



Sustainable Communities Program



GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

Academic Year 2024-2025

**Sustainable Communities Program
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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Masters of Arts Program in Sustainable Communities (SUS) at Northern Arizona University (NAU). It is a pleasure to have you in the program. This handbook is a compilation of useful information designed to help students. Please take time to familiarize yourself with this information and keep it for future reference. We hope you will find this information useful as you advance through the program.

Note that policies and procedures change over time. This handbook is meant to be a resource, but not as the final word on program and university policies. You will want to consult with the program coordinator or the Graduate College on changes that may arise during the course of your time in the program. Be sure to check the Graduate College website (<https://nau.edu/graduate-college>) for updates to policies and the Registrar and Bursar sites for relevant registration and payment dates. In addition, you will want to become familiar with the Graduate Catalog under which you were admitted. Catalogs are available at <https://catalog.nau.edu>; be sure to check the catalog for the year for which you were admitted.

II. INTRODUCTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

The M.A. in Sustainable Communities Program (SUS) at NAU cuts across many areas of study, including anthropology, the arts, business, communication, humanities, economics, education, environmental science, history, literature, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, sociology, women's studies, technology, and the performing and studio arts. Students gain both depth and breadth in understanding issues important to sustaining community life by choosing from among our SUS courses and those across the university.

Mission

The mission of SUS is to provide interdisciplinary face-to-face graduate education on complex and interlinked issues of sustainability and social justice, encouraging students to pursue important social and environmental issues concurrently. The program seeks to educate students as critical thinkers for community leadership and to enable its graduates to contribute to the well-being of communities. At the same time, the program aims to push students intellectually, looking to produce thoughtful and critical graduates who can think theoretically. The curriculum is student centered and student driven. Students bring their intellectual, ethical, and practical concerns to bear on their particular academic inquiry. These skills are sharpened in collective collaborations between students and different communities through praxis.

Guiding Principles

The program has six key principles. These form the core values of the program.

1. Interdisciplinary: Sustainability implies interconnectedness and a systems understanding of knowledge. SUS students study the intersections between human social structures and the natural world and give attention to the philosophical, ethical, and practical dimensions of such study.
2. Intentionally links theory and practice: One of the program's goals is to educate people who have a depth of understanding and the ability to engage directly in community work. The program pushes students to think theoretically while working with communities. Learning is intended to be integrative, both in content and in application. Thesis work is required to have both a theoretical and applied aspect. "Skills-based" elective courses such as grant-writing, fundraising, mediation, community assessment, and documentary filmmaking are sometimes offered through the SUS program or other departments in order to provide SUS students with useful tools for social change.
3. Issue-based: Rather than learn a discipline, SUS students focus on a particular issue or a nexus of issues. You gain depth in relation to the issue and breadth from courses taken across the disciplines. Recent students have focused on such topics as sustainable design, sustainable food systems, environmental education, wildlife preservation, and community planning, among others. The program also seeks to connect issues to larger ideas, mixing practice with theory to form praxis.
4. Learner-centered: Your intellectual, ethical and practical concerns are the basis for the structure of your graduate education. In consultation with the program coordinator and/or your advisor, you define a concentration that is related to the program focus on "good and sustainable communities" and then create your own course of study to explore the issue(s) you have chosen.
5. Works closely with the community: The program views local and regional communities as potential partners in graduate education and develops collaborative networks that extend the classroom into the community. Since its inception, the SUS program has developed community partnerships on issues related to sustainability. SUS also organizes and sponsors lectures, discussions, and workshops that are open to the public, champions community-based research, and helps to support local sustainability efforts.
6. Uses a flexible pedagogy: The program maintains curricular and pedagogical openness, recognizing that "sustainability" is an evolving topic and requires, in both content and practice, curricular and methodological flexibility.

Program Key Concepts

The Sustainable Communities program is built around the following six concepts. Each of them guides the curriculum and actions in the program. We designed the program so that aspects of these concepts appear throughout the curriculum.

Sustainability SUS takes an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to sustainability, defining it as the sustenance of ecological and social well-being that centers on resilience, flourishing, equity, democracy, justice, and interdependence. The complexity of this definition strengthens our students as community leaders because they have the skills to understand and act in response to a variety of approaches to sustainability, and also challenge those frameworks as they strive toward justice.

Justice The SUS program asserts that social and ecological justice are foundational to any sustainable community. Without equitable access to the resources that make a vibrant, healthy, autonomous life possible, sustainable communities are not possible. SUS students explore many visions and practices of justice. Through coursework and community engagement, students learn about the systems, institutions, and histories of power and domination that shape ongoing struggles for justice and sustainability. We prioritize visions of long-term, radical transformation of oppressive systems, and also give students the chance to work pragmatically for change.

Community engagement All of us in the SUS program recognize that we are embedded within the fabric of both the NAU campus and our regional communities. Community engagement includes the reflexive examination and use of various models of activism, organizing, historical analysis of movements for social change, and other democratic practices. Through community engagement, students directly learn from and participate in the creation, maintenance, and renewal of communities, interacting with, and in some cases becoming, local leaders.

Interdisciplinary Research Interdisciplinarity is integral to all aspects of the SUS program, how we teach, and the students we mentor. Students from varied disciplines join the program, and faculty from an array of disciplines teach within it. Our work to understand, reflect, and act toward just and sustainable communities embraces problem-solving theories and methods from a wide array of academic fields. This enables our students to excel at interdisciplinary thinking, writing, problem-solving, and organizing.

Applied Scholarship Scholarship in the SUS program is grounded in both rigorous theory and practice. Students in the program are encouraged to synthesize theoretical discussions in class with on-the-ground initiatives that respond directly to the needs of communities. SUS students may engage in applied scholarship in their classes, research projects, internships, and graduate assistantships.

Social Transformation Students in the SUS program critically study and practice the arts of social transformation. We believe that sustainable communities require widespread social transformation at political, economic, and cultural levels. While individual change is one component of social transformation, SUS places its focus upon broader, collective forms of transformation with the greatest potential to address the socio-ecological crises we face.

MA SUS PROGRAM

COURSE & THESIS TIMELINE

if you plan to graduate in 2 years, you can expect...

COURSE WORK

THESIS WORK

FIRST YEAR, FALL

SUS 601 (3 CREDITS)
SUS 603 (3 CREDITS)
SUS 608 (1 CREDIT)
ELECTIVE (3 CREDITS)

Your first semester, you will take 10 credits of coursework. Three of your courses (SUS courses) will be with members of your cohort, the remaining course is an elective that you chose.

ADVISOR ASSIGNMENT IDENTIFY RESEARCH QUESTION(S) CHOOSE THEORETICAL FRAME

In this first semester, you will be assigned an advisor who will help you choose classes, discuss your thesis research question, and connect you to faculty that might serve on your thesis committee. By the end of this semester, you should have a preliminary research question and theoretical frame (which you learn about and apply in SUS 601).

FIRST YEAR, SPRING

SUS 602 (3 CREDITS)
SUS 604 (3 CREDITS)
SUS 608 (1 CREDIT)
ELECTIVE (3 CREDITS)

Your second semester has the same general structure as your first semester. For your elective, you may want to take a research methods class, especially if you intend to collect data over the summer; discuss with your advisor.

CHOOSE THESIS CHAIR DEVELOP PROSPECTUS CHOOSE COMMITTEE DEFEND PROSPECTUS

You will choose a chair for your thesis committee and meet with them throughout the semester. In SUS 604, and with your chair, you will develop your prospectus (thesis proposal), ideally defending it by the end of the semester. You will secure two additional members for your thesis committee to guide, support, and evaluate your thesis.

FIRST YEAR, SUMMER

NO REQUIRED COURSES

Occasionally students take a methods or elective class in the summer; most often, they rest, work, and begin working on their thesis.

APPLY FOR IRB APPROVAL COLLECT DATA / FIELDWORK READ & WRITE

Using the summer to prepare and submit your IRB application, recruit participants, collect data, and/or read and write for your thesis, can significantly help you meet your timeline goals.

SECOND YEAR, FALL

SUS 685 (3 CREDITS)
SUS 699 (2 CREDITS)
ELECTIVE (3 CREDITS)
ELECTIVE (1 CREDIT)

Your coursework this semester is flexible. The courses above represent one common option; discuss alternative options with your advisor. SUS 685 is an independent study where you work with a faculty member to study a specific topic; many students use SUS 685 to read for and write their literature review or theoretical frame). SUS 699 is thesis credit.

APPLY FOR IRB APPROVAL RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS COLLECT DATA / FIELDWORK ANALYZE DATA

You will complete a significant amount of thesis work this semester. Exactly what you do depends upon the nature of your thesis, and whether you successfully completed the steps above. Schedule regular check-ins with your thesis chair to create and modify your timeline. Common steps for this semester include applying for IRB approval, recruiting participants, collecting data, and writing final drafts of your literature review, theoretical frame, or methodology.

SECOND YEAR, SPRING

SUS 695 (3 CREDITS)
SUS 699 (6 CREDITS)

Unless you are completing a certificate program, you will likely only take one course the final semester, which is the SUS capstone (695). Your remaining credits will be dedicated to your thesis. SUS 695 runs the first 8-weeks of the semester.

ANALYZE DATA WRITE & REVISE THE THESIS FORMAT THE THESIS DEFEND THE THESIS

This final semester you will write, analyze, reflect upon, re-write, and format your thesis before you are ready to present and defend it to your committee and the public. Meet with your chair to ensure you know & meet Graduate College deadlines.

CELEBRATE! CONGRATULATIONS!

III. THE SUS PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview of the Program

The M.A. in Sustainable Communities is a 36 credit-hour program consisting of 28 credit hours of class-based coursework, 2 credits of community-based engagement fieldwork, and 6 credit hours of a final thesis. All students are required to complete the program with a thesis.

Overview of the Program Requirements:

1. Core Courses	15 credit hours
2. Fieldwork Credits	2 credit hours
3. Elective Credits	13 credit hours
4. Thesis Credits	6 credit hours

The first three sections below explain each of the program requirements in greater detail. Additional program information follows the program requirements.

1. Core Courses (15 credit hours)

The program has 5 core courses: SUS 601, 602, 603, 604, and 695. SUS 601 and 603 are typically taken in the first semester, SUS 602 and 604 in the second. Full-time students should enroll in SUS 695 in their fourth semester (see Appendix A for further detail). Below is a description of each of the core courses.

SUS 601: Visions of Sustainable Communities

This course provides an introduction into critical conversations about social transformation toward sustainable communities, largely in the North American context. It examines dominant philosophical, social and economic worldviews and paradigms, and explores alternatives that might better support flourishing human communities and ecosystems. Core concepts in sustainable communities will be examined, and students will critically study forces and factors that prevent the practical formation of sustainable communities.

SUS 602: Elements and Contexts of Sustainable Communities

This course broadens and deepens the critical dialogue about sustainable communities, examining the economic, global, and technological contexts. Students will study the role of systemic factors, in particular the relationship between the local and the global, which help to maintain or undermine good and sustainable communities. The course will focus on globalization, sustainable economics, social interdependence, and the diverse forms of self-representations within communities.

SUS 603: Social Transformation

This course explores multiple theories and practices of social transformation. Embracing the core principles of the SUS program, it focuses on multiple ways to achieving positive change, pushing students to critically analyze different perspectives. These include, but are not limited to, engaged pedagogy, community organizing, democratic practice, and social movements. The aim is to cultivate critical inquiry, expansive imagination, self-exploration, community building, and

multiple practical organizing modes for initiating transformations in response to the challenges of our time.

SUS 604: The Craft of Inquiry

This course will introduce basic inquiry methodologies for doing interdisciplinary research. Students will learn how to identify key concepts for developing research questions and will be exposed to multiple ways of collecting information to answer their research question. The goal is teach students the logic of inquiry so that they can collect and analyze information.

SUS 695: Achieving Sustainable Communities

This course focuses on successful strategies for achieving sustainable communities, with a focus on communication beyond academia. It highlights successful sustainability initiatives (locally and globally). The course also exposes students to sustainable community networks beyond the university and explores the diverse strategies for continuing to foster sustainable communities following graduation.

2. Community Engagement Fieldwork (2 credit hours)

SUS 608 Fieldwork Experience

The SUS program places great value in seeing students engage hands-on with communities, undergraduate students, and others as they find practical ways to grapple with real-world issues. Some students in the program do this work in the university setting by overseeing undergraduate engagement work in the Community Engagement Minor or in the Community and University in Public Inquiry (CUPI) program. This work sometimes coincides with graduate assistantship assignments, while other students craft their own engagement work based around research projects or other professional work. Students formalize this work by enrolling in one credit of SUS 608 during each of their first two semesters; expectations for each student are developed through agreement with the program coordinator or faculty.

3. Elective Courses (13 credit hours)

Electives are drawn from across the university and are chosen in consultation with the program coordinator and/or your academic advisor to ensure program coherence. Your elective should be structured around a particular issue or complex of issues, so that your master's work is interdisciplinary in nature. Elective coursework must span at least two different disciplines. We encourage you to take at least one research methods course within a selected field. This course will help greatly with your thesis.

You may take any NAU graduate-level courses relevant to your program focus, providing you fulfill all stated prerequisites. Most graduate courses do not have prerequisites; if they do, this is indicated on the course schedule. In that case, you may need to seek faculty permission to enroll.

For most humanities and the social sciences courses, your undergraduate degree will be considered adequate preparation for graduate work. However, if you are unsure contact the

professor beforehand, asking for a syllabus and any preparatory reading and/or prerequisites. For example, several SUS students have taken Ecological Restoration courses and Watershed Management classes without having any background in Forestry or the Natural Sciences. They have sometimes prepared for the course by previewing an undergraduate text in the area prior to class or by following faculty suggestions for preparation. Typically, SUS students have done very well in classes throughout the university, regardless of their undergraduate majors.

SUS 599 (Special Topics)

Your elective work can also include special topics courses offered through the SUS program or other academic units. These classes are designed to address topics not offered elsewhere in the university at the graduate level. During the fall and spring semesters, we often offer one or two special topics classes. Special topics courses are just that: special. These courses are not available every semester or on a regular basis. Please do not assume that they will come around again during your time at NAU. If you see one that is of interest to you, you may want to do what you can to take it is when offered.

400-Level Coursework

If you wish, you may take up to two 400-level courses as part of your graduate work. 400-level courses are upper-level undergraduate courses. When you search the LOUIE system for courses each semester, be sure to search for “greater than or equal to 400” courses so that you will be aware of these classes.

In order for a 400-level course to count toward your graduate work, you must fill out an “Override Authorization-Audit/Class Links/Out-of-Career” form, available on the Registrar’s website.

Graduate Research (SUS 685)

You may include up to six hours of independent graduate research as part of your electives. Such credits enable you to tailor your program of study further. You can use these credits to undertake in-depth study in an area not currently addressed in a graduate seminar, or to do research that correlates with your program of study or with your thesis. You may register for 1-6 hours of independent work per semester. Examples of independent studies include: 1) reading all of Aldo Leopold’s work on land management; 2) reviewing concepts of alternative economics; 3) studying and analyzing court rulings on water use in the Southwest; 4) conducting a literature review for your thesis. You’ll need to consult with the Program Coordinator and your academic advisor to determine the appropriate unit allocation as well as the requirements for the overall project.

To register for a graduate research course, you must:

1. Arrange for a faculty member to serve as mentor/supervisor of your independent work. Develop the details of your project with this faculty member. It is your responsibility to recruit a supervising faculty member to oversee your intended study.

2. Download and complete the Graduate Research Agreement form for the SUS program. The form is on the SUS website under "Student Resources."
3. Get final approval of the proposed independent study from the SUS Program Coordinator. The Coordinator will want to make sure that the project is in line with your program of study and meets the requirements of master's level work. Once the Coordinator has approved the proposal, you will be enrolled.

Be sure to allow yourself sufficient time to move through this approval process and meet registration deadlines.

4. Thesis Work (6 credit hours)

A minimum of 6 hours of SUS 699 thesis work is required for graduation; these thesis credits cannot be counted as part of your elective credit. Generally, you enroll for thesis credit in the final two semesters of your program or after you have formally defended your prospectus. You'll need department permission to enroll.

Though students are encouraged to complete their theses in timely fashion, students may take a number of semesters to do so and may enroll in thesis credits throughout those semesters. **Once you have completed all coursework, you must register for at least one unit of thesis credit each fall and spring semester while you are completing your work.** Most students maintain continuous enrollment by enrolling for thesis credit. During the term in which you complete and defend your thesis, you must enroll for at least one thesis credit hour.

Students who accumulate a total of 18 thesis credit hours (which is an unusual circumstance) are required to submit a thesis completion plan. This plan should be written in conjunction with the chair of the committee and must include an outline the steps towards finishing the thesis, including a timeline of expected work. The plan needs to be submitted to the program coordinator for approval.

Thesis Prospectus Defense

Before a student may enroll for thesis credits, a prospectus defense must be held, during which the proposal is discussed and accepted by all committee members in order to develop shared understanding and consensus around the project. It is often a very constructive working session. A Prospectus Defense Acceptance form must be signed by all committee members and forwarded to the program coordinator to be placed in the student's permanent file (e-mail approvals are OK). Students aiming to graduate at the end of four semesters should plan to defend their prospectus no later than early in the third semester of regular graduate coursework.

Transfer of Credit

Up to 9 graduate credit hours from an accredited college or university may be transferred into the Sustainable Communities program. Transferring credits to a graduate degree program is not done routinely. If you plan to enroll in one or more courses at another institution with the intention to transfer the credits to the Sustainable Communities program, you must obtain the program Coordinator's approval. This ensures that your transfer work is relevant to, and coheres with, your overall program of study. This also applies to graduate work you may have done prior to being admitted to the SUS program. It must be relevant to your current program of study as determined and approved by the program coordinator.

In addition, transfer credit courses must meet all of the following criteria:

- be earned at a regionally accredited institution;
- be completed with a letter grade of A or B (pass-fail grade courses are not transferable);
- be earned within the six-year period required for completing a degree at NAU;
- be applicable to a graduate degree at the institution where the credit was earned;
- meet the Arizona Board of Regents' requirement for credit: a minimum of 45 hours of work is required for each unit of credit. (Note: An hour of work is equivalent to 50 minutes of class time, often called a "contact hour," or 60 minutes of independent study work. NAU requires at least 45 contact hours for each 3-credit course, and we assume at least 90 hours of student homework for that course.) Ordinarily, a course must cover a one-week period for every unit of credit given.

Master's students must complete the Petition for Transfer Credit form. The Graduate College will determine and finalize transfer credit at the time of admission to candidacy.

General Policies on Course Selection

- To earn a master's degree at NAU, you must complete at least 24 hours of formal coursework—that is, courses other than individualized studies such as independent studies, directed readings, and research.
- Courses taken without coordinator or advisor approval may not be applicable for graduation requirements.
- Selections of courses must be approved by the SUS program coordinator to ensure that the overall program of study meets the curricular goals of the program, results in a coherent program, and prepares students for thesis work.
- The SUS program coordinator serves as advisor for incoming students. During the first semester, an alternative advising assignment may be made depending on student and faculty interest. For most students, the thesis committee is established in the second semesters of full-time course work. The program coordinator will help you think about faculty who would be a good fit with your project. Your committee chair oversees thesis work.
- If you plan to complete the program in two years, you must take the required courses in the sequence indicated (see APPENDIX A). If you plan to work on your M.A. on a part-time basis, it is important to note that certain courses are only offered during certain semesters, so plan your program accordingly.

IV. PLANNING A COURSE OF STUDY

You will find a SUS Program of Study worksheet on the Graduate College website; make sure to download the one appropriate for the catalog year in which you began your graduate studies. This form will be useful to you in developing a comprehensive and cohesive program of study. As you plan your course of study, you will want to ask yourself:

- What do I want to know?
- What do I need to know to understand the issue or problem that drives my inquiry?
- What do I need to know in order to write a successful thesis? Do I need more content courses? Do I need a writing course? An internship or fieldwork?
- What do I need to know to facilitate the work I want to do in the world? Do I need a research methods course in addition to SUS 604 to understand how to research my area?
- Remember that the Sustainable Communities master's degree is characterized by four curricular principles: it is interdisciplinary, issue-based, learner-centered, and links theory with practice, preparing students to contribute to the wellbeing of their communities. Your program of study must be constructed with these characteristics in mind.

You will want to select courses that are related to the issue or problem that defines your studies. You are seeking both breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding. Because the SUS program is a distributive program, drawing on courses across the university, there is sometimes little advance notice which courses will be offered each semester through the different departments. We encourage you to map out a program of study by perusing the Graduate Catalog, but keep in mind that the process of creating your program will be more akin to meteorology than cartography. Each semester, you'll want to explore all the impending weather patterns offered by each relevant department before deciding on your classes. When you step back and review your overall program, you'll want to be sure that a sound, intelligible pattern appears and that there is shape and vitality to your work as a whole. Check with the SUS program coordinator for ideas on which external courses other SUS students have found useful in the past.

Your selection of courses should be approved by the SUS coordinator to insure that the overall program of study meets the curricular goals of the program, results in a coherent program, and prepares you for thesis or project work.

A fulltime course load is nine (9) hours per semester. Students spend, on average, 3 to 4 hours of study for each hour spent in class. We consider a full-time courseload to be more or less equivalent in its time commitment to a 40-hour-a-week job.

V. IMPORTANT GRADUATE COLLEGE POLICIES

The Graduate College details policies that apply to all graduate students. Updated policies and forms can be found on the Graduate College website.

Grades

You must maintain a 3.0 grade point average for all courses taken and for all courses required in your plan. No more than 6 units with a "C" grade can be counted on a master's degree. A grade below "C" does not earn graduate credit.

Graduate students do not normally repeat courses. However, if you receive a grade of D or F in a graduate course, you may repeat the course. If you repeat a course, both grades are used to compute your overall grade point average, but you may only use credits earned from repeated courses once to fulfill graduation requirements. If you wish to repeat a course, you must submit the Graduate Course Repeat Enrollment Form, available on the Registrar's office website.

A graduate student with a grade point average below 3.0 is placed on probation. Admission to a program may be revoked for any graduate student who receives unsatisfactory grades. If you have more than 6 units of graduate work with a grade of "C" or below, you cannot continue in your master's plan, regardless of your grade point average.

Graduate Academic Recognition

At the time of graduation, if you have earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.90 or higher for all courses taken at NAU on your plan of study, we recognize you with the notation "with distinction" on your transcript.

In-Progress Grade

Normally, a grade of IP is used only for graduate courses, in particular for the thesis. The university uses the IP grade for courses that, by their content and requirements, normally require more time than the term or session you enrolled in initially. You must be making satisfactory progress in the course to receive a grade of IP. Graduate students may complete IP grades until the time limit on your academic plan expires.

Incomplete Grade

If you are unable to complete coursework in a scheduled course within the term you are enrolled, you may petition your instructor to receive a grade of "I." If your instructor agrees to an incomplete, you and the instructor must complete a written agreement. A copy of which is held in your departmental file, indicating the exact work required to finish the course. This written agreement must indicate the date of anticipated completion. The final date cannot extend longer than one calendar year from the end of the term in which you were enrolled in the course. For graduate students, any grade of "I" becomes a permanent incomplete after one calendar year. Once the time for making up the incomplete has elapsed, you must re-enroll in the course to receive credit. We do not use incomplete grades in calculating your grade point average.

When you become eligible for graduation, you may elect to graduate with a grade of an "I" as long as it is only in courses that aren't required for graduation. These grades will be a part of your permanent academic record. In such cases, these grades cannot be changed after graduation by completing the course requirements nor will they revert to F grades.

Time Limit Policy

You must complete all requirements for your master's degree within a six-year period. If you take courses from other institutions and transfer them to your program at NAU, they must also be taken within the six-year period. We may grant one extension of up to one year to complete your degree requirements, if there are compelling extenuating circumstances. Reasons that may grant an extension include, but aren't limited to, job relocation, military duty, pregnancy, illness, a serious accident, divorce, or other personal tragedies within your immediate household.

To request an extension of the six-year limit, you must submit a petition to the Graduate College. This form, available from the Graduate College, must be endorsed by your adviser and program coordinator. The final decision is made by the dean or associate dean of the Graduate College.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

You are expected to pursue your graduate degree with a minimum of interruption and maintain continuous enrollment. If you are in a master's degree program and do not enroll for three consecutive semesters (not including summer), you will be considered withdrawn from the university and must reapply for readmission to resume your degree program.

If you have completed all course requirements for a degree, you may still need to use lab or other university facilities to carry out a required independent study or research project. For the protection of both you and the university, you must enroll for units of credit during any terms, including summers, that you use university facilities or require the professional time of faculty members. When you begin working on a master's thesis (699), you need to enroll each semester from the time you begin this work until completion of degree. You must register for a minimum of one credit each fall and spring semester. If you are using research or other university facilities, and/or the professional time of faculty members, you should enroll for at least three units.

If you do not maintain continuous enrollment after your work has begun on your thesis (and you do not have an approved leave of absence on file with the Graduate College) to resume work, you must submit a new application for admission and register for additional credits of thesis (699) in an amount equal to the number of credits missed while not maintaining continuous enrollment.

Leave of Absence

In extenuating circumstances, you may petition for an exception to the continuous enrollment policy. The petition form is available on the Graduate College website. It must be approved by your advisor, graduate coordinator and/or department chair and sent to the Associate Dean of the Graduate College for final approval. Your request must be filed and approved before the anticipated absence.

Grievance Policy

Students with significant complaints on any aspect of their academic experience in the department should directly address the person causing the grievance in order to negotiate a settlement. If such an approach fails, the program coordinator and/or student's faculty

advisor should be consulted and should attempt an agreeable settlement. Grade appeals will be treated as described in the University Student Handbook.

Academic Appeal Process

There is an appeal process for graduate students who wish to appeal an academic matter other than a grade appeal. See “Academic Appeal Process” at the Graduate College website for details.

Academic Integrity

NAU regards acts of academic dishonesty—including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, forging an instructor’s signature, stealing tests, copying themes or tests from other students, or using “crib notes”—as very serious offenses. If you are charged with academic dishonesty, you are subject to the Arizona Board of Regents’ Student Code of Conduct and procedures established by NAU, specifically the Academic Dishonesty policy, that are outlined in the online Student Handbook.

Withdrawing from NAU

Withdrawing from a given term (fall, winter, spring, or summer) at NAU means reducing your course load to zero credit units for that particular term. It does not necessarily involve withdrawing entirely from NAU. In most cases, if you withdraw from one term, you are still eligible to enroll for the next term.

Please be aware that you are not considered withdrawn if you drop courses during a term or session in which you also receive credit for other courses. If you are currently enrolled at NAU and wish to withdraw from a specific term or from NAU entirely, please refer to the Graduate College website for details on the withdrawal process.

VI. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The SUS program awards both tuition waivers and graduate assistantships in support of our students. New and continuing students are eligible to apply for these awards. Preference is given to SUS students who are in their first two years of graduate studies. The award process is competitive and not all students will be recipients of financial support. Academic merit, your ability to perform specific services, and financial need are all taken into consideration in the awarding of graduate assistantships and tuition.

In order to qualify for either, you must:

- be admitted to the SUS program;
- enroll as a full-time graduate student (taking a minimum of 9 hours per semester); and
- maintain a 3.0 GPA (with no grades below B and no grades of “incomplete”)
- submit an application to the SUS office prior to the announced deadline. The application is available on the SUS website.

For further information on employment programs, loans, and scholarships see the Graduate College website on financial aid.

Tuition Waivers

Each year, the SUS program is awarded a limited number of tuition waivers by the Graduate College. Arizona residents should apply for waivers of resident tuition; these waivers cover the cost of in-state tuition for fall and/or spring semester. Students who are not Arizona residents should apply for nonresident waivers; these waivers cover the out-of-state portion of NAU tuition for fall and/or spring semester. If you are awarded a non-resident waiver, you will still be responsible for paying the in-state portion of tuition.

The Western Regional Graduate Program (WRDP) offers funding for students from certain states attending NAU. Visit <http://nau.edu/gradcol/financing/western-regional-graduate-program/> to see if your home state is eligible.

Graduate Assistantships

Graduate assistantships are offered as part of an employment contract. Graduate assistants normally work 10 to 20 hours per week, and must be enrolled in at least nine, but not more than twelve credit hours per semester. All assistantships require at least ten hours of work per week and include a waiver of the nonresident portion of tuition. Graduate assistants who work 20 hours per week receive a waiver of 100% of resident tuition and a waiver of the student health insurance premium. Graduate assistants who work 10 to 19 hours per week receive a waiver of 50% of resident tuition. All graduate assistants are expected to pay other applicable fees.

In addition to Graduate Assistantships awarded through the SUS program, you may apply for Graduate Assistantships not attached to an academic department. These opportunities are typically announced on the Graduate College website. You are encouraged to check that site on a regular basis. In the past, SUS students have been successful in securing GAs with such offices as the Center for International Education, the Office of Undergraduate Research, the Bachelor of University Studies program, and a variety of other units on campus.

Student Health Care

The Fronske Health Center is open to all registered NAU students. Fronske Health Center offers several plan options, including major medical insurance. A mandatory health fee is required of all students and is in addition to the optional programs. Visit <http://nau.edu/campus-health-services/> for details.

The NAU Dental Hygiene Clinic can provide students with a variety of oral health services. For more information visit its website.

Graduate Student Government

The mission of the Graduate Student Government (GSG) of Northern Arizona University (NAU) is “to represent the interests of graduate students at NAU, and to communicate between the graduate student body and the NAU administration.” Among other services, the GSG provides travel grant funding to students needing support for research or conference travel. The organization’s website contains many valuable items of interest to graduate students. See: <https://nau.edu/graduate-college/graduate-student-government/>.

VII. WORDS OF WISDOM/ADVICE FROM SUS ALUMS

The final words of this handbook are advice from SUS alumni:

Plan carefully: Be aware that graduate courses are considerably more demanding than undergraduate courses. This explains why a full load of graduate school is nine (9) hours. Most of your courses will require intensive reading and writing. Plan your schedule with this in mind.

Register early: After your first semester, the registrar will email you with the date and time you may register. Students are advised to register as soon as possible for courses. Registering early ensures that the classes you wish to take will be offered since classes with low enrollment may be cancelled.

Choose instructors and courses carefully: Talk with other students, instructors, and the SUS program coordinator regarding course recommendations.

Avoid incompletes: Although extenuating circumstances cannot always be avoided, students should make every attempt to complete courses within each semester.

Take summer offerings and special courses: Courses on special topics are sometimes offered through SUS. These courses usually are assigned the university course number 599. SUS uses this number for innovative courses designed to address unique interests. Generally, these elective courses are offered on a one-time basis. Classes may also be offered in summer.

Find study partners: Consider working with a partner when studying for courses. Engaging in dialogue often increases the quality of your learning experience.

Use the SUS_Communities listserv: SUS maintains a listserv for all SUS students, current and former, along with other community members. This list is a great way to inform all SUS-interested people about events and other items of interest. Check your email to keep up with the latest SUS community activities and announcements. Use the listserv to announce your own events or to inform people about important ideas, articles, etc.

Network with students and community: Seek out opportunities to meet and work with people in fields of interest to you. Include an internship experience as part of your graduate work. Do volunteer work, whether short- or long-term. Join an NAU student club. Keep in mind that an important part of your education consists of becoming part of the community.

Take advantage of university events: Throughout the year, NAU offers a tremendous variety of lectures, films, theatre productions, musical events, etc. The SUS program is a sponsor of many events that are pertinent to our program. Attendance at these events will enrich your graduate experience.

Join other SUS students in social activities: Students sometimes organize weekly gatherings or other social events. You will find good conversation, support, and advice at these gatherings. Watch the listserv for announcements.

APPENDIX A:
SUS Master Checklist by Semester

This checklist serves as a general guide and pathway through the SUS Program, for students looking to graduate in two years. It does not substitute for the formal Program of Study form.

Semester 1 (end with a total of 9-10 credits)

Complete SUS 601 _____

Complete SUS 603 _____

Complete SUS 608 (1 credit) _____

Completion of 2-3 elective credits _____

Complete Program of Study form (in consultation with advisor) _____

Semester 2 (end with a total of 18-20 credits)

Complete SUS 602 _____

Complete SUS 604 (prospectus development) _____

Complete SUS 608 (1 credit) _____

Completion of 2-3 elective credits _____

Select chair and thesis committee _____

Semester 3 (end with a total of at least 27 credits)

Completion of 7-9 elective, research, or thesis credits _____

Defend prospectus (no later than early in the semester) _____

Semester 4 (end with a total of at least 36 credits)

Complete SUS 695 _____

Take 3-6 thesis credits _____

Write and defend thesis _____

Public presentation _____

HOW TO PICK A COMMITTEE AND CHAIR

Selecting a committee and chair for your thesis is one of the most important things you will do in route to completing the SUS program. To that end, you will want to think carefully about your selection. While there is no easy way to make this decision, the points below provide some suggestions.

1. Selecting a committee: Think carefully about what you want to do after graduation. Try to select a committee that will help you enter that world.
2. If possible, choose committee members who know your work and whose feedback has been beneficial to you in the past.
3. If you are unable to select faculty who know your work, look for faculty who have similar research interest as yours. This will require some independent inquiries, or conversations with other students. Remember to use the SUS-affiliated faculty as advisors in this process.
4. Take special care when choosing the chair of your committee. Some chairs will set regular deadlines while others will encourage you to work independently. Additionally, some chairs will serve as the "final word" when committee members offer conflicting comments. Others will expect the writer to resolve these differences. Think about what you need, how you work, and how your style compares to the style of your chair.
5. Make sure the chair of the committee is a full-time NAU faculty member who can guide your work. Of the three committee members, two must be NAU faculty members. The third can be a community member with particular expertise or a faculty member at another university; talk to the SUS coordinator or your advisor to determine the appropriate committee composition for you.
6. If possible, speak to other students who have worked with your potential committee members to get an idea of expectations and work styles.
7. Establish the role each person on the committee plays. Some committee members may want to see every chapter, while others only want to see a complete draft. Others may want to respond informally to your work-in-progress. Ask committee members what their expectations are and explain to them what would be helpful to you presently. It's also a good idea to assemble a committee whose members have expertise and interests that complement one another; one member, for example, may have a high degree of subject matter expertise relevant to your work, while others may offer methods expertise or excellent writing mentorship.