

Proposal to Change the Geology Master's Degree from an MA to an MS
3/30/01

The Department of Geology would like to propose a change in the name of our graduate degree from Master of Arts in Geology to Master of Science in Geology. This change will better reflect the department's home in the College of Science and Technology and be more descriptive of our program.

The Department of Geology currently offers an MA as our only graduate degree. All of our students must complete course work, conduct original research, and write a thesis to obtain their degree. Part of the thesis defense includes presenting their results orally to the department, and most students also present their research at a national or local meeting.

We request the name change for three reasons. We believe that changing to an MS degree more accurately reflects the students' work; the MS is more suitable to our current home of the dept in the College of Science and Technology; and the MS is by far the more traditional geology degree across the country. Let me elaborate on each of these points. 1. Several students who have graduated have told us that prospective employers assume that an MA degree represents a non-thesis option. Since all of our students produce a thesis, the current name doesn't describe the program completely. 2. The MA was created when we were part of the College of Arts and Sciences. When the College of Science and Technology formed in 1998, our program was deemed to fit in that new college. 3. There are approximately 200 graduate programs in geology across the country that offer a master's degree. Of these, 181 (the vast majority) are master's of science degrees. Six departments offer a masters of arts degree that is designed for teachers. There are about 30 departments that have a MA along with a choice of MS or PhD. Only 9 of the 200 programs offer an MA alone. Interestingly, 2 of these programs are in Philadelphia and 7 are in New York City. Clearly, Temple is in the minority in offering the MA, and it is time to update the name. This change will also make Temple more competitive regionally.