

# Handbook for the MA in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

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## Introduction and General Information

### **Introduction**

This handbook includes information vital to your success as an MA student in the WGSS Program. Please review the handbook and familiarize yourself with its content. If you have any questions, you can always ask the Director of Graduate Studies for WGSS—currently, Dr. Danielle Bouchard, [dmboucha@uncg.edu](mailto:dmboucha@uncg.edu) (DGS August 2019-July 2022).

### **Relationship of the UNCG Catalog to the WGSS MA Program Handbook**

The university catalog is the publication that documents all academic policies, regulations, and program requirements for a given academic year for all graduate students and programs. The student's catalog year determines their curriculum requirements. Generally, students are subject to the university policies in effect when they first matriculate into a graduate program. Minor changes in policy that will not impact progress toward degree completion may be implemented immediately when it is determined to be in the best interest of students and/or the university, or if the changes are required by a legislative or regulatory body. You can find the catalog at <https://catalog.uncg.edu/>.

The Graduate School website is also a great place to find lots of information about being a student at UNCG: <https://grs.uncg.edu/>

### **Official Program and University Communication**

Email is the official method of university communications. Students must use their assigned UNCG email address at the [uncg.edu](mailto:uncg.edu) domain or they will miss important program communications. Please include your nine-digit UNCG ID# in all emailed communications with the Graduate School.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Student: The student is responsible for reviewing the information in this handbook as well as in the university catalog. Throughout their time in the degree program, MA students should not hesitate to contact the Director of Graduate Studies for WGSS with any questions, concerns, or problems.

The Director of Graduate Studies: The Director of Graduate Studies serves as the academic advisor for all MA students in WGSS—advising students on courses and registration, completing official student paperwork, and (when relevant) aiding in the process of selecting a thesis committee. The DGS also conducts a yearly review with each MA student of their progress in the degree program.

The Graduate Studies Committee: The committee, composed of the Director of Graduate Studies plus three additional WGSS faculty members, suggests policy changes for the program, reviews applications and makes recommendations regarding admission to the Graduate School, and makes assistantship and scholarship funding decisions regarding MA students.

## Overview of the MA Program

### About the Program

Building upon UNCG's historical mission as the Women's College of North Carolina, we established one of the earliest Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies programs in the country. Our interdisciplinary Master of Arts degree is the only MA in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in the state of North Carolina. Our 36-credit hour MA program balances feminist theory with practice, preparing students for immediate entry into professions or further academic study. MA students enroll in 9 credit hours of theory and analysis and, in consultation with the Graduate Adviser, develop a plan of study tailored to their goals and interests (21 credit hours). Each student selects either a thesis or an internship as a culminating experience (6 credit hours). Full-time students can complete the program in two years. MA graduates typically go on to advocacy, healthcare, education, or related professions in governmental or non-governmental agencies, or they enter PhD programs. Courses offered by WGSS faculty and other outstanding faculty across the university provide opportunities for students to engage in varied modes of inquiry on issues of local, national, and international importance.

### MA Program Student Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate interdisciplinary understanding of the ways that gender, race, culture, class, and sexuality function in society.
2. Demonstrate understanding of power from historical, geopolitical, ethical, and psychological perspectives within global, national, and community contexts.
3. Develop an understanding of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies as an intellectual and activist, disciplinary and anti-disciplinary presence within the university, and within local, national, and international communities.
4. Develop varied modes of inquiry informed by the relationship between theory and practice, knowledge and action.

## Completing Your Program of Study

### Advising

You will work with the Director of Graduate Studies to identify courses of interest, strategize about course sequencing, and for general mentoring. The DGS will draft an initial Plan of Study with you. This is an official document which lists the courses you plan to take in fulfillment of the degree. The DGS will keep this document updated and file it at the appropriate moments with the Graduate School. A preliminary Plan of Study is filed with the Graduate School during your second semester; the final Plan of Study is filed with the Graduate School during the final semester of your program.

### Curriculum

You can find current degree program requirements in the UNCG Catalog, [here](#):

<https://catalog.uncg.edu/arts-sciences/womens-gender-sexuality-studies/womens-gender-sexuality-studies-ma/-requirementstext>

MA students complete a total of 36 credit hours:

- 6 credit hours of required core courses
  - WGS 650: Feminist Theory: Intersections of Gender, Race and Class
  - WGS 651: Feminist Research Analysis
- 3 credit hours of one additional theory course
  - Choose from: WGS 530: Critical Sexuality Studies and Queer Theory; CST 659: Communication and Gender; ELC 680: Transnational and Postcolonial Feminist Perspectives; ENG 688: Women's Rhetoric and Feminist Pedagogy; OR another course, chosen in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, that includes substantial theoretical content
- 21 credit hours of elective courses (chosen from WGS courses and courses offered by other departments that carry the WGS marker)
  - 9 credit hours constituting a concentrated area of study, identified in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies
  - 12 credit hours of any other elective courses
- 6 credit hours of capstone experience; choose between *either*
  - Internship option: WGS 601: Women's and Gender Studies Internship (3 credit hours) + WGS 602: Internship Seminar (3 credit hours); OR
  - Thesis option: WGS 699: Thesis (3 credit hours each over two semesters, for a total of 6 credit hours)

### Sequence and Timeline

The MA program in WGSS is designed to be completed in two years, when the student is full-time (taking 9 credit hours per semester); this includes the final capstone experience. Students entering through the Accelerated Bachelor's-to-Master's Degree Program may be able to complete the program in less than two years, depending on how many graduate-level credit hours (up to 12) they enter with. As per Graduate School policy, students may take up to 5 years to complete the program.

A typical program timeline for full-time students entering in the Fall:

- First semester (Fall): WGS 650; two electives.
- Second semester (Spring): WGS 651; two electives.
- Third semester (Fall): WGS 699 + two electives; or three electives.
- Fourth semester (Spring): WGS 699 + two electives; or WGS 601, WGS 602, plus one elective.

Most summers, there are a few graduate courses offered that carry the WGS marker and may count as electives toward your degree program.

### The Capstone Experience

The Internship: Please note that WGS 601: Women's and Gender Studies Internship and WGS 602: Internship Seminar are only offered in the Spring. You'll take them concurrently: WGS 601 is a way to get credit for the hours that you put in at your internship site; and WGS 602 is an academic course that meets on a regular basis. Well before the semester begins, consult with the Internship Coordinator (right now this is Dr. Levenstein) about how to locate an internship placement.

The Thesis: The thesis is a substantial research project that you complete in close consultation with the faculty member who serves as your thesis advisor and chair of your thesis committee. Depending on the nature of the project, a typical thesis in WGSS is around 75 pages. If you're interested in completing a thesis, you'll need to develop a topic for your project during your second semester. WGS 651: Feminist Research Analysis is in part designed to help you with this, as one of the major assignments for this course is a project proposal. You will also need to find a faculty member who will serve as your thesis advisor and the chair of your thesis committee. Typically, this is someone you have taken a class with and who knows your work, and who can also provide some expertise in the topic area of your thesis work. Once you have a thesis advisor on-board, together you can decide on two other faculty members who you would like to ask to serve on your committee. The role of the whole committee is to help you produce the best project that you can, by advising you on approach, content, method, bodies of scholarship, etc. and providing feedback along the way (both formally and informally). The Director of Graduate Studies will consult with you about choosing a thesis chair and committee and about the process. Here's a typical timeline for the thesis (for full-time students who entered in the Fall):

- Second semester (Spring): Consult with the Director of Graduate Studies about your ideas for the thesis; together, identify a faculty member to ask to be your thesis committee chair, as well as additional faculty members to serve on your committee; make a plan with your thesis chair for any work you may need to complete over the summer on your thesis proposal.
- Third semester (Fall): "Defend" your thesis proposal, as early in the semester as possible. After your thesis proposal "defense," you can work on your thesis.
- Fourth Semester (Spring): Schedule your thesis "defense" for later March/early April at the latest; plan to submit the final version of your thesis to the Graduate School by their deadline. There is an initial "clearance" copy that is typically due early in April, which is checked for formatting, while the absolutely final version is typically due at the end of April; you can find those dates at this link <https://reg.uncg.edu/calendars/> (click on the appropriate semester).

Other important things to note about completing a thesis:

- You will need to allow about 2 weeks for your thesis chair and committee members to read submitted materials (the proposal; the thesis) in preparation for the proposal defense and the thesis defense.
- Many faculty are on 9-month contracts, from August through May. This means that not all faculty will be available to work with you closely over the summer. This is just

something to be aware of and to discuss with your thesis chair when you're planning your thesis work.

### Research Involving Human Subjects and the Institutional Review Board

If, for your capstone project, you intend to do research involving human subjects (for example, conducting interviews or focus groups) you will need to complete Institutional Review Board (IRB) training and gain IRB approval for your study. Here's the link to the website for the UNCG IRB website: <https://integrity.uncg.edu/institutional-review-board/>. The IRB FAQs page is also really helpful: <https://integrity.uncg.edu/irb-faqs/>. Once you have submitted materials for approval, it can take four weeks for your approval to be processed.

### **Choosing and Registering for Courses**

The DGS will consult with you prior to every official registration period to plan your coursework for the following semester.

On the MA Program Curriculum webpage you'll see a long list of "Representative Courses Approved for WGSS Credit"; and in the University Catalog you'll see a similar list of electives. Some of these courses are offered fairly regularly, others are not; some of these courses might not be approved for WGSS credit in certain semesters; and there are other graduate courses that are approved for WGSS credit in any given semester that do not appear on these lists. To find the exact courses that are being offered for any given semester that have been formally approved for WGSS credit, follow these steps:

- In the official course listing, after selecting the appropriate term, leave the "Subject" box empty, and enter "WGS" in the "Categories and Attributes" box.
- This will generate a list of all courses for that term that carry WGS credit, including those courses offered by other departments that carry the WGS marker.

### **Teaching Opportunities in WGSS**

The WGSS Program offers some limited teaching opportunities to qualifying graduate students. As per university policy, graduate student instructors must have completed a minimum of 18 credit hours of graduate study in WGSS in order to qualify to teach at the undergraduate level. Students who are interested in the possibility of teaching must take an independent study course in preparation; please consult with the Director of Graduate Studies about this. After completing the independent study, students may then apply for available advertised teaching positions in WGSS, typically WGS 250: Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies. The number of such positions we can offer is limited, and we typically cannot accommodate all WGSS MA students who apply.

### **Graduating**

You must apply for graduation very early in the semester in which you plan to graduate, typically within the first two weeks. There is also a fee for graduating: \$85 for MA students. Procedures, deadlines, and other information can be found at this Graduate School webpage: <https://grs.uncg.edu/enrolled/graduation/>

## Funding, Finances, and Residency

### **WGSS Program Funding Opportunities**

The WGSS Program offers several monetary awards and funding for special projects. You need to apply for these funding opportunities; deadlines vary depending on the award. You can find information about them here: <https://wgss.uncg.edu/resources/cone-awards/>

### **Employment and Other Funding Opportunities on Campus**

Many offices on campus hire graduate assistants; these positions come with a stipend, and some come with additional tuition support. It is university policy that graduate assistants work a total of no more than 20 hours per week (or to apply for an exemption if desiring to work beyond that). You can find out more about these employment opportunities, as well as other financial information, at this Graduate School website: <https://grs.uncg.edu/enrolled/-1560964870416-9ab7d113-9aac>

### **Establishing In-State Residency for Tuition Purposes**

All supported graduate students are encouraged to make a good faith effort to become residents of North Carolina. As a state supported institution, the tuition rate for legal residents of North Carolina is much less than the tuition rate for nonresidents. After 12 months of continuous residence in NC, out-of-state students may apply for NC residency in order to qualify for in-state tuition. All students wishing to claim North Carolina residency must file through the State's Residency Determination Service at <https://ncresidency.cfnc.org/residencyInfo/>. In order to qualify as a resident of North Carolina for tuition purposes you must have established legal residence ("domicile") in North Carolina and maintained that legal residence for at least twelve months before you apply for classification as a North Carolina resident. In addition to this twelve-month physical presence requirement, there are numerous other factors that must be considered in determining whether or not an individual is a resident for tuition purposes. In order to obtain an in-state residency status for tuition purposes, state administrators must be able to conclude from the information you provide them that your intent is to make North Carolina your permanent dwelling place; rather than a single action, this is a cluster of events that must produce a preponderance of circumstantial evidence suggesting your intent to remain in North Carolina permanently.

### **Extension Status**

Permission to enroll in extension courses requires verification by the committee chair that the student is making satisfactory progress. Students in extension status are ineligible for state-funded support; they may purchase NC Blue Health Insurance.

## Support and Resources

### **Graduate Student Association**

The Graduate Student Association describes their mission like this: "The Graduate Student Association is a student fee funded organization formed by students to promote the interests of the graduate student body at UNCG. We meet monthly during the fall and spring semesters in joint senate and executive board meetings to discuss issues relevant to the general membership. The association is student operated and governed. Throughout the year we award approximately \$50,000 to support travel to conferences, assist with thesis and dissertation expense, and provide grants for local community-based research. We believe that it is our responsibility to act as good university citizens by informing ourselves about the actions of the university, the community, and the state, and to advocate for the interests of all UNCG graduate students in terms of employment, professional development, and school/life balance." You can find out more at their website:

<https://graduatestudentassociation.uncg.edu/>

The WGSS Program has two student representatives to the GSA.

### **Some Campus Resources for Students**

#### If You Need Support of Any Kind

If you're experiencing a crisis or emergency, or a life event that you need support with and/or is making it difficult to concentrate on your studies in the way that you want to, the Dean of Students office is a good place to start. They can do things like help you access resources, or communicate with your professors for you: <https://sa.uncg.edu/dean/>, or 334-5514 to make an appointment. Their website also lists many kinds of campus and community resources.

#### Office of Accessibility Resources and Services

For academic support and accommodations for students with disabilities:

<https://ods.uncg.edu/>

#### Counseling Center

See <https://shs.uncg.edu/cc> for Counseling Center resources. They offer traditional therapy appointments as well as group meetings, workshops, and other resources.

#### Support for Food and Housing Insecurity

You can get food at the Spartan Open Pantry. See locations and hours at <http://wesleyluther.org/sop> . If you are out of food and need food immediately, contact the Dean of Students Office for assistance. A list of area shelters and housing resources can be found at <https://sa.uncg.edu/dean/paths/resources/>

#### Emergency Loans

The Financial Aid Office provides emergency loans for unforeseen life expenses. Instructions for how to apply are at <https://fia.uncg.edu/faq/> (bottom of the page).



Student Groups

<https://cap.uncg.edu/student-groups/>

Resources for Trans and Gender Non-Conforming Students

See <https://intercultural.uncg.edu/student-advocacy-outreach/resource/transgender-and-non-binary-resource-toolkit> for a list of resources, ranging from how to navigate the institution while trans, to local and national resources.

Pregnant and Parenting Student Support

If you're pregnant and/or parenting, you have rights! Check out

<https://sa.uncg.edu/dean/faculty/>

Violence and Discrimination Resources

For support if you experience gender discrimination, sexual violence, harassment, or intimate partner violence, you can contact the Campus Violence Response Center, the Dean of Students Office, or the Counseling Center. Each of these offices provide different kinds of support and serve different functions. The Campus Violence Response Center offers both confidential (counseling) and non-confidential (Title IX investigation) support. Their website is <https://cvrc.uncg.edu/>. The Title IX website, <http://titleix.wp.uncg.edu/>, gives a good overview of where to seek different kinds of resources and support, procedural options available to you, as well as which offices on campus provide non-confidential support and which provide confidential support.