Western Regional Graduate Program

DRAFT Policy for MES

December 16th, 2021

The WRGP allows master’s students from a Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) state or territory to enroll in graduate programs offered by public institutions in the west outside their home state or territory and pay reduced non-resident tuition.

Qualified Graduate Programs at The Evergreen State College are listed below:

* The [Master of Environmental Studies Program](https://www.evergreen.edu/mes)

Academically qualified graduate students can receive reduced tuition for up to 4-years while pursuing a Master of Environmental Studies degree at The Evergreen State College. Qualified participants will pay a tuition rate ~~equal to~~ that is 150% of the Washington State Resident graduate tuition rate.

For example, non-resident tuition rates for the 2021-2022 academic year would be as follows:

* ~~Washington residents: $3,887 per quarter for 12 graduate credits, or $11,661 annually for 12 graduate credits per quarter for Fall, Winter, and Spring.~~
* Regular Non-residents: $8,742 per quarter for 10-16 graduate credits, or $26,226 annually. ~~for 12 graduate credits per quarter for Fall, Winter, and Spring.~~
* WRGP students: $5,710 per quarter for 10-16 graduate credits, or $17,130 annually. ~~for 12 graduate credits per quarter for Fall, Winter, and Spring.~~

These figures do not include fees, room and board, supplies, or living expenses. Be sure to review our [cost of attendance](https://www.evergreen.edu/costs/costs-aid) information to learn about the total cost of attending Evergreen as a graduate student, and evergreen.edu/mes/costs for MES specific scholarship options.

WRGP tuition awards are available for the 2022-2023 academic year to graduate applicants who demonstrate academic merit. Merit for new MES admitted students is determined by the strength of their admissions application for the academic year they intend to begin the program. The factors which influence merit for applicants are:

1. The quality of letters of recommendation from 3 required references.
2. The quality of writing in the Statement of Purpose.
3. Academic history represented on the transcript from the institution where the applicant earned their bachelor’s degree.
	1. For applicants who earned their most recent higher education credential more than 5 years ago, work history represented in the Resume or Curriculum Vitae will be more heavily weighed alongside the bachelor’s degree transcript.
	2. Applicants who have previously earned a Master’s or Doctoral degree, can also submit transcripts for their former graduate academic history. Academic merit on the transcript will be weighed more heavily from the most recent degree or coursework.
4. The final requirement for admissions in MES involves a choice between completing and submitting GRE Scores or an Analytical Essay on an environmental topic of the applicant’s choosing. Merit is evaluated for each category based on:
	1. GRE Scores: Cumulative GRE Scores must meet a minimum score of 300 to be considered for WRGP.
	2. Analytical Essay: Overall quality and coherence of analysis represented in the Analytical Essay.

Non-resident enrollment into MES through the WRGP must be determined prior to an applicant’s enrollment as a graduate student. Once WRGP eligible non-residents have matriculated into MES as a regular non-resident, they are not eligible to apply for WRGP.

Prospective students interested in applying to the Master of Environmental Studies Program through the Western Regional Graduate Program’s reduced tuition rate, must apply for admission at evergreen.edu/mes/apply and submit all requirements.

If you are not from a [WRGP state or territory](https://www.wiche.edu/our-region/), or don’t meet the merit requirements, MES’s scholarships, fellowships, and tuition waivers are another great option to pursue to reduce the overall cost of attendance for your graduate degree. Please contact the Graduate Admissions Office with any questions.

**Initial Eligibility**

* ~~“Graduate” is defined as a student of any age that has earned a bachelor’s degree or has achieved professionally relevant work experience in the field related to the graduate program they are applying to.~~
* WRGP tuition is available only to graduate applicants who are offered admission to the Master of Environmental Studies Program.
* Admission to MES can be deferred once, for up to one year. However, enrollment through WRGP cannot be deferred. If an applicant accepts the offer to attend MES through WRGP, the offer is only good for the academic year they have initially applied for and cannot be deferred to another academic year. The choice of an admitted student to defer admission, waives their acceptance of the WRGP offer and the MES Program has the option to then offer this tuition reduction opportunity to the next qualified admitted student. Contact the Graduate Admissions Office for information and instructions on how to defer enrollment.

**Continued Eligibility, Keeping WRGP**

You will receive WGRP tuition each quarter if you meet all of the following criteria:

* You are an admitted degree-seeking Evergreen student in the MES Program.
* You are enrolled for ~~full-time (based on college and Financial Aid standards at Evergreen) with~~ a minimum of 8 graduate credits per quarter.
* You meet the [Master of Environmental Studies’ Academic Standing Requirements.](https://www.evergreen.edu/mes/handbook-registration)
* You meet the residency requirements detailed below.
* Should you take a Leave of Absence from MES for more than a year, you will need to re-apply for admission, and you will no longer be eligible for the WRGP tuition rate.

**Time Limitations**

* WRGP tuition rates are renewable for up to ~~225~~ 90 attempted credits under the same policy and provisions as financial aid limitations.
* WRGP must also be used within four years of a student’s first quarter of enrollment in MES. Four years is the maximum timeframe a student may take to complete the 72 quarter credit MES degree.
* WRGP tuition does not apply to summer quarter enrollment.

**Residency**

* WRGP students are considered non-resident students and are not eligible for Washington State aid programs or scholarships limited to Washington residents.
* All graduate students and applicants are considered Independent Students regardless of their age; therefore, residency is based on the residency status of the student alone. Students receiving WRGP must continuously maintain legal residency in one of the 16 WRGP states or territories to receive a WRGP tuition award.
* WRGP tuition rates will end immediately upon the college determining a student no longer meets residency requirements. Once terminated, the WRGP cannot be re-established for the student.
* Time spent in Washington while receiving WRGP tuition cannot count as time towards establishing [Washington State residency.](https://www.evergreen.edu/registration/residency)

**Electing Not to Use WRGP Tuition**

* Once a student chooses not to use WRGP, it cannot be reversed.
* A student may elect not to use WRGP and pay the full non-resident rate. To do so, notify the Graduate Admissions Office in writing.
* A student can elect not to use WRGP at any time during their enrollment at Evergreen, students may waive their eligibility if they would like to pursue the establishment of residency in Washington State during their time as a graduate student in MES.
* Once notified, the College will apply regular non-resident tuition rates to the upcoming quarter the student registers for.

**Study Abroad and Internships**

* WRGP can be used for quarters that a student is studying abroad or engaged in an internship as long as their total quarterly credits add up to a minimum of 8 quarter graduate credits and Evergreen tuition is being paid.
* If a graduate student would like to pursue graduate credits at another institution or program to transfer the credits into MES and apply them towards their required 24 elective credits, WRGP tuition rates will not apply.

**Other Scholarships and Financial Aid**

* All applicants are encouraged to file the FAFSA or WASFA to check qualification for need-based aid and apply for MES scholarships, fellowships, and tuition waivers.
* You may be eligible to receive other forms of financial aid and scholarships, along with WRGP such as Unsubsidized Federal Direct Stafford Loans, The Evergreen Need Grant, and MES specific scholarships, fellowships, and tuition waivers.  However, your total amount of assistance cannot exceed your Cost of Attendance, as defined in your financial aid package.
* The WRGP can be combined with external funding resources such as AmeriCorps Education Stipends and Peace Corps Coverdell Fellowships.

**Marketing and Outreach Plan for WRGP**

If the Master of Environmental Studies Program and Evergreen are eligible to be included as member colleges and graduate programs through the Western Regional Graduate Program, we would implement the following recruitment and outreach strategies for prospective students from eligible WICHE states and territories:

1. Include announcements on the Master of Environmental Studies application page on the Evergreen Website.
2. Curate social media posts advertising the WRGP opportunity on the following @EvergreenMES platforms prior to the close of each round of admissions for the upcoming Fall admissions cycle:
	1. Twitter
	2. Facebook
	3. Instagram
	4. LinkedIn
3. Work with the Marketing and Communications department to coordinate social media marketing campaigns on the @Evergreen social media accounts.
4. Include a slide talking about the opportunity during our weekly Tuesday evening MES Information Sessions.
5. Send intentional text messages and emails to applicants who start MES applications from WICHE states and territories.
6. Include the WRGP opportunity in email and phone communications with prospective students who submit Radius inquiries about the MES Program and indicate their residency in a WICHE region.
7. Attend virtual and in-person Graduate and Career Fairs in WICHE states and territories to directly reach undergraduates interested in pursuing graduate education and careers in environmental studies.