006) in the library or online (2006 and after). To view a list of their titles and authors, go to <http://www.evergreen.edu/mes/thesisresources.htm> and click on “Past MES Theses.” You will find a wide variety of interesting environmental topics covered, and it is likely that you will find past theses inspiring and potentially useful in your own work.

Writing with Outside Clients in Mind

Ideally, your thesis will be of value to an external client or organization and not just an academic exercise. Here, we use the term client to mean an organization with a specific interest in your thesis topic and who could provide continuous contact with you during the project.

A benefit of Evergreen's location in Olympia is an abundance of federal state, regional, and local government agencies within close proximity to the college. Many of these agencies are environmental in nature, and can be considered potential clients for research projects in the MES program. Such agencies are excellent sources of ideas for research projects with real world significance.

Students are encouraged to work with government agencies or other environmental organizations (such as consulting firms or non-profits) to develop pertinent research projects. For students working on research related to their job, they need to make sure the scope of the thesis is open to a wider audience.

Funding Your Thesis

Students are encouraged to find grants or fellowships to fund their research. There are several resources offered by MES to help you do so. Please see the Research Funding section of our Financial Aid page for more information: <http://www.evergreen.edu/mes/financial.htm#research>.

Working with Other Students

Students who are interested in taking advantage of the unique peer relationships formed during the MES core programs and electives by working with one or more other students on a collaborative thesis must seek permission from the MES Director first.

Publication in Lieu of Thesis

In exceptional cases, a student may petition to substitute a publication in a peer-reviewed journal in lieu of thesis. This must be approved by the student's reader and the MES Director.