

Frequently Asked Questions for Prospective and Current REES M.A. Students

General Information

Q. *What is the Weiser Center?*

A. The Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia (WCEE) is an umbrella organization for the Center for Russian and East European Studies (CREES), Center for European Studies-European Union Center (CES-EUC), and Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED) housed at the U-M International Institute. It is dedicated to enhancing interdisciplinary knowledge about, and public engagement with, the institutions, cultures, and histories of Europe and Eurasia. Named in honor of Ronald and Eileen Weiser and inspired by their time in Slovakia during Ambassador Weiser's service as U.S. Ambassador from 2001-04, WCEE began operations in 2008.

Q. *How many students are associated with CREES?*

A. There are currently about 20 students pursuing REES M.A. or Graduate Certificate degrees and between 150 to 200 graduate students in other fields (history, political science, anthropology, etc.) who focus on the region. All of these students, plus related faculty, make up our CREES community. Normally, between two and ten students start the REES M.A. or Graduate Certificate program each fall semester.

Q. *What is the average length of the Master's program?*

A. Students normally complete the M.A. in two years (four terms), or sometimes three terms depending on how many credits they take, and, in particular, how many language classes they need to take. Many of our students are dual degree students (with professional programs such as public policy or law and Ph.D. programs such as Slavic, history, or education) and therefore do not finish in the traditional two years. These add between one and ten (for Ph.D. programs) terms to the overall time to completion.

Q. *Is language study required during the program?*

A. Language study is not required, but highly encouraged. If a student already has a high degree of proficiency in a language of the region, then he or she must retain that proficiency to use primary language sources when researching the master's project. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of language course offerings and pursue a second or third language of the region. If a student is not proficient in an area language, then he or she must enroll in language classes until proficiency is achieved.

Q. *Does CREES offer a Ph.D.?*

A. No. However, REES M.A. students in the past have successfully applied to Ph.D. programs at the University of Michigan through other departments. For information on Ph.D. programs, contact the specific department of interest, such as anthropology, education, history, political science, Slavic, sociology, etc. For applications and further information on all these programs, visit the [Rackham School of Graduate Studies website](#).

Q. *What careers have past CREES students pursued?*

A. Most REES M.A. recipients and those with dual degrees with professional programs are interested in government service (e.g., State Department, Foreign Service, military) or non-governmental organizations both domestically and abroad. The latter include non-profit environmental or human rights organizations and think-tanks. Others find positions in private businesses, including consulting firms, banks, and law firms. Others pursue careers in teaching at all levels, and many graduates continue on to obtain a Ph.D. in various fields.

Application/Admissions

Q. How do I apply to the REES M.A. program?

A. Prospective students may [apply online](#) through the Rackham School of Graduate Studies. Online applications with the statement of purpose will go directly to Rackham and CREES. GRE scores are sent to Rackham, code 1839.

All applicants are required to **mail 1 set of official academic records/transcripts** from undergraduate and postgraduate institutions to the Rackham Graduate School.

Rackham Graduate School
 Attn: Transcripts/U-M ID# (if known) or Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)
 915 E Washington Street
 Ann Arbor MI 48109-1070
 USA

Official documents must be provided by the institution awarding the degree. Academic records certified by notary publics are not official.

Your completed online application and supporting documents (including academic records/transcripts, test scores, and letters of recommendation, etc.) should be submitted early enough to arrive two to three weeks prior to the deadline. **All application materials must be received by both CREES and Rackham by January 15.**

Note: All credentials submitted for admission consideration become the property of the University of Michigan and will not be returned in original or copy form.

Q. When are applications available and what is the application deadline?

A. Rackham Graduate School applications normally are available in August. The CREES application deadline is January 15 for enrollment the following fall.

Q. On what basis are applicants accepted to the program?

A. The Admissions Committee relies on the entire application to assess each prospective student: the statement of purpose, transcript(s), letters of recommendation, and GRE scores. The committee does not focus on one criterion to the exclusion of others, nor do we have minimum requirements for any criterion (although successful applicants typically have GRE scores in the mid-600s, and an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.25). In addition, applicants should have strong motivation to study the region and already have a substantial background or experience—educational or otherwise—in the region prior to entering our program.

Q. What kind of educational background do successful applicants have?

A. You need not have majored in Slavic or REES or anything similar. Past students majored in history or political science and a wide variety of subjects, but entered with a broad knowledge of the region or of selected countries stemming from coursework and/or experience abroad.

Q. Language study is obviously important to study of the region. What background should I have before entering the REES M.A. program?

A. Students entering the REES M.A. program generally have some previous knowledge of a language of the region (e.g., through formal coursework, tutoring, volunteering in the region). Although there is no minimum entrance requirement, attainment of area language proficiency needed for post-graduation careers is a key program objective. Prior to graduating, all students must demonstrate proficiency

equivalent to three years in at least one language of the region (German not included) by completing coursework at the appropriate level (or the equivalent). Except for native speakers, all students must also take a proficiency exam administered by the relevant U-M language program.

Q. I am interested in applying for the REES M.A. program, but am not currently proficient in a language of the region. What can I do to make my application strong enough that I am considered for admission?

A. Students with little or no knowledge of an area language are encouraged to enroll in language courses during the academic year or summer prior to matriculation, and should note these plans in their admission applications. Information about summer language programs in the U.S. can be found on the CREES website under [Student Resources](#).

Q. How many applications does CREES receive and how many get accepted?

A. CREES receives between 25 and 75 applications each year; we do not have a quota or percentage of applications that we accept, but review each student based on his or her own merit. This means that the acceptance rate varies each year depending on the quality of the applications.

Q. What are the dual degrees offered by CREES? How do I apply for one?

A. CREES offers dual degrees with the [Ford School of Public Policy](#) (M.A./M.P.P.), the [Law School](#) (M.A./J.D.), and the [Ross Business School](#) (M.A./M.B.A.). The main advantage of the dual programs is that they decrease the number of credits needed to obtain both degrees. Applications must be made separately to both programs, and admissions decisions are made by separate committees. See the [CREES Graduate Programs](#) webpage for more information.

Q. From whom should I request letters of recommendation?

A. You should request letters from those best able to assess your ability to succeed in graduate school. Traditionally these are faculty members from your undergraduate institution, but they can easily be employers or military supervisors if you have been out of school for a while or are in the military.

Q. When will I be notified of decisions regarding my admission?

A. Typically, applicants are notified by mid-March.

Coursework

Q. How is advising handled? Do I need to find an advisor on my own?

A. The CREES Director acts as Academic Advisor for all REES students to assist with course selection, degree requirements, and related matters. The CREES Student Services Associate also provides guidance on application questions, funding matters, and degree requirements. M.A. students should meet with the Academic Advisor at least three times throughout the course of their degree: once at orientation, again near the end of their first year to discuss plans for the thesis and for guidance in selecting a thesis advisor, and early in their final semester to conduct a degree audit. Additional appointments can be scheduled as necessary. Contact CREES at 734.764.0351 or crees@umich.edu to set up an advising appointment.

In addition, M.A. students must have two thesis readers. The primary reader, or thesis advisor, must be a CREES faculty member, and is generally someone whose research is closely related to the individual student's own field. The secondary reader should also be a CREES faculty member (or, in the case of dual degree students, faculty from the other school or unit). Students are responsible for selecting their thesis advisors, and should do so no later than the beginning of their second year.

Q. What are the requirements for completing the M.A. program?

A. Students must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours: 15 of these must be in REES-approved courses at the 500-level and above, and 9 more credits must be in REES-approved courses at the 400-level and above. Courses must be distributed in at least four departments. REES 795, Seminar in Russian and East European Studies, or an advisor-approved seminar resulting in a master's project is mandatory. In addition, a Master's thesis or project is required and must be approved by two CREES faculty members. Proficiency in a language of the region must also be demonstrated by time of degree completion.

Q. What is the average course load for a CREES student?

A. Most REES M.A. students take 9 credits per term (the equivalent of three graduate-level courses) plus a language course which may or may not be for graduate credit depending on the level.

Q. The program seems very flexible...how will I know what classes I should take?

A. Each term, CREES puts together a list of "REES-approved" and "REES-related" courses to help students find courses that can be used to fulfill the requirements of the REES degrees. The list is not exhaustive and students may use other courses to fulfill the requirements provided that the course has some REES content and/or the student plans to work primarily on the region under the auspices of the course. Students must obtain permission from the Academic Advisor for "REES-related" courses and any not appearing on the list produced by CREES to be counted toward their REES degree. No such permission is needed for "REES-approved" classes.

Funding

Q. What is a FLAS Fellowship and how do I get one?

A. Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships provide tuition and a stipend to students pursuing graduate training in designated foreign languages in combination with area studies or international aspects of professional studies. FLAS Fellowships are administered by U-M Area Studies Centers and Programs and are awarded competitively through fellowship competitions. The U.S. Department of Education (US/ED) funds and manages these awards under the provisions of Title VI of the Higher Education Act. The amount of funding and number of awards granted is contingent upon annual US/ED program approval, federal regulations, as well as continued congressional funding, all of which may change from year to year. There are two kinds of FLAS fellowships: one for academic year and one for summer intensive language study. See [CREES Student Funding](#) for more information and application instructions.

Q. Does the M.A. program offer teaching opportunities?

A. CREES has Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) positions for two survey courses on Russia and Eastern Europe. Priority is given to applicants who have an academic background on Russia/FSU or Eastern Europe and knowledge of a language of the region, and who intend to pursue an academic career (including teaching) focused on the region. Strong preference is given to graduate students who have prior experience as a GSI. For application information, see [CREES Student Funding](#). For information about other GSI positions, please contact individual departments. The [Slavic Department](#) sometimes has positions open for Russian language GSIs.

Q. Where else should I look for funding?

A. See the [CREES Student Resources](#) webpage for links to other organizations which offer fellowships and other funding opportunities related to the region. Some of these would be applicable to academic work at U-M, and others would fund research abroad, both long- and short-term.