

**A two-year interdisciplinary  
Master of Arts in Social Science Program in:**



**ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY**

**PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

**(most recent revision May 26, 2020)**

**Humboldt State University  
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## Summary of Policies, Procedures & Opportunities:

**I.** Please note that the official *Humboldt State University Graduate Student Handbook* and other relevant forms for all HSU graduate students are available online at: [humboldt.edu/gradprograms/forms](http://humboldt.edu/gradprograms/forms). Information may also be obtained by contacting the Office of Academic Programs and Undergraduate/Graduate Studies in Siemens Hall 217A, (707) 826-3949.

The information included below offers specific expectations and policies for students in this program, some of which exceed the minimum university requirements detailed in the *Graduate Student Handbook*. It is important to note, however, that nothing printed here should be interpreted as contradicting the *Graduate Student Handbook*, the University Catalog, or Statewide Title V requirements for graduate education.

**II.** The E&C program is a two-year, full-time (36 units) program. A cohort refers to a group of students all beginning the program and completing the course work at the same time.

Students must be enrolled on a continuous basis from the time they begin the program until receipt of their M.A. degree. Students who have not completed their M.A. degree by the end of the two-year cohort program must enroll for 1-3 units of EC 690, EC 695 or EC 693 (register for EC 693 through Extended Education & Global Engagement). Students may enroll through Extended Education & Global Engagement if they meet the necessary requirements: advancement to candidacy, completion of all required coursework, submission of an approved draft of their thesis/project to their committee chair, and not being registered for any classes.

Although we expect and encourage students to finish the program within two years, all students are required to finish the degree within seven years. The university allows this deadline to be extended if students are able to demonstrate currency in the courses that will be older than seven years at the date of graduation, but this is not a mandated policy and the E&C Program has chosen not to participate in this process. E&C students must complete the program in seven years; there will be no extensions.

Students receiving financial aid should also note that this aid is capped once 50 post-baccalaureate units have been attempted. This includes all enrolled courses, including additional units of thesis or research credit, P.E. credits, and any courses dropped after the deadline in the 2nd week of the semester.

**III.** Graduate seminars for the E&C program are offered sequentially; all students are required to successfully complete a total of six graduate seminars. Students in their first semester are required to enroll in EC 630 Mattole Field Institute, which counts as one of the required seminars.

Students are also required to take a minimum of one general elective and one research methods elective course at the graduate or upper-division undergraduate level for their degree. The graduate coordinator will provide a list of courses pre-approved for elective credit, each semester. Other courses may be approved for elective credit on an individual basis. For further program requirements, consult the Social Sciences page in the HSU Catalog.

A college-level course in statistics is a pre-requisite or a co-requisite for all students enrolled in the E&C program. The student must earn a C- or better. However, this course does not count toward the M.A. degree requirements. Some statistics courses are STAT 106, STAT 108, STAT 109, and PSYC 241.

**IV.** The graduate coordinator will serve as official academic advisor for all entering students in the E&C program. In this role, s/he will be able to provide registration access codes, etc. During the course of the program, each student will be expected to select a chair for her or his thesis or project committee. Upon advancement to candidacy, the chair will become the student's academic advisor.

**V.** All E&C students are expected to advance to candidacy by the end of their first year. (See Appendix I for the recommended timeline for timely progress to completion.) To advance to candidacy, a student must:

**1. Select a committee of three faculty members who will supervise their thesis or project. Committee selection should be completed by the middle of the second semester. The committee, with the chair taking a lead role, will guide the student in preparing the proposal.**

**2. Prepare and obtain committee approval of their thesis or project proposal. The proposal includes an abstract, literature review, and an overview of methodology.**

**3. Complete the Application for Advancement to Candidacy and Graduation, pay the graduation processing fee, and submit the form to the Office of Academic Programs and Undergraduate/Graduate Studies. It is available online at: [humboldt.edu/gradprograms/forms](http://humboldt.edu/gradprograms/forms).**

**VI. All students who will be gathering personal information about living humans in the course of research for their thesis or project are required to complete the approval process for using human subjects in research prior to advancement to candidacy. The complete University policy can be reviewed here: [humboldt.edu/irb/](http://humboldt.edu/irb/).**

**VII. The E&C program office is located in Founders Hall Room 180. Phone: 707-826-3653; fax: 707-826-4496. This office is also shared by the departments of Politics, History, and International Studies.**

Founders Hall 143 is available to all E&C students. It is typically unlocked from 8am-5pm, but if it isn't, the office staff can open it. The room is available for group and quiet study. Copies of past student theses and projects are also on reserve in FH 128 or may also be accessed through the program's web site. You might want to examine recent ones to get an idea of what the program accepts as a culminating experience.

**VIII. Your thesis or project committee consists of three people. The committee chair is expected to be a full-time faculty member affiliated with the E&C program who has a terminal degree in their field (typically, Ph.D). (Appendix II lists committee chair responsibilities.) A second committee member must also be affiliated with the E&C program and have a terminal degree in their field but may be a full-time or part-time faculty. One member of your committee, with the approval of the committee chair and graduate coordinator, may be a full-time or part-time faculty member not affiliated with the program or an outside community member with particular expertise in your thesis or project topic.**

It is the student's responsibility to identify which faculty members he/she wishes to serve on the thesis or project committee. When approaching faculty, you should have at least a general idea of your thesis or project topic. Don't be offended if faculty decline to participate on your committee. Some of the E&C faculty are also involved in other master's programs and need to balance their committee workload. The E&C graduate coordinator maintains a list of which E&C faculty are serving on which committees. Feel free to ask the coordinator for names of E&C faculty who have relatively light committee responsibilities.

Students should form their committees in the second semester of the program. Remember, it is the committee members who sign the advancement to candidacy papers (see V. above), so you should develop a thesis proposal, including preliminary literature review and methodology. Before you embark on extensive work directly related to your thesis or project idea, you should have a meeting with your committee as a whole to discuss your proposal and to get any direction and suggestions from them. Through this meeting, you and your committee will reach consensus on what you need to do to complete a satisfactory thesis or project.

If you are doing a project, it is your responsibility to locate a site that is appropriate for your topic or questions. Of course the E&C graduate coordinator and your committee members can be of assistance in helping you find an appropriate location for your work.

During the fourth semester, you should sign up for 6 units of thesis or project (EC 690) units AND 3 units of fieldwork (EC 695) for a total of 9 units. These units should be distributed among your committee members. Your committee chair or the graduate coordinator will help you allocate these 9 units among your committee members. Whenever you register for EC 690 or EC 695 units, you must develop a work plan with the instructor of record for that semester, and meet with the instructor bimonthly to ensure the plan is implemented.

**IX. A thesis is original research or theoretical development that advances knowledge. The research or theoretical question(s) of interest is developed by the student. A project is a demonstration of professional skill and is based upon**

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research or internship activity that seeks to address the question(s) posed by a community group or organization. For example, if you wish to interview business leaders in Humboldt County, addressing the relationship between their beliefs and opinions about environmental and economic values, you would be conducting a *thesis*. If you are working with a community organization that asks you to interview business leaders in Humboldt County addressing the relationship between their beliefs and opinions about environmental and economic values so the organization can plan educational activities, you would be conducting a *project*. In both cases, you would be expected to frame your research with a thorough literature review, describe your methodology, report the results of your data analysis, and discuss the implications of your research findings.

Theses and projects must be rigorous but concise. An appropriate model for a thesis or project would be a publishable manuscript for a peer-review journal, plus supporting data included as appendices. If your thesis may exceed 75 pages, you must first discuss this with your committee chair. Both theses and projects must be formatted in accordance with the requirements of the Office of Academic Programs and Undergraduate/Graduate Studies.

The faculty expect theses and projects to demonstrate equivalent quality. Students absolutely should not think that one culminating experience is more or less rigorous than another.

Each student provides an oral presentation and defense of her/his thesis or project. All E&C faculty and students are welcome to attend this event. Please follow these guidelines when planning and preparing for your oral presentation and defense.

1. An oral defense will be scheduled when, in the judgment of the thesis or project committee members, a candidate has successfully completed an approved draft of the thesis or project. Each committee member must receive a complete draft of the thesis and have a minimum of two weeks to review it prior to making this decision. This means students must allow for at least four weeks between presenting their thesis draft to their committee chair and scheduling their defense: the chair must be allowed two weeks to read and comment on the draft, and once the chair gives permission to circulate the revised draft to the other committee members, the other members must be allowed two weeks to read and comment on the draft.
2. Students aiming to submit their complete thesis by the summer deadline are strongly encouraged to defend in May, up to the deadline for spring grades. Summer defenses can only be scheduled with the prior agreement of the committee.
3. Students must have the approval of all three committee members before scheduling a defense. At least two committee members must be present at the defense.
4. It is the responsibility of the candidate to coordinate with committee members to identify a mutually workable time to meet.
5. Candidates will provide the administrative support assistant with an abstract one week in advance of the oral defense.
6. Once the oral defense is scheduled, the administrative support assistant will circulate an announcement of the defense and abstract to E&C faculty and students.

The defense typically will be structured in the following manner (modifications should be agreed upon by the candidate, committee, and coordinator in advance):

- a. Brief introduction by the committee chair
- b. Student presentation of culminating experience (1/2 hour maximum)
- c. Questions from the audience (1/2 hour maximum)
- d. Questions and discussion with committee members (1 hour maximum)
- e. Brief conference among committee members without student present.
- f. Brief conversation between committee members and student. At this time, additional corrections or adjustments to the thesis or project may be requested and/or the committee members may simply sign all official copies of the signature page.

**X.** We encourage all students who have completed their M.A. degree to participate in the spring commencement ceremony! If you are very close to completion, and if you have the approval of your committee, we encourage you to participate.

All students participating in commencement must have a current graduation date on file with the Office of the Registrar and register for commencement. Graduation dates may be updated using the Graduation Date Change Request available at [humboldt.edu/gradprograms/forms](http://humboldt.edu/gradprograms/forms).

If you will need additional time to finish your thesis or project beyond the graduation date you applied for, you should file a Graduation Date Change Request *before* the original graduation date to avoid additional fees.

**XI.** Formatting requirements for a thesis or project are detailed on the Office of Academic Programs and Undergraduate/Graduate Studies web site: [gradprograms.humboldt.edu/content/hsu-thesis-and-project-format-requirements](http://gradprograms.humboldt.edu/content/hsu-thesis-and-project-format-requirements). Students are required to submit one copy of their final thesis via Digital Commons @ Humboldt State University.

**XII.** Each spring every graduate program at Humboldt State University is invited to select one student for the Patricia McConkey Outstanding Student/Graduation with Distinction Award. Students selected for this award will graduate "with distinction."

**XIII.** If you cannot complete your culminating experience by the end of the second year of the program, the faculty *strongly* encourage you to remain here until you have finished your project or thesis. Once students leave the area, communication with faculty becomes more difficult and the thesis or project seems to become less of a priority. If you want to finish your degree in a timely way with as little mental anguish as possible, stay here until you are done!

**XIV.** The E&C faculty recognize and fully support all of the rights granted to students by federal law, state law, CSU administrative regulations, HSU campus policies, graduate school policies, and program faculty resolutions. Students should familiarize themselves with these rights and responsibilities as documented in the *HSU Graduate Student Handbook* and the *HSU Catalog*.

In addition, each course syllabus is a contract that specifies and limits the requirements and expectations that will be placed on students in a particular course. Students who are troubled with a specific instructor or course requirements should first see that instructor and then the E&C graduate coordinator before seeking redress in a wider arena.

The California Education Code makes it clear that students may not cause a negative climate to develop in the classroom or interfere with the learning of other students. This Code entails refraining from sexist, racist, homophobic or other derogatory language, not interrupting or showing a lack of respect for classmates, and limiting class participation so as not to interfere with the participation of others. Professional conduct and respectful language usage are expected at all times.

**XV.** The Environment and Community M.A. in Social Science Graduate Program has developed a dual degree (3+2) pathway that enables exceptional students to simultaneously earn a bachelor's and a master's degree in five years. Although the pathway does not change undergraduate major or graduate degree requirements, students in the blended degree program seamlessly progress from undergraduate to graduate status. Students are eligible to apply for the dual degree pathway upon completion of 60 units, and are strongly encouraged to apply before completing 90 units. Admission to the pathway also constitutes admission to the Environment & Community MA program in Social Science; no further program application will be required and there is no application fee. The dual degree pathway consists of 150 units. Students in the dual pathway are able to take graduate-level courses while still undergraduates.

Successful completion of the dual degree program requires careful course selection and planning because the course requirements for both degrees as well as the culminating experience (either a master's thesis or project) should be completed in five years. Because of the tight timeline, students interested in this opportunity should plan ahead by taking courses during their freshman and sophomore years that will satisfy their undergraduate degree requirements. Students should complete all lower division course requirements for the major and all general education and all-university (GEAR) requirements either before admission into the dual pathway or during the first semester following admission. All lower division baccalaureate requirements and the Graduate Writing Proficiency Exam (GWPE) must be taken before completing 120 units of coursework.

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**Dual degree pathway students take graduate-level coursework during their third or fourth year and by the end of their fourth year they advance to candidacy. During the summer prior to their fifth year, students in the blended program conduct research for their master's degree or project. The fifth year is then devoted to completing course requirements and thesis or project writing. After earning 120 units of course credit and completing all lower-division work, the degree-objective status of dual pathway students changes from undergraduate to graduate.**

## Appendix I

### Thesis/Project Timeline for Achieving Timely Progress Towards Degree Completion

#### 1<sup>st</sup> semester

- \* Develop Initial Ideas for thesis/project
- \* Develop familiarity with E&C faculty members' areas of expertise/interest
- \* September-February: schedule conversations with potential committee members

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> semester

- \* Develop thesis or project topic; prepare draft abstract in colloquium
- \* By mid-semester: identify chair and other committee members; hold full committee meeting
- \* Finalize abstract
- \* By mid-April submit IRB application
- \* By end of semester advance to candidacy

#### Summer

- \* Conduct field research for thesis or project (data collection, surveys, interviews, etc.)

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> semester

- \* Conclude field research for thesis or project
- \* Commence work on writing thesis or project chapters
- \* Present research in colloquium

#### 4<sup>th</sup> semester

- \* Full-time thesis or project writing work
- \* By end March submit draft to full committee (with approval of chair)
- \* Oral defense in late April (see E&C Program Handbook for oral defense guidelines), followed by final revisions (if necessary)
- \* May 7: Submission of final draft to Office of Graduate Studies

## Appendix II

### Responsibilities of Committee Chairs

The duties and responsibilities of the committee chair include the following:

1. Working with the student to develop a viable culminating experience that can be completed in a timely manner.
2. Guiding the thesis or project to completion.
3. Meeting with the student on a timely and regular basis, and accommodating student requests for a meeting in a timely manner, i.e., typically within one week.
4. Assisting the student in obtaining IRB approval.
5. Returning the thesis/project drafts to the student with comments within a reasonable time period (within two to three weeks should be the norm).

If these responsibilities are not fulfilled, then the student may request another program faculty member to chair their committee.

## **Appendix III**

### **Expectations for Faculty Membership in the Environment & Community Program**

**Faculty members' participation in the E&C Program provides opportunities for faculty to engage with colleagues across the campus who share interests in graduate-level teaching and research within the environment and community arena. Faculty participation in the program takes a variety of forms. These include participating as a secondary reader on thesis or project committees, chairing such committees, and teaching graduate seminars. While serving as a secondary reader on thesis or project committees does not require formal participation in the E&C Program, chairing such committees and teaching graduate seminars does. Formal participation in the E&C Program entails contributing to the program in the following ways:**

- 1. Participating in biannual faculty retreats**
- 2. Participating in meetings during the academic year**
- 3. Advising incoming graduate students with shared interests**
- 4. Serving on thesis and project committees**

**Faculty membership will be recognized in the University catalog and on the E&C program web site. Faculty members accrue 1.0 WTU credit for every graduate student committee that they chair. Contributions can also be recognized through the RTP process.**

**It is by our collective engagement with the program through the above mentioned retreats and meetings that we can successfully manage the program, guide our graduate students to completion in a timely fashion, and plan for the future.**