

Student Handbook
MS Environmental Science
Revised August 2026

Student Manual – All Students

The [Student Manual](#) is the official statement of University policies, regulations, and expected standards of student conduct that are applicable to all students. While students should be familiar with the manual as a whole, the following are commonly referenced by graduate students: [Student Life & Conduct](#), [Leaves of Absence](#), [University Grievance Policy for Graduate Students](#), [Policy on Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct](#), [Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment](#), [Policy on Religious Accommodation for Missed Classes, Assignments, and Exams](#), [Academic Honesty & Plagiarism](#), [Graduate Student Parent Policy](#).

Divisional Policies

The Physical Sciences Division's [student policies](#) are applicable to all students in the MS Program in Environmental Science. Students with questions about PSD policies can reach out to their Student Affairs Administrator Adelaide Grosse (adelaide1@uchicago.edu) or the [Dean of Students Office](#).

Graduate Student Union

The terms and conditions of employment for certain graduate students at the University of Chicago who are employed to perform instructional or research services will be determined by a Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the University and Graduate Students United ("GSU-UE") for the duration of the assignment to perform such services. Students can access the CBA and review frequently asked questions about graduate student unionization on the [Provost's Office website](#).

Degree Requirements

The MS in Environmental Science program consists of nine (9) courses, typically taken over three (3) quarters (Fall, Winter, Spring). All students are encouraged to meet with the program Director and other faculty advisors to discuss their course planning and academic goals.

There are three required courses for the MS in Environmental Science:

- Foundations of Environmental Data Science I (ENSC 36100)
- Foundations of Environmental Data Science II (ENSC 36200)
- Capstone in Environmental Science (ENSC 36300)

In addition to the three required courses, students must also complete six (6) electives. Any 300-level course offered by the Department of the Geophysical Sciences (GEOS or ENSC 3xxxx) is suitable as an elective. Up to two courses outside the department may also count as electives towards the MS degree, provided the course is listed on an approved course list or with approval of the Director of the MS in Environmental Science. Students may not enroll in Booth School courses without written consent of the program Director.

In exceptional circumstances, other courses may be permitted by petition to the program Director. The petition form can be found on the department SharePoint; please email the program's Student Affairs Administrator for more details.

Full time students may register for three (3) courses per quarter. Registration in additional courses above this limit requires approval of the program Director and will incur additional tuition fees.

Grading Policy

Students must earn a grade of C or better in each of the courses that apply toward your degree requirement. Courses taken as Pass/Fail do not count towards the degree requirement. All grades received are final. Grades can only be changed by the registrar due to an administrative error. It is the students' responsibility to check their records at the end of each quarter and report all grading errors to the course instructor immediately.

In the Environmental Science MS program, we consider grading to be the exclusive purview of the instructor. If concerns remain after reaching out to the course instructor, students may follow the [PSD Student Concerns and Grievance policy](#). If a grade below C is earned for a class, that class will not count towards graduation requirements. In most cases, failed courses cannot be retaken and students should choose a different class to fulfill the graduation requirements. However, if the failed class is required for graduation (e.g., Environmental Data Science I), the student will need to register and pay for the course in order to take it again. Tuition and fees will be assessed as scheduled for any additional courses beyond the nine required for the program.

Course Completion

We recognize that our students may have to deal with emergency situations that interfere with their studies. In a case of emergency, where classes cannot be completed in the quarter taken, a student can request a leave of absence from the program. Please review the Leave of Absence policy below.

For students with scheduling conflicts, job duties, workload, recruiting, or other factors that have affected a student's ability to keep up in a particular course, a student should withdraw from the course. Poor performance in the class, or not being on track to earn a passing grade, is not a reason for a leave of absence. Please review the Withdrawal policy below.

Course Audits

While formal auditing courses is permitted, MS students will be charged the same amount to audit as to enroll in a course.

Graduation Information

Students follow the graduation processes of the Physical Sciences Division. Those processes are [available online](#).

Classroom Conduct

Students are expected to respect each other, the professor and learning environment during class. Access to a laptop computer, tablet or the Internet during class can be a valuable aid to classroom learning. However, students are discouraged from using laptop computers in ways that distract themselves and others from the learning process (e.g., surfing non-course materials, online shopping, emailing, etc.). Individual instructor policies on cell phone use must be followed during class.

Students found in violation of the Classroom Conduct policy are subject to discipline at the Instructor's discretion, including but not limited to removal from the class.

Leave of Absence

The Environmental Science MS program follows the [Leave of Absence policy](#) set by the PSD Dean of Students office. Environmental Science MS program students who wish to take a leave of absence from the program are required to notify the program administration as soon as possible. A student may be approved for a personal leave of absence of up to four academic quarters. A student may be approved for a medical leave of absence of up to four academic quarters. Students requesting a medical leave of absence must provide documentation. Tuition penalties and fees are assessed [as scheduled](#).

International students on a student visa should also review the Office of International Affairs (OIA) [Leave of Absence policy](#).

Academic Probation

If a student in the Environmental Science MS program is not making satisfactory progress towards his/her/their degree, the student may be placed on Academic Probation. In particular, any of the following may place a student on Academic Probation:

- Earning a single grade of D or below
- Academic Honesty violations
- Two or more Withdrawals (W), incomplete grades (I) or blank grades.

The standard requirement is that the student on probation should earn an average GPA of B or better in the next quarter they are enrolled in the Environmental Science MS program, with no single grade below a C+. This grade requirement will be in place until the student has completed three (3) classes while on academic probation and is making satisfactory academic progress towards graduation.

Students who fail to improve their academic performance during the probation period may be withdrawn from the program.

Students who encounter unexpected difficulties during their studies should refer to the Leave of Absence policy.

Computer Accounts

Use of the University of Chicago's computer resources must conform to UChicago's IT Policies.

For general questions, please reach out to the program's Student Affairs Administrator.

Transfer Credits

All Environmental Science MS program students are required to register and successfully complete the total number of required courses for the nine course Program. No previous coursework prior to entering the program will be counted towards the MS degree. The Environmental Science MS program does not allow the transfer of credits from any other graduate program, including credits from other graduate programs at the University of Chicago.

Environmental Science MS program courses taken before you are in Environmental Science MS program student status will not count towards your degree requirements. While you would not be required to repeat any passed courses, you would still be required to complete the required number of courses in order to graduate.

For example, a 4+1 admit who completed Environmental Data Science I & II as an undergrad, would not have to re-take these courses, but would be required to advance their data science skills with two other approved classes in order to graduate with an MS in Environmental Science.

Time to Degree Completion

The maximum period of enrollment in the Environmental Science MS program and the student's graduation cannot exceed 20 academic quarters.

Graduation

Students in the Environmental Science MS program follow the [graduation processes](#) in the Physical Sciences Division.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

The Department of the Geophysical Sciences (including the Environmental Science MS program) has high standards for academic honesty. The Environmental Science MS program Academic Honesty & Plagiarism Policy is aligned with the University of Chicago's Academic Honesty & Plagiarism policy:

"It is contrary to justice, academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit another's statements or ideas as one's own work. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously. Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas, whether by direct quotation or paraphrase, is expected. In particular, if any written or electronic source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number, or by website and date accessed. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor."

Cheating, copying, and all forms of plagiarism and academic dishonesty are considered a serious offense in the Environmental Science MS program. The Environmental Science MS program Academic Honesty & Plagiarism policy adds the following requirements to the University's guidelines above for all students taking Environmental Science MS program classes:

Academically honest work is understood to be:

- Work that has been done exclusively by you, without any outside assistance.
- Work that has involved some outside assistance (such as other students, reference materials found in the library or the Internet, AI tools), but which includes proper attribution.

Students must follow these rules for all submitted work:

- Always list any external sources consulted in your work: This includes not only books or websites you consulted, but also students that you discussed your solution with.
- Never use another student's work. Never submit any work that has been written by another student. This is unacceptable even with attribution. You can discuss the high-level aspects of an assignment with other students, but the work you hand in must always be your own.

Some Environmental Science MS program instructors may use plagiarism detection software to grade submitted work.

If you are ever unclear on whether you are following the rules correctly, ask your instructor before an assignment is due. It is your responsibility to seek clarification.

The program administration is notified of any violations of this policy. This misconduct will be investigated promptly and referred to a disciplinary committee. Penalties may include a zero for an assignment, an automatic F grade for the course, being placed on academic probation in the Environmental Science MS program, suspension from the Environmental Science MS program or expulsion from the University of Chicago.

Withdrawal from a Class

Students may withdraw from a class at any time up until one day prior to the final exam or final project due date, whichever occurs first. For students on Academic Probation, a course withdrawal is considered a grade lower than a C+ and will be assigned a weight of zero for GPA calculation.

Tuition Refund Schedule

Up to the end of the third week:

- 100% tuition refund. Class will be removed from transcript.

Week four and later: Must follow Withdrawal policy.

- No tuition refund.
- The dropped class will remain on your official transcript with a letter grade of W.

No exceptions will be made to this refund schedule. Please note that students withdrawing from all courses and requesting a leave of absence will follow the tuition refund schedule for leaves of absences and withdrawals. This information is [available here](#).

Student Contacts for Concerns

Students with questions may contact Adelaide Grosse, Student Affairs Administrator; Maureen Coleman, Faculty Director; Bahareh Lampert, Dean of Students; or Amanda Young, Director, Graduate Student Affairs in UChicagoGRAD.

The Environmental Science MS program follows the [PSD Student Concerns and Grievance policy](#).

Residency Requirements

Students are expected to follow the Division's [residency requirements](#) for graduate students.

Room Requests

All room requests for the purposes of administering the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the University and GSU-UE should be directed through the [UChicagoGRAD Room Reservation Form](#).

Email Lists

Students may utilize the Geophysical Sciences listserv for departmental matters. When students use the listhost:

- Email messages must be related to the business and mission of the department.
- Emails of a personal nature, such as notices of items for sale, lost or found items, and solicitation of goods or services, are not allowed.
- Messages that publicize or endorse causes, such as political movements, relief efforts for victims of natural disasters, or organizations seeking assistance, are not allowed.
- List-host moderators have the right to withhold any messages that do not meet the guidelines set forth in this policy.

Key Contacts

- Student Affairs Administrator:
Adelaide Grosse (adelaide1@uchicago.edu)
- Program Director, MS Environmental Science:
Sophie Coulson, Senior Instructional Professor (slcoulson@uchicago.edu)
- Faculty Director, MS Environmental Science:
Maureen Coleman, Associate Professor (mlcoleman@uchicago.edu)
- Chair of the Department of the Geophysical Sciences:
Fred Ciesla, Professor (ciesla@uchicago.edu)
- Dean of Students:
Bahareh Lampert (blampert1@uchicago.edu)