

Master of Science
Program in
Environmental Science



Thank you for your interest in the Master of Science program (Environmental Science) at Thompson Rivers University.

Before you decide to apply, you must familiarize yourself with the program and the process for admission. There are two major parts in the application process :

① **Identify a thesis supervisor:** The MSc (Environmental Science) program is based heavily on the student conducting research that will lead to their written thesis. The research project that each student undertakes is quite substantial, with the assumption that it leads to meaningful results that can be published in the peer-reviewed literature. This means that a faculty member at TRU must be interested and willing to supervise the research, and quite often they provide the funds needed to conduct the research. Hence, students cannot be accepted into the MSc program unless a faculty member agrees to supervise their research. Students are urged to see if supervision is possible before they apply, as there is no guarantee that a faculty supervisor will be identified. Please review the information on the website, including the list of faculty eligible to supervise research projects (theses). Students should ideally contact appropriate faculty (based on research interests) to discuss potential supervision before they send in their application, as it may save them time and money.

② **Submit an application package.** In addition to identifying a supervisor, interested students must also submit an application package to the Graduate Admissions Officer. Information on this package is available on the website. It is important that the forms and material provided by the student follow the guidelines exactly: otherwise, the application cannot be evaluated.

Currently, the academic admission requirement for the MSc (Environmental Science) program is a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.5 on the TRU scale (a high B+ average, or 77% or higher) in the higher-level courses taken by the student during their Bachelor degree. Students with a lower GPA may be considered if the applicant can demonstrate significant academic growth and training since their graduation. It is the responsibility of the student to present a case for this within their application package. International students from non-English countries will have to demonstrate their proficiency in the English language through a recognized test. Visit the website and/or by contact the Graduate Admissions Officer at TRU for more information.

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If you have not done so already, you should review the information available on our website:
www.tru.ca/science/programs/msces.html

The rest of this document contains additional information to help clarify the application process. After you have reviewed the material on line and in this document, you may still have questions. In that case, please use this chart to help you decide who to contact at TRU:

Inquiries relating to:

- the different fields of study covered by the MSc (Env. Sci.) program
- Is this the right program for you?
- contacting potential supervisors
- the acceptance process
- timing of admission (when can you apply and when can you start?)
- types of thesis research that may be conducted

Contact:

The MSc Program Coordinator
MSc_Coord@tru.ca

- requesting an application package or asking a question about the application
- checking to see if all application material has been properly submitted and received by TRU
- assessment of the GPA
- paying registration & tuition fees
- Tests of English skills for foreign students
- VISA requirements
- General questions about studying in Canada
- General questions about TRU and Kamloops

The Graduate Admissions Officer
GradAdmissions@tru.ca

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MSc (Env. Sci.) PROGRAM AT TRU:

What is a 'thesis'? The thesis is the major study and report that you work on as part of your Master of Science degree. You take on the lead role in conducting the work, analysing your data, and writing up the final thesis report, which is then presented to a group of faculty for evaluation.

What exactly is a 'supervisor' ? A supervisor is a faculty member who has agreed to help you conduct the research for your thesis. The thesis is the major part of your degree, so this is an incredibly important step to entering the MSc program. This means the supervisor and you have similar research interests. Often, this also means the supervisor is already conducting work in the area of study that you are interested in. It is important to realize that students ARE NOT accepted into the program and then assigned a supervisor. Acceptance into the program will only occur if a supervisor has agreed to help the student with their thesis. Many students with very high grades are unable to identify a supervisor for a number of reasons (no similar research interests and/or no current vacancies in the faculty member's research lab).

Why is it required that I find a supervisor before I enter the MSc program? This is required because the thesis makes up the major portion of the work you need to do for your degree. When students enter our program, we want to ensure they have at least a general idea on what they are working on for their thesis, and they need to have a faculty member ready to help them get their study started. Often research funds are needed to conduct the thesis research, and again the supervisor is the faculty member who will be able to help find these funds.

So, I need to have some idea on the type of study I want to conduct for my thesis before I start the program? Yes, absolutely. You should be considering an MSc degree because there is some area of study that greatly interests you. Some potential students already have a clear idea on the type of project they want to do for their thesis, whereas others have only a general idea and they can be helped to narrow it down by a potential supervisor.

How do I find a supervisor?

The **best** way to find a supervisor is to look at the list of faculty that are associated with the MSc program (this list is on the website). See which faculty have research interests that overlap with your own. Are you interested in plant ecology, animal conservation, environmental chemistry, resource economics, policy, management, tourism, geography, or something else? Start emailing or phoning the faculty that may potentially act as a supervisor. You can discuss whether they have ideas or research funds to support some sort of project that you are both interested in. Keep in mind that these faculty may not be accepting graduate students for any number of reasons (lack of research funds, too many current students, etc.), but by making contact you may be able to start a discussion. You are free to contact more than one faculty member at a time, but remember, faculty will be most interested in those students who clearly are interested in the ir specific field of study.

Some students submit their application before they have made any contact with faculty. There is nothing gained by this approach. Your application will not be formally reviewed by the MSc Program unless a potential supervisor has been identified. You will also be contacted by the MSc Program Coordinator to discuss whether you have tried to make contact with potential supervisors. If a supervisor is not available, then your application will not be processed, and you will still be charged the application fee. Thus, it makes far more sense to seek out a potential supervisor *before* you submit your application. If you are unsure who to contact even after looking at the list of faculty on the website, you may wish to contact the Program Coordinator to discuss your options. Please remember there is no guarantee that a supervisor can be found, but we will try to help!

So, is it possible I may have outstanding marks from my undergraduate degree, but without a faculty supervisor I will not be admitted to the program? Yes, this is definitely possible. Even though your application on paper may be very strong, you will not be admitted into the program without a supervisor. This is why you should seek out a potential supervisor *before* you send in your application. Do you want to spend the time and money submitting an application if a supervisor is not available?

Okay, I am going to start contacting faculty to see if they want to supervise a new MSc student. What sorts of questions will they likely ask me? Faculty approached by students interested in working with them on an MSc degree simply may not have any openings in their lab. But, if they have a potential project in mind, they will be looking for someone who is clearly interested in the type of research they are doing. They may ask you to provide them with your *curriculum vitae* and/or a written statement as to why you want to do a graduate degree, and they likely will want to talk to you. They probably will ask to see a copy of your undergraduate marks in order to determine whether an application by yourself to the program will be successful.

Once I am ready to send in my application, where do I send it? Once you are ready to apply, you should send your documents to **The Graduate Admissions Officer**. See directions for doing this on the website. Once your application package is complete, the Officer will forward it to the Coordinator for the MSc Program. Provided a supervisor has been tentatively identified, your application will then be evaluated. The Graduate Admissions Officer will be informed of the decision, and he/she will then contact you with the decision.

Once my application has been accepted, then what happens? The final step in the admission process is that you and your supervisor must co-sign a **Financial Agreement Form**. This means that both of you have agreed on how you will have an income while you are a student in the MSc program. This is very different than an undergraduate program, where you might have worked in a part-time or summer job in between your academic terms. Students in the MSc Program are expected to be mainly working full-time on their courses and thesis while they are in the program. This means there should be some financing in place to help the student cover the costs of living and their tuition fees. This may be covered through a scholarship, a research grant, or some other form of support. You will want to work out your financial plan with your potential supervisor *before* you sign the Financial Agreement Form.

What is my 'thesis committee'? As soon as you start the MSc program, you and your supervisor will identify at least 2 other faculty members that will sit on your 'thesis committee' and help provide guidance and assessment as you work on your thesis. Don't worry about this until after you start the program.

How long does it take to complete the MSc (Env. Sci.) program, and how much does it cost? The length of your MSc program will depend to some degree on the type of project you choose for your thesis. Most students start the program in September, complete their course requirements while developing a thesis proposal, and thereafter they devote themselves 100% of the time to working on the thesis. In some cases it may be possible to start working on your thesis immediately.

The average time that students take to complete the program is about 2.5 years, but this varies considerably. This is something you should discuss with any faculty member that may be acting as your supervisor. All students pay a set tuition fee for the program over the first 2 years. After that, if more time is required, a lower fee for each subsequent semester is charged. The Graduate Admissions Officer can provide you with the exact cost.

Please note that all MSc students are required to spend a minimum of 2 four-month semesters on the TRU campus (although many elect to stay on campus until they are finished, so they can work closely with their supervisor and thesis committee members).

Where can I get further information? The TRU website provides more information than is presented here. You need to visit this site at www.tru.ca/science/programs/msces. If you still have questions after this, you may contact the people listed on the website. Once you have found a supervisor, he or she also can help you with the application process or your plans to start your MSc degree. Good luck!