Graduate Study in Design + Environmental Analysis
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

FAQ

Currently Enrolled Grads

Q: What is a “minor member” and where do I find one?
A: Cornell graduate education is organized by “fields.” You can learn more about Cornell’s graduate fields here: https://gradschool.cornell.edu/degrees-fields/cugradfos/

Masters students must have one minor field in addition to their major in DEA. PhD students must have two minor fields. Your “minor members” are faculty members who belong to the field you choose as your minor field. Find a minor member by exploring online, taking courses, meeting with faculty, and identifying a person whose expertise will complement your DEA studies.

Q: What is a “special committee”?
A: Your special committee is your D+EA thesis advisor and your minor member(s).

Q: When do I need to finalize the selection of my minor member?
A: Typically, your Minor Member will require you to take 1-3 classes, so you need to identify this person early enough to fulfill requirements. Be sure to coordinate this choice with your thesis chair. Master’s students must complete their special committee selection by the end of the 2nd semester of your 1st year (last day of classes). PhD students must complete their special committee selection by the end of their third semester, although we recommend it be finalized at the end of the second semester.

Q: Is it possible to have a major and minor within D+EA?
A: It is strongly encouraged that minors are outside of D+EA. However, in some cases it is theoretically possible to have your minor within D+EA.

Q: How do I waive out of a course?
A: First, speak with your thesis advisor about the desire to waive out of a course requirement and what prior course you think may fulfill the requirement. Second, meet with the professor of the required course and discuss your level of competency in that area (show the professor your old syllabus and course assignments). If they determine (through dialogue, exams, etc.) that you indeed have sufficient understanding of the material, you will ask them to sign Course Waiver Form. Third, Pick up a Course Waiver Form from D+EA’s Graduate Field Assistant in D+EA Main Office (1411 MVR), have the professor of the course and your advisor sign it, and then submit it to the DGS. Course time conflicts are NOT a valid reason for requesting a waiver.

Q: For Doctoral students – what are the requirements for Statistics courses?
A: PhD students are required to take 2 statistics classes. These courses:
- must be graduate level (i.e., 5000-level or higher) courses; not undergraduate level courses
- cannot be an independent study (an independent study with a statistician could be a 3rd course, but would not count as one of the required 2 courses)
- may be taken at another institution if it is at a graduate level and if pre-approved by the faculty (i.e., student should provide syllabus for review in advance).
Q: Do International Students have to take any additional language tests?
A: D+EA requires that all incoming International PhD Students whose first language is not English pass an International Language Assessment (ILA). Upon admission, international students will be scheduled for an ILA, and will be informed of the date and time of their appointment by D+EA’s Graduate Field Assistant.

Q: What is the funding amount for the thesis research grant funding offered by the department?
A: As long as we have funds available, D+EA offers one-time thesis grant funding for 2nd year MA/MS students and 3rd year PhD students in Fall and Spring.

Q: I know that in some graduate fields, there is a “paper option” for the PhD dissertation, what does that mean and what is the policy in D+EA?
A: The “paper option” means that a student may, if their committee agrees, write a series of empirical research papers for their dissertation. Typically, one might write a general introduction and conclusion (chapters) as book ends and then approximately three empirical papers (chapters). The D+EA field has agreed that this is an option for PhD dissertations, but not for Master’s theses.

Q: What steps do I need to take when planning my thesis or dissertation defense?
A: You should first confer with your committee chair and members. When you are getting ready to defend your thesis, please also contact D+EA’s Graduate Field Assistant, 1411 MVR. There is a document that can be sent to you electronically that will help you to prepare for your defense. Also, please check online at: http://gradschool.cornell.edu/thesis-dissertation, for additional information from the Cornell Graduate School’s Thesis & Dissertation webpage.