M.S. Earth Science Graduate Program
Overview of the Research Proposal Process

All students must prepare and orally present a research proposal that clearly outlines the purpose and scope of their research as part of their Plan of Study. The proposal presentation must be completed before the beginning of the 3rd semester (for full-time students) or before the completion of 18 credits (for part-time students). There are no specific criteria or procedures to follow, but the scenario outlined below is very typical. Each student should work with their research advisor and committee to personalize their research proposal and presentation.

Typical Proposal Presentation/Defense Scenario

1. Student completes a written research proposal document outlining the project’s background (i.e., literature review), methods, preliminary results, and planned future work that will constitute the final project/thesis.

2. Student provides the written document to their committee at least one week in advance of the presentation.

3. Student completes preliminary information on a “Plan of Study” form available on the “Resources for Current Students” page of the MS-ESCI website:


   **Note:** The “specific goals” section refers to the objectives/hypotheses of the proposed research project/thesis.

4. At the defense, the student gives a 20-25 min oral presentation of their proposed research project/thesis.

5. Committee members ask questions of the student and provide recommendations on how to improve the project/thesis. (**Note:** Questions can address the research OR elements of integrated Earth Science covered in the student’s coursework).

6. Committee members ask student to step outside the room, while the committee deliberates a final list of recommendations. This list often includes additional components to the proposed research project/thesis, but can also include additional coursework needed to solidify the student’s conceptual understanding of a topic, or to gain/enhance skills required to complete the research.

7. If the committee finds the proposed research (with recommendations) satisfactory, then the student and the committee signs/dates the Plan of Study form.

8. Student returns Plan of Study form to Stephen Bowman (after a typed version of the recommendations list has been attached)