

Department Name Change Proposal

Academic Year 2023-2024

A. Summary Statement

1. Date of submission:
2 February 2024
2. Department name and underlying degree programs:
Department of Geological Sciences
BS3321, BS3326, OR3326, BS1948 (through HTC), MS3321, MS3325
3. Name of programs in the department:
BS3321: Geological Sciences
OR3321: Geological Sciences
BS3326: Environmental Geoscience
OR3326: Environmental Geoscience
BS1948 (through HTC): Geological Sciences
MS3321: Geological Sciences (thesis)
MS3325: Geological Sciences (non-thesis)
4. Name(s) of individual(s) proposing the name change and their email address(es):
Greg Springer, springeg@ohio.edu, 740-541-3559
Eung Seok Lee, lee1@ohio.edu
5. Home department/school and college:
Department of Geological Sciences
6. Desired semester/year of program change
Fall 2024-25, or sooner if possible.

7. A brief (< 250 word) description of the proposed change(s):

The Department of Geological Sciences proposes to change its name to the Department of Earth and Environmental Geosciences. This name should be read as “Earth Geosciences” + “Environmental Geosciences”. Appending geoscience to earth emphasizes that our focus is those earth processes and materials taught in our major courses (e.g., Geomorphology and Structural Geology). The phrase “environmental geosciences” is taken directly from our program BS3326 Environmental Geoscience.

B. Detailed Description of Change

1. Describe rationale for proposed change.

The Department of Geological Sciences proposes to change its name to the Department of Earth and Environmental Geosciences (ERTH). The change is strongly supported by our Alumni Board and reflects our major emphases, which are the earth geosciences (BS3321, BA3321, MS3321, MS3325) and environmental geosciences (BS3326). The current name does not reflect our environmental strengths or BS3326/OR3326, which comprises half of our enrollment and is actively growing.

Geology is the scientific study of the Earth, including its composition, structure, physical properties, and the processes that have shaped its formation and evolution over time. Hence, the choice of Earth Geosciences in the new department name, which makes clear we do not have climate processes and meteorology in our portfolio.

Four of our seven faculty study environmental and natural resource topics. We offer BS3326, which is entitled “Environmental Geoscience”, and most of our alumni work in the environmental field. The latter reflects the fact that, upon graduation, well over 50% of our students obtain employment in the environmental sciences.

In a previous draft of this proposal, we proposed the name “Earth and Environmental Sciences”. However, based on feedback from other departments, we now include geosciences in the name to emphasize that we are not speaking too broadly about the earth and environmental sciences.

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Nationally, there is a strong movement toward using the terms earth science, geoscience, or environmental geoscience because high school students have more exposure to earth science and environmental courses than geological courses, which results in students not knowing what “geological sciences” means. Hence, successful recruitment requires reaching students by using terminology that reflects our focus and includes terms that prospective students recognize.

Having a department whose name includes “environmental geoscience” will aid recruitment of students to OHIO given the appeal of the broader topic to recent

generations. This would also give CAS a department that could house environmentally-focused faculty.

Alternative names were considered, but phrases such as “environmental studies” are already in use at OHIO, although the associated school only offers an HTC undergraduate major and MS6956 Environmental Studies. The program is termed MSES by the Voinovich School. The other comparable phrase is BS2109 Environmental Science and Sustainability (ESS), which does not have a home department and belongs to the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) as a whole. We did not include sustainability in the new department name and will not use the term in any program names.

The term environmental is used in multiple program names in CAS. At present, there are nine environmental programs spread across five departments. As of Spring 2023, CAS had 435 students enrolled in environmental, sustainability, or conservation programs (“environmental programs”). These students account for 13.4% of all CAS students ($n = 3251$), so collectively, environmental, and allied students form one the largest groupings in CAS.

The lack of a department dedicated to the environmental sciences places OHIO at a competitive disadvantage among prospective OHIO students interested in the earth and environment. Clearly, the fact that so many schools have adopted the naming strategy is evidence of its value for recruiting students, so our new name would aid in recruiting students to OHIO.

2. **Desired semester/year of program change:**

Fall 2024-25, or sooner if possible.

3. **Impact on current students (majors and minors)**

The name change would have no effect on current students because our degree programs are remaining the same. The only potential point of confusion might be the name of the Geology Club. The latter is based on our department (Geological Sciences) and the club would keep its current name, but students looking to find the club might not immediately associate the new name with the club. However, we have spoken to the club officers and they report that students find the club through online student center listings, so they do not believe it will have an effect.

4. **Impact on current faculty.**

The faculty voted unanimously to change the name and we anticipate no effect on the faculty. Nationally, the name Geological Sciences is being replaced by variations on earth and environmental sciences, so the name will not confuse colleagues at other schools. Hence, when faculty list their institution on publications, the new name will not create any confusion or lessen our prestige.

5. **Evidence that the process followed ensured broad input from affected faculty.**

The faculty include four tenure-track professors and three professors of instruction. All seven had equally weighted votes, all faculty could suggest new names, and all faculty

participated in department meetings where the name change was discussed. Various faculty, including our instructors, suggest multiple new names and at one point we had eight to choose from. All faculty ranked the names and we used a series of rank-weighted votes to reach a final choice. Hence, everyone had an equal voice and equal vote.

6. Evidence of consultation (in all cases where your program impacts other academic departments or schools), cooperation and/or collaboration with other OHIO programs impacted by this change.

The first draft of this proposal was distributed to the Voinovich school, Geography (GEOG), and Environmental Plant Biology (PBIO). The latter had no objections, but as mentioned above, the other two units strongly objected to the name “Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences.” We changed the proposed name and gave this revised profile to the same units. Voinovich and PBIO have no objections to the new name (see email in a separate document).

The other units were given the revised proposal on 1 November 2023 and asked to return comments within two weeks. The chair of GEOG did not respond, so we wrote her again on 19 November 2023 and asked if they had comments. We were promised a response, but as of 5 December 2023 we have received no input. We feel that extending the evaluation time and wait for over a month is sufficient time and we are submitting the proposal without additional input from GEOG. However, the other proposal documents include their response to the first proposal.

7. Provide a detailed description of the proposed changes. For each course, include prefixes, course numbers, names, and credit hours. Indicate if any new courses are being included in the program change proposal and their approval status.

No new courses are being included, but new courses may be proposed at a future date.

8. Including any changes to credit hours and identification of all other academic units impacted by the change.

n/a

9. If a new track or concentration within an existing approved program is being requested, is there a desire for a new program code?

There are no program changes.

10. Provide a comparison table including all current program requirements alongside the proposed changes.

There are no program changes.