Guide for Prospective Students
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University of Maryland Baltimore (UMB)
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Graduate School (410) 706-7131; http://www.graduate.umaryland.edu/
Application https://graduate.umaryland.edu/Admissions/Apply-Now/

University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC)
General Information (410) 455-1000; http://www.umbc.edu
Graduate School (410) 455-2537; http://www.umbc.edu/gradschool/
Application http://gradschool.umbc.edu/admissions/apply/

University of Maryland College Park (UMCP)
General Information (301) 405-1000; http://www.umd.edu
Graduate School (301) 405-0376; http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/

University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES)
General Information (410) 651-2200; https://www.umes.edu/home/
Graduate School (410) 651-6507; https://www.umes.edu/Grad/
Application https://undergradapp.umes.edu/psc/webapp/EMPLOYEE/HRMS/c/ES_ADMISSIONS.ES_WEB_APP_ENTRY2.GBL?&

University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES);
http://www.umces.edu/
Appalachian Laboratory (AL) - (301) 689-7100; http://www.umces.edu/al/
Chesapeake Biological Laboratory (CBL) (410) 326-4281; http://www.umces.edu/cbl
Horn Point Laboratory (HPL) (410) 228-8200; http://www.umces.edu/hpl
Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET) (410) 234-8800;
http://imet.usmd.edu/

Revised: 8/28/18
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Introduction

The Marine-Estuarine-Environmental Sciences (MEES) Program is a graduate program leading to M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. The mission of the MEES Program is to train graduate students in the environmental sciences. There is a clear need for scientists with training in this area, given the multitude of environmental problems faced by society today. The title of the program emphasizes our strengths in marine and estuarine sciences, although the program spans environmental science as a whole, irrespective of habitat. The interests of students in the program are diverse, but generally center on some aspects of the interaction between biological and physical or chemical systems. The analysis of this interaction may range from a study of molecular mechanisms to an assessment of the economics of an environmental impact. To ensure that all students in the program have some understanding of the breadth of information in the field of environmental sciences, each student is required to have course work in a variety of areas.

The MEES Program is multidisciplinary; its faculty consists of members from numerous units within the University System of Maryland (USM). In most cases, students within the MEES Program work in the laboratory of their research advisor in the department or unit to which the advisor belongs. This may be a department of the Baltimore Campus or Baltimore County Campus, the College Park Campus, the Eastern Shore Campus, or at laboratories of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) - the Horn Point Laboratory, the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, the Appalachian Laboratory, or the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology.

Courses taken by MEES students are taught on all campuses of USM and at the research laboratories. In general, basic or fundamental courses are offered on the campuses, whereas more advanced and specialized courses are offered at both the campuses and research laboratories. A course taught anywhere within USM is available to any graduate student registered at any campus through inter-institutional enrollment.

The interests of faculty and students within the MEES program have led to four Foundations, from which a student may choose. The Foundations are: Environment & Society, Earth & Ocean Science, Ecological Systems, and Environmental Molecular Biology & Technology. Each student will choose a Foundation when applying to the MEES Program. Both admission and program requirements will depend upon the selected Foundation.

Given that students will be admitted to the program only if a research advisor can be identified, applicants are urged to contact potential advisors early in the application process so they can determine the possibility of working with him/her. This information can be found at our website: www.mees.umd.edu.
The Marine Estuarine Environmental Sciences (MEES) Program is a unique graduate education program offered through the University System of Maryland. The MEES curriculum provides a balance of disciplinary strength and interdisciplinary perspective, designed for environmental issues in the 21st century. Students work with faculty to develop an individually tailored program of study in route to a research-based master's or doctoral degree. The hallmark of the MEES program is that students can access training in the full breadth of environmental sciences from the social sciences to molecular ecology. All students receive quantitative training, professional development, and are exposed to a variety of interdisciplinary issues. MEES alumni enter a diversity of fields in academic, government agencies, non-governmental organizations and private industry.

MEES leverages the expertise of faculty from five universities; the University of Maryland, College Park; University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore; the University of Maryland, Baltimore; and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Classes are offered using interactive video technology so that courses from the different universities can be accessed by students.

The MEES Curriculum is designed around four interdisciplinary Foundational Areas: 1) Environment and Society; 2) Earth and Ocean Sciences; 3) Ecological Systems, and 4) Environmental Molecular Science and Technology. Students begin their academic training by taking the appropriate introductory Foundation course. Then, with the guidance of their advisory committee, students select additional elective courses that are specific to the student's interests. These courses may remain within their chosen Foundation or incorporate elements of other Foundations. There are numerous elective courses that can be taken to meet each student's diverse interests and study focus. Students also take several professional development courses and participate in seminars and issue study groups.
Admission Information

Applicants will be considered for admission and advising on all campuses by faculty associated with the appropriate Foundation based on the applicant’s requests. Prospective students may apply through the Graduate School at the University of Maryland Baltimore Country (UMBC), the Graduate School at College Park (for applications to UMCP, UMCES, or UMB) or the Graduate School at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). In general, a student who has identified a specific member of the faculty with whom to work should apply to the graduate school at the campus where the faculty member is affiliated.

Applicants to the MEES Program will be considered at both the M.S. and the Ph.D. levels. In the event an applicant to the Ph.D. program has only a B.A. or a B.S. degree, admission may initially be to the M.S. program with the possibility to change to the Ph.D. program upon successful completion of a probationary period and on the recommendation of the student’s Research Advisory Committee.

An Admissions Committee for each Foundation has been established to evaluate the applications of perspective students based on the following criteria:

1. The applicant’s research interests must be clearly stated and relevant to the MEES Foundation.
2. The academic preparation of the applicant must be consistent with stated interests and Foundation requirements.
3. All prerequisite courses for your Foundation must be completed with a grade of C or better.
4. The undergraduate GPA must be at least 3.0, although some students with a GPA below 3.0 may be provisionally accepted based on related research or work experience. **Note: If you are applying for the Ph.D. program and already have a M.S. degree, your undergraduate GPA is the one we will use when conducting evaluations, however your graduate M.S. GPA will be taken into consideration.
5. Applicants must submit the following required documents as part of their application for graduate study in the MEES Program:
   - Official transcripts of all college-level work.
   - A brief essay clearly defining areas of research interest and research objectives (preferably including the Foundation of interest). The essay should be carefully prepared, not in outline form, and will assist with identification of an academic advisor should the application be judged favorable for admission into the program.
   - A current CV or resume
   - Three letters of recommendation from persons familiar with the academic work of the applicant.
   - Official Graduate Record Examination Scores (Optional).
   - International Applicants: Most international applicants will be required to submit Test of English as Foreign Language (TOFEL) exam scores. This is specific to each applicant. Should you have any questions, please contact the appropriate
graduate school.

**NOTE: PLEASE SUBMIT ALL APPLICATION MATERIALS THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE GRADUATE SCHOOL. PLEASE DO NOT SEND INDIVIDUAL APPLICATION MATERIALS TO THE MEES GRADUATE OFFICE.**

The Admissions Committee of the appropriate Foundation does the initial screening of an applicant’s credentials. Each Foundation has specific course prerequisites; students missing one or two of these courses may be offered provisional acceptance. Such students will be expected to have successfully completed these courses during their first year of study. Students missing three or more prerequisites will generally not be admitted and should plan to take some of those courses before applying again.

Receipt of the complete application will initiate a search for an appropriate faculty member to serve as the academic advisor for the student. **No student will be admitted to the Program unless an advisor has been identified.** Hence, if prior discussions have taken place between an applicant and a member of the faculty regarding the faculty member serving as the advisor to the student, that should be mentioned and a letter from the potential advisor should be in the student’s file. The student will be matriculated on the degree-granting campus of their advisor, following formal acceptance of the applicant by the appropriate Graduate School. Please keep in mind that locating an advisor is the responsibility of the applicant. The MEES program will assist in trying to locate an advisor but it is solely the applicant’s responsibility to secure an advisor and ensure that MEES has been made aware of the agreement between the student and the advisor.

**MEES Application Deadlines**

All initial MEES Applications must be received by the following dates while all supporting materials must be received no later than 30 days after the initial deadline:  
*Deadlines subject to change- Please check MEES website.*

**Deadlines for Fall:**

- **January 13** for both Domestic and International applicants

**Deadlines for Spring:**

- **September 30** for both Domestic and International applicants

Revised: 8/28/18
Admissions FAQs

1. When applying do I need to submit one application at each campus?
   No. When you apply, your application will be considered at all campuses but only one application is necessary. Please apply to the campus at which your potential advisor is based.

2. Can I apply to more than one Foundation?
   No. When applying you must specify which Foundation you would like to be considered for evaluation. Please be sure to select your chosen Foundation within the online application or identify it within your personal statement.

3. Do I need to secure an advisor before I apply to the program?
   No. You do not need to secure an advisor prior to applying to the MEES program, but we strongly recommend that you do. In order for you to be admitted to the program an advisor must be identified and he/she must have confirmed with the MEES program that they have agreed to work with you before a formal acceptance can be processed. It is strongly recommended that you contact potential advisors in advance. Please see the faculty directory for a list of potential advisors. Keep in mind it is the student's responsibility to secure an advisor. You can use the email addresses listed in the faculty directory to contact potential advisors.

4. I have not located an advisor yet, which campus do I apply to?
   In the event that you have not located an advisor at the time of application but are still interested in applying to the MEES Program, please submit your application to the Graduate School at the University of Maryland, College Park. Arrangements can be made at a later date to transfer your application and matriculation to a different campus should that be necessary.

5. I do not have a M.S. degree, but I am interested in applying for the Ph.D. program. Is that possible?
   MEES does not require that Ph.D. applicants already have a M.S. degree in order to apply for the doctoral program. However, please note that acceptance might only be granted at the M.S. level initially with the potential to change degree tracks depending on your performance in the program.

6. Where do I send my application materials?
   The MEES Office does not accept any application materials. Please submit all application materials to the appropriate application website/Graduate School at the campus you are applying to.

7. How do I determine if I am eligible to apply to the MEES Program?
   To determine eligibility, please review the criteria listed under our How to Apply Section of the website. Both domestic and international applicants are eligible to apply but must
meet the minimal criteria for admissions. The MEES program will make a recommendation to the appropriate Graduate School based upon the application and the Graduate School will make the final decision after their review.

8. I am an international applicant. Do I need to have my transcripts evaluated?  
Yes. International transcripts must be evaluated prior to acceptance. Please be aware that each Graduate School has a different process for evaluating transcripts - please check with your appropriate Graduate School for more information. Transcripts in any language other than English must include a formal English translation. If you have additional questions, please contact the appropriate Graduate School where you have applied.

9. Do I have to submit GRE scores?  
The MEES Program no longer require students to submit scores. Students who have taken the GRE and would like to have their scores included in their application may choose to submit them.

10. I already have a M.S. degree and am applying for the Ph.D. Do I still need GRE scores?  
Yes. All applicants are required to submit official General GRE score reports.

11. Do I need to take the TOFEL and IELTS exam?  
The TOFEL or IELTS exam is required for all applicants for whom English is not the official language of instruction of the institution where they received their bachelor's degree.

* UMCP applications only- Exemptions apply to some English-speaking countries. List of countries can be found online.

12. Is there a minimum TOFEL or IELTS score?  
MEES does not review TOFEL or IELTS scores for a minimum. Please be sure to check with the appropriate Graduate School regarding their standards for TOFEL or IELTS exam scores.

13. Does the MEES program have specific requirement?  
The prerequisites for admission into the MEES program change depending upon the Foundation you are interested in. Please see the appropriate section for the Foundation you are applying to for a list of appropriate prerequisites. This information can be found on the MESE website.

14. Do all prerequisites need to be completed prior to applying?  
No. It is expected that any student who applies with outstanding prerequisites will have completed those outstanding courses to satisfaction prior to OR during the first year of entering the program.

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15. When are the deadlines for admission?
Please see the deadlines section under Admissions.

16. Can I transfer credits into a graduate program?
Students may transfer up to 6 credits from an accredited outside college/university into a masters program. These credits cannot have been used to attain a previously awarded degree. Credits cannot be transferred into a doctoral program, however students in conjunction with their advisory committee may petition the department to have credits waived. All inclusion or transfer of credit is dependent on department permission and approval of the appropriate Graduate School.

17. Are there funding opportunities for new students?
Funding is never guaranteed for students. The best way to receive some financial support is through your advisor should they have some funds available. Please speak with your advisor regarding different funding opportunities.

18. What happens once I submit my application?
Once your completed application is submitted, it will be sent out for evaluation which will be conducted by the appropriate Foundation Evaluating Committee. Your application will be evaluated based upon 6 different criteria: GPA, GRE and/or TOFEL/IELTS (if applicable), personal statement, prerequisites and coursework, references, and other relevant background (work experience, research experience, projects/thesis, etc.). An overall recommendation will be determined based upon the evaluation of each criterion.

Financial Assistance

While MEES will try to help in locating financial assistance for our students, please note that funding for students is not guaranteed at any point during your tenure in the MEES program.

Each University of Maryland campus has several types of graduate assistantships. Any financial aid available to graduate students on the University of Maryland campuses is available to MEES students on a competitive basis.

Teaching assistantships may also be available through funds provided by academic departments. Research assistantships are available through contracts and grants to faculty sponsored by outside agencies and through research funds allocated to specific research laboratories. The student’s advisor will take particular responsibility to assist in identifying these sources of financial aid for the student.

Students frequently find part-time employment in offices and laboratories in the Baltimore-Washington-Annapolis area and other parts of the state.
General Program Requirements

Committee Formation and Initial Advisory Meeting

Every MEES student must have a faculty advisor upon admittance. This person will be responsible for advising on all aspects of the student’s progress through the program.

During the first semester of enrollment in the MEES Program, the student and advisor must form this committee. The committee should meet by the end of the first semester to determine required coursework, as well as an initial advisory committee meeting report (form found on MEES website). Annual meetings are to be held throughout the degree program.

A Master’s advisory committee with consists of at least three members. A Ph.D. advisory committee must have at least five members.

Preparation of Theses and Dissertations

The student, in consultation with the advisory committee, will designate an area of research specialization and prepare a thesis or dissertation reporting the results of an original investigation in that area. The thesis or dissertation will be prepared according to the rules of the Graduate School. The final oral examination for the MS. or Ph.D. degrees will constitute a defense of the thesis or dissertation.

Master of Science Requirements

The requirements for the M.S. degree in MEES are as follows:

1. Course Work
   a) A minimum of 30 credits with 24 credits of course work and 6 credits of Masters thesis research (MEES 799). Of the 24 course credits, at least 12 of them must be at the 600 level or higher. Exceptions and waivers for equivalent courses taken before entry may be used to meet requirements of the student's Foundation upon approval by the appropriate Foundation Committee. Although graduate courses taken elsewhere may serve to fulfill requirements, only six credits from such courses may be transferred. Courses used to fulfill requirements for a previously awarded degree cannot be used for transfer credits.

   b) Core Foundation course specific to student's chosen Foundation.

   c) Three Professional Development courses, including Applied Environmental Sciences (any additional professional development courses can satisfy elective courses).

   d) Elective courses specific to each student's academic program and approved by the student’s advisory committee.

   e) One Issue Study Group.

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2. **Annual Progress Reports**
   All MEES students are required to convene a committee meeting at least once per year and at that meeting provide a progress report summarizing their research and coursework to date, including a transcript. Reports are due annually on September 30th.

3. **Thesis Defense**
   An oral defense of the thesis, administered according to Graduate School regulations will take place at the completion of the research project. Once the thesis has been successfully defended, one copy must be supplied to the MEES Office in addition to the requirements of the Graduate School.

4. **Time to Degree**
   MEES full-time M.S. students will be limited to four years in which to graduate. Part-time students will not be held to the more rigorous MEES time limits, but to the former limits of five years.

**Doctor of Philosophy Requirements**
The requirements for the Ph.D. degree are as follows:

1. **Course Work**
   a) The student must complete a minimum of 36 credits, with at least 24 credits of course work and 12 credits of dissertation research (MEES 899 (after advancement to candidacy at UMCP). At least twelve credits of course work must be at the 600 level or above. Credits used to obtain a M.S. degree at U.M. or elsewhere cannot be transferred to the Ph.D. program. However, if a student has completed a M.S. degree, up to 16 credits of appropriate courses can be waived by petition to the MEES Office.

   b) Core Foundation course specific to student's chosen Foundation.

   c) Three Professional Development courses, including Applied Environmental Sciences (any additional professional development courses can satisfy elective courses).

   d) Elective courses specific to each student's academic program and approved by the student’s advisory committee.

   e) One Issue Study Group.

2. **Annual Reports**
   All MEES students are required to convene a committee meeting at least once per year and at that meeting provide a progress report summarizing their research and coursework to date, including a transcript. Reports are due annually on September 30th.

3. **Doctoral Candidacy**
   Advancement to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree requires successful completion of both a comprehensive examination and an oral defense of the dissertation proposal. The comprehensive examination must be passed before the student can defense the dissertation proposal. Students must be advanced to candidacy within six semesters after entering the Ph.D. program.

   a. **Comprehensive Exam**
      This examination is intended to determine whether the student demonstrates sufficient evidence of scholastic and intellectual ability in major and related
academic areas. Areas of the examination will be chosen by the student’s advisor, with approval by the committee, from a general list formulated based upon the Foundation. The examination will include a written and oral portion. A copy of the questions and answers must be received by the MEES Office.

b. Dissertation Proposal Defense
The proposal defense is an oral examination on the research proposal administered by the advisory committee. At the successful completion of this defense the student officially applies for Advancement to Candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.

A candidate for the Ph.D. degree will present a public seminar on the dissertation research during the academic year in which the degree will be awarded. A committee of graduate faculty conducts the final oral defense of the dissertation. Following successful completion of the final examination, a final copy of the dissertation must be supplied to the MEES Office, in addition to the requirements of the Graduate School.

5. Time to Degree
MEES full-time Ph.D. students will be limited to seven years in which to graduate. Students must be advanced to candidacy - pass both comprehensive examination (written and oral) and proposal defense - within six semesters after entering the Ph.D. program. Part-time students will not be held to the more rigorous MEES time limits, but to the former limits of nine years for a Ph.D. (five to candidacy)
Foundations

Each student will design his or her curriculum in consultation with their advisory committee, subject to approval by the MEES Program.

Environment and Society

In this foundation, students will obtain foundational knowledge of core theories and methods in the following domains of integrated social and environmental sciences: Coupled natural and human systems, cultural models of the environment, political ecology, participation and governance, ecological economics, and environmental ethics. Students will develop scholarship and practice social science aspects of coupled natural human systems that include critical thinking, written and verbal communication, and practice in interdisciplinary fieldwork to hone skills in data collection and analysis, consensus building, and stakeholder analysis.

Prerequisites:
Bachelor’s degree, including a minimum grade of C or better in the following courses:
1. Two introductory Science courses
2. Two Advanced Science courses
3. Two Quantitative courses
4. Two Foundation relevant courses

Courses & Other Requirements (M.S. & Ph.D.):
1. Foundational Course: MEES620- Coupled Human and Natural Systems.
2. A minimum of three Professional Development courses including:
   - MEES 609A- Applied Environmental Sciences.
3. One Issue Study Group.
4. Elective courses approved by the student's advisory committee.

Note: Students seeking a M.S. degree must take a minimum of 30 credits with 24 credits of course work and 6 credits of graduate research. Of the 24 course credits, 12 of them must be at the 600 level or higher.

Students seeking a Ph.D. must complete a minimum of 36 credits, with at least 24 credits of course work and 12 credits of dissertation research. At least twelve credits of course work must be at the 600 level or above.

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Earth & Ocean Sciences

Earth & Ocean Sciences is an interdisciplinary field incorporating fundamental and applied studies of the land-estuarine-ocean systems. Students will gain a fundamental understanding of the movement and transformation of materials and energy between mountain headwater and estuarine, coastal, and oceanic systems, including geomorphology and landscape dynamics, physical circulation and transport, chemical transformation, and biological reaction. This foundational area also includes elements of environmental chemistry, geochemistry, hydrology, and toxicology to help understand and predict the fate and effects of nutrients and contaminants in the environment. In Earth & Ocean Sciences, we use a wide variety of techniques and approaches, including observing platforms and numerical models to investigate processes in each sub-system, build connections across systems, understand processes at multiple spatial scales, and to foster interdisciplinary educational experiences for graduate students.

Prerequisites:
Bachelor’s degree, including a minimum grade of C or better in the following courses:
   1. Two introductory Science courses
   2. Two Advanced Science courses
   3. Two Quantitative courses
   4. Two Foundation relevant courses

Courses & Other Requirements (M.S. & Ph.D.):

   2. A minimum of three Professional Development courses including:
      o MEES 609A- Applied Environmental Sciences.

   3. One Issue Study Group.

   4. Elective courses approved by the student's advisory committee.

Note: Students seeking a M.S. degree must take a minimum of 30 credits with 24 credits of course work and 6 credits of graduate research. Of the 24 course credits, 12 of them must be at the 600 level or higher.

Students seeking a Ph.D. must complete a minimum of 36 credits, with at least 24 credits of course work and 12 credits of dissertation research. At least twelve credits of course work must be at the 600 level or above.

Ecological Systems

The Ecological Systems Foundation encompasses a broad array of topics and scales of research, all with the fundamental perspective that understanding the interactions between organisms and their environment leads to valuable scientific discovery and application. From genes to
ecosystems and from the mountains to the seafloor, previous student research in this area has included development of techniques in landscape ecology, ecological genomics and fisheries stock assessment. Tools developed over the course of a graduate student career may include sophisticated field and laboratory studies as well as analytical and stimulation modeling. Faculty supporting this foundation are actively conducting research around the globe from the Arctic and Australia to continental areas such as the American Midwestern prairie and the iconic Chesapeake Bay. Our faculty draw from the traditions of individual, population, community and ecosystem approaches, providing students with depth in their individualized training even as the curriculum promotes access to a variety of ecological perspectives. We are committed to training the future leading scientists and professionals in all aspects of ecology. Students interested in pursuing ecological research or engaging in cross-disciplinary research that bridges to each of the other three Foundational Areas are strongly encouraged to explore graduate work with us.

**Prerequisites:**
Bachelor’s degree, including a minimum grade of C or better in the following courses:

1. Two introductory Science courses
2. Two Advanced Science courses
3. Two Quantitative courses
4. Two Foundation relevant courses

**Courses & Other Requirements (M.S. & Ph.D.):**

1. Foundational Course: MEES 660 – Ecological Systems
2. A minimum of three Professional Development courses **including:**
   - MEES 609A- Applied Environmental Sciences.
3. One Issue Study Group.
4. Elective courses approved by the student’s advisory committee.

**Note:** Students seeking a M.S. degree **must** take a minimum of 30 credits with 24 credits of course work and 6 credits of graduate research. Of the 24 course credits, 12 of them must be at the 600 level or higher.

Students seeking a Ph.D. **must** complete a minimum of 36 credits, with at least 24 credits of course work and 12 credits of dissertation research. At least twelve credits of course work must be at the 600 level or above.

**Environmental Molecular Science & Technology**

This foundation encompasses research topics that include current molecular approaches to study biodiversity, bioremediation, food chains, discovery of drugs and enzymes from marine microbes and macroorganisms, sustainable aquaculture, biofuels, biogeochemistry of carbon cycling, and genomics/metabolomics of marine organisms. An entrepreneurship program is available for

Revised: 8/28/18
translation of scientific research into start-up businesses though development of business plans and formation of biotechnology start up companies.

**Prerequisites:**
Bachelor’s degree, including a minimum grade of C or better in the following courses:
1. Two introductory Science courses
2. Two Advanced Science courses
3. Two Quantitative courses
4. Two Foundation relevant courses

**Courses & Other Requirements (M.S. & Ph.D.):**

1. Foundational Course: MEES 680- Cell and Molecular Biology for Environmental Scientists - Genes to Ecosystems

2. A minimum of three Professional Development courses **including:**
   - MEES 609A- Applied Environmental Sciences.

3. One Issue Study Group.

4. Elective courses approved by the student's advisory committee.

**Note:** Students seeking a M.S. degree **must** take a minimum of 30 credits with 24 credits of course work and 6 credits of graduate research. Of the 24 course credits, 12 of them must be at the 600 level or higher.

Students seeking a Ph.D. **must** complete a minimum of 36 credits, with at least 24 credits of course work and 12 credits of dissertation research. At least twelve credits of course work must be at the 600 level or above.