



ENVIRONMENT
&
SUSTAINABILITY
COMMITTEE
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

MEERM GRADUATE HANDBOOK

Graduate Director
Graduate Coordinator
School of Earth, Ocean, and Environment
University of South Carolina

GradDir@seoe.sc.edu
SEOEGradCoord@seoe.sc.edu
<https://tinyurl.com/seoe-meerm>

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. MASTER OF EARTH & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (MEERM) 3	
2.1 Advisory Committee.....	4
2.2 Program of Study	4
2.3 MEERM Program Requirements.....	4
2.4 Thesis Qualifying/Comprehensive Exam and Internship Project Proposal/Comprehensive Exam	5
2.5 Thesis/Project Defense	6
2.6 Thesis Submission.....	6
2.7 Time Limits/Restrictions	6
3. JURIS DOCTOR-MEERM DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM.....	6
4. APPLICATION TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM.....	7
Deadlines for Admission:	7
4.1 Admission Requirements for the MEERM Program.....	7
4.2 Admission Requirements for the JD-MEERM Program.....	8
4.3 Changes to an Application	8
4.4 International Students.....	8
5. TUITION, FEES, AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT.....	9
5.1 Tuition Rates.....	9
5.2 University Fees	9
5.3 Mandatory Student Health Insurance	9
5.4 Fellowships.....	9
5.5 Assistantships	9
6. COURSE REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT METHODS.....	10
7. STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS/EXIT SURVEYS.....	10
8. ETHICAL CONDUCT/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY.....	11
9. ACADEMIC STANDARDS.....	11

APPENDICES

A. **Faculty List**

B. **List of Courses Available for MEERM Credit**

C. **SEOE Graduate Student Frequently Used Forms**

D. **All Forms**

E. **Exit Interview Form – link now sent via email in on-line survey form**

1. INTRODUCTION

Created to provide a University-wide focus on environmental studies, the School of Earth, Ocean and Environment's Environment and Sustainability Committee represents a novel interdisciplinary approach to address environmental issues and problems through research and scholarship. The Program consists of faculty in affiliated departments, centers, and institutes and includes such divergent fields as physical and natural sciences, computational science, social science, business, engineering, law, liberal arts, public health, and journalism. The Committee draws on the interdisciplinary strengths of its associated faculty in various departments and institutes of the University as well as on collaborative arrangements with other universities, public agencies, and the private sector.

The Environment and Sustainability Committee (E&SC) offers the Master of Earth and Environmental Resources Management (MEERM) Degree and the JD-MEERM Dual Degree which are designed to provide individual curricula for students interested in management positions in earth resources (minerals, water, sustainable development within ecosystems) or environmental resources (safe and effective use or remediation of man-made materials into different ecosystems). The program allows students to tailor a graduate degree program to their own particular interests and goals in earth or environmental resource management. Recent MEERM students have come from backgrounds as diverse as accounting, journalism, business, geology, environmental science, and engineering, which allow them to learn from each other as well as from the faculty.

The material presented in this handbook is a summary of the requirements for the MEERM and JD-MEERM Degree programs. These requirements are in addition to those posted in the Graduate Bulletin. *If discrepancies are found between this handbook and the Graduate Bulletin, the Bulletin will be followed.* The most recent version of the [Graduate Bulletin](#) is available online.

For information not contained in this handbook, please contact the School of Earth, Ocean, and Environment Graduate Director's office, email: SEOEGradCoord@seoe.sc.edu.

The requirements in this document apply to all graduate students who were admitted to the MEERM Program on or after January 2021. It also applies to students who were admitted before January 2021, but who were re-instated or changed status after this date.

2. MASTER OF EARTH & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (MEERM)

The E&SC Graduate Committee administers the MEERM Program on behalf of the Principal Faculty of the Environment and Sustainability Committee. The Graduate Committee reviews curriculum needs and assists in the development and coordination of interdisciplinary course offerings.

The MEERM program is designed to provide individually tailored curricula, particularly for students interested in administrative posts dealing with earth or environmental resources as well as for current college graduates with relevant experience. This interdisciplinary program provides courses in earth

and environmental resources to reinforce the scientific or technical knowledge of the participants and courses in management, finance, accounting, and economics to develop administrative skills. Electives in geological, biological, marine, and health sciences; geography; chemistry; engineering; policy; law; and international relations are available to meet specific career objectives. Individual programs of study are developed with an interdisciplinary committee chaired by an advisor in the department most closely matching the student's interests and background.

2.1 Advisory Committee

Unless a candidate has already secured a specific faculty advisor prior to admission, on admission to the program, a faculty member familiar with the candidate's areas of research interest will be appointed by the Graduate Committee to serve as initial advisor. With the advisor's assistance, the student will assemble an interdisciplinary advisory committee. The committee should consist of three members, including the primary advisor. The primary advisor and at least one other committee member must be appointed as Graduate Faculty affiliated with the Environment and Sustainability Committee on either a permanent or temporary basis. A directory of currently affiliated faculty is at [Appendix A](#). For those enrolled in the MEERM internship option, the third (outside) member of faculty must be the primary internship supervisor. Any member of the UofSC Graduate Faculty may petition for temporary affiliation for the purpose of serving on a MEERM committee.

A full [SEOE graduate advisor directory](#) and [summary of research areas](#) are available on the SEOE website. When a student applies to the MEERM program is having difficulty identifying or finding a major advisor, they should consult those directories, then contact the Graduate Director for advice.

2.2 Program of Study

Individual Programs of Study are developed with the student's major advisor according to the guidelines established by the MEERM Graduate Committee and the Graduate School. The program of study must be approved by the student's advisor, the Graduate Director, and the Dean of the Graduate School, and serves as a contract between the student and the Graduate School. The **Master's Program of Study (MPOS)** lists *only* the courses the student chooses to meet the requirements of the MEERM degree (download at [Appendix C](#)). *Only the student* can make changes to their program of study, by submitting an **Adjustment to Program of Study Form** (downloadable at [Appendix C](#)).

2.3 MEERM Program Requirements

The MEERM program requires a total of 36 credit hours, which includes six hours of integrative seminars and six hours of thesis or internship capstone project credit hours. The remaining twenty-four credit hours are selected from the approved course list. There is no foreign language requirement.

The MEERM Graduate Committee has generated a list of approved courses for the MEERM program. The courses are designated and listed in one of two primary categories: either 1) Business, Environmental Management, and Policy courses ("Policy courses") or 2) Earth Resources and Environmental Science or Engineering courses ("Science courses"). *At least one-third of a student's coursework must come from the Science courses and at least one-third from Policy courses, but*

no more than 50 percent can come from either field. The list of courses pre-approved for MEERM credit is at [Appendix B](#). If a student desires to take a course not listed in Appendix B, the student's advisor will contact the Graduate Program Coordinator by email or memo, indicating whether the course should count as a Science or Policy course and why the course should be allowed for use by this student.

Additionally, at least one-half of the credits, exclusive of ENVR 799, must be taken in courses numbered 700 or above.

Students are required to complete six hours of integrative seminars to be taken from the following courses: ENVR 700, ENVR 800, ENVR 804, ENVR 835, GEOL 560, and GEOL 743. The integrative seminars serve the purpose of relating science and non-science or policy subject matter.

A thesis or internship capstone project deliverable is required; however, students with substantial experience (which includes having written a document substantially similar to a thesis), may apply for an exemption to this requirement. *If the exemption is approved* by the Principal Faculty of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, *six credit hours of additional coursework is required.* The thesis/capstone project is supervised by a thesis/capstone advisor and an interdisciplinary committee selected by the student and the advisor to support the planned research. (See 2.1 Advisory Committee)

It is expected that students with demonstrated coursework in earth or environmental resources and pertinent experience should be able to complete the program in two years.

2.4 Thesis Qualifying/Comprehensive Exam and Internship Project Proposal/Comprehensive Exam

Once a student has formed an advisory committee, they finalize the thesis/capstone topic with the committee and present a proposal to the committee in conjunction with a comprehensive examination, which is open to the public. *It is the student's responsibility* to set a date, time, and location for the comprehensive examination acceptable to all committee members. Refer to [Appendix C](#) for announcement formatting instructions and the **Comprehensive Exam Form**. Successful completion is required before enrollment for thesis research (ENVR 799) or internship project credit (ENVR 796).

For the MEERM internship option, the project proposal must specify the nature, content, and scope of one or more project deliverables, equivalent in research rigor to the thesis. If the primary deliverable is not in the form of a formal, written report (e.g. software, management systems, patentable processes, business tools, turnkey training systems, etc.), it must be accompanied by a written report that demonstrates research rigor not otherwise documented within the deliverable itself, such as references, data and data collection methods, and analytical methodologies. The plan for that report must be included with the proposal.

Once the committee completes the comprehensive examination and approves the proposal, they will sign an approval form. The **Qualifying/Comprehensive Exam Form** is then submitted to the Graduate Program Coordinator for approval by the Graduate Director.

2.5 Thesis/Project Defense

A master's thesis/project deliverable defense consists of a public seminar with question and answer period and a private examination with the advisory committee. The student should submit a brief abstract, date, time, and location of the defense to the Graduate Program Coordinator at least one week in advance of the defense. If a student is having trouble finding a location for the defense, the Graduate Program Coordinator can help find a location. The Graduate Program Coordinator will announce the defense to all School of the Earth, Ocean and Environment faculty, staff, and students via email and post it on the program's website.

Upon successfully defending the thesis, the advisory committee must sign the **Thesis Signature and Approval Form** and return it to the Graduate Program office. Refer to **Appendix C** for formatting instructions of announcements and **Thesis Signature and Approval Form**. (NOTE: Be sure to complete the *Citation and Reference Style Certification* blank at the bottom of the form prior to turning it in to the Graduate Program office.) The Graduate Director will review the form and acceptable forms will be signed, and returned to the Graduate Program Coordinator who will submit the form to the Graduate School.

Upon successfully defending the internship project deliverable, the advisory committee must sign the **Internship Approval Form** and return it to the Graduate Program office. The Graduate Director will review and sign. This document will not be sent to the Graduate School, but is required for degree completion.

2.6 Thesis Submission

The Graduate School posts deadlines for graduation, thesis defense, and thesis submission on their website each semester. The Graduate Coordinator send reminders of these via email. Students should check the deadlines at least one semester in advance of thesis completion to ensure that a deadline will not be missed.

2.7 Time Limits/Restrictions

Graduate courses are valid for six years. Once a course has expired it can be revalidated. Revalidation requires advisor approval, instructor approval, passing a comprehensive exam administered by the instructor, the Graduate Director's approval, and the Dean of the Graduate School's approval. To find out more about revalidating courses, please contact the Graduate Program office.

3. JURIS DOCTOR-MEERM DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM

The **Juris Doctor (JD)-MEERM Dual Degree Program** is a dual degree program with the USC School of Law and the Environment and Sustainability Committee. Students will often complete the dual degree program in four years, whereas it would typically take approximately 5 years to earn both degrees individually. Students apply to and must be admitted separately to the MEERM program through the USC Graduate School and to the JD degree through the USC School of Law. Students can

then be admitted to the Dual Degree Program by application.

Through the combined program, the total course load may be reduced by as many as 18 credit hours from that required if the two degrees were earned separately, since up to 9 hours of electives toward the MEERM degree may be taken in approved law courses and 9 hours of electives toward the JD may be earned in the MEERM program.

Per the JD-MEERM regulations, a student undertaking a thesis in the MEERM program will have a member of the law school faculty on their thesis committee. Students in the dual program who have the approval of the Principal Faculty of the Environment and Sustainability Committee for the non-thesis option shall be required to complete an ENVR 790 and complete a law faculty supervised independent research (LAWS 570) on a subject related to environmental law. This LAWS 570 research paper can also serve to satisfy the “substantial legal research project” required for the JD degree. Upon completion of the paper, a copy of the paper and a letter requesting that it be deemed sufficient for the non-thesis option is submitted to the Principal Faculty of the Environment and Sustainability Committee for review. The Principal Faculty will assess the adequacy of the paper and, if so, will approve the request. The approval also then allows a graduate student to take two other MEERM courses in lieu of the thesis requirement (ENVR 799).

Since the course distribution for MEERM is that at least one-third of a student’s coursework must come from earth resources and environmental science or engineering (minimum of 12 hours) and at least one-third from business, environmental management and policy (minimum of 12 hours), but no more than 50 percent (18 hours) can come from either field, there is some flexibility on the two remaining courses a non-thesis dual degree student may take.

4. APPLICATION TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

Students wishing to apply to the MEERM program must [apply to the Graduate School](#) via the [General Graduate School Application](#). The Graduate Director recommends applicants for admission to the Graduate School on behalf of the MEERM program, but final admission decisions are made by the Graduate School itself.

Deadlines for Admission:

- To be considered for admission **with financial aid** for the **fall** semester, all application materials must be received by the preceding **February 15th**.
- To be considered for admission **without financial aid** for the fall semester, all application materials must be received by the preceding **April 1st**.
- To be considered for admission **with or without financial aid** for the **spring** semester, all application materials must be received by the preceding **November 1st**.

4.1 Admission Requirements for the MEERM Program

Students are accepted into the MEERM program based on undergraduate record, letters of recommendation, and compatibility with faculty interests. Students will be required to demonstrate

sufficient competency (gained by academic study or experience) to enroll in graduate courses in earth and environmental resources.

In addition to the application, several supplemental documents are required before an application is complete. All applicants must submit:

- official transcripts from all undergraduate and/or graduate institutions attended;
- at least two letters of recommendation (three preferred);
- a Statement of Purpose detailing the student's proposed research area, course of study, and reasons for applying to the MEERM program, and goals once they complete the degree;
- requested faculty member(s) affiliated with the MEERM program to serve as their advisor.

An immunization form is required for admission, but not for the application review process

4.2 Admission Requirements for the JD-MEERM Program

Students wishing to apply to the JD-MEERM Dual Degree program must apply, and be accepted, to both the Graduate School and the School of Law (<http://www.law.sc.edu>). Please visit the School of Law Admissions website (<http://www.law.sc.edu/admissions/>) for application instructions and admission requirements to the Law School. (See section 4.1 for admission to the MEERM program.) Once accepted to both programs individually, the student must then complete the **Dual Degree Form**, available from the Office of Admissions at the School of Law.

4.3 Changes to an Application

Students who wish to make changes to their application or admission status may do so by submitting an **Update Request** form to the Graduate School. Please notify the Graduate Director or the Graduate Program Coordinator of any change in status by email to SEOEGradCoord@seo.sc.edu.

4.4 International Students

International students applying to the MEERM Program must submit an application and the supplemental materials **as required by the Graduate School**. In general, these requirements include:

- **Language Certification.** Official TOEFL or IELTS scores for non-native English speakers.
- **Certification of Financial Support**
An application of Immigration and Certification of Financial Support must be completed once the student is accepted to the university.
- **Application of Immigration**
- **Transfer In Form**

If transferring from another U.S. institution, the student must also complete a Transfer In form.

International Student Services is dedicated to providing the services and support needed for international students to pursue their education at the University of South Carolina. Their staff assists students prior to arrival and throughout their studies.

5. TUITION, FEES, AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

5.1 Tuition Rates

The [Office of the Bursar](#) posts the current tuition rates and fees on their website. Graduate students taking nine credit hours a semester are considered to be enrolled full-time. Graduate students that have been awarded a Graduate Assistantship are considered full-time students when enrolled in six credit hours a semester, though many enroll in nine credit hours.

Students enrolled in the JD-MEERM dual degree program are charged [the School of Law's tuition rates](#). Students enroll exclusively in Law School courses during their first year in Law School and are subject to credit hour and assistantship requirements of the Law School.

5.2 University Fees

In addition to tuition, graduate students are required to pay the

- Student Health fee,
- Technology fee,
- Matriculation fee (applies to new students only),
- Student Health Insurance premium, and
- International Student Enrollment fee (only for international students requiring a visa).

5.3 Mandatory Student Health Insurance

All graduate students enrolled in nine or more credit hours, all graduate assistants, and all international students must purchase the university sponsored Student Health Insurance Plan, or provide documentation of enrollment in a comparable health insurance plan. Students who have not turned in a waiver form by the deadline will be automatically enrolled in the university's health insurance plan and billed by the Bursar's Office for the health insurance premium. Students can submit an insurance waiver via the [Student Health Services \(SHS\) website](#). Part-time students can purchase the university-sponsored health insurance if desired, but it is not required.

5.4 Fellowships

Financial support is available to a limited number of students each year in the form of graduate instructional assistantships (IA) and research assistantships (RA). Working students seeking to enhance their capabilities are encouraged to seek financial support from their employers. External fellowships are available through state, federal, non-governmental and private organizations (e.g. NWF Campus Ecology Program, the US EPA STAR Fellowships). Opportunities for additional funding are emailed to students as the program receives them. The Graduate School maintains a list of [graduate fellowships and other financial support opportunities](#).

5.5 Assistantships

Applicants are automatically considered for an assistantship *if they indicate interest on their application*. Each semester the Graduate Director and the E&SC Principal Faculty will assess assistantship availability

for current and new students and will notify students in writing of their offer. Students will be assessed based primarily on academic credentials.

All Instructional Assistants (IA) are required to have completed the **Graduate Instructional Assistant Workshop** provided by the Graduate School before they can be hired as an IA. The workshop is offered at the start of the fall and spring semesters. Students only need to take the workshop once.

International students must also successfully pass the **International Teaching Assessment** before they can be hired.

Graduate Assistants work up to 20 hours a week and are paid a stipend for each semester they are employed. Stipend amounts are based on the number of hours the student is expected to work each week, with the minimum rate set by the College of Arts and Sciences. In addition to the stipend, IAs and RAs are assessed the in-state tuition rate and *may* receive a tuition supplement. Tuition supplements are based on the number of credit hours enrolled per semester, and the availability of funding. While IAs and RAs *must* be enrolled in a minimum of six credit hours, *most* enroll in nine credit hours. Students are responsible for their fees and any portion of their tuition not covered by the supplement.

A student who has received an assistantship at 20 hours per week *may not* receive additional UofSC funding in the form of a fellowship or internship that requires additional duties. A student *may not* receive assistantships or internships requiring work in excess of 20 hours per week.

6. COURSE REGISTRATION AND PAYMENT METHODS

MySC.edu can be used to register for courses; change, view, and print out your class schedule; apply financial aid and scholarships to your bill; pay tuition and fees with a credit card; and check the status of your financial aid application. To request a schedule code for ENVR 799 Thesis Preparation, ENVR 790 Independent Study, or for assistance registering for a course, please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator at **SEOEGradCoord@seoe.sc.edu**.

7. STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS/EXIT SURVEYS

To ensure that students are aware of and have completed program requirements, the Environment and Sustainability Committee requires advisement during a student's the first year (fall and spring). Students may meet with their advisor or with members of the Graduate Committee to discuss program requirements, Master's Program of Study, potential thesis or internship project topics, formation of a thesis or internship committee, and any other questions or concerns the student might have. Meetings are held in the fall and spring semesters. Notices will be sent out to all MEERM students via email about completing the **Student Progress Report**. All students are required to complete an **Advisement Form**, even if they are not required to schedule a meeting that semester.

Exit interviews with members of the Graduate Committee are scheduled near the end of the semester in which a student plans to graduate. This provides the students an opportunity to evaluate their

experiences in the program, suggest improvements, and discuss any problems they may have experienced.

8. ETHICAL CONDUCT/ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic ethical behavior is essential for an institution dedicated to the promotion of knowledge and learning. The University of South Carolina is committed to fostering a university environment which exemplifies the values embodied in the [Carolinian Creed](#). Members of the University Community have a responsibility to uphold and maintain the highest standards of integrity in study, research, instruction, and evaluation; as well as adhering to the [Honor Code](#).

For questions about the university's policies regarding academic integrity, please contact the Director, [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

9. ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The Environment and Sustainability Committee adheres to the [Graduate School Academic Standards and Regulations](#).