

University of Kansas

School of Engineering

**Department of Civil, Environmental & Architectural
Engineering**

Graduate Handbook

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
1. Department Directory	1
2. General Academic Policies and Procedures	2
2.1. Admission	2
2.1.1. Minimum requirements or prerequisites	2
2.1.2. Deadlines.....	2
2.1.3. Application Materials & Procedures	3
2.1.4. Admissions Contact Information	3
2.2. Enrollment	3
2.2.1. General Enrollment Information.....	3
2.2.2. Permission Numbers	4
2.2.3. Changes in Enrollment / Late Enrollment.....	4
2.2.4. Special population considerations.....	4
2.3. Academic Integrity & Misconduct.....	5
2.4. Good Academic Standing.....	5
2.5. Grading.....	6
2.5.1. Minimum Grade Requirements for Core Courses	6
2.5.2. Incomplete Grades	6
2.5.3. Grading for Thesis & Dissertation Hours	6
2.6. Annual Student Progress Review.....	7
2.7. Professional Development	7
2.8. Grievance Procedures.....	8
2.9. Petitions	8
3. Advising, Mentoring, and Communication of Assignments & Roles	8
3.1. Change of Faculty Advisor	9
3.2. Regular & Timely Feedback from Thesis/Dissertation Advisors.....	10
4. Information for Graduate Assistants (3G: GTA/GRA/GA)	10
4.1. General Information for All 3G Positions.....	10
4.2. GTAs.....	11

4.3. GTA MOA Requirements	11
4.4. GRAs/GAs	11
5. Degree Requirements and Procedures	12
5.1. Academic Catalog	12
5.2. Master’s Degree Requirements.....	12
5.2.1. Coursework Requirements	12
5.2.2. Culminating Effort Options	13
5.2.3. Outcome.....	13
5.2.4. Continuation to the Ph.D.	13
5.3. Doctoral Degree Requirements.....	13
5.3.1. Admission	13
5.3.2. Coursework and Degree Requirements	14
5.3.3. Research Skills & Responsible Scholarship	14
5.3.4. Establishing a Committee	14
5.3.5. Oral Comprehensive Exam /Dissertation Proposal Procedures	15
5.3.6. Post-Comp Enrollment.....	15
5.3.8. The Dissertation	15
5.4. Certificate Requirements	15
6. Other Topics	16
7. Appendices.....	16
Appendix A. CEAE / KU Resource Directory	16
Appendix B. Graduation Checklist (required).....	17

How to use this handbook. This handbook is designed to complement, not replace, the KU Academic Catalog, University Policy Library, and Office of Graduate Studies materials. Department-specific expectations and procedures are described here; KU-wide policy is referenced by source rather than restated in full.

1. Department Directory

The Department of Civil, Environmental & Architectural Engineering (CEAE) is part of the University of Kansas School of Engineering. Department leadership, graduate administration, and program support are distributed across faculty and staff roles. Students should use the directory below as the starting point for questions about admissions, advising, enrollment, milestones, petitions, and graduation.

Role	Name	Contact	Typical reasons to contact
Department Chair	Caroline R. Bennett, Ph.D., P.E.	crb@ku.edu 785-864-3235	Department leadership, high-level concerns, faculty matters, escalated issues
Associate Chair / Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)	Jian Li, Ph.D., P.E., F.ASCE	jianli@ku.edu 785-864-6850	Graduate policy interpretation, advising questions, petitions, committee and degree milestone questions
Graduate Coordinator	Ronda Morgison	gradceae@ku.edu 785-864-5124	Admissions processing, forms, milestone routing, enrollment questions, graduation paperwork
Department Office	CEAE Main Office	ceae@ku.edu 785-864-3766 2150 Learned Hall, 1530 W. 15th St., Lawrence, KS 66045	General inquiries, referrals, department operations

Students may also need to coordinate with the School of Engineering graduate staff and the Office of Graduate Studies for university-level processes, including graduation clearance, Electronic Thesis or Dissertation (ETD) submission requirements, and selected petitions. When in doubt, begin with the CEAE Graduate Coordinator, who can route the question to the appropriate office.

Additional Resources

Students may also consult:

- [Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs](#)
- [Office of the Registrar](#)

These offices provide guidance on university-level policies and procedures.

Faculty Directory

A complete listing of CEAE faculty and research areas is available at:

<https://ceae.ku.edu/faculty>

Students are encouraged to review faculty profiles when selecting advisors.

2. General Academic Policies and Procedures

2.1. Admission

Admission to CEAE graduate programs is based on academic preparation, the fit between the applicant's background and the intended program, evidence of readiness for graduate study, and—particularly for research degrees—the fit between the student's interests and faculty expertise. The department admits for all semesters, and students may study full time or part time depending on the program and the availability of courses or faculty supervision.

The department's graduate offerings currently include Master of Science (MS) degrees, the Master of Construction Management (MCM), doctoral degrees, and graduate certificates. Some options are primarily intended for full-time, research-oriented study, while others—especially the Master of Science (coursework only option) and MCM—are also structured to serve working professionals and part-time students.

2.1.1. Minimum requirements or prerequisites

For civil engineering and architectural engineering graduate degrees and certificates, an ABET-accredited bachelor's degree in engineering, or the equivalent from abroad, is the required preparation. For environmental and water resources engineering programs, a bachelor's degree in engineering or a field of science is acceptable. For the MCM, a bachelor's degree in engineering or in a relevant non-engineering field, such as architecture or business, is acceptable.

Applicants whose prior degree work is related but not fully aligned with the intended program may be admitted with prerequisite expectations. In practice, prerequisite coursework is used to ensure students are prepared for graduate-level work in structures, construction, geotechnics, transportation, water resources, architectural systems, or environmental topics. Prerequisites do not normally count toward the graduate degree unless explicitly approved under catalog rules.

2.1.2. Deadlines

Application deadlines and any priority deadlines for funding consideration are published by CEAE and KU Graduate Admissions. Students should use the official departmental admissions page for current dates. Because assistantship and scholarship decisions often occur on an earlier timeline than general admission review, applicants who seek Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) or Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) support should apply as early as possible and should not assume that applying by the final admission deadline preserves equal access to funding. International applicants should build in additional lead time for English proficiency review, document processing, immigration documentation, and visa appointments.

2.1.3. Application Materials & Procedures

Applicants complete the online KU graduate application and submit the program-specific materials requested there. Before admission can be finalized, official transcripts must be received from each university or college attended. Applicants may upload transcript copies with the online application, but official transcripts must be received by the end of the first semester.

- GRE: GRE is not required for admission. However, for M.S. and Ph.D. applicants, CEAE strongly recommends the exam because some funding decisions consider GRE scores as one element of a competitive application package.
- Recommendations: MCM applications require 2 references; all M.S. and Ph.D. applications require 3 references; and graduate certificate or non-degree applications require no references. Applicants will be asked to provide contact information for the required number of references; these references will be contacted by KU to upload letters of recommendation.
- Statement of purpose and résumé/CV: applicants upload both through the online application. The statement of purpose is a brief explanation of academic and career interests, goals, and the desired area of specialization.
- English proficiency: non-native English speakers must satisfy KU English proficiency requirements ([Options for Demonstrating English Proficiency](#)).

For research-oriented degrees, applicants should use the faculty pages to identify potential advisors whose interests align with the proposed area of study. Prospective students are encouraged to explore visits or contact the graduate coordinator with application questions.

2.1.4. Admissions Contact Information

Questions about admissions should be directed to the CEAE Graduate Coordinator (gradceae@ku.edu, 785-864-5124). KU Graduate Admissions handles the institutional application system and official transcript intake. Students interested in visiting, scheduling conversations, or clarifying degree options should also review the School of Engineering graduate staff directory and the relevant CEAE program pages.

2.2. Enrollment

2.2.1. General Enrollment Information

Students are responsible for timely enrollment each term in accordance with KU's academic calendar, Graduate Studies rules, assistantship conditions, and immigration requirements where applicable. CEAE-specific enrollment expectations vary by program stage. Research-degree students typically progress from coursework-heavy early semesters to a mix of coursework and research/dissertation hours later in the program. Professional master's students often follow a course-sequenced plan, especially in the MS-coursework option and MCM programs.

Graduate students in a master's program, or in a Ph.D. program who have not yet completed the oral comprehensive examination, should generally be enrolled in at least 6 credit hours each fall and spring semester when supported by a 3G appointment (graduate teaching assistantship, graduate research assistantship, or graduate assistantship), or similar funding, unless a

fellowship or other award specifies a different rule. Students who are not supported by a 3G appointment should generally be enrolled in at least 9 credit hours each fall and spring semester. After completing the oral comprehensive examination and dissertation proposal milestone, doctoral students are expected to follow KU's [post-comprehensive enrollment policy](#). Students should direct enrollment questions first to the Graduate Coordinator.

Students should also remember that tuition and fee implications may differ by campus, course location, or delivery mode.

2.2.2. Permission Numbers

Some courses require department or instructor permission because of prerequisites, limited seats, graduate standing restrictions, or sequencing. Permission numbers may be issued by the Graduate Coordinator, or another authorized staff member within the department. There are two types of permission numbers, department and instructor. For instructor consent, the student should reach out to the instructor for their approval for permission to enroll in the course. If the request is in email, the Graduate Coordinator should be copied in when sent to the instructor and they have given their permission. For department consent, the student should reach out to the Graduate Coordinator or another authorized staff member within the department for permission to enroll in the course. Students should request permission early, especially when the course is tied to graduation timing or a funding condition.

2.2.3. Changes in Enrollment / Late Enrollment

Students considering adding, dropping, or withdrawing from a course should review [KU Registrar deadlines](#) and should consult CEAE graduate coordinator before the change as it could affect progress, assistantship eligibility, full-time status, international student status, or graduation timing. Late enrollment may carry fees or may require multiple approvals.

Students should be especially cautious when changing thesis, dissertation, special problem, capstone, or required core enrollment. Those courses often anchor milestone timing or faculty workload planning. A change that appears minor administratively can create a significant delay in degree progress if it removes a student from a culminating requirement, an advisor-supervised course, or an exam prerequisite.

2.2.4. Special considerations

Some cases may need additional attention during enrollment planning.

- International students should consult International Student Services before dropping below required enrollment or changing modalities in a way that affects visa compliance.
- Students in online or evening-focused programs should verify whether all required courses are available in the intended delivery format for the term in which they plan to take them.
- Students supported by an assistantship or fellowship should review the enrollment conditions of that appointment before changing hours.
- Students in research track degree programs should enroll in thesis, dissertation, or special-problem hours before published deadlines.

2.3. Academic Integrity & Misconduct

The CEAE Department regards academic misconduct as a very serious matter. Students who violate conduct policies are subject to severe penalties, up to and including dismissal from the School of Engineering. Students should refer to [University Senate Rules and Regulations](#) and [School of Engineering rules](#) for the official definitions of misconduct and the full range of consequences.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, disruption of classes; threatening an instructor or fellow student in an academic setting; giving or receiving unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of reports or other assignments; knowingly misrepresenting the source of academic work; unauthorized changing of grades; unauthorized use of University approvals or forging of signatures; falsification of research results; plagiarism; violation of regulations or ethical codes for the treatment of human or animal subjects; or otherwise acting dishonestly in research.

Because CEAE programs often involve laboratories, design projects, team-based work, professional software, data collection, and externally funded research, students should take particular care with collaboration boundaries, source attribution, authorship, data stewardship, human-subject or animal-use protocols, and truthful reporting of analyses and design assumptions. When expectations are unclear, the student should ask the instructor, advisor, or supervising faculty member before proceeding.

2.4. Good Academic Standing

Good academic standing in CEAE requires more than the bare absence of a hold or a registration problem. Students must meet KU Graduate Studies standards and make timely progress toward degree requirements and milestones. At minimum, students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0, remain active in their program, and show satisfactory progress in coursework, research, annual review, and program milestones.

A student may be placed on probation based on the recommendation of the School of Engineering or the Department of CEAE. Common reasons for probation include, but are not limited to, failure to maintain the required GPA; failure to establish an advisory committee in a timely manner; failure to complete degree milestones within expected timeframes; receiving multiple or consecutive Incomplete grades; failure to submit materials for annual review; or a faculty determination that progress is not satisfactory.

Students placed on probation should expect written notice describing the specific deficiencies, the steps required to return to good standing, and the timeline for doing so. Failure to meet the terms of probation may constitute grounds for dismissal from the graduate program. A second probation episode—consecutive or not—may also be treated as evidence that the student is not making satisfactory progress.

Because many CEAE students hold assistantships, good standing also affects department funding decisions. A student whose performance falls below expectations may lose priority for potential for reappointment or may become ineligible for certain departmental opportunities.

Students receiving federal financial aid should consult with the KU Office of Financial Aid on any additional requirements for satisfactory academic progress.

2.5. Grading

2.5.1. Minimum Grade Requirements for Core Courses

KU Graduate Studies requires a grade of C or higher for graduate credit to count toward graduate degree requirements. Departments may set higher expectations for specific courses or sequences. In CEAE, students should assume that strong performance in core and specialization coursework is expected, especially for research degrees, fast-track doctoral study, and any future funding competition.

Students who earn a grade below B in a course that is foundational for later work should consult their advisor immediately. Depending on the program and the course, the remedy may involve repeating the course, substituting another approved course, demonstrating equivalent competency, or revising the plan of study.

2.5.2. Incomplete Grades

The grade of I (Incomplete) is used to indicate work of passing quality in a course, some part of which is, for good reason, unfinished. It is given only by advance arrangement between instructor and student. Students are advised to make the removal of any Incomplete a matter of first priority.

CEAE discourages the accumulation of Incomplete grades because they cloud progress assessment and may affect assistantship review, annual review, or graduation timing. The accumulation of multiple Incomplete grades, or the failure to remove an Incomplete within one year, may result in the student falling out of good standing and, when applicable, not being reappointed to a graduate assistantship. An Incomplete is not appropriate for thesis, exam hours, or dissertation enrollment.

A student who believes an Incomplete may be necessary should communicate with the instructor before the end of the term, document the reasons, and obtain a clear written understanding of the remaining work and deadline.

2.5.3. Grading for Thesis & Dissertation Hours

CEAE research supervision uses the following SP/LP/NP grading system that make progress transparent.

- Satisfactory Progress (SP): the student met the goals of the semester as agreed upon with the advisor, and the work supports timely completion.
- Limited Progress (LP): the student completed less than what was agreed upon with the advisor; the semester's progress may delay timely completion.
- No Progress (NP): the student showed no meaningful evidence of completed work or did not make progress toward the thesis or dissertation.

If a student receives two consecutive LP grades or accumulates a third LP grade, the graduate studies committee may review the record and may recommend probation and/or a mentoring

agreement. An NP grade may trigger an immediate review of academic standing, because it indicates the student is not making satisfactory progress.

Students should ask the advisor at the start of each semester to define expected deliverables for research hours—examples include proposal sections, experiments, code development, data collection, manuscript drafts, or thesis/dissertation chapters—so that the eventual grade is based on shared expectations rather than assumptions.

2.6. Annual Student Progress Review

Annual review is required and is an important advising and accountability tool. CEAE students should expect to submit a **Graduate Student Progress to Degree Annual Assessment** describing coursework completed, GPA, milestone status, research progress, publications and presentations, assistantship performance, professional development, and goals for the coming year.

The department may assign one of three ratings—Satisfactory, Satisfactory with Warning, or Unsatisfactory. A Satisfactory rating indicates that the student is meeting goals, research is progressing, and the student is on track to graduate in a timely manner. Satisfactory with Warning means that some aspects of progress are problematic and must improve.

Unsatisfactory means progress is unacceptable and may trigger probation, funding ineligibility, or other corrective action.

Students should receive written feedback after the annual review and should discuss it with their advisor, or the DGS, as appropriate. Students are strongly encouraged to treat annual review as a planning document, not merely an evaluation. A strong annual review practice can help students coordinate coursework, publication goals, proposal timing, internship or conference activity, and degree completion milestones.

2.7. Professional Development

Professional development is a core expectation of graduate study in engineering. CEAE students should build habits that support their academic and professional goals, including technical communication, professional networking, résumé/CV development, career planning, software and technical skill development, and participation in relevant workshops, seminars, conferences, or professional organizations. Research-oriented students are also encouraged to pursue conference presentations, poster and paper submissions, research ethics training, and proposal-writing opportunities as appropriate to their degree path.

Students should prepare a résumé or CV and seek feedback from faculty; use KU Career Center resources; review job announcements from relevant professional societies; attend professional meetings and conferences; and inform advisors and program leadership when they are actively seeking positions so opportunities can be shared quickly.

For students pursuing academic or research careers, professional development may also include manuscript drafting, literature review mastery, mentoring undergraduate researchers, grant proposal participation, and building a coherent research identity. For students pursuing industry roles, professional development may emphasize design tools, project delivery,

management systems, presentations, licensure planning, and interaction with external partners or clients.

2.8. Grievance Procedures

Grievances arising within the Department of CEAE must be heard under the applicable grievance procedure of the [School of Engineering](#) and the [University of Kansas](#). This grievance procedure applies to faculty members, unclassified professional staff, and students in academic or program-related matters within the department.

This procedure does not apply to graduate students in matters related to their employment as Graduate Teaching Assistants. A separate grievance procedure outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Kansas, the Kansas Board of Regents, and the Kansas Association of Public Employees is available for that purpose.

Students are encouraged to raise concerns promptly and to consult the DGS, Department Chair, or Graduate Coordinator if they are unsure which procedure applies.

2.9. Petitions

Petitions are used when a student seeks an exception to a departmental, school, or university rule. The petition process must be documented, timely, and routed through the correct levels of review.

Exceptions to the rules and requirements of the graduate program may be granted for sufficient reason by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Students must petition to waive handbook requirements and should include written assessments from the faculty advisor and, when relevant, from committee members. Petitions may need additional approval by the School of Engineering or the Office of Graduate Studies when the request affects college- or university-level requirements.

Petitions based on medical or similar personal circumstances should include appropriate supporting documentation, but students should not be asked to provide unnecessary personal details. Students should consult the Graduate Coordinator before submitting a petition so the request can be routed on the correct form and timeline. Students should not assume that a petition is approved merely because it has been submitted.

3. Advising, Mentoring, and Communication of Assignments & Roles

Advising and mentoring are central to graduate success in CEAE. The DGS and Graduate Coordinator serve as key graduate support roles, but day-to-day academic guidance typically comes from a faculty advisor. For research degrees, the advising relationship also shapes research direction, assistantship assignments, and milestone timing.

Coursework-only and professionally oriented master's students may be assigned an initial faculty academic advisor or program advisor to assist with course selection and transition into

the program. Research-based M.S. and Ph.D. students are generally expected to identify or enter the program with a primary faculty advisor whose expertise aligns with the student's intended research area. Students should confirm their advising arrangement early in the program and consult the DGS or Graduate Coordinator if they are unsure who their advisor is or how advising responsibilities are assigned.

The program provides a structured framework of faculty and staff responsibilities to support graduate students' academic progress. Students should consult the appropriate individual depending on the nature of their question or need:

- Course planning and general progress review: faculty advisor and/or DGS
- Forms, deadlines, milestone routing, and graduation paperwork: Graduate Coordinator
- Research supervision and committee planning: primary advisor/major professor
- Unit-level conflict resolution or concerns: DGS or Department Chair, depending on the issue

Students are responsible for maintaining regular contact with their advisor, preparing for meetings, and understanding milestone deadlines. Advisors are responsible for providing guidance, helping the student interpret program expectations, and communicating concerns early enough for the student to undertake corrective action when needed.

3.1. Change of Faculty Advisor

CEAE Department Policy on Changing Graduate Faculty Advisor:

This policy establishes a process for a change of faculty advisor for graduate students in the Department of Civil, Environmental, and Architectural Engineering (CEAE). The graduate faculty advisor is the chair of the committee, as listed on the student's graduate plan of study. The policy balances student academic and professional needs with the rights and responsibilities of faculty members.

The expectation of the CEAE Department is that the advisor/student relationship should endure through the student's time in degree. However, this policy recognizes that unforeseen circumstances can sometimes complicate that ideal. Graduate students may request a change in advisor for any reason. Advisors may also initiate termination of the advising relationship, but they must provide at least a three-month written notice as detailed below. Graduate students must be in good academic standing to change advisors; however, exceptions may be granted in cases of unresolved conflict.

A graduate student or faculty advisor considering a change must notify the DGS in writing to initiate the process. In the event of a conflict of interest, they may contact the Department Chair. The DGS or Department Chair will meet with both parties. All discussions regarding advisor changes will be shared only with individuals directly involved in facilitating the process.

A graduate student must secure a new faculty advisor within three months of initial notification to the DGS of the intention for change of advisor. If a student cannot secure a new advisor within the three-month period, the student may voluntarily withdraw or petition to change their degree program within the department. In very rare cases, where no other solutions are available, the department may recommend dismissal from the graduate program.

The graduate student may approach potential advisors directly. The DGS may provide guidance and facilitate introductions, but the student bears ultimate responsibility for identifying a new advisor regardless of whether the change was initiated by the student or original faculty advisor. Once a new advisor has agreed to chair the committee, the student must notify the DGS and the Graduate Coordinator in writing.

When a student in a research-based MS or PhD degree program changes advisors, a written agreement must be completed to clarify authorship, use of research data, future publishing, and rights to lab access and materials. This agreement is to be signed by the student, the former advisor, and the new advisor, and the agreement will be filed with the DGS.

3.2. Regular & Timely Feedback from Thesis/Dissertation Advisors

Students and advisors should discuss communication norms at the beginning of each semester and whenever the student enters a new stage of work.

- Meeting frequency should be appropriate to the stage of study; many research-active students will need regular recurring meetings.
- Draft turnaround expectations should be discussed in advance, especially before proposals, oral examinations, conference deadlines, or final defenses.
- Students should not submit major written work at the last possible moment and expect immediate review.
- Where helpful, a mentoring agreement or individual development plan may be used to document expectations.

If a student experiences persistent difficulty obtaining feedback or direction, the student should first try to resolve the issue directly with the advisor. If the problem continues, the DGS should be consulted promptly.

4. Information for Graduate Assistants (3G: GTA/GRA/GA)

Graduate assistantships support both student development and departmental teaching and research needs. Graduate assistants are student employees, and their appointments are governed by KU rules, appointment letters, and hiring documents, and—in the case of GTAs—the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the GTA union.

Students should understand that assistantships are not guaranteed and are generally contingent on funding availability, satisfactory performance, enrollment compliance, and good academic standing. Assistantship decisions are based on faculty need, student progress, prior performance, and fit with instructional or research assignments.

4.1. General Information for All 3G Positions

All graduate assistants should receive clear information about supervision, expected duties, access to resources, and procedures for raising concerns. Typical resources include desk space (as available), computing access, building access, printing or copying availability for course GTA duties, and orientation to the relevant lab, classroom, or project environment.

- Students should know who directly supervises the appointment.

- Students should understand the average workload expectation associated with the percentage appointment.
- Students should know how to report absences, schedule conflicts, or workload concerns.
- Students should understand the link between good academic standing and reappointment.

Graduate assistants should keep a copy of the appointment letter and should ask questions early if duties or workload seem unclear.

4.2. GTAs

Graduate Teaching Assistants support instructional needs such as grading, office hours, lab or recitation leadership, discussion sections, review sessions, and, in some cases, independent or supervised classroom teaching. CEAE should ensure that GTAs understand the pedagogical and administrative expectations of the appointment.

- GTAs should be introduced to course objectives, grading standards, communication norms, and FERPA-related expectations.
- If the assignment involves classroom instruction, GTAs should have timely access to the syllabus, course platform, schedule, and any required training.
- Students should follow departmental procedures for illness-related absences or other situations that prevent them from meeting instructional obligations.

KU and CEAE both expect GTAs to behave professionally in the classroom, in student communications, and in the handling of grades and course records.

4.3. GTA MOA Requirements

The GTA MOA sets binding expectations for GTA working conditions, workload, evaluation, and grievance rights. Departments are expected to communicate the parts of the MOA that affect graduate employees directly, including access to necessary resources and assignment of duties. Failure to comply with the MOA can create a grievance issue.

Students should review the current MOA, especially if they hold a GTA appointment. Questions about interpretation should be directed through the appropriate departmental and university channels. The handbook does not supersede the MOA but should explain local practices in a way that is consistent with it.

4.4. GRAs

Graduate Research Assistants in CEAE typically work on sponsored research, laboratory activity, design support, data collection, analysis, software or model development, or unit operations. Expectations should be discussed by the supervising faculty member at the outset of the appointment and revisited as the project evolves.

- Students should understand the scope of work, expected deliverables, and any sponsor constraints.
- Students should ask about authorship, data ownership, publication expectations, and safety training before beginning a project.

- Students should understand how the assistantship supports their professional development and, where applicable, their dissertation or thesis progress.

A GRA or GA appointment is not identical to an advising relationship, but in practice the two are often closely linked. Students should clarify when employment expectations and degree expectations overlap and when they do not.

5. Degree Requirements and Procedures

5.1. Academic Catalog

The [KU Academic Catalog](#) is the official source of degree requirements. CEAE's handbook complements the catalog by explaining processes, expectations, and local procedures. Students should follow the catalog of the year in which they entered the program unless they receive approved permission to move to a later catalog.

CEAE graduate programs currently offer: Master of Science degrees in Architectural Engineering, Civil Engineering, and Environmental & Water Resources Engineering; the Master of Construction Management; doctoral degrees in Civil Engineering and Environmental & Water Resources Engineering; and graduate certificates in Construction Management, Structural Analysis, Structural Design, Structural Forensics, and Water Resources.

5.2. Master's Degree Requirements

The CEAE department offers both research-oriented and professionally oriented master's programs, including the Master of Science (M.S.) and the Master of Construction Management (MCM). Students should select the program and degree option that best align with their academic background, career objectives, and intended mode of study.

Within the M.S. program, Option A (thesis) and Option B (project) are research-oriented pathways, while Option C (coursework-only) is professionally oriented. The MCM is a professionally oriented, coursework-only degree focused on construction management practice.

5.2.1. Coursework Requirements

CEAE master's degrees require 30 credit hours. The exact mix of coursework, thesis, or special problem requirements varies by degree. All graduate students are expected to develop a [plan of study](#) and to keep it aligned with catalog rules and advising decisions.

For the MS coursework-only option, 30 semester hours of graduate coursework are required. No more than 9 hours from other departments and no more than 6 hours below the 700 level (with only 3 of those inside the department) may be counted without approval.

For the MCM, the program consists of 30 credit hours: 18 hours of core courses and 12 hours of electives. No more than 9 hours from other departments and no more than 6 hours below the 700 level (with only 3 of those inside the department) may be counted without approval.

5.2.2. Culminating Effort Options

CEAE's M.S. degrees have three options. Option A requires 30 credit hours including 6 hours of thesis credit and a final oral examination including defense of the thesis. Option B requires 30 hours including a 3- or 4-hour special problem investigation in the specialization and a final oral examination; no thesis is required. Option C requires 30 credit hours of coursework and does not require a thesis, special problem investigation, or final oral examination.

Students should select the option in consultation with the advisor, based on the degree program, intended timeline, and career goals. Research-intensive students who may later pursue a doctorate are often best served by Option A or B, but the appropriate choice depends on faculty guidance and catalog rules.

5.2.3. Outcome

For thesis or oral-exam options, the committee determines the outcome of the examination or defense. Students should expect clear communication about pass, conditional pass, required revisions, or unsatisfactory performance, along with any deadlines for revision. For coursework-only options, degree completion is based on successful completion of the approved plan of study and all graduation requirements.

In cases of unsatisfactory performance, the conditions for re-examination, including whether a second attempt is permitted, are determined by the committee in accordance with department and university policies. Students should not assume that committee approval is final until all required signatures, revisions, and Graduate Studies checks are complete.

5.2.4. Continuation to the Ph.D.

Students who wish to continue from a CEAE master's pathway to a CEAE doctoral pathway should discuss that intent with the advisor and DGS early. Exceptionally well-qualified baccalaureate degree holders may also be admitted directly into a fast-track Ph.D. path without first completing an M.S. In all cases, continuation or direct doctoral admission requires strong academic performance and faculty support.

Students moving from a master's track to the Ph.D. should expect a fresh review of research fit, faculty advising capacity, and readiness for doctoral milestones. A master's degree does not automatically guarantee doctoral continuation.

5.3. Doctoral Degree Requirements

Doctoral study in CEAE culminates in original research and the dissertation. Doctoral students must satisfy the University's general requirements for the Ph.D. and must have a Plan of Study approved by the major professor, the examining committee, and the DGS.

5.3.1. Admission

An ABET-accredited bachelor's degree in engineering is required for admission to the Ph.D. in Civil Engineering. For admission to the PhD program in Environmental and Water Resources Engineering, students with an accredited undergraduate degree in engineering are eligible;

students with degrees in chemistry, biological sciences, geology or other related natural or life sciences are also eligible for admission but may be required to complete pre-requisite courses in addition to those that count for graduate credit. The department admits for all semesters, and students may study full or part time.

5.3.2. Coursework and Degree Requirements

Doctoral coursework is individualized through the plan-of-study process. Students should work with the advisor and committee to build a coherent doctoral curriculum that supports both breadth in the field and depth in the research area. Because CEAE doctoral specializations span structural, transportation, geotechnical, construction, architectural systems, environmental, and water resources topics, course plans differ substantially across students.

The plan of study should be created early enough to support the qualifying and comprehensive examination sequence and should be updated whenever there is a material change in coursework or research direction.

5.3.3. Research Skills & Responsible Scholarship

Before a doctoral student is admitted to the comprehensive examination, the student must satisfy the research skill and responsible scholarship requirements. The research skill requirement is defined as a skill distinct from, but strongly supportive of, the dissertation research. Students should discuss possible research skill pathways with the advisor well before the comprehensive exam stage.

Responsible scholarship expectations may include research integrity training, human-subjects or animal-use compliance where relevant, proper authorship and data practices, and professional standards in publication and collaboration. CEAE PhD students fulfill this requirement by completing **CE 820 - Responsible Scholarship in CEAE**.

5.3.4. Establishing a Committee

A doctoral committee should be formed in consultation with the major professor and in compliance with [KU committee composition policies](#). In addition to KU policies, CEAE requires that doctoral committees are composed of at least five (5) voting members. The committee typically evolves as the student's topic becomes more focused. Students should not leave committee formation until shortly before the comprehensive exam or proposal defense.

- The student should discuss possible committee members with the advisor early.
- The Graduate Coordinator can help confirm whether committee composition satisfies KU and CEAE rules.
- Any outside member or special appointment should be requested early enough to avoid delaying the exam or defense.

A well-chosen committee should provide both substantive expertise and a constructive advising environment. Students should think carefully about technical coverage, mentoring style, and long-term fit.

5.3.5. Oral Comprehensive Exam /Dissertation Proposal Procedures

An aspirant for the Ph.D. must pass a qualifying examination. In addition, students must later complete the oral comprehensive examination according to KU policy and departmental procedures.

The Comprehensive Exam /Dissertation Proposal stage moves the student from general doctoral preparation to a defined dissertation plan. At minimum, the proposal should articulate the problem, context in the literature, methodology, expected contribution, and a realistic work plan.

Students should provide the written proposal to the committee with sufficient lead time for review before the oral exam. The expected review window should be discussed with the advisor. The proposal defense is an important part of the comprehensive exam which is a critical milestone in the PhD program.

Students should work backward from the intended comprehensive exam date to identify the written materials, reading lists, coursework prerequisites, proposal components, and committee scheduling steps required.

5.3.6. Post-Comp Enrollment

After successful completion of the comprehensive stage, students must follow [KU's post-comprehensive enrollment policy](#). Because post-comp rules affect tuition, continuous enrollment, and graduation timing, students should confirm requirements each semester with the Graduate Coordinator rather than relying on memory or outdated screenshots. Students who are employed, off campus, or writing full time should pay special attention to post-comp rules and filing deadlines.

5.3.8. The Dissertation

The dissertation must represent original scholarship that contributes to knowledge in the field. Students should work with the advisor to define the expected scope, chapter or manuscript format, timetable for drafts, and committee review sequence.

CEAE's graduation checklist reminds students that the Office of Graduate Studies houses the official formatting requirements for theses and dissertations and that students should not rely on old department copies for formatting. Students submitting a thesis or dissertation should also complete ETD/ScholarWorks/graduate completion steps according to current KU instructions.

The final defense should be scheduled only after the advisor determines the document is ready for committee review. Students should never assume that a committee will approve a defense date simply because the student hopes to graduate in a given term; scheduling must account for faculty availability, revision time, and Graduate Studies deadlines.

5.4. Certificate Requirements

CEAE offers five graduate certificates: Construction Management, Structural Analysis, Structural Design, Structural Forensics, and Water Resources. Certificate students should

review the catalog for the current curriculum and application pathway, because certificate requirements can differ from degree requirements in admissions materials, letters of recommendation, or statement-of-purpose expectations.

No recommendation letters are required for graduate certificate applications. However, certificate students still need to meet the academic and English proficiency requirements applicable to graduate study.

6. Other Topics

The following topics are relevant to CEAE students during graduate study.

- Graduation checklist. CEAE provides a graduate student graduation checklist that directs students to KU Graduate Studies deadlines, ETD release forms, Engineering Career Center graduation reports, doctoral completion surveys, title/acceptance pages, and online thesis/dissertation upload instructions.
- Facilities, software, and laboratories. Many CEAE programs require specialized software, research equipment, or lab access. Students should ask the supervising faculty member about safety training, access permissions, and appropriate use.
- Travel and conferences. CEAE hosts conferences and has active faculty research groups; students should ask advisors about poster, conference, or travel support and any reimbursement procedures before making commitments. CEAE offers a limited pool of merit-based graduate travel fund to support graduate student travels to conference and professional development opportunities.

Whenever a process touches student employment, sponsored research, safety, travel reimbursement, or records retention, students should confirm the correct current procedure rather than assuming that prior practice still applies.

7. Appendices

Appendix A. CEAE / KU Resource Directory

The resource list below is included so students know where to start. Official websites should always be checked for current names, links, and procedures.

Office / resource	Use it for
CEAE department main office	General departmental questions, referrals, public contact information
CEAE Graduate Coordinator	Admissions processing, milestone routing, forms, graduation paperwork
Associate Chair / Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)	Graduate policy questions, advising escalation, committee and milestone questions
School of Engineering graduate staff	School-level graduate forms, graduation support, program staff coordination
Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs	University-level graduate policy, ETD requirements, graduation clearance

University Registrar	Enrollment dates, add/drop deadlines, calendars
International Student Services	Visa and immigration compliance
KU Policy Library	Official university policy text
KU Academic Catalog	Official degree requirements
KU Career Center / Engineering Career Center	Career development and graduation reporting

Appendix B. Graduation Checklist (required)

This graduation checklist must be completed by the graduation deadline. The Graduation Checklist is found here, [Graduate Graduation | School of Engineering](#).

- Apply for graduation in [Enroll & Pay](#) by the published deadline. This is for both degree and graduate certificates, if applicable.
- [School of Engineering Graduation Checklist](#).
- Confirm all degree requirements on the approved [plan of study](#) have been or will be completed in time.
- Schedule the final oral examination / defense with enough time for revisions before term deadlines.
- Submit title and acceptance pages and any school-level forms according to current instructions.
- Complete Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) Release form and submission requirements if graduating with a thesis or dissertation.
- Complete any Engineering Career Center graduation reporting form currently required by the school.
- Doctoral students must complete any doctoral completion survey required by Graduate Studies.
- Attach the YUJA Panorama Accessibility score of 85% or higher.