

# Department of Community Sustainability



## Master's and PhD Graduate Handbook 2024

Rev. 2024

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## Introduction and Overview

The CSUS graduate program is designed for students interested in issues of community sustainability in either a domestic or international context. Broadly speaking, faculty, academic staff, and graduate students working in this graduate program tend to focus their work on community food and agricultural systems, natural resources and the environment, tourism and recreation systems, education and civic engagement, and international development. These themes are very broad, and they overlap not only with each other but also with issues around sustainable tourism and protected area management, the focus of the department's other MS and PhD graduate programs. We apply our work in these areas in both domestic and international settings, with numerous faculty and graduate students working in the context of international development.

**Our vision** is to lead and aid in the development and revitalization of sustainable communities, thus enhancing the capacity of current and future generations to reach their potential.

**Our mission** is to assist the development of sustainable communities by conducting excellent scholarly research, teaching, and outreach in:

- education and civic engagement
- community, food, and agriculture
- natural resources, land use, and the environment
- recreation and tourism systems

**Our work** addresses critical issues at the interfaces of agriculture, natural resources, recreation, tourism, and communities. Our public scholarship of research, teaching, and outreach helps people in their roles as residents, landowners, businesses, and governmental and non-profit institutions to make informed decisions with a goal of not compromising future generations. Our work ranges from local to global. Students work closely with faculty advisors to identify course requirements and to define a research or professional project.

## Our Values

- development of the professional, technical, and specialized knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to help diverse individuals and communities improve their quality of life and the environment
- promotion of social responsibility and development of a broad understanding and awareness of agricultural, natural resource, and recreational issues, challenges, and opportunities
- nurturing approaches that support positive and healthy relationships among diverse individuals, communities, and agricultural and natural resource systems
- respect for our environment
- a commitment to professionalism built around liberal education, practical experience, and applied learning opportunities that encourage both local and global engagement

## Scholarly Foundation

- The faculty carries out research, teaching, and outreach focused on social, environmental, community and agricultural/food systems to strive for an ecologically and socially sustainable world. The faculty is committed to sustainable development that is integrative, inclusive, and systemic in nature; involves local-to-global restructuring; and promotes public health and wellness.
- The faculty study management, planning, leadership, and policies that lead to transformational change to address complex and emerging issues in community, agriculture, recreation and tourism, and natural resource areas.

- The faculty employs a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to understand and address complex and interrelated issues. The faculty's multidisciplinary expertise creates a unique synergy that drives the department's mission and places the department at the fore of this broad and critical area of scholarship.
- The faculty work as scholar-practitioners. The scholar-practitioner model is built on critical discourse connecting theory and practice in endeavors of joint discovery and learning. The faculty supports a continuum of scholarship by conducting applied research, engaging in outreach and Extension initiatives, and developing curricula to balance the interests and demands of its students and stakeholders.

**Diversity** CSUS is committed to creating a diverse faculty and student body, to include recruitment of ethnically diverse domestic students/faculty/staff as well as recruitment and acceptance of international students from countries throughout the world. The Department works closely with the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA) and the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS). We believe strongly in the value of cross-cultural sharing and multi-disciplinary approaches to education, research & outreach. An additional aspect of diversity central to the CSUS Department is the wide variety of academic and professional backgrounds of both our students and faculty. We strongly encourage all graduate students to take advantage of the diverse student and faculty bodies within and across the MSU campus.

### Program Admission – for Prospective Students

Our graduate program follows an advisor-sponsored model of admissions. This means that to apply, you first need to find a faculty member who will agree to serve as your advisor throughout your graduate career at CSUS. No applicant is admitted to the graduate program unless a faculty member has committed to advise the student (with or without a funding offer). This ensures that every student admitted benefits from the expertise of our faculty and receives strong mentorship throughout their time here. After the application process is complete, an admissions and funding decision is emailed to the applicant by the Department and forwarded to the MSU Office of Admissions. The MSU Office of Admissions sends the final admissions decision to the applicant, based on its review.

Applications are submitted via Slate - <https://explore.msu.edu/apply/>

The Department of Community Sustainability graduate programs are based on cohorts, beginning in fall semesters only (for both new applicants and those hoping to transfer from other MSU programs). Applicants are encouraged to apply early to increase their opportunities for acceptance and funding. The deadline for university-wide fellowship consideration is November 1<sup>st</sup>.

### English Language Requirements & Provisional Acceptance

All international applicants to the Department of Community Sustainability must meet minimum TOEFL (or other accepted English Language assessment) scores as required by Michigan State University. See MSU Graduate School guidelines at [English Language Proficiency](#).

Some specific conditions may make applicants eligible for automatic waivers of English Language Proficiency scores. The policy for when and how to apply for an English language waiver can be found here: [Procedure to Request a Waiver for English Language Competency | The Graduate School \(msu.edu\)](#)

### CSUS Graduate Courses

In addition to the standard CSUS [graduate course offerings](#) and requirements, there are a number of courses that are meant to fulfill specific purposes and have specific limitations.

- **Transfer Credits:** A maximum of 9 semester credits of graduate course work (excluding research and thesis) can be transferred into a graduate degree program
- **400-level Courses:** By MSU policy, more than half of the credits of the total (30) required for a master’s degree must be taken at the 800 and 900 levels, except as specifically exempted by the college dean. Courses at the 400 level may be applied to the master’s degree program; however, when both 400- and 800-level courses are available that cover the same content, the 800- level course should be selected. No more than 9 credits of 400 level courses can be taken for PhD students.
- **CSUS 890: Independent Study in Community Sustainability** – 1-6 credits, maximum of 6 total credits over the course of a degree. This independent study should cover material not covered by existing MSU classes
- **CSUS 891: Selected Topics in Community Sustainability** – 1-9 credits (typically 3), maximum of 9 total credits over the course of a degree. This course is for more current events that are not the focus of existing CSUS courses.
- **CSUS 894: Field Practicum in Community Sustainability** – 1-3 credits, maximum of 3 total credits over the course of a degree. This course allows students to earn credit for field-based experiences that integrate or add to a student’s CSUS knowledge and training in domestic or international settings.
- **CSUS 898: Master’s Professional Project** – 1-3 credits, maximum of 9 total credits over the course of a degree. These credits are for MS-B students to devote time towards their final professional project.
- **CSUS 899: Master’s Thesis Research** – 1-6 credits, maximum of 18 total credits over the course of a degree. These credits are for MS-A students to devote time towards their master’s thesis research.
- **CSUS 999: Doctoral Dissertation Research** – 1-12 credits, maximum of 36 credits over the course of a degree. These credits are for PhD students to devote time towards their dissertation research.

**Master of Science Graduate Program**

The Department of Community Sustainability offers **two Master of Science degrees** that provide students with opportunities to engage in integrated and applied research and acquire professional skills.

**Overview of MS Graduate Program Timeline**

| <b>MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAM PROGRESS DEADLINES</b>  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Action</b>  | <b>Grad School Suggested Deadline</b>                             | <b>“No Later Than” Deadline</b>   |
| <b>Form guidance committee, have first committee meeting</b>                                 | End of student’s first semester                                   | <b>End of student’s second semester</b>                                   |
| <b>Submit Program Plan to <a href="http://www.student.msu.edu">www.student.msu.edu</a></b>   | End of student’s first semester                                   | <b>End of student’s second semester</b>                                   |
| <b>Hold proposal presentation with committee</b>   | After program plan is submitted; end of student’s second semester | <b>After program is plan submitted; early in student’s third semester</b> |
| <b>Submit announcement for project final defense</b>   | 2 weeks before final defense                                      | <b>2 weeks before final defense</b>                                       |
| <b>Hold public final presentation defense, followed by closed committee proposal defense</b> | <b>End of student’s second year</b>                               | <b>End of five years from the starting semester of degree program</b>     |

## MS-A Degree

The Master of Science Plan-A option (MS-A) is a research-based degree that requires completion of a thesis. This option emphasizes the development of integrated and applied research skills which are the foundation of doctoral study or other research-related work.

## MS-A Degree Requirements

A minimum of 30 credits is required for the degree under Plan A. The student's program of study must be developed in cooperation with and approved by the student's guidance committee and must include the requirements specified below.

## Required Courses

- CSUS 800 - Foundations of Community Sustainability I (3 credits), first fall semester
- CSUS 801 - Foundations of Community Sustainability II (3 credits), first spring semester
- CSUS 802 - Introduction to Interdisciplinary Inquiry (3 credits), first fall semester
- A minimum of 3 credits of quantitative or qualitative methods
- A minimum of 6 credits CSUS 899 – Master's Thesis Research

## Focus Area Courses

In addition to the above required courses, each student must take a minimum of 11 credits of course work in a self-defined focal area, which may coincide with one of the department's themes, an interdepartmental specialization, or be developed in consultation with the student's guidance committee. At least 6 credits of this focus area must be in CSUS courses.

## Guidance Committee

The guidance committee is expected to share responsibility for reviewing the graduate student's progress, guiding the student toward completion of course and program requirements, and preparing the student for professional success after graduation. Once designated, the Guidance Committee is responsible for meeting periodically to oversee the student's progress if they continue in good standing.

Students should work with their advisor to identify potential committee members and speak with several different potential committee members to determine if they are a good fit given their expertise, interest, availability, and advising style. Guidance committees are entered into GradPlan, where they are approved and become part of your record.

**Committee Composition:** Guidance Committees must consist of MSU regular faculty members and (optionally) others having Graduate School faculty status. MS-A committees must have at least three total members, with at least two from the CSUS faculty. Requests for non-regular faculty must be made to the academic program coordinator or graduate program director.

**Timing:** Graduate students should form their committee by the end of their second semester in CSUS. Even if student's thesis/dissertation plans are not yet solidified, it is important for a committee to guide a student's course plan and general progress through the program.

**Changes to committee:** Students always reserve the right to change any committee member. This is accomplished by talking with and getting approval from both departing and incoming committee members, requesting the change through GradPlan, and documenting the reason for the change. Committee members may be changed for a variety of reasons including: the student's research ideas have changed, a committee member has left the institution, etc.

## MS-A Thesis Proposal

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Students must prepare a written thesis proposal in consultation with the Guidance Committee chairperson and present the proposal to the Guidance Committee in a public forum. The dissertation proposal may be scheduled, prepared, and presented only after successful completion of the comprehensive examination.

The proposal should describe:

1. The purpose and objective of the proposed research
2. A review of the relevant literature
3. The proposed method of data collection and analysis

Students must submit the proposal to all Guidance Committee members at least two weeks prior to the public forum. The forum should be scheduled and announced to faculty and graduate students by submitting said proposal to the Graduate Coordinator for electronic distribution at least two weeks before the scheduled defense.

At a minimum, the announcement should include:

- Student's name
- Degree program and type
- Thesis proposal title
- Chairperson & committee member names
- Date, time, and location (contact Grad Coordinator for room reserve if needed)
- Zoom link + password for the proposal defense
- Abstract (see below)
- Committee Members

**Abstract:** Write a short abstract, approximately one or two paragraphs, here that succinctly presents the proposal's purpose, need/rationale, theoretical framework used or tested, context, methods and/or procedures, and any other information that is relevant to help others understand your work.

**Proposal Approval:** After the public presentation and in a closed session, members of the Guidance Committee will discuss the suitability of the proposal and indicate their approval on the Thesis Proposal Approval form (see sample in Appendix A); use digitally fillable/signable version found on the CSUS Graduate Forms website. This form must be signed digitally (to be circulated in order of listing on the form) by the student, the Guidance Committee members, the Graduate Program Coordinator, and the Department Chairperson.

**Human Subjects/IRB:** Students must ensure compliance with the university requirements and guidelines pertaining to use of human subjects and vertebrate animals in research, and to safe use of hazardous materials. The necessary forms to secure approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) may be obtained from the Human Research Protection Program (<http://hrpp.msu.edu> ; use the new CLICKTM Research Compliance System).

## Completion and Public Defense of Final Master's Thesis

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Upon completion of their final defense, the committee must complete the [Report of Master's Thesis Final Examination form](#) and email it to the Academic Coordinator.



## MS-B Degree

The Master of Science Plan-B option (also referred to as MS-B) focuses on the acquisition of well-defined professional skills, appropriate as a terminal degree and for professional employment. The MS-B degree requires completion of a professional project and associated paper. **The MS-B degree does NOT require completion of a research-based thesis.**

## MS-B Degree Requirements

The student's program of study must be developed in cooperation with and approved by the student's guidance committee and must include the requirements specified below.

A minimum of 30 credits is required for the degree under Plan B. The student's program of study must be developed in cooperation with and approved by the student's guidance committee and must include the requirements specified below.

## Required Courses

- CSUS 800 - Foundations of Community Sustainability I (3 credits), first fall semester
- CSUS 801 - Foundations of Community Sustainability II (3 credits), first spring semester
- CSUS 802 - Introduction to Interdisciplinary Inquiry (3 credits), first fall semester
- A minimum of 3 credits of a techniques or skill-building course relevant to the student's academic and career goals
- A minimum of 3 credits of Community Sustainability 898 - Master's Professional Project

## Focus Area Courses

Take a minimum of 14 credits of course work in a self-defined focal area, which may coincide with one of the department's themes, an interdepartmental specialization, or be developed in consultation with the student's guidance committee. At least 6 credits of this focus area must be in CSUS courses.

## Guidance Committee

The guidance committee is expected to share responsibility for reviewing the graduate student's progress, guiding the student toward completion of course and program requirements, and preparing the student for professional success after graduation. Once designated, the Guidance Committee is responsible for meeting periodically to oversee the student's progress if they continue in good standing.

Students should work with their advisor to identify potential committee members and speak with several different potential committee members to determine if they are a good fit given their expertise, interest, availability, and advising style. Guidance committees are entered into GradPlan, where they are approved and become part of your record.

**Committee Composition:** Guidance Committees must consist of MSU regular faculty members and (optionally) others having Graduate School faculty status. MS-B committees must have at least two total members, with at least one from the CSUS faculty. Requests for non-regular faculty must be made to the academic program coordinator or graduate program director.

**Timing:** Graduate students should form their committee by the end of their second semester in CSUS. Even if student's thesis/dissertation plans are not yet solidified, it is important for a committee to guide a student's course plan and general progress through the program.

**Changes to committee:** Students always reserve the right to change any committee member. This is accomplished by talking with and getting approval from both departing and incoming committee members, requesting the change through GradPlan, and documenting the reason for the change. Committee members may be changed for a variety of reasons including: the student's research ideas have changed, a committee member has left the institution, etc.

## MS-B Project Proposal

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A professional impact project is required for the MS-B degree. Because the project emphasizes professional development, the student designs and completes a significant project that helps to further his/her professional goals. Because this project is for an advanced degree at an academic institution, the project must be informed by the current literature as this will: 1) ensure that the work is current, and 2) help students learn how to conduct their professional work as scholar practitioners. The project should be an important and relevant training experience and should contribute to developing specific professional skills and knowledge. Although the project may have practical research applications, the applicability of the results is likely to be local and targeted (e.g., to an organization, a location, or a particular situation) rather than general or generalizable (e.g., contribute to the literature or theory-building).

The student shall prepare a project proposal for their Guidance Committee prior to beginning any work on the project itself. The project should be laid out via a written proposal before it is begun. Generally, the proposal should consist of: 1) a statement of professional and learning goals; 2) a statement indicating how the project is designed to address professional and learning goals; 3) a narrative about how the project is informed by current literature or state-of-the-art practice in terms of subject matter, techniques, or practice; and 4) an outline detailing proposed procedures, products, and potential significance and application of the project results.

The written proposal must be provided to the Guidance Committee for review and comment. Although not required, students are strongly encouraged to present the proposal in a public forum in addition to the oral defense for the committee. Approval of the proposal by the committee is required before continuing with project dissemination. Summer defenses are based on mutual agreement of committee members and students as faculty may not be available during the summer months.

Students must submit the written proposal to the Guidance Committee members at least two weeks/14 days prior to the oral proposal presentation.

## Final Professional Impact Project Description and Final Defense

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The final project defense meeting serves as the student's final certifying examination for the MS-B degree. It is a public seminar that is open to attendance by faculty, staff, students, and other invited guests. The student shall notify the Graduate Program Director at least two week/14 days in advance of the final project defense (follow the format for final defense notification below). The Graduate Program Director shall forward this notice to faculty and graduate students. Notification shall be via email, with flier attached. Students must provide Guidance Committee members with a copy of the written project (marked "DRAFT") at least two weeks/14 days prior to the defense seminar.

### Structure of Final Project Defense/Impact Presentation:

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The student shall orally present and defend his/her final project in a public forum, using appropriate visual and other aids. This final presentation and defense shall comprise a public session that includes a 15- to 30-minute presentation and a public question-and-answer period, followed by a closed session for additional discussion with the Guidance Committee. Guidance Committee members may require corrections, revisions, clarifications, and edits before final approval of the project.

### Formatting Your Master's Project:

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As explained in the project description above, the actual final project can take many forms. The Guidance Committee will determine if a separate final report is necessary in addition to the product (sometimes some type of report or other written document already is included in the project format, so another one is not necessary). The Guidance Committee will determine the format and content. Committees often include a requirement for a "student's lessons learned" reflective piece to supplement the actual project and (if required) report.

## Record of Completion and Submission of Project:

The student will provide copies of the final project (and project report), approved by the Guidance Committee, to the student's major advisor, to the Graduate Program Director, and to other Guidance Committee members.

If the student passes the oral defense, but the written project paper still needs more than minor editing, the advisor should check "conditional pass," summarize edits needed (on the form or on an attached page). Then, after the student makes all revisions required by the committee, the advisor will sign and date the "final approval" form.

## Completion and Public Defense of Final Master's Thesis

Upon completion of their final defense, the committee must complete the [Report of Master's Thesis Final Examination form](#) and email it to the Academic Coordinator.

## PhD Graduate Program

### PhD Degree Requirements for Community Sustainability (CSUS)

A minimum of 60 credits is required for the degree. The student's program of study must be developed in cooperation with and approved by the student's guidance committee and must include the requirements specified below.

### Required Courses

- CSUS 800 - Foundations of Community Sustainability I (3 credits), first fall semester
- CSUS 801 - Foundations of Community Sustainability II (3 credits), first spring semester
- CSUS 802 - Introduction to Interdisciplinary Inquiry (3 credits), first fall semester

If a student already has credit in any of these courses, these credits must be replaced by a comparable number of credits of relevant coursework chosen in consultation with their advisor.

### Research and Methods Courses

Complete a minimum of 9 credits of advanced research methods, to be selected in consultation with the student's guidance committee; at least 3 credits must be taken in each of quantitative and qualitative methods, plus another 3 credits selected from statistics, quantitative, qualitative, or other advanced research methods.

### Focal Areas

Complete a minimum of 18 credits across 2 self-defined focal areas (minimum of 9 credits each). Of these, at least 3 credits in each focal area must be selected from Community Sustainability (CSUS) courses. Focal areas may coincide with one of the department's themes, an interdepartmental specialization, or be developed in consultation with the student's guidance committee.

### Independent Research

Complete a minimum of 24 credits of Community Sustainability 999 – Doctoral Dissertation Research.

### Guidance Committee

The guidance committee is expected to share responsibility for reviewing the graduate student's progress, guiding the student toward completion of course and program requirements, and preparing the student for professional success after graduation.

Once designated, the Guidance Committee has the responsibility to meet periodically to oversee the student’s progress as long as the student continues in good standing.

Students should work with their advisor to identify potential committee members. Students should speak with several different potential committee members to determine if they are a good fit given their expertise, interest, availability, and advising style. Guidance committees are entered into GradPlan, where they are approved and become part of your record.

### Committee Composition

Guidance Committees must consist of MSU regular faculty members and (optionally) others having Graduate School faculty status. Committees must have at least four total members, at least two members from the CSUS faculty, at least one faculty member external to CSUS, and an additional committee member (i.e., either CSUS or non-CSUS faculty member).

To request a non-regular faculty as a committee member, consult the [Graduate School’s relevant policy](#) and fill out the appropriate form to be reviewed by the CSUS Graduate Program Director.

### Timing

Graduate students should form their committee by the end of their second semester in CSUS. Even if student’s thesis/dissertation plans are not yet solidified, it is important for a committee to guide a student’s course plan and general progress through the program.

### Changes to committee

Students always reserve the right to change any committee member. This is accomplished by talking with and getting approval from both departing and incoming committee members, requesting the change through GradPlan, and documenting the reason for the change. Committee members may be changed for a variety of reasons including: the student’s research ideas have changed, a committee member has left the institution, etc.

## PhD Major Milestones

| DOCTORAL DEGREE MAJOR MILESTONES   |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Action   | Grad School Suggested Deadline  | “No Later Than” Deadline  |
| <b>Form guidance committee, have first committee meeting</b>                                 | End of student’s first semester   | <b>End of student’s second semester</b>                                   |
| <b>Submit Program Plan to GradPlan</b>   | End of student’s first semester   | <b>End of student’s second semester</b>                                   |
| <b>Hold informal proposal presentation with committee</b>                                    | After the program plan is submitted; end of student’s second semester or early in the third semester. | <b>After program plan is submitted; early in student’s third semester</b> |
| <b>Pass Comprehensive Exam</b>   | Usually, after the end of 4 <sup>th</sup> semester  | <b>No later than the end of year 5</b>                                    |
| <b>Hold Proposal Defense</b>   | Soon after passing comprehensive exam   | <b>Varies</b>   |
| <b>Hold public final dissertation defense, followed by closed committee proposal defense</b> | <b>End of program<br/>Most students end in 4-6 years</b>  | <b>End of year 8 from the starting semester of degree program</b>         |

The basic format of reaching milestones should be discussed with your adviser during the first semester of enrollment. It might be hard early on to know who exactly should be on your committee but know that committees can change over time.

Below are an overview of the milestones and the reasoning behind them:

- (1) Form a guidance committee: To meet CSUS faculty, create the community that will support you along your dissertation journey, and get advice on what courses to take.
- (2) Submit program plan to SIS: To plan out the courses you wish to take to fulfill your requirements and interests, paying attention to when courses are offered.
- (3) Hold informal proposal presentation with committee: To share ideas about what your research interests are (broadly) and get feedback from your committee.
- (4) Pass Comprehensive Exam: To develop your own areas of research interest, become knowledgeable about past work and theoretical developments in those areas, and demonstrate your expertise and progress towards a PhD.
- (5) Hold proposal defense: To receive feedback on your planned dissertation research from your committee and structure what research is feasible.
- (6) Hold public final dissertation defense, followed by closed committee defense. To present to your committee and publicly the research you have completed.

## PhD Comprehensive Exams

### Timeline

Students should aim to take the comprehensive exam during Year 3 of their degree program and, according to MSU policy, must complete it no later than the end of Year 5.

From the beginning of a student's program, they should begin identifying core literature for inclusion in focal areas and writing early literature review drafts synthesizing this literature.

During the semester before the Comprehensive Program Statement is finalized, relevant committee members should provide feedback on drafts. This process is intended to result in a solid draft 60 days prior to the comprehensive exam to eliminate any surprises.

- 7 weeks before Day 1 of comp exam:
  - Submit full draft of Comprehensive Program Statement (CPS) to student's committee
- 5 weeks before Day 1 of comp exam:
  - Committee submits any comments, recommendations for additional reading or writing of CPS to student
- 3 weeks before Day 1 of comp exam:
  - Committee approves CPS and signs the CPS Planning and Approval form; advisor sends approved CPS to all CSUS faculty, and submits CPS form to CSUS Graduate Office
- Before Day 1 of comp exam:
  - Schedule oral comp exam within 14 days of final/Day 5 of written comp exam
- Written comp exam:
  - 5-day written exam
- Oral comp exam:
  - Opportunity for clarifications, additional questions

If student does not pass both oral and written comprehensive exam components in full, they may re-take the exam, but must wait between 45 and 120 days after conclusion of first attempt (to allow time for additional preparation).

## Comprehensive Program Statement (CPS)

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### What is the purpose of the Comprehensive Program Statement?

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The purpose of the CPS is for you to define yourself as a scholar, speak to your professional and personal preparation up to that point, identify your background and plans for the future, and to identify your areas of scholarly focus. The CPS is also to help you prepare for your comps. A CPS should create a narrative that presents the student's learning and professional background and goals, provides a rationale for the student's focal areas that summarizes and synthesizes the research literature related to each focal area, and includes a complete list of completed and planned courses. The CPS is prepared in consultation with the student's guidance committee and is presented to the full faculty for review. The committee will use the CPS to inform them of their questions for the written portion of the exam.

### CPS required components

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**Research Interests:** a description and discussion of the student's research interests, with emphasis on the rationale for the two chosen focus areas and how they support the student's academic and professional goals. This should include an overview of how the student's research interests are informed by elements of the CSUS graduate core curriculum, as appropriate: wicked problems, systems thinking, ethics, community engagement, sustainability and interdisciplinarity.

**Description of Focus Area 1:** a description and discussion of the student's intellectual interests in the focus area and a synthesis of the associated literature, including theories and empirical models related to the focus area.

**Description of Focus Area 2:** a description and discussion of the student's intellectual interests in a second focus area, including the components listed above for Focus Area 1.

**Research Statement:** this section includes 1) a discussion of the student's epistemological position, how it is informed by their experiences in CSUS 800, 801, 802 and other readings and study, and how it influences the way they approach research, and 2) a discussion of research methodologies relevant to the student's focus areas. This discussion is not intended to be exhaustive of all relevant methodologies or methods, however, it should be broader than individual methods or techniques the student anticipates using in their dissertation research.

**Program Plan:** an outline of the student's curricular program plan, including required core courses, research methods, focus areas, and dissertation course credits; may include information about additional certifications, specializations, and dual degrees as relevant to the individual student.

Curriculum vita

**Proposed plan for the comprehensive exam:** a brief outline of the organization, nature, and scope of the comprehensive exam process (e.g., number of questions to be answered, any flexibility in the choice of questions, what time questions will be delivered, whether questions are delivered all together or one per day, and other relevant procedural information [e.g., when the student and advisor will talk on Day 1 of the exam]). Subsequent changes must be mutually agreed upon by the student and advisor. As a general guideline, the student and the committee should approach the exam as a 40-hour activity over five days and agree upon what is feasible over this period.

Given the diversity among CSUS students and their areas of interest, and the need for flexibility in adapting the CPS to their interests, a fixed length for the CPS is not established. However, each focus area description should cite roughly 30-50 references. Generally, students write 5 to 15 pages for each focus area (not including citations). The work that CSUS students do varies greatly and the amount of writing necessary to adequately address a focus area will vary as well. A student and their advisor should explicitly discuss expectations about the amount of writing to be done for the CPS and how it will influence preparation for the exam.

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## Approval

After all committee members approve of the CPS, the committee chairperson will send the approved version to all tenure stream faculty. Sharing the CPS with faculty not only informs our community of students' interests and goals, but also establishes norms regarding acceptable and quality Comprehensive Program Statements. Any time after 2 weeks from the time the adviser submits the CPS to the department, the student can schedule their written and oral examinations.

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## Written exam

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### What is the purpose of the Written Examination?

Doctoral programs have long required students to take written qualifying exams, typically around the time students begin to think about their own contributions to independent research. Although seemingly a nerve-racking experience, it is a helpful step along the PhD pathway and provides skills in making arguments in written form that will serve you well as an independent scholar.

Your committee will prepare written questions before the start of the written exam and the questions or questions they pose will be largely based on information you provide from your CPS. In some cases, you can even recommend written questions at the end of each of your CPS focus areas to inspire your committee members to think about what questions you find interesting. These questions can also be related to your planned PhD research areas.

There is some flexibility in the formatting of your written exams, but all written exams take place over 5 days, usually from Monday to Friday. Depending on what you, your adviser and your committee agree upon, you may receive all committee members' questions for the exam period at one time at the start of your written exams OR you may receive one or more exam questions from your committee each day of the exam period. Some students find it easier to limit the question and writing to one 24-hour period for each committee member (usually 4 questions) and one day to read and review each answer before officially submitting.

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## Process

When complete, the written exams will be submitted to your adviser via email at the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> 24-hour period and the adviser will distribute your written packet to your committee members for review. Most often, the committee members will review your answers to the questions submitted by the individual committee member, but they may also review all your written responses and consider them together. Your oral examination should be scheduled within 2 weeks of your written examination, so it is important to schedule both your written and oral exams at the same time. The adviser will inform the student if the student can move on to the oral examination, which is most often the case.

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## Oral exam

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### What is the purpose of the Oral Examination?

Once you have completed the written examination the oral examination can take place. This is a closed examination with just you and your committee. Like the written examination, the oral examination is a helpful step along the PhD pathway and

provides an opportunity to practice speaking to your interests and expertise, which will serve you well as an independent scholar. Keep in mind that preparing for the oral examination is what you have been doing for throughout your coursework, CPS, and written exam. It is a chance to talk about your ideas and interests and for the committee to see how you think about your research area.

The duration of the oral examination varies, typically lasting 1.5-2 hours. Like the written examination, the structure of the oral examination can vary slightly. Most often, the committee will take turns asking clarifying, qualifying, or follow-up questions mostly based on your answers to your written examination questions. After the committee has finished asking their questions, the student is asked to leave the room while the committee discusses the examination. At that point the student is invited back into the room.

### Approval

After the oral examination, the committee must complete the [Comprehensive Exam Approval form](#) and email it to the Academic Coordinator.

### Dissertation Proposal

Students must prepare a written dissertation proposal in consultation with the Guidance Committee chairperson and present the proposal to the Guidance Committee in a public forum. The dissertation proposal may be scheduled, prepared, and presented only after successful completion of the comprehensive examination.

The proposal should describe:

1. The purpose and objective of the proposed research
2. A review of the relevant literature
3. The proposed method of data collection and analysis

Students must submit the proposal to all Guidance Committee members at least two weeks prior to the public forum. The forum should be scheduled and announced to faculty and graduate students by submitting said proposal to the Graduate Coordinator for electronic distribution at least two weeks before the scheduled defense.

At a minimum, the announcement should include:

- Student's name
- Degree program and type
- Dissertation proposal title
- Chairperson & committee member names
- Date, time, and location (contact Grad Coordinator for room reserve if needed)
- Zoom link + password for the proposal defense
- Abstract
- Committee Members

Proposal Approval. After the public presentation and in a closed session, members of the Guidance Committee will discuss the suitability of the proposal and indicate their approval on the Dissertation Proposal Approval form (see sample in Appendix A); use digitally fillable/signable version found on the CSUS Graduate Forms website. This form must be signed digitally (to be circulated in order of listing on the form) by the student, the Guidance Committee members, the Graduate Program Coordinator, and the Department Chairperson.



Human Subjects/IRB. Students must ensure compliance with the university requirements and guidelines pertaining to use of human subjects and vertebrate animals in research, and to safe use of hazardous materials.

### Final Dissertation

Students are required to write and successfully defend a dissertation containing a contribution to knowledge, conforming to professional standards of evidence and argument, and using clear and correct English language. The Guidance Committee and student have wide latitude in determining the design and format of the dissertation, but the dissertation should be designed so as to facilitate publication of the results. One common alternative to a conventional dissertation format is a set of related papers written in a format and style.

### Formatting and Filing Dissertation

Once approved by the committee, prepare your dissertation following the specific instructions in the Graduate School Formatting Guide. Dissertations are submitted electronically in accordance with Graduate School policies. Please review these policies prior to preparing your dissertation for submission. In addition, please review the target dates for final approval of electronic dissertations to the Graduate School for graduating the semester of that submission. Be aware that submission to the Graduate School **does not** mean the document has been approved. The review process is iterative; final approval can take from a few hours to a few weeks, depending on the extent of the necessary revisions.

### ETD - Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Submission

Each semester has a firm [submission deadline](#) by which students must submit their thesis/dissertation to ProQuest. The document must have been successfully defended, corrections from the committee addressed and is to be a final version. After submission it may take several days for the Graduate School to review and approve the documents, especially if formatting revisions are needed. Each semester has a [final deadline](#) (usually 2 weeks later) by which students must have all required paperwork turned in, all milestones completed, and their thesis/dissertation accepted by the Graduate School. To begin, you may want to access the resources available by the Graduate School formatting outline: [ETD Formatting Guide](#). Sample template: [ETD Printable Sample Pages](#). All ETD information is available here: [MSU Grad ETD Page](#)

### Final Dissertation Defense

#### Timeline Summary

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 6 Weeks Prior to CANR & GRAD School Final Deadline and 2 Weeks Prior to Final Dissertation Defense | Submit final defense announcement to the CSUS Graduate Secretary and submit a draft copy of your dissertation to your committee.<br><br>Note. The defense may not occur any less than two weeks after the committee has received your draft. |
| 4 Weeks Prior to CANR & GRAD School Final Deadline   | Hold final defense with your committee; allow about 2 weeks to make committee-recommended revisions/edits.   |
| 2 Weeks Prior to CANR & GRAD School Final Deadline   | Submit committee-approved draft of your dissertation to the graduate school for review, comments, editorial, and formatting requirements.  |
| CANR & GRAD School Final Deadline  | Last date to submit final dissertation draft to graduate school.   |

**Note.** By university policy, doctoral students must be registered for at least one credit during the semester in which the final defense/oral exam is taken (including summer semester).

**Structure of Final Dissertation Defense:** The student's guidance committee will decide on the specific format to be used in examining the student, to include the balance between the public presentation and closed examination portions of the session.

**Decision:** At the end of the dissertation defense, the committee will identify one of three outcomes, to be marked on the PhD Examination/Defense Form.

- Accepted: Student has passed the oral defense and the written document is approved "as is" and can be submitted to the Graduate School.
- Rejected: Student does not pass the oral defense; committee may request significant additional work be done before student attempts to defend again or may choose to counsel student out of the program.
- Accepted Subject to Revisions (Most Common Outcome): Student has passed the oral defense, but revisions and/or editing are required in the written document (i.e., detailed within the PhD Examination/Defense Form). In this instance, the student will make revisions, as requested by the committee, and when the committee members are satisfied with the modifications, they will provide final approval. The committee chairperson will sign and date the "revisions approved" line on the PhD Examination/Defense Form.

**Announcement of Dissertation Final Defense:** The dissertation defense is a public seminar open to attendance by faculty, staff, students, and other invited guests. When sharing your dissertation announcement with the CSUS Graduate Secretary, use the same formatting as the dissertation proposal.

## CSUS Graduate Program Requirements

### Responsible & Ethical Conduct of Research –RECR

As an MSU Spartan, research integrity is so important to our development as scholars and creators that the Graduate School has developed minimum education requirements for all graduate students regarding the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR). Not only is it required by federal and state policy, research integrity is essential for our work to have legitimacy and impact. **The Graduate School will assign service indicators (holds) on students' records if they have not completed their annual RECR requirements.**

The Graduate School's RECR education program consists of two parts.

- basic or foundational education (Years One and Two, for all Master's and Ph.D. students)
- annual refresher education (Years three and beyond, for Ph.D. students only)

The basic education program consists of the following:

- **Four specified online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) training modules.** To be completed by the end of the student's first year.
- **A minimum of 6 hours of face-to-face, discussion-based education.** To be completed by the time of graduation for master's students and prior to completing the comprehensive examination and entering candidate status for doctoral students.

- Three additional on-line CITI modules for Master's Plan A and Doctoral students. To be completed by the end of the student's second year.

| RECR Basic Education Program Requirements   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Master's plan B (including online) and grad professional (including medical students)   | Master's Plan A students  | Doctoral students   |
| <b>CITI Modules Year 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research</li> <li>• Authorship</li> <li>• Plagiarism</li> <li>• Research Misconduct</li> </ul> | <b>CITI Modules Year 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research</li> <li>• Authorship</li> <li>• Plagiarism</li> <li>• Research Misconduct</li> </ul>   | <b>CITI Modules Year 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research</li> <li>• Authorship</li> <li>• Plagiarism</li> <li>• Research Misconduct</li> </ul>   |
| 6 hours discussion-based education (complete before graduation)   | 6 hours discussion-based education (complete before graduation)   | 6 hours discussion-based education (complete before finishing comprehensive examination and entering candidacy status, doctoral students starting in Fall 2020 or later)  |
|   | <b>CITI Modules Year 2</b><br>Complete 3 of 6 possible RECR Basic modules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative Research</li> <li>• Conflicts of Interest</li> <li>• Data Management</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Peer Review</li> <li>• Financial Responsibility</li> </ul> | <b>CITI Modules Year 2</b><br>Complete 3 of 6 possible RECR Basic modules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative Research</li> <li>• Conflicts of Interest</li> <li>• Data Management</li> <li>• Mentoring</li> <li>• Peer Review</li> <li>• Financial Responsibility</li> </ul>   |
|   |   | <b>Year 3 forward</b><br>3 hours of annual refresher education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CITI modules not previously taken to fulfill Year 1 or 2 or another refresher year's requirements</li> <li>• Department/College Workshops, brown-bag luncheons, group discussions that cover RECR related topics</li> <li>• Graduate School RECR workshops not previously taken</li> <li>• One-on-one discussions between the student and their advisor</li> <li>• Other RECR related courses (non-CITI modules, Academic courses, etc.)</li> </ul> |

- RECR Resources:
  - [RCR Research Integrity - Requirements](#)
  - <https://grad.msu.edu/recr>
  - [RCR Student Job Aid Instructions](#)

### Graduate Self-Assessment

All students must fill out [Graduate Self-Assessment](#) each year and upload it into GradPlan. Failure to do so could result in a delay in graduation.

### Grade Point Average Requirement

As stated in the degree description sections of this handbook, graduate students must maintain a 3.0 cumulative grade-point average out of a possible 4.0 to remain in good standing. All student GPAs will be reviewed each semester. Students whose GPA falls below 3.00 will receive notification of such, indicating that they have been placed on probation. The student should schedule an appointment with their advisor immediately to discuss the probationary status and to make plans to raise the GPA.

### Full-time Status Requirements

International students on F and J visas are required to have full-time status. Domestic students may have other reasons for needing full-time status (insurance eligibility; eligibility for certain financial aid, scholarships, fellowships; etc.). MSU requires being enrolled in 9 credits in the fall and spring semesters to be considered full time. Deviations are allowed only for summer semesters (minimum 3 credits) or final semester of student's degree program (minimum is the number of credits required to complete the degree or to meet university minimum registration requirements). Additional enrollment status related to financial aid can be found at: <https://finaid.msu.edu/enrlchrt.asp> Loan deferral status may affect credit numbers; contact the Office of Financial Aid.

### Additional CSUS Information & Expectations

## Faculty Mentorship

Upon the student's entry into the Graduate Program at MSU, the student and advisor should develop a plan for an appropriate number of meetings. The frequency and format will vary by student, faculty, and across the academic career of the student. The plan should meet the needs of both parties. The Major Professor's role is to serve as mentor for graduate students as well as to serve as their academic advisor. Students also have a lot to share with each other, as well as with faculty. A student's graduate experience is much more than "taking courses," and students are encouraged to make their graduate experience as rich as possible. Students are strongly encouraged to attend seminars, engage in active scholarly debate outside the classroom, read broadly, get involved in research and outreach activities (paid or volunteer), participate in professional conferences, and (when ready) begin writing professional articles for submission to professional magazines and journals.

In their role as mentors, faculty should model and provide encouragement for working as scholar-practitioners; discuss the nature and practicalities of research ethics and academic integrity; discuss University policies and procedures; involve students in extracurricular professional activities; review Department expectations; and discuss professional ethics and responsibilities. Here are some additional resources that can help make the advising relationship as supportive as possible:

[MSU Guidelines for Grad Student Mentoring & Advising](#)

[Optimizing Research Mentoring Relationships](#)

[Student - Advisor Expectation Scales](#)

## Student Involvement Opportunities

**Note** – most faculty in the Department of CSUS have “academic year” appointments (9 months) rather than calendar year appointments. Also, most faculty are engaged in out-of-state and international travel for conferences, research, and outreach work at various times throughout the year. Discuss your advisor's and committee members' schedules with them so that you know when they will be available to you. Scheduling for committee meetings should be done well in advance to maximize the potential for finding common dates of availability across your diverse committee members.

Graduate students are encouraged to be active contributors to the continuing development of the Department and its work. Student perspectives, values, and ideas are considered valuable input into the Department's evolution.

**Formal channels** for providing input to the department include:

- Graduate Student Organization (GSO)
- Graduate Student Representative to the Department's Graduate Affairs & Curriculum Committee (GACC), ex officio
- Annual student progress assessment packet
- Exit interview (at the time of graduation)

Graduate student representatives also are included in time-bounded task forces, faculty recruitment committees, and other task-specific ad hoc committees, as needed. Additionally, other opportunities for graduate student involvement exist at the University level (see the Graduate School website, <https://grad.msu.edu> , or talk with the current CSUS GSO Coordinator).

**Informal channels** for providing input, or simply conversing about the work of the Department or asking questions, include open-door access to the following individuals:

- Academic Coordinator
- Graduate Program Director

- Associate Chairperson of the CSUS Department
- Chairperson of the CSUS Department

Additionally, all students are welcome to participate in CSUS academic governance through participation (non-voting) in staff meetings and faculty meetings. (See CSUS Bylaws, section 9.5, for details.)

### Graduate Students as Representatives of MSU

Graduate students engaged in professional activities – whether at the University, working with communities, engaged in international travel and work, participating in professional conferences, attending meetings and public hearings, or other relevant scholarly or practitioner activities – are representatives of Michigan State University. Consequently, as an MSU student, you are expected to behave in a professional manner. Some examples (provided only as examples, not intended to be comprehensive) of appropriate behavior are:

- When attending professional conferences or meetings, especially when funded in whole or part by University funds, you are expected to actively participate in conference sessions and events.
- In doing all your work, you should behave with academic and professional integrity. (Review all the Research Integrity Resources: <https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>)
- When engaging in scholarly debate, treat others with respect and be an active listener.
- In making professional presentations or writing journal articles, acknowledge and cite all work and ideas of others, as they contribute to your own ideas and work.

### Electronic Academic Advising Files

The CSUS Department maintains electronic academic files on each graduate student within the SLATE/SIS systems. The student may have access to all records in their personal file, with the exception of letters of recommendation for which they waived their right of access and records of GACC deliberations prior to acceptance. If a student wants to review their file, they should schedule an appointment with the Academic Coordinator.

If the student wishes to challenge the validity of any of the records, they may present a written challenge explaining the perceived inaccuracies, along with supporting documentation. The written challenge should be submitted to the Academic Coordinator, who will review the challenge and the file. The Academic Coordinator may consult with the Graduate Program Director, the student's major professor, and the Chair of the Graduate Affairs and Curriculum Committee. The Academic Coordinator will provide a written response to the student's challenge. If the student does not believe the issue has been resolved appropriately, they may file an official Grievance (see separate Conflict Resolution and Grievances section of this Handbook.). Items kept in the electronic file (SLATE/SIS) may include:

- All original application materials (application, letters of reference, former degree transcripts, academic and personal statement essays, and resumé).
- Correspondence between student and department faculty and staff
- Copies of fellowship and scholarship applications or nominations, plus award letters/forms
- Copies of all other paid work records, as relevant
- Annual written progress assessment packets (including student's written self-assessment), used as the basis for student review each calendar year
- Written plan describing how the student will address deficiencies, or improve their GPA (if it falls below 3.00), if needed as a result of the annual review (or semester GPA check resulting in a probation letter)
- Copies of critical correspondence between the University and student
- Copies of any other MSU forms submitted on behalf of the student during their study

## Student Status: Good Standing, Probation & Termination of Program

Students not making adequate progress, or earning a cumulative GPA of less than 3.00, or engaging in unethical behavior may be placed on probation. Such a determination can be made after an unacceptable annual review, after a semester-by-semester review of GPA, expiration of University deadlines, or violation of University standards of academic integrity. Specific examples of conditions or actions that may result in probation are:

- Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) falling below 3.00.
- Violation of scholarly ethics and/or University policies. (Depending on the nature of the violation, the result may be probation or dismissal from the program/University.)
- Repeated failure to make academic progress, such as expiration of University deadlines for comprehensive examinations or program completion.

Additional conditions for being in “good standing” (as related to eligibility for special funding or awards) include:

- Meeting requirements for and submitting annual assessment documents on time (by each January 31 for previous calendar year); and
- Meeting requirements for and submitting annual RCR training documents on time (training completed and documentation submitted by December 31 each year).

Students will receive a letter from the Academic Coordinator and chairperson at the beginning of the first semester in which they have been placed on probation, explaining the requirements that must be met in order to return to good standing. The requirements must be met by the end of the semester. If the student fails to address the deficiencies, the student’s graduate program will be terminated within fourteen days of the end of the semester.

If the student does not agree with the decision of the Department, they may file an official grievance in accordance with the University’s Grievance Procedures. (See separate Conflict Resolution and Grievances section of this Handbook.)

## Annual Academic Performance & Progress Assessment

As required by the MSU Graduate School, students will complete a performance and progress assessment, including a meeting with her/his academic advisor, for the preceding calendar year. The purpose of this process is for the student and advisor to review the student’s performance and progress, lay out plans for the next year, discuss ways to facilitate the student’s success, and enable the student to request additional help, if needed. This process is to be initiated by the student, using the form found on the CSUS website: [Annual Grad Student Assessment Form](#)

The entire process, including your individual meeting with your advisor, should be completed no later than January 31. Steps in the assessment process, which is to begin with the student, are to include the following:

- Complete the Annual Student Assessment Form
- Faculty advisor will review your report and write their assessment of your progress.
- After you receive advisor’s written assessment, meet with your advisor to review the assessment.
- When student and advisor have met and understood each other’s comments, both sign the signature page.
- Compile cover form, student’s written assessment, advisor’s written assessment, and signature page into a single document.
- Submit the entire assessment packet to the Academic Program Coordinator for placement in your

## Academic Research & Integrity

Academic integrity is a strong value adhered to by the University, and all students and faculty members are expected to behave and conduct their work with integrity, adhering to general professional ethical standards and University policies and guidelines. Students may be dismissed from the CSUS Graduate Program for violating University academic integrity and research ethics. (GSRR)

As is the rest of the University, CSUS is diligent in its efforts to maintain the highest levels of ethical scholarly practice. Faculty, specialists, and students are expected to adhere to the standards and processes of Michigan State University's institutional review board, the University Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB). You are required to receive IRB approval PRIOR TO BEGINNING any data collection. The faculty member identified as principal investigator of your research will work with you to develop and submit the required application. Detailed information regarding IRB and its procedures can be found at the Human Research Protection Program's [website](#).

"Breaches in professional ethics range from questionable research practices to misconduct . . . Integrity in research and creative activities is based not only on sound disciplinary practice, but also on a commitment to basic personal values such as fairness, equity, honesty, and respect. These guidelines are intended to promote high professional standards by everyone – faculty, staff, and students alike" (MSU, Research Integrity, Vol. 7 No.2 Spring 2004, pg. 12). If a student violates academic integrity and research ethics, the circumstances and actions will be reviewed. A decision will be made about whether to terminate the student, place them on probation, or permit them to continue in their program. Depending on the outcome of the review, there exists the possibility of having the case referred to the Dean of Graduate Studies for CANR. (See Grievance Procedures for guidelines for disputing a Department decision, pages 51-52.).

***Note: IRB and RCR are two separate requirements!***

IRB training is required by MSU before you can conduct research involving human subjects. IRB training can be used for 2 hours of your annual RCR training, but is not sufficient to meet RCR training requirements.

**IRB training** is required by MSU's Office of Contracts and Grants every 2 years

**RCR training** is required by the MSU Graduate School (4 Modules and 6-hours of discussion-based training).

## Additional Student Resources

Following is a list of websites that graduate students may find useful as they pursue their graduate education:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Academic Programs Catalog                  | <a href="#">MSU Academic Programs/</a>   |
| Graduate Student Rights & Responsibilities | <a href="#">Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities   Office of Spartan Experiences   Michigan State University (msu.edu)</a> |
| MSU/Graduate Employees Union Contract      | <a href="#">MSU Union Contracts</a>  |
| Code of Teaching Responsibility            | <a href="#">Graduate Student Rights &amp; Responsibilities</a>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <a href="#">MSU Spartan Handbook</a>                          |
| Office for International Students and Scholars   | <a href="#">MSU OISS</a>                                      |
| Guidelines for Graduate Student Advising and Mentoring Relationships                     | <a href="#">MSU Graduate Student Advising &amp; Mentoring</a> |
| Research Integrity   | <a href="#">MSU Grad Research Integrity</a>                   |
| Policy on Relationship Violence, Sexual Misconduct, and Anti-Discrimination Policy (ADP) | <a href="#">MSU Office of Civil Rights</a>                    |
| Active Shooter Guidelines  | <a href="#">MSU Active Shooter Guidelines</a>                 |
| MSU Health & Safety Resources  | <a href="#">MSU Resources</a>                                 |
| MSU Safety When Traveling/ MSU Travel Clinic   | <a href="#">MSU Travel Clinic</a>                             |
| Certification in College Teaching  | <a href="#">Certificate in College Teaching</a>               |

## Conflict Resolution & Grievance Procedures

### Conflict Resolution

Conflicts, disagreements, and issues sometimes arise during the course of a graduate program. To assist students and faculty confronting a conflict, the University has developed a program of support. The [Conflict Resolution Program](#) provides tools that aid in preventing and resolving interpersonal conflict. The CSUS Department Chairperson, Associate Chairperson, and Graduate Program Coordinator also are available to consult with students who need assistance in resolving conflicts.

### Office of the University Ombudsperson

If you have exhausted the internal resources for resolving the issue and the issue remains, you may contact the Office of the University Ombudsperson.

The Office of the University Ombudsperson provides assistance to students, faculty, and staff in resolving University-related concerns. Such concerns include: student-faculty conflicts; communication problems; concerns about the university climate; and questions about what options are available for handling a problem according to Michigan State University policy. The University Ombudsperson also provides information about available resources and student/faculty rights and responsibilities. The office operates as a confidential, independent, and neutral resource. It does not provide notice to the University – that is, it does not speak or hear for the University.

Contact the Ombudsperson at any point during an issue when a confidential conversation or source of information may be needed. The Ombudsperson will listen to your concerns, give you information about university policies, help you evaluate the situation, and assist you in making plans to resolve the conflict.



Contact information:

[Office of the University Ombudsperson](mailto:ombud@msu.edu) 129 N. Kedzie Hall, 354 Farm Lane (517) 353-8830  
[ombud@msu.edu](mailto:ombud@msu.edu)

## Grievance Procedures

If you have an issue that rises to the level of formal grievance, the University, College, and Department [provide procedures for this](#). Resolution of cases involving graduate student rights and responsibilities will be carried out according to Article 5 of the Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (G.S.R.R.) document. Prior to initiating the College and University grievance procedures, students should explore all channels and grievance procedures within their home department. The CSUS Department procedures (informal and formal) are outlined on the next page, as specified in the Department's Bylaws.

## CSUS Bylaws Related to Grievance

### GRIEVANCE AND HEARING PROCEDURE

- 8.1. Preamble. All faculty and students shall have the right to due process in settling grievances that may arise (CANR Bylaws 7.1.).
- 8.2. Procedures
  - 8.2.1 Procedures for resolving faculty grievances may be found in appendix D of the CANR Bylaws as well as in the Faculty Grievance Procedure in the Faculty Handbook. The practices followed by the Department will be those set forth in the document "Model Academic Unit Grievance Procedure," approved by the University Council for Faculty Affairs, 30 April 1991 (appended).

8.2.2. Procedures for resolving student grievances are outlined in the University documents Student Rights and Responsibilities (<http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/rights-and-responsibilities>) and Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities (<https://grad.msu.edu/sites/default/files/content/gsr/GSRR.pdf>), and in the Bylaws of the Student Senate. A student or students may take complaints relative to instruction directly to the Department Chairperson. If the Chairperson is unable to resolve the matter to the student's satisfaction, the Chairperson shall refer the unresolved complaints in writing to the Graduate Affairs Committee who will conduct a hearing. A hearing shall be scheduled within 2 weeks involving the student(s), the involved faculty or staff member(s), and the Graduate Affairs Committee. A written report of the action or recommendations of the Graduate Affairs Committee will be forwarded to the Dean, Department Chair, the involved faculty or staff member(s), student and university Ombudsperson within ten working days of the receipt of the complaint. Students wishing to appeal the Department's action or recommendation may do so as outlined in provisions of the above referenced documents and guidelines for procedures for resolving student grievances.

Note that, for any conflict resolution or grievance process, any faculty member simultaneously having a complaint filed against them and is in one of the involved administrative positions to address the situation, they will recuse themselves and not be involved in the resolution. This is true for academic as well as other issues related to grievance.