

Environmental Sciences

Contact Information

Website: www.uis.edu/environmental-studies

Email: ens@uis.edu

Office Phone: 217-206-7495

Office Location: PAC 350

- Concentrations (3)
- Graduate Certificate (1)

Goals and Objectives

Environmental Studies is an interdisciplinary program that provides a framework for studying the relationship between humans and their environment. Society looks to environmental professionals to lead the way in protecting air, water, and soil quality and developing better solutions for the management, conservation, and restoration of our resources. The mission of Environmental Studies Program at UIS is to provide students with the advanced interdisciplinary training necessary for addressing environmental problems. Graduates will be prepared for diverse careers in environmental fields.

For graduate students, the program offers an MS in Environmental Sciences with three concentrations and a Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). All three MS concentrations and the GIS certificate are available to both on-campus and online students. The principal emphasis in the MS is on professional development, and the degree is appropriate for students who are just entering the field as well as mid-career professionals. Faculty work with students to help tailor the curriculum to meet their specific interests and professional goals, and the degree is designed so that students who are working and/or balancing multiple responsibilities can succeed.

The Master's Degree

Three concentrations in the M.S. in Environmental Sciences are available:

- ES - Environmental Natural Sciences Concentration
- ES - Environmental Planning and Management Concentration
- ES - Sustainable Development and Policy Concentration

The curriculum for the M.S. in Environmental Sciences allows students to gain a strong scientific understanding of ways to study, evaluate, and interpret environmental realities and their impacts, as well as to manage and mitigate environmental problems.

Advising

All new students will be assigned a faculty academic advisor upon acceptance to the program. Students who want to switch to a different faculty advisor may do so by completing a Change of Advisor form available from the ENS Program Lead.

Educational Plan

In consultation with the academic advisor, each student must prepare an educational plan before or during completion of the first semester of study. The plan indicates the courses required for the student's concentration and the semester when each will be taken. Upon completion of the plan, the advisor and the ENS Program Lead will review and sign it. Minor amendments (such as electives) may be made during the course of study with approval of the academic advisor; significant changes in direction (changes between concentrations or degrees) also require the approval of the ENS Program Lead and necessitate a Change of Curriculum form. Variances from degree requirements must be approved through a Student Petition.

Grading Policy

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a scale during their course of study. A maximum of four hours of C (2.0) grades (a grade of C- or lower will not be acceptable) is applicable to an ENS degree, provided each hour of C is balanced by an hour of A (a grade of A- will not be accepted) and an approved Student Petition is on file in the Office of Records and Registration. Failure to maintain an overall graduate grade point average of 3.0 or higher will result in initiation of academic dismissal by the Environmental Studies Program. Courses that are offered on a letter-grade basis must be taken for a letter grade.

Students should also refer to the campus policy on Grades Acceptable Toward Master's Degrees in this catalog.

Program Learning Outcomes

A student receiving a master's degree in Environmental Sciences will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Analyze environmental issues in a logical manner by breaking down an issue into constituent parts, identifying players and relationships among players in those parts, describing these relationships, recognizing unstated assumptions, distinguishing facts from opinions, and distinguishing statements of cause from statements of effect.
2. Critically appraise the value of data and information relevant to environmental questions and problems, including the appropriateness and adequacy of any qualitative or quantitative methods used in its compilation. In evaluating evidence or arguments, a student integrates key theories, information from works of recognized excellence, and facts and generalizations germane to a field to verify the soundness of arguments.
3. Synthesize diverse ideas relevant to environmental science to form a coherent perspective on how best to further research in the field and/or create policies or practices designed to address environmental problems. The parts to be integrated may, to the extent necessary, come from a variety of disciplines.
4. Create a research proposal or applied plan of work that includes asking and answering questions relevant to environmental studies, testing hypotheses or assumptions based on previous research or observations, collecting information to analyze the factors involved, modifying the hypotheses or assumptions based on new factors or considerations, and then making inferences and recommendations based on findings.

5. Design effective ways of presenting data and information from the environmental sciences to others through written, visual, and oral means.

Requirements

The MS in Environmental Sciences requires a total of 40 credit hours. All three concentrations require two common core courses, ENS 551 Environmental Natural Sciences and ENS 552 Environmental Social Sciences and Humanities. The remaining courses required for the degree depend on the concentration in which a student is enrolled.

Refer to the catalog page for each concentration for an overview of the specific requirements for each.

Master's Closure

M.S. candidates, with the assistance of their advisors and graduate committees, are required to complete one of the three available closure options. For some ENS students, the culminating experience of graduate-level work is a formal thesis. Other ENS students develop a substantial and carefully-designed graduate project, such as an interpretive plan for a nature center, an exhibit for a museum or visitors' center, a film or multimedia show with supportive materials, or a finished and well-researched draft of environmental legislation or policy. ENS students are required to present and defend their thesis/graduate project proposal and completed thesis/graduate project before the graduate committee. Students enroll for thesis or graduate project credit hours with the approval of their thesis/graduate project advisor. Students must enroll in a total of four credit hours of closure; however, they may accrue the total in increments (thesis and graduate project only).

The third closure option is the Capstone Closure course. The Capstone Closure option is not available to students in the Environmental Natural Sciences Concentration. The Capstone Closure option involves the completion of a 240-hour professional internship while enrolled in ENS 550. Before enrolling in ENS 550, capstone students must identify a suitable internship site and develop an internship plan in consultation with their internship site supervisor and the capstone instructor. The capstone instructor determines whether the proposed internship activities and learning goals meet required standards. Prior approval of the internship plan is required in order to register for ENS 550. While enrolled in ENS 550, students submit regular progress reports and complete a final capstone presentation and a comprehensive final capstone report summarizing and analyzing their accomplishments and learning experiences during the internship.

Once students begin taking closure hours, they are required by campus policy to be enrolled in at least one closure hour per regular semester (fall and spring) until the four-credit hour closure requirement is completed. If the closure exercise is not completed by the time four credit hours have been completed, students must register for zero credit hours (one billable hour) of ENS 511, ENS 529, or ENS 557 (as applicable) in all subsequent regular semesters (fall and spring) until the closure exercise is completed.

Graduate Certificate

- Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems

Online Degree

Students interested in the MS in Environmental Sciences can obtain their degree online with the same curricula as the on-campus programs. This format allows students to complete their degree from any location in the world while participating in a dynamic online community with instructors dedicated to their success.

- ES - Environmental Natural Sciences Concentration
- ES - Environmental Planning and Management Concentration
- ES - Sustainable Development and Policy Concentration
- Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems