

Master of Soil Science Degree Information

This is an overview of the Master of Soil Science (MR) program in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences at NC State University. It is organized as a FAQ to answer common questions that are asked by prospective students.



How does the MR program compare to the Master of Science in Soil Science (MS)?

The MR degree program is considered a professional master's degree that is largely course based. There is no requirement for research leading to a thesis and because of that the degree is typically considered to be a terminal degree. In contrast, the research-based MS degree requires original research, a thesis and a final oral defense of the thesis. It is often a stepping stone to a PhD degree.

Is the MR program an online or in-person degree?

The MR program can be pursued both online and in-person. You can also take online and in-person courses together if you wish.

Can I pursue the MR degree while working?

Many of our MR students are pursuing this degree while also working. This often means that a student may not take a full 9-credit class load. This is not a problem since you have a total of six years to complete the requirements, starting from your first semester.

Will completion of the MR degree assist me in obtaining licensure or certification as a professional soil scientist?

Yes, this degree provides the core soils courses needed to pursue licensure or certification. The program is flexible enough to allow you to take other courses that also contribute to that goal. However, coursework alone is not sufficient for licensure or certification and you should always check the latest requirements for licensure in your state or the requirements for national certification.



Does my BS or MS need to be in Soil Science in order to qualify?

No! Students from many different science backgrounds are good candidates for pursuing graduate studies in soil science. We do look for coursework in the basic sciences including

biology, chemistry, physics, earth sciences, and mathematics. Incoming students with no soil science experience may be required to take SSC 200 - Soil Science in order to establish an understanding of the discipline. Students with weak science backgrounds are generally not competitive. However, if you wish to discuss you can contact the Director of Soil Science Graduate Programs.



What are the requirements for admission to the MR program?

You should have a BS degree in a science- or -STEM-related field. Of course, an undergraduate degree related to soil science helps! If you have not had an undergraduate soil science course, you may be required to take the SSC 200 class to set your baseline. We require at least a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale from your undergraduate degree. We will also need a personal statement from you, your unofficial transcripts from previous academic degrees, and three references.

What are the degree requirements for the MR?

The MR degree requires a total of 30 credit hours of coursework for completion. These requirements include:

- Completion of at least four of the following four core graduate courses (13-14 credits minimum)
 - Soil Chemistry
 - Soil Fertility
 - Soil Genesis, Classification and Morphology
 - Soil Microbiology
 - Soil Physics
- SSC 601 Seminar (1 credit)
- SSC 675 Project in Soil Science (3 credits)
- No more than six credit hours of 400-level undergraduate courses may be used in the 30-hour requirement and those courses must be from outside soil science
- At least 21 credit hours must be letter grade courses (i.e., A, B, C, etc) at the 500 and 700 level earned while the student is in the graduate program – these must be NC State courses or [inter-institutional courses](#)
- Completion all requirements within six calendar years after the student first enrolls in the program

Do I need to take the Graduate Record Exam?

The Soil Science program does not require the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) for admission. If you have scores, you may submit them, but they are not required.

What GPA do I need to be considered for admission?

We require a minimum of a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale.



Do I submit a personal statement of purpose?

Yes, we require a personal statement and it is an important component of your application. This is your opportunity to tell us why you are interested in pursuing graduate study in soils, your past experiences that show us that you are a good fit, and any other information you wish to share.

How much is tuition and fees?

Refer to <https://studentservices.ncsu.edu/your-money/tuition-and-fees/distance-education/> for the latest information for online/distance education costs and to this page <https://studentservices.ncsu.edu/your-money/tuition-and-fees/graduate-students/> for in-person costs.

Is there financial assistance available?

The program does not provide scholarships or grant funding for MR students. You can apply for assistance through the financial aid office at NC State.

How do I apply to the program?

You must first apply for admission to the Graduate School. You can start your application at <https://grad.ncsu.edu/admissions/>. After you apply and your materials are submitted then a committee of soil science faculty will evaluate your application. If deemed admissible, we will notify you of your acceptance into the program.

Where can I find graduate admissions information at NC State?

All students must apply to the Graduate School for admission to all graduate programs. For details on the process and requirements, please see [Section 2 of the Graduate Handbook](#).

What are the deadlines for application?

The priority deadlines as listed by the Graduate School for admission for Fall, Spring and Summer are below. For the Master of Soil Science degree, you can still apply after these deadlines and we will consider your application.

	Fall	Spring	Summer 1	Summer 2
US Citizens	Jun 25	Nov 25	Mar 25	May 10
Internationals	Mar 1	Jul 15	Dec 15	Dec 15

Where do soil scientists work?

Soil scientists find employment opportunities in a variety of industries. Students work in environmental and soils consulting groups, cooperative extension, county and city health departments, state departments of natural resources, federal agencies like the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the EPA, and other agencies working with land management, non-governmental organizations, teaching in college settings, and laboratory and field technicians.

What Soil Science courses are available online?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SSC 200 - Soil Science ● SSC 511 - Soil Physics ● SSC 609 - Colloquium ● SSC 521 - Soil Chemistry - NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE ● SSC 532 Soil Microbiology ● SSC 541 - Soil Fertility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SSC 551 - Soil Morphology, Classification, Genesis ● SSC 562 - Environmental Applications of Soil Science ● SSC 570 - Wetland Soils ● SSC 601 - Seminar ● SSC 675 - Project in Soil Science
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Questions?

If you have questions, contact the Director of Soil Science Graduate Programs at soilsciencedgp@ncsu.edu.