

Fisheries Wildlife and Conservation Sciences Department

Graduate Certificate Advising Guide

Oregon State University

Check for updates on the [FWCS Graduate Certificate](#) website

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How to use this document

This document provides students enrolled in a graduate certificate offered through the FWCS department with critical information needed to manage their academic studies. Please review the entire document after you've been admitted and refer to it as needed throughout your course of study. This is a living document so please take note of the date edited at the bottom of the first page. Updated versions will always be available for downloading from the [FWCS graduate certificate website](#).

To navigate this document, click on the sections in the table of contents section, open the bookmarks view, or use the search tools by typing Ctrl + F to open a search box that will allow you to search the document using keywords.

If you are unable to find the information you need, or just want to chat about capstone or career planning, contact your certificate advisor via email or by using their bookings calendar to schedule an appointment. Please let us know if you find any broken links so we can update them quickly!

Welcome to the FWCS Department

Welcome to the Fisheries Management or Wildlife Management graduate certificate programs offered through the Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Science department in the College of Agricultural Sciences at Oregon State University. You have enrolled in one of the fastest growing graduate certificate Programs in the country, where we strive to assure program quality and rigor. We want your time here to help you reach your professional goals. This document is a guide to successfully completing your certificate.

Our Learner Outcomes for these two certificates are simple. We will help you:

- Demonstrate mastery of subject material that relates to the natural sciences portion of their capstone paper.
- Locate sources, evaluate the credibility of those sources, and determine the relevance of that information to a specific conservation and management issue.
- Synthesize the peer-reviewed literature to produce a report that is consistent with the norms of written communication of the fisheries and wildlife profession.
- Apply human dimensions concepts to persistent or emerging conservation concerns.

The information you need about policies and requirements of our Certificate Programs is available on three websites. We recommend that you bookmark these websites and visit them quarterly so that you are always working with the most up to date information about course offerings and program policies:

- The FWCS Department website, <http://fwcs.oregonstate.edu/fisheries-and-wildlife/fisheries-or-wildlife-management-graduate-certificate>
- The Graduate School website: <https://gradschool.oregonstate.edu/current/certificate-students>
- The Ecampus website for newly admitted students: <https://ecampus.oregonstate.edu/students/newly-admitted/>

Meet your Advisors

Dr. Susie Piacenza, Dr. Scarlett Arbuckle, and Dr. Susie Dunham advise students in all of our graduate programs and bring 30+ years of professional expertise in the fisheries, wildlife and conservation arena. We can assist you with questions about registration, course selection, and continuous enrollment policies and other University policies that apply to all graduate students. They can also help you plan for your capstone project and provide insight on how the graduate certificate can work as part of a larger plan for professional development.

If you would like to schedule an appointment with an advisor, you can do so using the following links below their contact information. These links can be used to schedule phone or Zoom appointments. You're also welcome to email us with questions at any time!

Dr. Susie Piacenza (she/her)

Wildlife Management Certificate Advising

Email: susan.piacenza@oregonstate.edu

Website: <https://fwcs.oregonstate.edu/users/susan-piacenza>

[Book an Appointment with Susie Piacenza](#)

Dr. Scarlett Arbuckle (she/her)

Fisheries Management Certificate Advising

Coordinator for [thesis-based programs](#) in Fisheries and Wildlife Science

Email: scarlett.arbuckle@oregonstate.edu

Website: <https://fwcs.oregonstate.edu/users/nancy-arbuckle>

[Book an Appointment with Scarlett Arbuckle](#)

Dr. Susie Dunham (she/her)

Advising on Transitioning from a Graduate Certificate to a Master's program

Coordinator for [PSM in Fisheries and Wildlife Administration](#) Degree

Email: susie.dunham@oregonstate.edu

Website: <https://fwcs.oregonstate.edu/users/susie-dunham>

[Book an Appointment with Susie Dunham](#)

Minimum Requirements for Academic Performance.

The OSU Graduate School and the FWCS department require that all graduate students maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 or better to stay in good academic standing. You can use course grades as low as C on your graduate program of study, but if these grades pull your overall GPA below a 3.0 the Graduate School will place a registration hold on your account. To remove this hold, you must meet with an academic advisor and create a plan for recovery of your GPA.

In addition to the GPA requirement described above, any student using federal financial aid (FAFSA) must maintain a PACE score that is 67% or higher. The PACE score is calculated by dividing the number of courses you have completed by the number of courses you have attempted. Because our graduate certificate programs are short (only 18 credits) it is very easy to run into issues with academic success measure if you withdraw from a large number of classes or withdraw from classes early in your program. In this situation, the financial aid office will withhold any upcoming awards until you have communicated a plan for correcting the issue. If you are contacted by the OSU financial aid office or the Graduate School about any academic success issues, be sure to contact your academic advisor (i.e., Dr. Arbuckle or Dr. Dunham) as soon as possible so we can help you.

Getting Set Up as an OSU Student!

In addition to working with faculty in the FWCS department, students at OSU interact with offices across campus such as financial aid, the registrar's office, Ecampus and the graduate school. This part of our advising guide will help you get set up for that.

Set up your ONID account

Now that you've been formally admitted, you'll need to sign up for your [OSU Network ID \(ONID\) account](#) (Click on "Sign up for ONID"). If you've attended OSU before you may already have an ONID account. If this is the case, you **do not** need to set up a new account. After you have your ONID account set up, go to [My OSU Online services Log In](#). If you have trouble setting up your ONID account or logging in, call the OSU computer help desk at 541-737-3474 or submit an [online request for assistance](#).

Get Started with DUO

All OSU online services are protected by a [two-step authentication system called DUO](#). You should sign up for DUO as soon as possible. OSU Ecampus has a nice [summary of how to navigate DUO](#) as an Ecampus student. We recommend downloading the app to your phone AND getting a [hardware token](#). Having both can save you a lot of hassle if your phone becomes unavailable for some reason.

Checking your OSU Email

Mission critical offices such as the graduate school, financial aid and the registrar will restrict communications with you to your OSU email account. If you are not checking your OSU email, you will miss out on information delivered by these offices. The FWCS Department uses your OSU email account to send registration reminders, information about new courses and upcoming seminars, job digests, etc. – so be sure you're checking your OSU email! We realize checking email in multiple accounts requires extra effort but monitoring your OSU email will greatly enhance your experience in our program.

Process for Transferring credits

Students who completed graduate level courses with grades of B or better at another institution can transfer those credits to OSU and apply them to the requirements of a graduate certificate. The first step would be discussing the courses that you want to transfer with your graduate certificate advisor. If your advisor approves use of the courses, you can submit a [Transfer Credit Request](#) to the OSU graduate school to make the courses available for use on your Program of Study. This process can only be completed after you've been fully admitted as a graduate student at OSU. You are allowed to use up to nine quarter credits of transfer work on your graduate certificate program. **Transfer credits cannot fulfill your capstone requirement.** If the courses you're transferring were taken at a semester school, multiply the number of semester credits by 1.5 to convert to quarter credits. You can also 'transfer' up to nine credits that were taken as part of another program at OSU.

All of the courses applied to any graduate certificate must be completed within seven years so be sure to keep this timeframe in mind when considering a transfer credit request. If you took the courses a while ago, they may have aged such that they can no longer be used on an OSU graduate program.

Registration

How to register

The tools you need to register are found in your [My OSU account](#). Click the **Tools and Services** button and use your ONID username and password to log in. There are also step by step instructions [about how to register](#) on the Ecampus website.

Graduate students do not need a registration PIN. If you were enrolled in an undergraduate program at OSU the term prior to admission to a graduate program, you will need to enter a registration PIN for your first term of registration. You should not need a PIN for any subsequent terms. If you need help finding your registration PIN, contact your advisor for the program.

Use the [Ecampus Schedule of Classes](#) to browse online offerings, find course CRNs and to find out what books you'll need to purchase; you can also view all course offerings in the [General Catalog](#). It is a good idea to review your course enrollment after you have completed the registration process. To do that, go to your [MyOSU account](#) and use the registration system to view your schedule.

If you run into issues registering, try switching web browsers. OSU systems prefer Chrome and Firefox. If registration issues persist, check the academic calendar to make sure registration for that term is open. Also check the General Catalog to make sure the course has space available. If registration problems continue, contact the [Registrar's office](#) or your advisor for help.

When to register

Review the [OSU Academic Calendar](#) for important dates such as the beginning of registration, the start and end dates of terms, drop/withdraw deadlines and University holidays.

Graduate students can register for classes until the Add deadline for each term. We recommend that you always register as early as possible for three reasons:

1. Classes fill quickly and waiting will limit your options because popular classes will close early.
2. It really helps us with course planning if students register early and greatly reduces the chance that classes will be cancelled due to low enrollment; it also gives us time to add new sections of courses to meet student demand.
3. It gives you sufficient time to order any required books. You will not be billed for tuition until after the term begins – so there is no 'advanced cost' to registering early.

What if the Class you Want is Full?

Our classes are popular with students enrolled in a number of OSU programs and some can fill quickly. If the class you want is full, the first thing to check is whether there is a course wait list set up. **If there is a wait list**, you must register for that in order to get into the course. Registration for wait lists does not open until [Phase 2](#) of OSU's Priority registration schedule. There is a great summary of how wait-listing works on the [OSU Registrar's website](#) so please follow their instructions. Be sure to read the 'How Does It Work' section at the bottom of the page so you know what to expect.

If the class does not have a wait list set up, you can email the course instructor and request permission to register for the course. If the instructor agrees, forward that information to your program advisor so they can enter the override you need to add the course.

In the meantime, keep an eye on the course. If another student changes their registration it will create an open seat and allow you to add the class without further assistance.

Do I need to register every term? Can I take Term off?

You do need to complete at least one course in your first term, but after that you can stop out during subsequent terms if needed. You have **seven years** to complete the requirements for the graduate certificate and the requirements of a subsequent Master's program (if desired).

Can I change my admit term?

Yes! Students are allowed to defer their start term to a future term. To do so, use the [Change of Term](#) form managed by the graduate admissions office. Once you submit the form email fw.gradadvising@oregonstate.edu to let us know so we can approve the change.

Enrollment verification

Some students need official verification of their enrollment. Usually this is requested by their employer and is often required for students using GI funding. You can request a letter verifying your enrollment, through the [registrar's office Verify Your Enrollment website](#). If you require information beyond what the registrar office can provide, contact your academic advisor for the program for assistance.

Selecting Classes

Please be sure to review the most recent [curriculum sheet](#) for the certificate in which you enrolled. Scheduling an appointment to discuss your academic plan with an advisor is a great idea! You can start the program by taking just one course if you like. If you're working full time limiting your registration to a maximum of two courses is a very good idea. Please chat with your program advisor if you plan to take a course load heavier than this.

Using financial aid? Any students who have submitted a FAFSA and who wish to use aid must enroll in a minimum of five credits for ½ time aid; nine credits for full time aid. If you have questions about your FAFSA or aid award you can contact the [financial aid office](#) at 541-737-2241. Information about your award will be sent to you through your My OSU account.

Any prerequisites you see listed for graduate-level courses are 'recommended' and not enforced. We allow our graduate students to evaluate if they are prepared to handle the graduate-level content that we offer on different topics. If you're uncertain, you can consult with [course instructors](#) to discuss your background and make a determination.

You may feel the need to take an undergraduate course before diving into graduate level content on a particular topic or to pick up credits needed to fulfill minimum coursework requirements for state or federal jobs. Graduate students can take some additional undergraduate background courses. Any undergraduate course listed on the [curriculum sheet for your program](#) is eligible for federal financial aid and can be counted towards the credit load required to use financial aid. While these courses are eligible for financial aid, they cannot be used to fulfill graduate program requirements.

The OSU graduate school requires that all graduate programs (Certificate, Master's, and PhD) contain coursework that is at least 50% stand-alone. This means the course includes only graduate students; in a slash course graduate and undergraduate students take the class together (e.g., 4XX/5XX). You can identify stand-alone courses by looking at the 'Stand-alone' column in the [curriculum sheet for your program](#). If the cell in that column says 'yes' the course meets the stand-alone requirement; if there is an 'no' in the cell next to a course, then it a slash course.

HAZARD ALERT: If you are registering for a slash course, be sure to register for the graduate section (numbered 500 or higher). You cannot get graduate level credit if you are enrolled in the undergraduate section (numbered 499 or lower). The two sections will have different Course Registration Numbers (CRNs).

Even if your ultimate goal is to transfer into a subsequent Master's program, you should stick to the requirements for your graduate certificate until you have been fully admitted to a Master's program. Do not take extra courses that you think will eventually apply to the Master's program while you are enrolled in just the graduate certificate. The OSU graduate school places a cap (22 credits) on the number of credits that can be transferred from a graduate certificate to a subsequent Master's. If you exceed this, you'll end up paying for courses that you cannot apply to your Master's program of study.

Preparing for a State or Federal job?

Before selecting courses, we recommend that you review the TWS and AFS certification program requirements because a lot of state agencies use these as guidelines for hiring:

[The Wildlife Society Professional Certification Guidelines](#)

[The American Fisheries Society Professional Certification Guidelines](#)

You should also check out the [OPM requirements for different types of federal jobs](#) here.

The FWCS Department also provides resources for [career preparation](#) such as conducting a mock job hunt and identifying professional organizations of interest.

Courses with special registration requirements

There are some unique requirements for a few courses that FWCS offers. These courses require students to contact the instructor and an advisor to receive permission to register.

Super-term courses start before the normal start term date and continue through the regular 11-week term. Some super-term courses include a hybrid component, which requires synchronous, in-person activities. For example, **FW 426/526 Coastal Ecology and Resource Management** and **FW 469/569 Behavior and Physiology of Marine Megafauna** require that student attend a 4-day intensive session scheduled prior to fall term at the [Hatfield Marine Science Center](#). Afterwards, students can complete those courses completely online.

FW 514: Professional Development – Meeting Communications is a course that students can take for one credit if they are planning to attend a professional conference. Registration for the course requires instructor approval. FW 514 is offered every term and students should plan to register for that credit during the term in which the conference falls. Students should provide the course instructor with a request that includes links to the conference, the days they plan to attend, whether the conference is virtual or in-person and a short description of how the conferences meets their goals for professional development. Once students have obtained instructor approval to take the course, they should send their request for a registration override to their advisor. Please include the course CRN, your 9-digit OSU ID and the term you'd like to take the course. If you would like to take this class but have not identified a conference, the FWCS department maintains a list of upcoming conferences on our website. Check out the [FWCS Conference Guide](#) and other useful information on our Careers website.

FW 506: Projects is a required, 3-credit course that all graduate certificate students take when they complete their capstone project. Preparation for this course should begin at least one term prior by scheduling an advising appointment to discuss project requirements and options. In order to register for the course, we require that students send a short proposal that describes their project and identifies their intended audience, and summarizes a conversation or conversations with FWCS professionals that led the student to selecting this capstone topic. Students can find instructions for how to complete this proposal on the [FWCS Website](#). Just scroll down on this page to the Capstone Projects area and then view the FW 506 Capstone Project Proposal Instructions document and other materials. Once the proposal is approved by Dr. Arbuckle or Dr. Dunham, students will be given the override they need to register for the course.

Resources for Student Success

Now that you are registered, it's time to prepare for the coming term. These links and resources will help you have a great term.

Finding your course in Canvas

Your online courses will be delivered via [Canvas](#), OSU's Learning Management System. OSU offers [resources, training, tips and tutorials](#) for those new to Canvas. You can access Canvas from the OSU [main page](#) (Click Tools and Services) or from the Ecampus [Current Student Page](#). We recommend that you bookmark this log in page for quick access.

How to find books

First check the [Ecampus Schedule of Classes](#)

- Find your course
- Look for the beaver store Link (usually below the last term)
- That will take you to books required for YOUR course

How to find your instructor's contact information

You should contact your instructor for any course related concerns such as requesting a syllabus prior to registering or requesting special permission for registration (e.g., if the class is full). The best place to look up an instructor's contact information is the [OSU directory](#). If you're not sure you have found the right email address for your instructor, contact your program advisor for help.

Course Drops, Course Withdraws and Associated Deadlines

If you are registered for a class you don't want to keep, you can either drop or withdraw. Please review the quarterly deadlines for dropping and withdrawing from courses in the [OSU Academic Calendar](#). It is your responsibility to know these deadlines and doing so will help you effectively manage your courses and your budget. **Sometimes the decisions are complicated so be sure to consult with your instructor and your advisor if you're not sure you should drop or withdraw.** If you are using financial aid, you should also review [information on the impacts of withdrawing](#) before taking any actions.

Grades of C or better can be used on the graduate programs offered by the FWCS department. That said, you also need to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better in order to stay in good academic standing in the program. You can't maintain a 3.0 GPA with too many grades below a B on your transcript. The options described below can help you protect your GPA when necessary.

What if I need to drop a class?

Dropping [removes a course from your transcript](#) and eliminates your tuition bill for that course. The deadline for dropping classes falls within the first week of the term, but is sometimes earlier for summer term sessions, extended terms, super-terms, etc. You can drop and add a course on your own through the [MyOregonState](#) registration tool. Use the [guidance provided by the registrar's office](#) for steps, links, and a tutorial. If you need to add or drop a course after the term deadline, this will require a petition and instructor approval. More information and instructions are available on the [Registrar's Office website](#). **HAZARD ALERT:** Petitions for Late Change of Registration are not always approved by the Registrar's office so reviewing drop deadlines prior to each term can save you quite a bit of hassle.

What about Withdrawing?

When you need to remove a course from your schedule after the drop deadline, you can [withdraw](#). This will result in a grade of W on your OSU transcript which does not carry any GPA weight. There are multiple deadlines for course withdrawals each term and your timing will impact the level of tuition refunded. These deadlines are clearly outlined in the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term. Even if you do not receive a tuition refund, course withdrawals can protect your GPA and academic standing. Your course instructors and program advisor are available to consult with you as you make decisions. Step by step instructions for how to withdraw from a course are available on the [Registrar's office website](#).

HAZARD ALERT: There is a difference between withdrawing from a COURSE and withdrawing from a TERM even though sometimes the net result is essentially the same. When you remove one or more courses from your schedule, but you remain registered for other courses, OSU considers the action [Withdrawing from a COURSE](#). When you remove one or more courses from your schedule and the result is that you are no longer registered for any courses that term, the action is considered [Withdrawing from a TERM](#). When only enrolled in just one course, withdrawing from that one course will also count as withdrawing from the term. The processes for these two actions and the limits on the number of times you're allowed to do this also differ.

There are lifetime limits for the number of withdrawals and they are different for each type:

- You can withdraw from 18 total COURSES during your time as a student at OSU (applies to any and all programs that you pursue).
- You can only withdraw from the TERM four times across all programs.
- If you find yourself coming up on one of these limits, **it is important for you to discuss options with your advisor**. Be mindful of these limits if you plan to pursue a Master's degree after completing your certificate.

Withdrawing due to Hardship?

When you withdraw due to hardship, there is a [tuition refund appeal](#) process you can pursue. You will still have a W on your transcript associated with the course, but this process can put some tuition dollars back in your pocket!

Can you Convert a Course W into a Drop?

This is possible if you did not participate in the course beyond the drop deadline and experienced circumstances beyond your control that resulted in you needing to withdraw from the course after the drop deadline. In this scenario, you would submit a [Petition for Late Change of Registration](#) to request the change. You'll need advisor assistance with this petition, so be sure to contact your program advisor as soon as you realize you need to complete this type of petition.

What about S/U Grading?

In addition to dropping or withdrawing from courses, you also have an option to change to an S/U grade, but you should talk to your advisor before doing so. Courses with graded on an S/U basis cannot be used on your graduate program at OSU but requesting this grading basis can allow you to keep a desired course on your transcript with a passing grade while also protecting your GPA if you think you're going to earn a grade below a B.

Basic information about this option can be the [Registrar's website](#), but be sure to scroll down to the "Graduate Students" section on that page. Graduate students who want to request this grading basis for a course must submit a PDF form as part of their request. The deadlines for requesting this type of change are shown in the [Academic Calendar](#).

Key points to keep in mind when considering S/U grading.

- You pass the course (S) if you earn a grade of C- or better and fail the course (U) if you earn a D+ or lower. Any course with a grade of C or above can be used on your graduate program of study. So, if your overall GPA can absorb a C and you think you're going to earn at least a C it might be better to stick with the standard A-F grading basis
- Cs can lower your GPA, and some students who require a higher GPA might consider changing to an S/U to avoid GPA consequences, loss of financial aid or entering academic probation.
- Converting to S/U grade means you may not use a course on your Program, but it may protect your GPA and allow you to keep the course on your transcript if you need it to meet employment requirements.

Funding and finances

Tuition and Billing

If you have questions about your bill, please check the Ecampus website on [Billing and Payment](#) for guidance. You can also check the [current tuition rates](#). If you would like more detailed financial guidance, see the OSU Financial Aid [website for financial literacy](#) for resources and tips.

Financial Aid

If you are using **FAFSA**, you can find more information and help on the [OSU Financial Aid website](#). Minimum loads for using federal financial aid are five credits for half-time aid and nine credits for full-time aid. If you have questions about your FAFSA or aid award you can contact the financial aid office at 541-737-2241.

If you are using the **GI bill** or **Military Tuition Assistance (MTA)**, you can find more information and help on the Ecampus website for [Military Students and Veteran](#) or on OSU's [Military and Veteran Resources](#) website.

If you are interested in pursuing grants and scholarships, please note that these are generally not available through OSU for graduate certificate students, but you can seek outside support through your employer or community. The OSU Graduate School maintains a list of [External Fellowships and Scholarships](#) on their website.

Additional OSU Resources

We are here to support you as you work toward a graduate certificate. Please know that you can reach out to your advisor, instructors or OSU offices at any time. Below are just a few of the additional resources you have as an OSU Ecampus students.

OSU libraries

Most FWCS certificate students are not physically based in Corvallis, however all OSU Ecampus students have access to the library and special Ecampus librarians. Use the FW 506 capstone course library page to learn more about [how to use the library at OSU as an Ecampus student](#).

Resources for Academic Success

If you are an online student, Ecampus maintains a very handy [Current Students website](#) that houses quick-links for the services you will use on a day-to-day basis while enrolled at OSU.

Technical help

The [Ecampus website provides technical help](#) related to CANVAS and how to get, software such as Microsoft Office 365, for free.

Mental Wellness

If you are experience distress or need support, please contact the OSU [Counseling and Psychological Services](#). Several services are available free to Ecampus students as well as some for a nominal fee.

Planning for your Capstone

The Capstone component of your graduate certificate provides an opportunity for you to refine your thinking about your career goals, network with fisheries or wildlife professionals who work for an agency, non-governmental organization, or university, and learn more about an emerging or persistent fisheries/wildlife conservation or management issue. In the term prior to taking the capstone course you should do the following:

1. Consider your current position, how you would like to progress in your career, and how professional connections can help you along that path. As part of this, consider the conservation and management issues that you'd really like to engage with during your career.
2. Contact one or more fisheries or wildlife professionals to conduct informational interviews. Ideally these folks are working in positions you'd like to eventually pursue or are members of the OSU graduate faculty (including instructors) who might serve as your major professor for a subsequent Master's program. You could also consider attending a professional conference (in association with a credit of FW 514) and networking during the conference to identify a capstone topic. ***If you're having trouble figuring out who to contact, schedule an advising appointment with Dr. Dunham or Dr. Arbuckle for help!***
3. Chat with these folks about their path through the career field to pick up tips about what you should be doing/learning now to prepare for the kind of jobs you'd like to pursue in the future. Ask them about the emerging or persistent management or conservation issues that they deal with on a regular basis. As you learn about these issues, identify one that interests you enough to spend a term writing about it! This can be anything related to the ecology of fish or wildlife species, their management, related human dimensions topics, or policy.
4. Once you have your idea, write up a short (2-page max) proposal about your capstone topic and send it to fw.gradadvising@oregonstate.edu. There are [detailed instructions on the proposal](#) available on our website if you scroll to the "Capstone Projects" area of this site. We'll review your proposal, provide feedback, and enter the override you need to register for FW 506.
5. The capstone for the graduate certificate is completed as part of a 3-credit, writing-intensive course (FW 506) so it should be a project you can complete in roughly 150 hours of work. This timeframe assumes you have strong written communication skills. If you do not, your project may take you a bit more time to allow for multiple revisions.
6. Finally, we realize that you'll have written several papers on interesting topics for other courses that fulfill requirements for your graduate certificate. To get the most out of your capstone experience, work to identify a new topic. There is not much benefit to recycling text from previous papers as part of this project.

Selecting a topic for your capstone

The best capstone projects are framed around a narrow topic that allows you do a thorough primary literature review without having to read an unreasonable number of published papers. Library searches on general topics that are well-researched (e.g., trophic cascades or riparian restoration) can generate thousands of search results. In contrast, highly focused topics may not have received as much research attention so there won't be as many peer-reviewed publications for you to review. In our experience, the 'sweet-spot' are topics where there are ~50 published papers; sufficient to provide enough information to produce a nuanced review without having to read half the library.

How does this capstone work with the capstone for a non-thesis Master's degree?

If you are concurrently enrolled in a Master's program or intend to pursue one after your certificate is complete, the capstones for both the Master's degree and the graduate certificate can be developed

with your faculty advisor for the Master's program. The two capstones (graduate certificate and Master's) can be related in topic but should comprise distinct bodies of work. Drs. Dunham and Arbuckle must approve the part of your project that will be used to fulfill the capstone requirement for the graduate certificate and will need to know what you're planning for your Master's program in order to do so. Please chat with them about this as you plan for your graduate certificate capstone.

Finishing your Certificate

You are almost there, but to finish your certificate program there are a few steps you must take to ensure your credential is conferred and shows on your OSU transcript! The good news is that we will guide you through these steps during the Capstone Course (FW 506).

First, visit the graduate school website for current certificate students. Confirm all requirements are met by reviewing the details on the page carefully.

There are two parts to the finishing the certificate to be aware of:

Part 1: SUBMIT YOUR PROGRAM OF STUDY! All students should do this do this part when enrolled in FW 506. We also need you to submit a program of study using the graduate school's online tool. You can find the link to log into the digital program of study here:

<https://gradschool.oregonstate.edu/formlink/14661>

- Log in and add the courses you've taken to your certificate program and submit it. If you still have a few courses to take, include those planned courses. It's okay if you have courses on your program that do not have a grade assigned. Here are some quick tips to help you avoid common problems
 - Pull the courses that you've completed or are in your current enrollment from your OSU transcript
 - Pull any courses you have yet to complete from the catalog
 - Make sure the number of credits associated with FW 506 is set to three (3)
- **Wait** a minute after you submit and follow the steps to sign the form electronically via DocuSign (if you log out too quickly and do not do this part your program will just sit there and never make its way into our inboxes).
- Once you've submitted and signed the form, it will come to Scarlett for approval and she'll move it along from there.

Please let **Scarlett** know ASAP if you run into any issues using the digital program of study form.

Part 2: SUBMIT YOUR DIPLOMA APPLICATION! **Only do this if you are in your final certificate courses.**

The graduate school requires that certificate students apply to graduate at the start of the term in which they complete the certificate requirements. If you're wrapping things up in a future term, make a note on your planner to do this at the start of that term. Also, if you take an incomplete grade in FW 506 for any reason, you'll need to update your diploma application to reflect the term that you complete your certificate requirements.

To submit a diploma application Navigate back to the Graduate school's current certificate student website and follow the instructions to **apply to graduate**: <https://gradschool.oregonstate.edu/current-students/certificate-students>

Finally, the FWCS asks that you complete a short exit survey to provide feedback on the certificate program. You will be sent the link to this survey via email by your program advisor after your certificate has been awarded. We greatly appreciate our recent graduates taking the to complete this survey so that we can use their feedback to improve the program for future students. Once you complete the exit survey, we will have the information we need to mail you a "suitable for framing" copy of your Certificate.

Want to go on for a Master's program?

Many students complete one of our graduate certificates with the intention of continuing on to complete a Master's program. We recommend that you start by reviewing the program requirements for the two Master's programs that students in our graduate certificate program typically pursue. Both programs can be completed online and the credits from your graduate certificate can be applied either of them. However, you should **not** take coursework that would apply to a future Master's program until you are admitted. Just stick to your graduate certificate requirements until you've been admitted to a Master's program. **You cannot be admitted to either of these programs until a member of the OSU graduate faculty has agreed to serve as your major professor** – so your first step is finding a graduate advisor for the program.

How to find a Major Professor for your Master's program?

- Contact the PSMFWA Program Advisor – Susie Dunham (susie.dunham@oregonstate.edu) for assistance: <https://fw.oregonstate.edu/fisheries-and-wildlife/psm-fisheries-wildlife-administration>
 - To hunt for a faculty advisor for this program, you should look at our faculty website. Anyone with a '*' next to their name can advise students in the PSMFWA program: <https://fw.oregonstate.edu/fisheries-and-wildlife/directory/faculty>
 - Once you've created a short list of faculty who have backgrounds of interest to you, send this list to Susie Dunham. Susie can make sure everyone on your list is still accepting PSMFWA students and may be able to put some additional folks on your list.
 - [Schedule a phone/zoom appointment](#) with Susie to discuss your options and a strategy for contacting advisors.
- MNR Contact the Program Director – Janean Creighton, Janean.Creighton@oregonstate.edu for assistance: <https://catalog.oregonstate.edu/college-departments/forestry/forest-ecosystems-society/natural-resources-mnr/>
 - You'll need to contact Juliet Sutton juliet.sutton@oregonstate.edu for a list of faculty who advise in this program.

Will my certificate courses count towards my Master's?

The courses you complete during your certificate can be used as a part of the program of study for a Master's degree. However, only 22 course credits can be "carried over" in this way. Courses cannot be split for partial credit, so if you complete 23 credits during your time in the certificate, you'd only be able to transfer the subset of courses that gets you closest to 22 credits to the Master's. Be sure to plan ahead and carefully time your transition to avoid paying for credits that cannot be used toward either program. Feel free to talk to your certificate advisor about this if you have any questions.

What about thesis-based programs?

The main difference between our thesis and non-thesis master's programs is the level of independent research required and the availability of the thesis-based program to students who want to complete their degree without attending an OSU campus. Students in a thesis-based program are expected to produce and defend primary research suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The goal of a thesis-based master's is to prepare you for a career that will involve independent research.

If your career goals and interests relate more to the application of knowledge for management or conservation, a non-thesis Master's can be a better fit. Non-thesis programs are coursework driven and

conclude with a public defense of an expanded capstone project or internship report. While a capstone project may involve research, the scope will be narrow when compared to a thesis. Also, non-thesis capstone projects do not need to be research based and can involve developing management or monitoring plans, policy analysis or outreach projects. As a result, non-thesis projects are more diverse and can be tailored to the student's interests when those interests do not align specifically with being trained to conduct research.

When considering these two types of degrees, it is important to return to your career goals. If the positions that interest you require the type of training you'd receive in a thesis-based program, you should consider a thesis. If you're seeking other types of professional development, then the non-thesis program can be a good fit. Be aware, however, that thesis-based research requires funding that is typically provided by a program and/or major professor making these programs more competitive. Because non-thesis capstones often do not require financial support it is much easier for students to self-fund these programs. This can make admission to non-thesis programs less competitive compared to thesis-based programs. It does not make the non-thesis program less rigorous, just different.

Our graduate certificate advisors have pursued multiple graduate degrees in science and education and can provide you with invaluable advice on what type of program might be best for you and how to pursue admission to such a program once you have made a decision. Book an appointment and take advantage of their expertise.