

# Department of Watershed Sciences MoER Student Handbook

*Requirements, Policies, and Advice  
to Aid Your Graduate Career*



**UtahStateUniversity**  
DEPARTMENT OF WATERSHED SCIENCES

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## Introduction

This handbook describes the basic requirements for obtaining your Master of Ecological Restoration degree in the Department of Watershed Sciences (WATS) at Utah State University (USU). It does not cover every expectation, procedure, or policy established by USU pertaining to you as a graduate student—rather, it summarizes the most salient insights and milestones. The Department of Watershed Sciences generally adheres to the expectations, procedures, and policies of the USU School of Graduate Studies. Therefore, consult the “School of Graduate Studies” section of the online [USU General Catalog](#) for information on all USU general graduate policies. Also, if you have questions about something that does not appear in this handbook, departmental staff are delighted to help you with any matter, big or small. Just ask!

## Keys to Success in Graduate School

Everyone in the WATS Department shares the goal of you getting the most out of your graduate school experience. Beyond obtaining your degree, we strive to create a setting and culture that enable you to be exposed to new ideas, perspectives, and approaches, develop technical and professional skills, and connect you with colleagues who will support you throughout your time at USU and beyond. Everyone has a role to play in creating a safe, engaged, and productive culture. Below are a few guidelines to help you understand your role in fostering that culture.

1. **Develop healthy professional relationships** with your instructors, internship supervisors and peers. Communicate often and as clearly and openly as possible. Be proactive in asking questions and asserting your needs and boundaries. With a small amount of time, effort, and mutual respect, reasonable people can find reasonable solutions to conflicts. Reach out early to peers, WATS faculty or staff, or the department head if you need help resolving a conflict. The official channels for grievances are outlined in [article 7 of the USU Student Code](#).
2. **Be deliberate about your work-life balance.** Focus your work time on work and plan deliberately for breaks and mental health activities, as needed. Sleep is an essential and often undervalued activity that supports creativity, productivity, and mental health. USU has [numerous resources](#) to support your mental wellness.
3. **Find your ‘productive mode.’** Different people work in different ways. Explore and figure out how you work best. What kind of space is most conducive to the types of work you need to do (e.g., writing vs. data analysis)? Can you work in an open office or do you need private space? What time of day and for what duration of time can you work effectively? [This page from Stanford University](#) provides some resources to help you think through how to focus and be most productive during your work time.
4. **Take responsibility for staying on track with your degree.** It is your responsibility to track your progress and complete the two requirements for your degree: coursework and internship. You can stay on top of your program milestones by referring to this handbook or by visiting the [USU School of Graduate Studies](#) website, both of which include the graduate checklist, as well as other information. Failure to remedy deficiencies may result in delayed completion of your degree.

## Program Description and Expectations

### Curriculum Requirements

Program participants are required to take a total of 30 credits. Ten credits comprise the core curriculum of the program. These required courses were selected to ensure MoER students have a common core of knowledge that can be marketed to prospective employers, some requirements may be waived upon petition to the Restoration Consortium Director and Department Head. The remaining 19 credits will be selected from the four blocks (Ecology, GIS and Remote Sensing, Quantitative Methods, Design) of elective credits. Elective credits require a minimum of two credits per block. Through advising, students will be encouraged to develop depth (e.g., ten credits in one block and two to three credits in each of the other blocks), but the electives are intended to be flexible so students can tailor their education to the topics and skill sets that will be most marketable for their specific job and career goals. Not all elective courses will be offered every year. Visit the [MoER webpage](#) for a comprehensive list of electives and talk with the Restoration Consortium Director for the most current list of electives offered each semester.

Graduate students must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA. Grades of C- or lower will not be accepted for a graduate degree program.

### Program of Study

In consultation with the Restoration Consortium Director, construct a list of the courses you plan to take to fulfill the requirements for your degree. This proposed Program of Study should then be entered into the "[WATS MoER POS Template](#)". Send this spreadsheet directly to dominique.shore@usu.edu once you have finished entering the information so they can begin the process of getting it officially approved.

Plan out your program of study early, ideally during your first semester or the summer before. Do not postpone submitting it until your degree is nearly complete; you will miss the opportunity to get input when it is most useful. If you deviate from your initial Program of Study, work with departmental staff to submit a Program of Study Revision Form.

### Internship Requirements

The MoER internship requirement is typically fulfilled by doing an ecological restoration internship off-campus. MoER students are encouraged to complete the internship during the summer between their senior year and the start of the MoER program, but students are permitted to complete the internship at any time before the end of their last semester. Internships can be performed at local, state, or federal agencies, consulting firms, or non-profit organizations that are external to Utah State University. Internships with USU as the employer are not eligible.

For internship credit towards the 30-credit MoER program requirements, prior to initiation of the internship students must submit a completed [MoER Internship form](#) to [dominique.shore@usu.edu](mailto:dominique.shore@usu.edu). Following their internship, students should create a personal portfolio website that pulls together projects from their applied internship and coursework into one publicly available and professional webpage. This portfolio will be one of the most important deliverables students can use for job applications, so students are encouraged to take it seriously and work with peers, instructors, and the Restoration Consortium Director to make the most of it.

Work that is counted towards the MoER internship requirement should meet the following requirements:

- MoER students are required to complete a minimum of 4 credits of WATS 6420 - Graduate Internship/Co-op. Generally, USU defines one credit hour as equal to 45 hours of work. Thus, 4 credits of internship translates to 180 active work hours.
- A maximum of 8 internship credits can count towards the 30 credit requirement for the MoER.
- Students are welcome to complete job shadowing opportunities by observing a professional in their work environment for a day or several. These hours can be included in your internship hours if they are formally documented.

## Checklist for Completing a Master of Ecological Restoration Degree

### Coursework Requirements

- Complete a total of 30 credits of coursework
- Complete the required courses
  - WATS 6240 - Graduate Internship/Co-op (4-8 credits)
  - WATS 5620 - Introduction to Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration of Riverscapes (1 credit)
  - WATS 5625 - Adaptive Management and Monitoring of Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration of Riverscapes (1 credit)
  - WATS 6350 - Capstone Mentoring (1 credit)
- -- And one of the following --
  - WATS 5310 - Wetland and Riparian Plant Ecology (3 credits)
  - WATS 6310 – Wetland Ecology and Management (3 credits)
- Completed at least 2 credits from the following categories: Ecology, GIS and Remote Sensing, Quantitative Methods, Design
- Enter your *Program of Study* into the “[WATS MoER POS Template](#)” and send it directly to departmental staff
- Maintain at least a 3.0 GPA

### Internship Requirements

- Within the first weeks of your internship, work with your supervisor to complete the [MoER Internship form](#) and send it to [dominique.shore@usu.edu](mailto:dominique.shore@usu.edu)
- Register for and complete 4-8 credit hours (180 – 360 hours) of WATS6420 – Internship & Grad Co-Op
- Create a webpage summarizing your learning and development outcomes and send to [dominique.shore@usu.edu](mailto:dominique.shore@usu.edu) following the completion of your internship