
Environmental Assessment Professional Science Master's Graduate Student Handbook

2026-2027

University of Kansas Edwards Campus
Overland Park, KS



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Preface..... | 4 |
| University Support Resources | 4 |
| Program Directory | 5 |
| Primary Program contacts | 5 |
| General Program Policies and Procedures | 5 |
| Admission | 5 |
| <i>Deadlines</i> | 5 |
| <i>Application Materials & Procedures</i> | 6 |
| <i>Admissions Contact Information</i> | 6 |
| Enrollment | 6 |
| Permission Numbers..... | 7 |
| Transfer Credit..... | 7 |
| Good Academic Standing..... | 8 |
| <i>Lapse in Enrollment</i> | 8 |
| Academic Integrity & Misconduct..... | 8 |
| Grading..... | 9 |
| <i>A-F Plus/Minus (+/-) Grades</i> | 9 |
| <i>Passing Grades</i> | 9 |
| <i>Incomplete (I) Grades</i> | 9 |
| Annual Student Progress Review | 10 |
| Grievance Procedures..... | 10 |
| Petitions..... | 10 |
| Advising and Mentoring..... | 11 |
| Change of Faculty Advisor | 11 |
| Professional & Career Development and Resources | 12 |
| Research and Travel Funding Opportunities | 12 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Information for Graduate Assistants (GTA/GA) | 13 |
| Degree Requirements & Procedures | 13 |
| Academic Catalog | 13 |
| Professional Science Master’s Degree Requirements..... | 13 |
| Accelerated Professional Science Master’s Requirements | 14 |
| Graduate Certificate Requirements | 14 |
| Graduation Requirements (PSM & Graduate Certificates) | 15 |

Preface

This Student Handbook is a resource for graduate students in the Professional Science Master's (PSM) in Environmental Assessment at the University of Kansas. It provides essential information about program expectations, procedures, and academic guidelines to support students throughout their progress in the program. Students should consult this Handbook regularly while enrolled in the PSM program and use it alongside the broader policies that govern all KU students.

The PSM in Environmental Assessment is an interdisciplinary degree within the Department of Earth, Energy, and Environment under the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. The PSM was established to meet the growing workforce demand for professionals who can bridge scientific expertise and applied environmental problem solving with strong stakeholder communication. Designed for both full-time students and working professionals, the program provides flexible course delivery formats including online and evening classes at the KU Edwards Campus in Overland Park. This program also offers an Accelerated Professional Science Master's degree for undergraduate students majoring in the Environmental Studies degree at KU that meet qualifications and offers Graduate Certificates in Environmental Assessment and Environmental Justice.

All students are responsible for understanding the University of Kansas Student [Rights and Responsibilities policies](#). Questions about program requirements or policies should be directed to the Environmental Assessment [Program Director and/or Graduate Academic Advisor](#).

University Support Resources

The University of Kansas offers a variety of support services and resources for students. These include:

- The [Academic Achievement & Access Center \(AAAC\)](#), which works with programs to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed at KU
- [The KU Libraries System](#)
- [The KU Writing Center](#)
- [KU Career Center](#)
- [KU Edwards Campus Student Services](#)

Program Directory

Department of Earth, Energy, and Environment, Chair:

Dr. Nathaniel Brunsell

Email: brunsell@ku.edu

Primary Program contacts

Environmental Assessment PSM Program Director, Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) &
Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Terri Woodburn

Email: terriw@ku.edu

(913)897-8427

Graduate Academic Advisor:

Renee Williams, Senior Academic Advisor

rcwr@ku.edu

(913)897-8494

General Program Policies and Procedures

Admission

Deadlines

Applications due dates for each term is listed below with priority dates based on KU Edwards Campus scholarship opportunities. Due to some classes being in an 8-week structure there are opportunities for mid-term start dates – reach out the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) for additional information.

- Fall – August 1st; priority date of May 1st
- Spring – December 15th; priority date of November 1st
- Summer – May 1st

Application Materials & Procedures

The following components should be included in your online application:

- A completed [Graduate Application Form](#) found on the Graduate Admissions website.
- A copy of official transcript(s) from all post-secondary institutions attended showing proof of a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution, or a foreign university with equivalent bachelor's degree requirements.
 - The student must have an undergraduate major in the natural, physical, or applied sciences, engineering, or related fields, OR coursework of at least 20 semester hours in the natural and applied sciences (e.g., biology, chemistry, geology, physical geography, physics, statistics, and/or civil/environmental engineering). For those without the necessary background courses in undergraduate science, some additional coursework will need to be completed prior to the start of the graduate student program.
- A statement of interest and goals: a 1-2 page narrative that summarizes your education, employment history, your long-term career goals, and how this degree program will help you achieve these goals.
- At least two letters of recommendation from persons qualified to offer judgment on your work ethic and ability to undertake graduate-level work.
- International students must also demonstrate [English proficiency](#). Admissions will **not** result in an F-1 Visa, as the program does not qualify for the F-1 Visa status.

GRE is not required.

Admissions Contact Information

If you have questions about the academic program or curriculum, contact the [Director of Graduate Studies](#). If you have questions about the application process or required materials, contact the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#).

Enrollment

The schedule of classes is published online in early March for Fall and Summer terms and late September for Spring terms. Students should discuss their course selections with their advisor. Enrollment for continuing graduate students opens late March for the Fall and Summer terms and mid-October for Spring terms. Enrollment for new graduate students

opens late April for Fall and Summer terms and mid-November for Spring terms. Enrollment for Accelerated Master's students will need to be discussed with the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) as enrollment timing will shift between the undergraduate and graduate terms.

As many students in this program are working professionals, they are typically enrolled as part-time students. However, a student's level of enrollment may impact financial aid eligibility. See the University's [policy on graduate student enrollment](#) for additional information.

A student should ensure that there are no enrollment holds on their account. Holds on a student's account could impact their ability to enroll. If students enroll after 11:59pm the day prior to classes beginning for a term a late enrollment fee will be added to the student's account.

Students are highly encouraged to consult with the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) if there is a need to make changes to their enrollment after the start of a semester. Students can review the University Registrar's website covering [considerations and impacts of a drop or withdrawal](#). Depending on a student's situation, there may be other options available or additional steps that need to be taken. In some situations a request for a [Leave of Absence](#) (LOA) may be necessary.

Permission Numbers

If a student requires a permission number to enroll in an Environmental Assessment course they should contact either the [Graduate Academic Advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies](#). If a course offered outside the program is approved for use in the program and a permission number is required, the student should contact the instructor of record for the course requesting permission to enroll. The instructor will be able to provide instructions for their department's process for issuing permission numbers.

Transfer Credit

At the discretion of the program, up to nine (9) hours of graduate credit taken at a regionally accredited graduate school may be transferred and applied to a KU master's degree plan if the credits were taken prior to the final semester of enrollment at KU and if the courses are approved as meeting program requirements. Only work graded B (3.0 on a 4.0 scale) or higher may be transferred. KU does not accept transfer credit for institutes, workshops, or for life/work experience. Credit will not transfer for courses that were previously counted toward the completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree.

Good Academic Standing

To be considered in “good standing” in any graduate program, the University requires graduate students to maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (or “B” average) and making timely progress toward meeting their degree requirements. While this program is built as a 2-year master’s program, the primary student base of working professionals may take longer to complete. University policy sets a [maximum time to degree](#) of 7 years for a stand-alone master’s degree. A student must have all courses, including the Capstone courses, successfully completed prior to this time limit.

Lapse in Enrollment

At times, exceptional circumstances require students to delay or discontinue their enrollment in the program. If a student does not intend to enroll for the term, they must determine the appropriate course of action in consultation with their advisor:

[*Leave of Absence*](#): Students may petition for a Leave of Absence (LOA) of up to one calendar year. A leave of absence may be granted in extraordinary circumstances (e.g. cases of illness, emergency, financial hardship, military leave), to pursue family responsibilities, or to pursue full-time activities related to long-range professional goals. A Leave of Absence may only be granted upon request of the student in advance of the leave. The request can be made by a form provided by the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#). If granted, the Leave of Absence will maintain the student’s place in the Program. Leave of Absence petitions must be submitted by the advisor and will provide evidence of the program’s endorsement of the petition.

[*Voluntarily Discontinue*](#): Students may elect to Voluntarily Discontinue from the program and must inform the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) in writing of this decision. The advisor will submit the necessary forms to the College. This option requires the student to seek re-admission to the Program if they choose to return at a future date. If a student elects to Voluntarily Discontinue and subsequently return to the program, the time that has elapsed does not count against the time to degree.

Academic Integrity & Misconduct

Academic integrity is a foundational principle of the Professional Science Master’s program, and we expect all students to uphold the highest standards of honesty, responsibility, and ethical conduct in their academic and professional work. Maintaining integrity means that students fully and accurately acknowledge all sources used in

research, writing, data analysis, and project development. Failure to credit a source constitutes plagiarism and is a serious breach of academic standards.

Students are responsible for ensuring that their work, whether for assignments, examinations, applied projects, or collaborative activities, is completed independently or by authorized means, as defined by course expectations. When questions arise about proper citation, use of external materials, or the boundaries of collaboration, students should consult faculty well in advance of deadlines to avoid unintentional violations.

Students who fail to uphold these principles are subject to University sanctions for academic misconduct. Formal definitions, procedures, and potential consequences are outlined in the [University Senate Rules and Regulations](#), which all students are expected to review and understand.

Grading

[Article II, Section 3](#) of the University Senate Rules and Regulations provides detailed information on regulations governing the grading of graduate coursework. The following are of particular relevance for graduate students in this program:

A-F Plus/Minus (+/-) Grades

Plus/minus (+/-) grades are used in many Environmental Assessment classes. The plus or minus sign describes intermediate levels of performance between a maximum of A and a minimum of F. Intermediate grades are calculated as 0.3 units above or below the corresponding letter grade.

Passing Grades

Only courses graded C or above are considered passing and may be counted for graduate credit. Courses graded C-, D, or F may not be used to fulfill degree requirements. As noted above, graduates must also have a minimum GPA of 3.0.

Incomplete (I) Grades

Incomplete (I) grades are used to note, temporarily, that a student's work has been satisfactory to date, but that they have been unable to complete a portion of the required course work during that semester due to circumstances beyond their control. Incomplete work must be completed within the time period prescribed by the faculty member, at which point a permanent grade will be assigned. After one

calendar year from the original grade due date or after the prescribed deadline, an Incomplete (I) grade will automatically convert to a grade of F or U, or the lapsed grade assigned by the faculty member.

Students must request an Incomplete from their instructor and fill out an Incomplete Grade Request Form obtained from the faculty member or [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) for approval.

Annual Student Progress Review

All graduate students will be evaluated on an annual basis to achieve the following goals:

- To identify students who are under performing and in need of assistance.
- To keep track of graduate student performance and achievements.
- To review progress to degree.

The review occurs a minimum of once per year as a student meets with the Graduate Academic Advisor to prepare for enrollment or during graduation timeline checks.

Grievance Procedures

For any grievances, please contact the Environmental Assessment [Program Director or the Graduate Academic Advisor](#). They will assess the situation and act accordingly. For more information regarding a more formal grievance procedure, please refer to the [Policy Library](#).

Petitions

If a graduate student has a compelling reason to seek exemption from a program requirement or University policy, they may submit a petition to the Environmental Assessment [Program Director and Graduate Academic Advisor](#).

Petitioners should make their request in writing (via email is sufficient), explaining the reasons why the student is seeking exemption from specific rules, as well as how the educational goals of the rules reflected will still be fulfilled.

In cases where the policy or requirement is a program requirement (for example, a course requirement for a degree), the Program Director will issue a final decision (for example, that the student may be exempt from a course requirement based on coursework taken at the master's level at a previous institution).

In cases where the policy or requirement being petitioned is a University policy, the Program Director will decide whether to support the student's petition. If they are in support, the program will submit a petition form to the College Office of Graduate Affairs (COGA) accompanied by supporting materials as required. The petition form specifies the supporting material needed for each kind of petition. These materials must accompany the petition sent to COGA. Refer to University policy for additional information regarding the more common University petitions, such as [leaves of absence](#), [enrollment requirements](#), and [time limit extensions](#).

In cases where the Program Director declines to support a University petition, no paperwork may be submitted to COGA. COGA only accepts student petitions in cases where there is documented departmental support and when the petition itself is submitted by a representative of the department.

Students should always consult with the Graduate Academic Advisor or DGS prior to submitting a petition to ensure that a petition is necessary and that all the appropriate supporting documentation is accounted for.

Advising and Mentoring

The Environmental Assessment PSM [Program Director](#) is the faculty advisor for all students. The faculty advisor will work with students on choosing coursework best suited to their career goals and skillsets needed and to guide them through their graduate degree and capstone project. While the program only has one primary faculty advisor, mentorship will be provided in a variety of opportunities and avenues. Students may reach out to adjunct instructors (who are industry professionals) with questions about the professional sector, request connections through the faculty advisor to other industry professionals for career guidance, and participate in program-hosted, hybrid networking events with alumni and the Industry Advisory Board members. Additionally, each student will create a Capstone Panel of faculty and industry members to mentor them during the Capstone project process. A mentorship module of resources and information is provided in the program's Career Development Canvas site that students have access to throughout their time in the program and within the Capstone course Canvas site.

Change of Faculty Advisor

The Environmental Assessment program is structured as a coursework only degree, with the Capstone project completed within designated Capstone courses. The Program

Director serves as the instructor of record for these courses and acts as the primary faculty advisor for all students.

Students select their own Capstone Panel members with approval of the faculty advisor, and the Panel Lead may be any full-time faculty member in the Environmental Assessment program. A different faculty member may serve as the Panel Lead if either the Program Director (as faculty advisor) or the student determines that the student's project would be better supported by another faculty member.

Professional & Career Development and Resources

The Environmental Assessment PSM is a professional-focused degree for those already in or going into industry. Due to this focus, professional development is a core component of this degree and educational experience. The PSM degree has a professional core of coursework that includes environmental policy and regulations, project management, strategic communications, and other skillsets. These professional skillsets are also embedded in the science courses of the program, which also utilize applied projects through case studies, writing technical reports as seen in industry, and in some instances, work with community or industry stakeholders.

In addition to this coursework, additional career development is built into the Capstone course and provided through a program-wide Canvas site that students have access to during their time within the program. Resources available through this Canvas site includes an msIDP – an Individual Development Plan for STEM master's students going into industry, mentorship resources, networking resources, and more.

Research and Travel Funding Opportunities

The Office of Graduate Studies offers a [Graduate Student Travel Fund](#) intended for graduate students presenting a paper at a national or regional meeting of a learned or professional society. A student may receive an award only once per academic year, with priority given to students who have not received the fund previously. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Environmental Assessment program students may also apply for the Zadigan Graduate Research Scholarship. This is a limited fund and students will be notified of the call for applications via email when available.

Students interested in applying for either fund should contact the Environmental Assessment [Program Director](#).

Information for Graduate Assistants (GTA/GA)

There are no GTA, GRA, or GA positions available directly through the Environmental Assessment PSM program at Edwards Campus. Students may apply for opportunities available through the Department of Earth, Energy, & Environment with EVRN courses or faculty, or through other programs at Lawrence Campus. Please note that these opportunities require work completed in-person on Lawrence Campus.

Degree Requirements & Procedures

Academic Catalog

The University [Academic Catalog](#) is the definitive source for requirements and regulations for every academic program. However, the Catalog is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a contract. [Environmental Assessment PSM degree requirements](#) listed in the Catalog have been approved by established University Governance procedures. Degree and program requirements and course descriptions are subject to change. This handbook serves as a supplement to provide further details on the requirements, policies, and procedures described in the Catalog.

Professional Science Master's Degree Requirements

The Environmental Assessment PSM is a coursework only degree that students can complete as either full-time or part-time status. The program is a total of 33 credit hours, which includes a Capstone practicum requirement. The PSM program structure includes a professional core of 12 credit hours, a science core of 9 credit hours, science electives of 9 credit hours, and 3 credit-hours for the Capstone course series (EVRN 814 (1 cr. hr.) and EVRN 815 (2 cr. hr.)). The course options within these sectors are shown on the [Degree Requirements](#) page in the Academic Catalog, along with a sample [Degree Plan](#). The Degree Plan will be individualized with the help of the [Graduate Academic Advisor](#) to meet each students' skillset/career needs and timeline. Through the selection of core course options and electives, this program can be tailored to multiple environmental career avenues including environmental science, community resilience/sustainability, and environmental policymaking.

The curriculum for this program prepares students to integrate scientific expertise with real-world environmental problem-solving and stakeholder communication skills. Courses blend foundational environmental science, applied analytical training, and professional

practice through case studies, real-world projects, and technical report development. Additionally, there is an Environmental Research Lab at KU Edwards Campus available to students within the program that is utilized for optional in-person, hands-on elective courses and for Capstone research as needed. Various field equipment is also available for use for Capstone projects. Please contact the [Program Director](#) for access and equipment training as needed.

Accelerated Professional Science Master's Requirements

Undergraduate students majoring in Environmental Studies at KU may be eligible to apply for the Accelerated Master's program, allowing them to begin graduate coursework during their senior year and complete both the bachelor's and master's degrees in five years. This option is ideal for students seeking a streamlined path into the environmental science workforce. Candidates for the Accelerated PSM should have a 3.2 GPA or when they apply, and can be from the B.S., B.A., or B.G.S degree tracks. [Admissions requirements](#), suggested timeline for the application, and [degree requirements](#) are provided in the Academic Catalog. An advising appointment will be needed with the [Graduate Academic Advisor and/or the Program Director](#).

Graduate Certificate Requirements

A Graduate Certificate is a way to gain a credential for expertise in an outside area of study in addition to your primary program, or can provide advanced study for those not ready to commit to a full degree program. Note that students must be fully admitted to a graduate certificate by the end of the last course that will count to fulfill the certificate. Current students wishing to complete a graduate certificate should apply as early as possible. The Environmental Assessment [Program Director](#) must approve the addition of any graduate certificates before applying.

Graduate Certificates available associated with this program are the [Environmental Assessment Graduate Certificate](#) and the [Environmental Justice Graduate Certificate](#). Both certificates require 12 credit hours of directed coursework as described in the Academic Catalog. Students interested in adding the Environmental Justice Graduate Certificate to the Environmental Assessment PSM degree may count up to 6 credit hours toward both the degree and certificate depending on the courses selected. The same is true for graduate certificates such as Environmental Geology and Project Management, provided through other KU programs. If there is a different KU graduate certificate that is of interest, contact the Environmental Assessment [Program Director](#) to determine if there are overlapping coursework requirements that may count toward the PSM.

Graduation Requirements (PSM & Graduate Certificates)

In addition to all program requirements, students planning to graduate must complete all [University graduation requirements](#) **prior to the published Graduation Deadline** in a given semester. Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for the published Graduation Deadline, which varies by semester.

A Graduate Certificate student must apply for graduation from that certificate during the semester in which they complete the final course – even if this occurs prior to the completion of their master’s degree.