

**Department of Geosciences and Environment**  
**M.A./M.S. Degree Prospectus Guidelines**  
**Thesis Track Students**

*The signature page should include the starred information below.*

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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES

**MS DEGREE IN GEOLOGY OR MA DEGREE IN GEOGRAPHY**  
**GRADUATE THESIS PROSPECTUS**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

CIN \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Research Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

(If applicable) Off-campus research dept/phone \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date Prospectus Approved \_\_\_\_\_

\* \* \* \* \*

**Procedures & Deadlines:**

The prospectus must first be approved by the primary Thesis Advisor and then by the Thesis Committee. It is the student's responsibility to consult with the Thesis Advisor at the start of the semester when the prospectus will be submitted. Note that initial revisions typically take several weeks. After the prospectus has been approved by the Thesis Advisor, it must be given to the Thesis Committee no later than the Monday of twelfth week of the semester. After it has been approved by the Thesis Committee, it must be given to Department Secretary no later than the Monday of the fifteenth week of the semester. The MS or MA prospectus must be submitted before any significant field, laboratory, or analytical/interpretive work is completed on the MS or MA Thesis.

**General Considerations:**

All text is to be single-spaced in at least 12-point type  
Margins should be one inch on all sides.

## **Prospectus Components and Accompanying Guidelines:**

*May be modified at the discretion of the Principal Research Advisor*

### **I. Title**

- A. Conveys the specific nature of the proposed study
- B. Is formatted such that:
  - 1. Only the first word and proper nouns are capitalized, or
  - 2. All words except for articles, prepositions, and conjunctions are capitalized.

### **II. Abstract (~500 words)**

- A. Briefly conveys what the study is about in a form comprehensible to a general audience.
- B. Includes a hypothesis or objective of the study, an overview of methods, and a brief statement of expected results and their significance.
- C. Avoids acronyms, abbreviations, and technical jargon specific to the field.

### **III. Objectives (0.5 to 1.0 pages)**

- A. Includes specific hypothesis (or hypotheses) to be tested, expressed as a statement.
- B. If work will not test a hypothesis, clearly states the objective(s) to be met.

### **IV. Background (2.0 to 4.0 pages)**

- A. Introduces topic to a reader outside of the field.
- B. Includes literature review and summary of information relevant to the proposed research.
  - 1. Synthesizes information; does not simply state a disconnected list of facts.
  - 2. Includes relevant unpublished data.
  - 3. Properly references all published and unpublished work discussed.
- C. Restates Objectives section and explains how objectives relate to earlier work covered in the literature review.

### **V. Overview of the Study Design (0.5 to 1.0 pages)**

- 1. Presents the conceptual approach to the study.
- 2. Includes the overall experimental design.

### **VI. Methods and Materials**

- A. Covers procedures to be used and measurements to be made.
  - 1. Includes explanation of treatments and controls, where appropriate.
  - 2. Presents each procedure in sufficient detail that the reader can evaluate whether it is an appropriate choice for meeting your objectives.
  - 3. Discusses the methods of analysis and any statistical procedures to be applied.
- B. Includes materials, supplies or equipment as needed and gives sources of specialized items.
- C. References published procedures and software.
- D. If the proposed work involves animals or human subjects, includes a statement that the principal investigator and the participating student will comply with the appropriate federal and institutional guidelines.

**VII. Data Interpretation**

- a. Includes discussion of possible outcomes and how they will be evaluated in light of the hypothesis or objective(s).

*Sections VI and VII page limit: total 2.0 to 4.0 pages*

**VIII. Significance (0.5 to 1.0 pages)**

Considers how the proposed work will:

1. Fill gaps in current knowledge.
2. Contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge and/or to the good of humanity.
3. Lay the foundation for future research.

**IX. Budget (0.5 to 1.0 page)**

- A. Itemizes major expenses.
- B. Specifies the sources of funds to be used to cover these expenses.

**X. Timeline (0.5 to 1.0 page)**

- A. Provide details of when different tasks of the project will be undertaken/completed including the thesis defense.

**XI. References**

- A. Lists all references mentioned in text.
- B. Follows a single format for all references.
- C. Lists references in one of the following formats:
  1. In numerical order, according to order mentioned in text, and referenced in text by number.
  2. In alphabetical order, by first author's last name.
  3. In alphabetical order and enumerated, with numbers cited in the text.

**XII. Figures and Tables (optional, as needed)**

- A. A small number of figures, tables, and flowcharts is recommended to illustrate complex ideas, designs and methods.
- B. All figures and tables must include concise, explanatory legends.

**Evaluation of the Prospectus**

The prospectus will be evaluated at two levels: 1) by the Principal Research Advisor, and 2) by the Thesis Committee. The Principal Research Advisor will work with the student until the prospectus is in its final form, ensuring that the scientific reasoning is sound, the prospectus is organized, and the writing is clear. *Note: upon accepting a student, an off-campus advisor will be advised of this requirement and be given a copy of the M.S. degree Prospectus Guidelines by the Department Secretary.* The other Thesis Committee members will then carry out an in-depth evaluation that includes content, format, organization, style, clarity of writing, depth of student knowledge, and writing skills (grammar, etc.). Upon approval students may add thesis units. If conditionally approved, or not approved, it will be returned to the student with suggestions for improvement and a stipulation of a deadline for revisions. Students not meeting this deadline may not add thesis or research units.