

## How does graduate school work anyway?

You might think that the MS program in Meteorology is simply an extension of our BS program. Just another 30 units of classwork! But you'd be wrong – graduate school is so much more than classwork.

Our MS program requires 30 units to graduate, and 24<sup>1</sup> of these are from 100- and 200-level courses, as described [here](#). The other 6 units are earned from research-related activities, and in many ways these are the most important of your 30 units. Although you might only take 2 units total of METR 299 (“thesis”), completing these 2 units might take most of your time, especially in your final semester.

The balance between classes and research typically changes over the course of your studies. A new student might typically take 3-4 classes in his/her first 1-2 semesters. In the first semester, you are “getting used” to graduate-level work. The classes are harder than BS classes, meaning that more material is covered in lectures, and the material is more difficult. In addition, more homework is typically assigned in graduate school.

By their second semester, the student is now more comfortable with the level of work, and has begun to make decisions about his/her research project. At SJSU, the thesis is the culmination of the MS, and requires a substantial investment in time. Some students arrive on day one with a clear-cut idea of what project they wish to pursue. If a student is being paid by a faculty member from research funds, their project is defined for them by the faculty member. Other students may take a little longer to decide on a project. We encourage all students to speak with faculty members to see what projects they might work on.

So in the second semester, the student may again take 3-4 classes, or may instead take one less class and start their research project. This beginning work may include things like: a literature review, acquisition of data, preliminary analysis of data, learning how to run a computer model etc.

The student's thesis work really gets underway in the first summer, with the student basically working full-time on their research. For students working for/with and being paid by faculty, the normal appointment involves 20 hours work per week on the project during the semester, and 40 hours per week during the summer.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters, students will take the remaining classes they need to complete the 24 units of classwork (soon to be 21). Very often in their last semester, the student is ONLY doing thesis work, having finished all other classwork.

So you see – there is much more to getting your MS degree than classwork!

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<sup>1</sup> In Fall 2017, this will drop to 21 units of classwork, and 9 units of “research”.