Sustainability, PhD

This is a doctoral program for students who want to research and develop solutions to sustainability challenges. Students learn from leading sustainability scientists and scholars in this flexible, interdisciplinary program that integrates social and environmental leadership.

Program Description

Degree Awarded: PHD Sustainability

The PhD in sustainability prepares students to become scientists and leaders in research and to investigate the urgent sustainability challenges of this century. Graduates will possess an advanced understanding of the dynamics of coupled socioecological systems and be able to lead others in research providing adaptive solutions to specific sustainability challenges.

The flexible, transdisciplinary nature of the program allows students to focus on problems of interest to them, drawing upon relevant knowledge from a variety of disciplines. Students can also apply to participate in the Global Development Research Program, which works in conjunction with this program.

All sustainability graduate students will possess:

- an understanding of the need for a transdisciplinary approach to solving sustainability challenges
- the ability to communicate their work to professionals in other disciplines and to policymakers and the general public
- the breadth of vision to recognize the interconnectedness of social, economic, environmental and technical systems
- the critical-thinking skills to approach sustainability challenges from a systems perspective
- the skills needed to work effectively in transdisciplinary teams
- the technical skills to formulate and solve problems at the appropriate scale

In addition to the common learning outcomes, students will be able to conduct research on particular sustainability challenges using standard skills, including the capacity to identify problems; formulate and test hypotheses; use statistical, econometric and geographical information-system techniques to construct and analyze datasets; and build and apply models. They will be able to lead others in the analysis and design of the built environment and institutions' policies, regulations and technologies to support sustainable
development, and they will be able to lead others in applying these concepts and methods to the development of sustainable strategies for water, land, air and urban management at the local and global levels. Students will be able to understand the concepts and methods of a number of critical disciplines bearing on the sustainability of systems at different spatial and temporal scales.

At a Glance

- **College/School:** School of Sustainability
- **Location:** Tempe campus

Degree Requirements

84 credit hours, a written comprehensive exam, a prospectus and a dissertation

**Required Core (6 credit hours)**
- SOS 510 Perspectives on Sustainability (3)
- SOS 520 Research Design (3)

**Foundational Electives (15 credit hours)**

**Solutions Workshop Electives (6 credit hours)**

**Open Electives (33 credit hours)**

**Research (12 credit hours)**
- SOS 792 Research (12)

**Culminating Experience (12 credit hours)**
- SOS 799 Dissertation (12)

Additional Curriculum Information

For electives, students should see the academic unit for the approved course list. Other coursework may be used with the approval of the academic unit. Only six credit hours of 400 level course work can be included in the plan of study.

When approved by the student's supervisory committee and the Graduate College, this program allows up to 30 credit hours from a previously awarded master's degree to be used for this program. If students do not have a previously awarded master's degree, the remaining coursework will be made up of appropriate electives.
Admission Requirements

Applicants must fulfill the requirements of both the Graduate College and the School of Sustainability.

Applicants are eligible to apply to the program if they have earned a bachelor's or master's degree, in any field, from a regionally accredited institution. The school encourages applicants with diverse educational backgrounds and experiences that are relevant to the school’s core objectives.

Applicants must have a minimum of a 3.25 cumulative GPA (scale is 4.00 = "A") in the last 60 hours of a student's first bachelor's degree program, or applicants must have a minimum of a 3.25 cumulative GPA (scale is 4.00 = "A") in an applicable master's degree program.

All applicants must submit:

1. graduate admission application and application fee
2. official transcripts
3. statement of intent
4. GRE scores
5. three letters of recommendation
6. resume or curriculum vitae
7. proof of English proficiency

Additional Application Information

An applicant whose native language is not English (regardless of current residency) must provide proof of English proficiency.

The statement of intent should not exceed 600 words and should describe how the applicant's background will contribute to success in the program; describe how completion of the degree will support long-term career goals; elaborate on key research questions the applicant wishes to address or problems to solve as part of the plan of study; and, identify potential faculty advisors.

Letters of recommendation must be from three people who can attest to the applicant's academic and professional achievements. At least one letter should be academic in nature.

Contact Information

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Admission Deadlines