Guidelines for Advanced Standing/Fourth-Year Master’s Degree Students

Introduction
Advanced Standing students have an opportunity in their fourth year to pursue a Master's degree (AM) in the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences (EPS). Policies for this degree are administered by the EPS Graduate Studies Committee (GSC). Students apply online for admission (http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/prospective_students/admissions_overview.php) to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in their third year. It is advised that students consult the Department as early on as possible – as early as freshman year. This is to ensure that students are aware of the requirements for the degree, and that they may prepare accordingly.

Requirements for admission are highly flexible and each application is judged on its own merits. The AM degree is intended for strong science or engineering students with an interest in Earth sciences. Advanced preparation in mathematics, and in at least one of the disciplines of Earth science, physics, chemistry, or biology is expected prior to starting the AM. The Department requires prospective applicants to take the Graduate Record Examination prior to applying.

Course Requirements
Eight letter-graded courses are necessary to complete the AM degree. Students must ensure that they have the appropriate pre-requisites for each of the 8 courses. Students must maintain an average of a B grade or better; courses with a grade of C or below cannot count toward the AM degree.

- Mathematics requirement: One math course at the 100-level or above is required. This course is generally expected to be chosen from Applied Math 104 or 105, or a graduate statistics course. The math course requirement depends on the EPS area of interest of the candidate and needs to be individually approved by the GSC.

- Breadth requirement*: At least two EPS courses outside of the student's main area of interest are required. These courses should be at the 100- or 200-level.

- Area requirement: An additional five courses should be chosen to achieve maturity in an area of Earth science. These courses should be at the 100- or 200-level, three of which should be at the 200-level. By petition, one 300-level course may count towards this requirement.
*For the purpose of the breadth requirement, the Department has been subdivided into the following six sections:

I. Geology  
II. Solid Earth Geophysics  
III. Paleontology  
IV. Climate, Oceanography and Atmospheric Sciences  
V. Geochemistry  
VI. Planetary Sciences

Appointment of an Advisor  
Once admitted to the Master's program, students are assigned a Principal Advisor. The advisor is appointed in conjunction with the student's area of interest. Students should plan their course of study in consultation with their advisor and the Co-Directors of the GSC. The GSC Co-Directors will meet with all new students. During the first week of classes, the student will meet with her/his advisor and the GSC Co-Directors to decide upon a Selection of Course Requirements and a Plan of Study to be presented and approved by the GSC.

Selection of Course Requirements and Plan of Study  
Students are required to submit a Selection of Course Requirements form to EPS and specify which courses they intend to use in satisfying each of the several course requirements and when each course will be taken. Students are also required to submit a Plan of Study form to EPS with the student's schedule during the Fourth-Year Master's program. The GSC will review and approve the Selection of Course Requirements and the Plan of Study or notify the student and their Principal Advisor if it foresees any problems. It is anticipated that a student's plan for future semesters will be subject to change, and it is not the intention of the GSC to discourage such changes; nevertheless the GSC believes it to be important that the student have in mind, from the beginning of their graduate career, a coherent program of study leading to the degree. The Selection of Course Requirements and Plan of Study forms must be submitted by the study card due date of the first semester in which the student begins the Master's program.

If the Selection of Course Requirements or the Plan of Study represents a deviation from the degree requirements, it should be accompanied by a petition explaining the reasons for the deviation and the written approval of the Principal Advisor. Since the GSC will review the Selection of Course Requirements and Plan of Study after the due date for study cards, it may not be possible for the GSC to consider petitions until courses are well underway. For this reason, students and advisors should try to anticipate the need for GSC approval well in advance.

Additional Required Forms  
- Students must file the Advanced Standing Activation Form with the Allston Burr Assistant Dean during the third term before they intend to enter the Master’s program.

- Students may bracket certain courses to count toward the AM degree in their second, third, or fourth year by submitting the Bracketing Form to the Office of Undergraduate
Education by the fifth Monday of the term in which the course is being taken. The Bracketing Form must be approved by the DGS or Chair of EPS. These forms and more information about Advanced Standing and AM programs can be found here: https://oue.fas.harvard.edu/advanced-standing

- Students must submit a Master’s degree application within their my.harvard account by the appropriate deadline in the term they intend to graduate, e.g., in March for a May degree.
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Selection of Course Requirements

Use this form as a worksheet to plan which courses will satisfy the degree requirements and when you plan to take them. Please return the completed form to the Graduate Coordinator, Sarah Colgan, in Hoffman 407 by the study card due date of the first semester in which you begin the program.

Name: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________

Address: ___________________________  Email: ___________________________

Mathematics requirement: Needs to be approved by the GSC on an individual basis. This course is generally expected to be chosen from Applied Math 104, 105, or a graduate Statistics course.

1.  
   Course  
   Term/Year

Breadth requirement: In which section (I…VI) is your research interest concentrated?

List two EPS courses outside of the section in which your research interest is concentrated. These courses should be at the 100- or 200-level.

1.  
   Course  
   Term/Year

2.  
   Course  
   Term/Year

Area requirement: Five courses should be chosen to achieve maturity in an area of Earth Science. These courses should be at the 100- or 200-level, three of which should be at the 200-level. By petition, one 300-level course may count towards this requirement.

1.  
   Course  
   Term/Year

2.  
   Course  
   Term/Year

3.  
   Course  
   Term/Year

4.  
   Course  
   Term/Year

5.  
   Course  
   Term/Year
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Plan of Study

List the courses you plan to take during the Fourth-Year Master’s program. Please return the completed form to the Graduate Coordinator, Sarah Colgan, in Hoffman 407 by the study card due date of the first semester in which you begin the program.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Address: _________________________ Email: ___________________________

Fall Term  
Academic Year ____________________
Course Number and Title
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________
4. ________________________________

Spring Term  
Academic Year ____________________
Course Number and Title
1. ________________________________
2. ________________________________
3. ________________________________
4. ________________________________

Advisor’s comments: Please attach an additional sheet if necessary.

Signature of Student Date Signature of Advisor Date

Approval of GSC Date