



M.S. in Water Resources Program Handbook

Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Science Program in Water Resources (WRS) at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. This interdisciplinary program is intended to provide students with the background to better understand technical, economic, and social issues associated with the utilization of the Earth's limited water supply. In choosing to enter this program, most students will be broadening their knowledge base well outside of their previous educational experiences, which can be both intimidating and exciting. Understanding the steps needed to complete your degree program will make the process seem less intimidating, so please review this handbook carefully as you begin your graduate studies, and then refer to it as you progress.

Eakalak Khan, Ph.D.

Director, Water Resources M.S. Program

Mission Statement(s)

The M.S. in WRS program in the Graduate College at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas is a flexible, interdisciplinary course of study leading to a Master of Science degree. It is a technically and scientifically based program that blends the physical, chemical, and biological aspects of the hydrologic sciences with social, policy, and management issues.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in [the UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and [the UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: <mailto:valarie.burke@unlv.edu> or <mailto:gradassociatedean@unlv.edu>.

Program Faculty

Faculty must hold graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up-to-date information regarding graduate faculty status in the WRS M.S. Program, visit the [Graduate Faculty status web page](#).

The WRS M.S. Program is interdisciplinary in nature. Membership in the WRS faculty is by application. Participating faculty come from the Colleges of Sciences, Urban Affairs, Engineering, and Liberal Arts; and the School of Public Health at UNLV, plus the Desert Research Institute. Qualified faculty from these academic units can request graduate faculty status in the WRS M.S. Program by contacting the Program Director.

Program Information

[Master of Science in Water Resources](#)

Subplan 1: Thesis Track

Subplan 2: Professional Paper Track

Contact Information

[Water Resources](#)

Program Director/ Graduate Coordinator

Eakalak Khan, SEB 3134, eakalak.khan@unlv.edu

Program Main Office

SEB 3134, wrs.director@unlv.edu, 702-774-1449

Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework and culminating experience](#) are found in [the graduate catalog](#).

Advisory Committee Guidelines

All students in the WRS M.S. Program are required to form an advisory committee that is consistent with the policies of the UNLV Graduate College. In addition to the Graduate College policies, three of the four advisory committee members must be the WRS M.S. program faculty with approved graduate faculty status and at least one of the three, excluding the Graduate College Representative must be from outside the home College/School of the primary academic advisor. One of the four members must be the Graduate College Representative. Students are required to consult with the WRS M.S. Program Director prior to finalizing their advisory committee, or making changes to the advisory committee.

Degree Program Benchmarks

Research Prospectus

All WRS M.S. students are required to prepare and complete a research prospectus that defines the research question/hypothesis and scope of work to be completed for their culminating experience. Prior to developing a research prospectus, the student is expected to have extensive discussions on the topic with their advisor. The selection of the research topic is the responsibility of the individual student, and not that of the faculty member with whom the student desires to work. In addition, a faculty member may decline to direct any project. Once a student and their advisor have agreed on the nature and scope of research needed to satisfy the culminating experience component of their degree, the student is required to prepare a research prospectus for approval by their advisory committee.

The research prospectus must clearly define the research problem/hypothesis to be considered, explain the importance of the problem/hypothesis, outline the approach that will be implemented to address the problem/hypothesis, and predict the expected outcome. The research prospectus should be sufficiently clear that the advisory committee is able to assess if: 1) the project is feasible; and 2) the student is prepared to embark on the proposed course of research.

The format and length of each individual research prospectus will be determined by discussions between the student and their advisor. A research prospectus submitted by a student in the WRS M.S. Program must include at least the following components: description of thesis/project including the research problem/hypothesis, brief description of methodology/approach, and timeline for completion of thesis/project.

The research prospectus should be submitted to the student's advisor as early as possible, and prior to beginning the actual research. The student is required to have their advisor's approval before scheduling a meeting of their advisory committee to discuss their research prospectus. Following verbal approval from the advisory committee, it is the students' responsibility to initiate a properly prepared Prospectus Approval form through the Grad Rebel Gateway. If the student's research project changes in a substantive manner after the prospectus is approved, a new Prospectus Approval Form must be submitted and approved. Only after the approval may the student enroll in either thesis or professional paper course credits. If the student fails during the first attempt of the prospectus defense, the student will be placed on probation via the Graduate College process. The student is able to schedule a second attempt within three months after the first prospectus defense. If the student fails the second attempt, the student may be separated from the program.

Subplan 1: Thesis Track

Thesis

Students pursuing their M.S. in WRS through Subplan 1 are required to produce and successfully defend a research thesis as their culminating experience. The thesis must be prepared in collaboration with the student's advisor and follow formatting directions available on the Graduate College website. Every thesis is unique, and individual advisors follow their own procedure in advising students.

Students are encouraged to review previous theses produced by their advisors' former students and other students in the WRS M.S. Program. There is no formal length requirement for a WRS thesis, the actual length will depend on the amount of material required to address the questions posed in the research prospectus. The advisory committee determine the standards and will have final say. Ultimately, a high-quality thesis is the end product of the research study.

Writing the thesis is the student's responsibility, and may require multiple drafts. Each student should be aware that their advisor has other commitments that will restrict their ability to review an individual thesis. Students should expect that their advisor will need at least two weeks to review each draft of their thesis. This review and revision process may

take several months; however, advisors and committee members always strive to provide timely feedback as much as possible. The thesis is not distributed to the other members of the advisory committee until the advisor deems it ready for their review. The advisory committee then has two weeks to review the draft and decide if it is ready to be defended. Committee members may suggest revisions and wish to see revised drafts before they concur that the thesis is defensible. The student is required to discuss suggested revisions with both the committee member and their advisor.

Thesis Defense

The student may schedule their thesis defense to occur a minimum of two weeks after the committee has concluded that the draft thesis is defensible. The student must also adhere to the Graduate College deadlines displayed on the Graduate College website. The thesis defense cannot be scheduled during university holidays, weekends, or the summer unless all committee members agree in advance. The composition of the committee shall not be changed to facilitate scheduling during these periods. The student is required to notify the WRS M.S. Program Director and the Graduate College of the defense, and to post clearly visible notices advertising the defense in the building(s) where their advisor and the WRS M.S. Program Director have offices. These notifications must occur at least one week in advance of the thesis defense. For professional papers, notification to the Graduate College is not required.

Students in the WRS M.S. Program are obligated to follow all requirements for the thesis defense stated in [the UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). The first portion of all WRS M.S. thesis defenses is open to the public. Each defense will begin with an introduction by the advisor that includes a concise explanation of the examination procedure. The student will then give an oral presentation that summarizes their thesis. The presentation should be about 25 minutes in length and may not exceed 45 minutes. The public audience will be invited to ask questions following the presentation. At the end of this brief discussion period, the public audience will be excused and the advisory committee will proceed with their examination of the candidate. After completion of this question and answer period, the student will be dismissed, and the examination committee will evaluate the student's performance. After completing their deliberations, the committee should discuss their conclusions with the student. In most cases, the advisory committee must unanimously pass the student on the thesis defense. If a student fails the first attempt, the student, in consultation with their advisor, may request the exam committee to administer a second defense at least three months after the first attempt. After the first failed attempt, the student will be placed on probation via the Graduate College process. If the student fails the second attempt, the student may be separated from the program. If the outcome of the thesis defense is passing, the student must make any needed changes to the thesis, receive final approval from the advisor/committee and submit the final document to the Graduate College. Upon notification of passing, it is the students' responsibility to initiate a properly prepared Culminating Experience Results form through the Grad Rebel Gateway.

Subplan 2: Professional Paper Track

Students in the WRS M.S. Program who are seeking their degree under Subplan 2 (Professional Paper) are required to follow the same procedures as for Subplan 1 (Thesis) with the following differences:

1. The scope of work required to complete a Professional Paper is expected to be considerably less than for a typical Thesis. The credit requirements in the degree program should be used as a rough guide; an approved Thesis counts for 6 credits of the degree program and an approved Professional Paper counts for 3 credits.
2. The advisory committee may choose to have an open or closed defense of the Professional Paper.
3. Copies of the approved Professional Paper are submitted to the advisor and the WRS M.S. Program Director, the Graduate College is not provided with a copy.

Program Timeline

The time required to complete WRS M.S. is highly variable. Many students in the WRS M.S. Program are seeking their degree part-time or are admitted with conditions that must be met before they proceed with their coursework and/or research. Both of these scenarios will extend the time required to complete the degree. Students who intend to finish in four semesters should plan on meeting the following sample timetable.

Recruitment of advisory committee - end of the first semester

Completion of the research prospectus - end of the second semester

Submission of a draft thesis or professional paper - start of the fourth semester

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in [the graduate catalog](#).

All students in the WRS M.S. Program must adhere to the UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity provided in [the graduate catalog](#). This policy applies to all academic endeavors, including preliminary drafts.

In accordance with Nevada Law (NRS 200.650), students are prohibited from recording meetings or discussions without the full consent of the involved parties.

Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are required to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form [Formerly known as the Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead.

Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each student's submitted IDP and provide acknowledgement that they have reviewed the IDP.

Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner.

Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

Discipline Resources

The WRS M.S. Program is interdisciplinary in nature. Therefore, internal and external resources used by students will vary with their academic/professional objectives and the topic of their thesis. Students are expected to consult with their advisor regarding: relevant professional organizations, journals, and technical conferences; and the writing/reference style to be used in completing their thesis.

University Resources

The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

Alumni Engagement

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

Office of Diversity Initiatives

The vision of the [Office of Diversity Initiatives](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Office of International Student and Scholars Services

[International Students and Scholars \(ISSS\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

The Care Center

The [Care Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

[The Intersection](#) is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

[UNLV Libraries](#) has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#) serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

[Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

The [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

[Military and Veteran Services Center](#)

The [Military and Veteran Service Center](#) is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

[The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#)

The [Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#) supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

[Writing Center](#)

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the [online reporting form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Department Vote Tally: Yes/No/Abs. (date of vote)	Changes summary
March, 2020	Michael Nicholl		Minor edits, updated UNLV policies
May 9, 2024	Eakalak Khan		Major edits for name change and redesignation as IGP
March 27, 2025	Eakalak Khan	8/0/0 (03/27/2025)	Minor edits on Mission Statement and Degree Program Benchmarks