

Department of Geography,
Environment and Geomatics

Graduate Student Handbook



UNIVERSITY
of **GUELPH**

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Graduate Student Handbook

1. Introduction

Graduate studies can be exhilarating, confusing and stressful in equal measures. This online handbook is designed to reduce the confusion and stress by providing information about the Department, people who can help you, resources that are available for your use, and answers to frequently asked questions.

- Section 2 identifies people and organizations in the Department and the University who can help you during your time as a graduate student. Many of these people have specific jobs and responsibilities, and you need to know what they are so that you'll know who to see when you need help.
- Section 3 is a list of "frequently asked questions" about resources, equipment, procedures, and other issues you'll confront.

The handbook will be updated regularly as information changes, and as new information is added. Suggestions for improvements are welcome. If you have any, contact geograd@uoguelph.ca, the Department's Graduate Program email acct.

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2. Who Does What?

Many people in the Department and the University will be ready and willing to help you during your time as a graduate student. If you get to know who they are, what their responsibilities are, and how they can help you, then your graduate experience will be a lot smoother.

Don't forget that you are one of the people responsible for ensuring that your graduate experience at Guelph is productive and enjoyable! This section also identifies your specific responsibilities to yourself and to others.

Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics

Chair (Wanhong Yang – Room 118A)

The Chair is the person ultimately responsible for the Department of Geography (including its graduate programs). Certain forms can only be signed by the Department Chair. The Chair is also the person you will see if you have a problem that other people in the department cannot solve.

Graduate Coordinator (Aaron Berg – Room 135)

The Graduate Coordinator is responsible for administering the Department of Geography's graduate programs. This includes interpreting program regulations, arranging defences and assigning Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs). Contact Aaron Berg (ggradcrd@uoguelph.ca) if you have questions about program requirements, concerns about your GTA, issues relating to your advisory committee that you cannot resolve yourself, or any other matters that you think are important and want to discuss.

Graduate Program Assistant (Nance Grieve – Room 123A)

The Graduate Program Assistant takes care of day-to-day administration of the graduate program. Contact Nance Grieve (geograd@uoguelph.ca) if you need forms signed, scholarship application materials, or advice about general administrative issues.

Administrative Secretary (Jennifer Beehler – Room 119)

The Department's Administrative Secretary is responsible for day-to-day administration in the Department and works with the Chair to ensure that things are running smoothly. See Jennifer for anything relating to human resources, payroll and other financial concerns (except travel claims). She also manages the assignment of keys to students.

Undergraduate Program Assistant (Carol Hart – Room 118)

The Undergrad Program Assistant handles day-to-day issues not relating to the graduate program, for example, faxes, mail, and courier shipments. Carol also processes Travel Claims and requests for Travel Advances. Carol is also the person to see about adding money to your printing account (see Section 3).

Technician (Sandy McLaren – Room 005)

The Department's Technician.

Computing Coordinator (Gihan Sooriyabandara – Room 231B)

The Computing Coordinator takes care of our network, and all matters relating to computer software in the Department. If you're bringing your own computer into the office, then Gihan can help you to set up a network connection. Gihan is not responsible for maintaining the software on

your own computer, but he can give you advice.

GIS Specialist (Adam Bonnycastle – Room 231A)

The GIS Specialist supports all things related to using GIS and remote sensing technologies in the department. This ranges from supporting undergraduate geomatics courses to helping graduate students and faculty use these technologies for their research. Adam can help you with GPS, finding spatial data, and how to use GIS software to make maps and conduct spatial analyses.

Cartographer and Web Master (Marie Puddister – Room 239)

The Cartographer provides cartographic and web design services to the Department, and is in charge of signing out audiovisual equipment, including the digital camera. Marie can also help you to design slides for PowerPoint presentations and posters. The Cartographic office has a 42-inch printer and laminator for posters.

Advisory Committee

Your Advisor

Your Advisor is the faculty member with whom you'll have the most contact during your program. Your Advisor will guide you through the graduate program, help you to develop and undertake a research project, and make sure that you are on track to complete your program successfully. In most cases, your Advisor will be providing part of your funding package and will be financially supporting your research. It's very important that you and your Advisor have a common understanding regarding your relationship – so, make sure that you have an open and thorough discussion about your mutual expectations at the start of your program, and that you keep the lines of communication open throughout your program.

Your Advisory Committee

All graduate students must have an Advisory Committee, which normally will be formed by the end of Semester One. Masters students typically have a two-person Advisory Committee (the Advisor and one other faculty member). Doctoral students typically have two to three committee members in addition to their Advisor.

How much interaction you'll have with your Advisory Committee member(s) will depend on how much effort you make to involve them, how much they want to be involved, and your Advisor's expectations.

Talk to your Advisor about who the members of your Advisory Committee will be, how they will be selected, and what role they will play.

Your committee members can be an excellent source of support as you complete your work. In addition, committee members may have to play another extremely important role: in the event that your Advisor is unable to perform his or her duties, for example, because he or she goes on a parental leave, one of your committee members will be designated Co-Advisor, and will take over your Advisor's responsibilities.

Other Members of the Department

Other Faculty

Other faculty in the department (and the University) will be happy to chat with you about your work. Feel free to knock on doors and ask for help, advice and suggestions. As a general

guideline, if you find yourself visiting a particular faculty member frequently and receiving a lot of help, then you may wish to consider discussing with your Advisor whether or not that person should be added to your Advisory Committee.

Your Cohort

The people who started the program with you are your cohort, and they can be a tremendous source of support, friendship, and advice. Don't be afraid to lean on them when you need help.

Upper-Year Grads

The people who went through what you're going through now a year or two ago have a lot of experience to share, and they're usually always willing to help out. You can learn a lot about how things work, and gain valuable insights into challenges you're facing, by talking to people who've been there.

Graduate Student Representatives on the Graduate Affairs Committee

The Department's Graduate Affairs Committee includes two graduate student representatives. One of the main functions of the student representatives on the committee is to be a conduit for communicating concerns from graduate students to the Department. Throughout the year your representatives may ask you for your opinions, but feel free to tell them what you think without being asked – especially if you have some concerns that you want the department to be aware of.

Other People and Organizations in the University

The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (OGPS)

The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is the office within the University administration that is responsible for the administration of graduate programs. You will deal with The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies regarding registration, certain scholarships, and graduation. The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies also is responsible for dealing with health insurance for international students. [The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies web site](#) is an important resource for information about all of these concerns. The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is located in the University Centre, Level 3.

Student Financial Services (SFS)

For assistance with financial matters, including paying fees and applying for OSAP and other forms of financial assistance, visit the [Student Financial Services](#) web site. If you need to see someone from this office in person, Student Financial Services is located in the University Centre, Level 3.

Graduate Students' Association (GSA)

All graduate students are members of the GSA. This organization represents your interests to the administration, deals with issues such as the Student Health and Dental plans, and performs the very important function of running the Graduate Lounge! Visit the [GSA web site](#) for more information.

CUPE 3913

If you are a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) or a Graduate Service Assistant (GSA), then CUPE 3913 – Unit 1 is your union. Visit the [CUPE 3913 web site](#) for more information.

Office of the International Student Advisor

The [University's International Student Advisor](#) provides counseling and assistance to

international students. The Office's web site provides links to useful resources and information for international students.

Reference Librarians

The University of Guelph has an excellent library, and superb reference librarians. They can help you figure out where to find things, how to use paper and electronic resources, etc. Put them to work for you!

Other

Numerous other organizations exist on campus to provide assistance to graduate students. Examples include Teaching Support Services, the Learning Commons, Health Services, Career Services, and the Centre for International Programs. Links to these organizations and services are collected in the [Services page](#) of the University's web site.

You and Your Responsibilities

You can do a lot to ensure that your graduate experience at Guelph is productive and enjoyable. You also have important responsibilities. General responsibilities of all graduate students at Guelph are detailed in the [Graduate Calendar](#), please review them. The following are specific responsibilities of graduate students in the Department of Geography:

- Asking questions if you don't know how something works, or what you're supposed to do.
- Negotiating an agreed-upon program of research with the Advisor. An approved research proposal will constitute an agreed-upon description of your program of research.
- Bringing any proposed deviations from the agreed-upon program of study and research to the attention of your Advisor in a timely fashion and negotiating an appropriate course of action.
- Meeting regularly with your Advisor and/or the Advisory Committee to discuss your progress, problems, etc.
- Actively seeking and applying for funding from pertinent external and internal sources (awards, scholarships) to support your studies.
- Becoming familiar with the rules governing graduate studies in the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph and seeking clarification immediately from the Graduate Program Assistant, Graduate Coordinator or The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in cases where you don't understand the rules.
- Completing degree requirements in a timely fashion, consistent with the Department's policy regarding acceptable program durations.
- Notifying the Graduate Coordinator immediately if a serious interpersonal conflict has occurred between you and your Advisor, or between you and any other member of the University, which you cannot resolve yourself.

3. Frequently Asked Questions

This is an evolving list of answers to questions you might have about how to do things in the Department and the University. If you have a question that isn't answered on this list, one of the people identified in Section 2 will be the right person to ask! If you have suggestions for frequently asked questions not addressed below, contact the Graduate Program Assistant.

How do I Register, Pay Fees and Sign up for Courses?

Students are required to register for every semester in which they are in the graduate program. Regular students (i.e., those whose status is not "provisional") should use

[WebAdvisor](#) to register for the semester and to register for courses. Provisional students must register in person at The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (University Centre, Level 3). To check the status of your account, contact Student Financial Services or use WebAdvisor (click on "Students" from the Main Menu, enter your login information and then select "Account Summary" from the Financial Profile menu).

Detailed instructions for registering and paying tuition fees are provided by Student Financial Services and sent by email. This email spells out procedures and identifies key steps in registering such as the Authorization for Graduate Settlement form. Authorization for Graduate Settlement is now available on-line and you can access the site through the menu item 'Graduate Settlement' in WebAdvisor. This process will be required each semester and must be completed by the deadlines in order to avoid late fees and/or de-registration. If you are going to self-pay tuition in full by the payment deadline, you are not required to complete the Graduate Settlement process.

You are responsible for ensuring that you are registered and that your fees are paid. Please read this information carefully.

If you complete all program requirements in time, you can avoid registering and paying for the next semester. You may also be eligible to get some or all of your tuition and registration fees fee back if you complete all program requirements early in the semester. Contact The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to find out the pertinent dates for each semester. You will need to submit an [Early Completion Rebate Application](#) form if you paid and wish to reclaim your tuition and fees.

Enrolling in courses

Registering for the semester and registering for courses is different. Most students can and should use [WebAdvisor](#) to both register and select courses. In certain cases you may need to complete a [Graduate Course Waiver Request](#) form, e.g., if the course is at capacity according to WebAdvisor, but the instructor has agreed to let you enroll; if this form is required, then you will have to register in person at Student Enrollment Services (University Centre, Level 3). Students whose status is "provisional" cannot use WebAdvisor; they must use a [Graduate Course Waiver Request Form](#) to add a course.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Applying for a fee reduction because you no longer live close to campus

Full-time students who no longer live close to the campus (200 + km from campus), and who therefore do not make use of university facilities on a regular basis, may apply for "Full-Time/Distant" status. Use the [Application for Full-Time Distant Fee Status](#) form.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Transferring from full-time to part-time, and vice-versa

With permission of the Department and the University, students may change their status from full-time to part-time, or from part-time to full-time. Use the [Full-Time And Part-Time Transfer Application](#)

Note that part-time students are not guaranteed funding or office space in the Hutt Building.

In addition to the Full-Time and Part-Time Transfer Application appropriate Application form, you will need to complete a [Graduate Course Waiver Request form Student Course Add/Drop & Change Form](#) and check the correct box in Section D. Your change in status also may involve adding or dropping courses; you'll use this form to do that too.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in*

Applying for a leave of absence

Under rare circumstances, students may apply for a leave of absence from the University. For example, you may become ill, or you may have to deal with a family emergency. Leave requests must be approved by the Department and by the University. Discuss your request with your Advisor prior to making your application. Use the [Application For Leave Of Absence & Withdrawal Application for Leave of Absence \(Hiatus\)](#) form to apply for a leave of absence.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Setting up Your Advisory Committee and Program

Learning program regulations

All graduate programs at the University of Guelph are subject to certain common rules and regulations. Additionally, each of the department's programs has specific rules and regulations. You need to become familiar with both the general and specific regulations.

- Consult the [Graduate Calendar](#) for general regulations and information, general degree regulations, etc.
- Regulations pertaining to the Department's [Master's](#) and [PhD](#) programs are presented in detail on the Department's web site.
- If you have any questions about program regulations, contact the Graduate Program Assistant. If necessary, you may be directed to the Graduate Coordinator or to The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Creating and modifying your Advisory Committee

Your Advisory Committee must be properly constituted (according to the regulations governing your program). During your first semester in the program, you should discuss potential advisory committee members with your Advisor. Use the [Advisory Committee Appointment Form](#) to identify the members of your committee; this form must be submitted as early as possible in Semester 2.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Any changes to your Advisory Committee (additions, deletions) must be approved by the Graduate Admissions and Programs Committee (see the Graduate Coordinator). You will need to submit a revised Advisory Committee Appointment Form.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Note that changing your Advisor is a major decision that cannot be taken lightly. All students are admitted to the program at the recommendation of a specific faculty member, who typically has committed to providing funding for your guaranteed minimum stipend and research. You may not be eligible for this finding if you change advisors – assuming that you can find someone who is willing to take you on.

Creating and modifying your Graduate Degree Program

Students must have an approved graduate degree program that specifies courses that comprise their program. Your Advisory Committee will help you to create an appropriate graduate degree program that is consistent with your program's requirements. Use the [Graduate Degree Program Form](#) to specify your program. Discuss your program with your Advisor early in your first semester; the form should be submitted prior to the end of Semester One.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Any changes to your Graduate Degree Program must be approved by the Graduate Admissions and Programs Committee (see the Graduate Coordinator). You will need to submit a revised Graduate Degree Program Form.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Making satisfactory progress

At the end of every semester, your advisory committee is required to evaluate your progress in the graduate program. This is done through a Gryphform that characterizes your progress as "Satisfactory", "Some Concerns", or "Unsatisfactory". The department has adopted formal guidelines for evaluating the progress of Master's and Doctoral students (see Section 3.4 in the Department's official [Graduate Program Policies](#) document). Review these guidelines and discuss them with your Advisor early in your program so that you can avoid later misunderstandings. Each semester The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies will send notification that a Student Progress Report is due.

Transferring credits from another university

If you started a graduate program at another university, and did not finish that program, you may apply to transfer some of the course credits received at that other university to the University of Guelph (and then have them count towards your program requirements). Strict conditions apply. The [Application For Transfer Credits](#) form outlines the conditions. You will use the same form if you received permission to take a course at another university.

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

Transferring from your current program to another program

All students are registered in a specific graduate program (e.g., MA.GEOG+IDEV, PHD.GEOG). With permission of the Department and the University, students may transfer between programs (e.g., from the MA.GEOG to MA.GEOG+IDEV, or from a Master's program to the PhD program). Students applying to transfer from one program to another must meet all of the new program requirements. Use the [Program Transfers form](#). A transfer fee is required at the time of application.

Note that special rules apply for transferring from the Master's program to the Doctoral program. These are outlined here in the Department's [regulations for the PhD program](#) (see "Transfer from the MA/MSc Program to the PhD Program").

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once you have filled it in.*

How Do I Defend My Thesis and Graduate?

Arranging for a thesis defence (Master's Thesis and PhD Thesis only)

Once PhD students and Master's students (thesis program) have completed their thesis and other program requirements they must request a thesis defense. Students are entitled to request a defence whether or not their advisory committee believes they are ready. Clearly you will want your committee to support your decision!

You must prepare a complete, final copy of your thesis. It should be formatted properly (as per the [Graduate Policy on Thesis Format](#)). All parts of the thesis must be complete (i.e., front matter, body chapters, appendixes, references), and the thesis should be free of spelling and grammar errors.

- Consult your Advisor about members of the examining committee, potential examiners, and a range of dates. The timeline described below is firm, so plan ahead.

Your Advisor will contact the Graduate Coordinator to discuss potential examination dates and members of the examining committee. All formal arrangements must be made through the Graduate Coordinator. Therefore, neither you nor your Advisor should contact potential examiners or arrange dates without the permission of the Graduate Coordinator.

- Print page 2 of the [Examination Request Form](#) which is a PDF form and can be filled in online and then printed. Collect the required signatures from the members of your Advisory Committee; everyone listed on your approved Advisory Committee Appointment Form must sign. The Examination Request Form has two pages. Advisory Committee members sign page 2. You sign on page 2 after the Advisory Committee members have signed. Original signatures are required. If Advisory Committee members sign different copies (e.g., one member sends in a faxed copy, another signs a copy that you provide), then you must provide your original signature on all copies of the form.
- Complete Page 1 the Examination Request Form after your Advisor has consulted with the Graduate Coordinator regarding dates and members of the examining committee etc. You will have to sign this form once it is filled in. The Graduate Program Assistant will enter the date and other information as required

⇒ *Submit both pages of the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once it is complete.*

Keep in mind that for Master's students, a minimum of 13 days is required between the date the Examination Request Form is received by the Graduate Program Assistant and the date of the defence. For Doctoral students, the Examination Request Form also must be delivered to the Graduate Program Assistant at least 13 days prior to the defence. However, the external examiner must receive a printed copy of the thesis a minimum of four weeks prior to the defence. Therefore, it is very important that the process of arranging your defence begins in plenty of time.

- Master's students should plan for at least four weeks between Step 2 (above) and the defence
- PhD students should leave at least eight weeks between Step 2 and the defence. If you do not leave enough time, you may have to register and pay for the next semester.

Applying to graduate because you have completed all program requirements

Once you have completed all of your program requirements, you will need to apply to graduate. Use the [Application for Graduation](#) form.

⇒ Submit the form to The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies once you have filled it in.

Other Administrative Functions

Notifying the University that you have changed your address

The University needs up-to-date contact information for all students. If you change your address, then you must notify Human Resources, Graduate Program Assistant, and Enrollment Services immediately. Use the [Address Notification \(Change of\)](#) form.

Verifying the information in our database

The Department collects detailed information about every student in a database. This database is used to manage the graduate program efficiently, so it needs to be correct and up-to-date. At various stages of your program, you will be asked to review a report that contains the information about you that is stored in our database. When you are asked to review this information, please return the verified report promptly to the Grad Program Assistant.

Note the Department is governed by the University's regulations regarding confidential information and will never share personal information collected with unauthorized people.

Requesting a Graduate Transcript

You can check your grades, and view an unofficial transcript, at any time using [WebAdvisor](#). However, on occasion you may need an official copy of your Graduate transcript. For example, when you apply for scholarships and awards, you may be asked to supply an official transcript. Use the [Graduate Official Transcript Request Form](#). If applying for OGS, SSHRC, NSERC, or CGS-M clearly make note of this on the request form and the transcripts will be "no charge" if pick up the transcripts in person.

⇒ Submit the form to Enrolment Services once you have filled it in.

Petitioning for Academic Consideration

In all matters relating to program regulations, courses and grades, graduate students are entitled to petition for academic consideration. For example, if you received permission from the instructor to defer a major assignment past the end of the semester in which it was due, and you believe that you need more time, you may petition for academic consideration if your request has been denied by the course instructor. Use the [Graduate Student Petition for Academic Consideration](#) form.

⇒ *Notify the course instructor and submit the form to The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies once completed.*

Withdrawing from your graduate program

In the unfortunate event that you decide to withdraw from your graduate program, you must do so formally. Use the [Withdrawal Notice](#) form. Please be sure to consult with your Advisor and the Graduate Coordinator prior to making this decision. In some cases, a Leave of Absence may be the better choice (e.g., if you are ill).

⇒ *Submit the form to the Graduate Program Assistant once completed.*

What do I Need to Know About Conducting Research and Writing my Thesis?

Getting approval for your research

Ethical clearance must be obtained before conducting any research involving human participants. Your Advisor is responsible for completing the application to the Research Ethics Board requesting permission to conduct research with human subjects. However, your Advisor may ask you to prepare a first draft of the protocol. It can take several weeks, and multiple revisions, to satisfy the University's Research Ethics Board. You will not be able to start your research involving human participants until this process is complete, so start early.

Under certain circumstances, you may require other kinds of permits to undertake your research. For example, if your research takes place in a National Park, then you may require special permission. Consult your Advisor for instructions if this is the case.

Filing a travel claim and requesting a travel advance

At the University of Guelph, "travel claims" are used to recoup costs relating to fieldwork and the purchase of certain kinds of equipment and supplies. All travel claims must be approved by your Advisor and Department Chair. Be sure to keep original receipts, including for meals. If you are claiming a flight, you must retain the boarding pass and submit it with your claim. You will not be reimbursed for expenses if you cannot provide original receipts. Please see ECS link

for further information and [starter tutorial](#).

⇒ *Travel claims are processed by the Department Secretary*

All research grants have rules and conditions regarding eligible expenses. For example, there is a daily limit on the amount that you may claim for meals, and no research grant will pay for alcohol. Grants provided by a Tri-Council agency (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR) do not permit charges for cell phone rental. Speak to your Advisor and the Undergraduate Program Assistant regarding eligible expenses before you spend any money.

If you need large amounts of money for your research or travel, you can request a travel advance so that you have the money in hand before work or travel begins. See the Undergraduate Program Assistant before you make any travel plans or purchase anything you plan to claim (even if you have spoken to your Advisor already). Travel Advance forms must be submitted 3 weeks prior to departure. The Undergraduate Program Assistant will require the Trust Fund number that will provide funds; ask your Advisor for the correct account number. If you submit a void cheque with your first travel claim, the funds will be deposited into your bank account. See Department Secretary for the form.

Renting a car

If you need a car for your research, and your trip begins from Guelph, then you must book a car through the Department. You'll need your Advisor's approval because the car will be paid for from your Advisor's research funds. See the Undergraduate Program Assistant to arrange a booking. Ensure that you give the Undergraduate Program Assistant the Trust Fund number that will be used to pay for the car rental (see your Advisor for the number).

If your research occurs at a site too far from Guelph to rent a car in Guelph, then you will have to make your own arrangements and recover the money you spend using a travel claim. Speak to the Undergraduate Program Assistant if you have any questions about car rentals.

Formatting your thesis

All theses (Master's and PhD) must be formatted according to the University's [Graduate Policy on Thesis Format](#). This document spells out requirements such as page layout, formatting rules and elements of the thesis. You should review this document carefully before you start writing your thesis.

If you use Microsoft Word, you can use a [template](#) that has been prepared for Geography graduate students. This template includes all the major styles that you will need (headings, body text, bulleted lists, etc.) and is formatted to meet the University's requirements. Use of this template can save you an enormous amount of time when you're preparing your thesis.

How do I Apply for and Fulfill the Requirements of a Graduate Teaching Assistantship?

All full-time graduate students are eligible to apply for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA). GTA positions in the Department of Geography are available for the Fall and Winter semesters, and occasionally for the Summer semesters. When positions become available in the Department, they will be posted on the [CUPE website](#). Follow instructions posted on this web site to apply for positions.

GTA positions are assigned based on the agreement between the University of Guelph and CUPE 3913, and on the Department of Geography's funding policy; a copy of the funding policy that applies to you was attached to the letter you received from the Graduate Coordinator notifying you of a pending offer of admission. If you lost it, the Graduate Program Assistant can make you a copy.

Keeping your GTA assignment on track

Full GTAs involve 140 hours of work over the semester (whether evenly distributed week-by-week, or in large clumps). You are neither expected nor required to work more than the number of hours posted. However, you are required to record every hour that you have spent on your GTA in a log, and to report the cumulative time regularly to the course instructor so that he or she can help you to manage your time, and can make contingency plans if the work load was greater than expected.

Collecting labs and assignments

If you need to collect assignments from students outside of class time as part of your GTA duties, then use the drop box located in the Hutt Building (first floor, beside the large mirror). A key for the lock on the box is located in every graduate student office. Index cards are available from the Graduate Program Assistant to indicate course name, course number and your name.

Handling and returning exams, essays and other course material

Considerable care is needed when handling student assignments. Once you receive or collect an essay, lab report, examination or other assignment, you are responsible for its safekeeping. Use a checklist to track assignments that you have in your possession. Ideally, you will keep all assignments in a secure location in your office in the Hutt Building while you are grading them. If you prefer to grade assignments at another location, you must take extra precautions to ensure that they are not lost or misplaced. Final examinations must never be taken out of the Hutt Building. Assignments (graded or not) must **never** be left in publicly accessible areas, e.g., in a box outside your office. If you are responsible for returning assignments to students, then you must return each assignment directly to the student who prepared it. If you are unable to return assignments to students during class, seminar or lab times, then you must make special arrangements to return them at another time; you can book one of the GTA consultation rooms for this purpose (see below). Final examinations must be returned to the course instructor, who is required to retain them for one full year.

Consulting with students

Many GTAs need to consult with students as part of their duties. This can be very disruptive if consultation occurs in offices shared with other students. Therefore, the Department has provided two dedicated GTA consultation spaces (Room 350a and Room 343a). Please be sure to hold consultations with students in one of these rooms; you will need to book time by reserving a time slot on the schedule posted on the door of each room.

Availability and requests for special accommodations

You are expected to perform your duties in a professional manner, and to be available to perform the duties associated with the GTA assignment you have accepted. In the event that you require a special accommodation for personal reasons, e.g., religious holidays or important family functions, it is your responsibility to ask the course instructor to accommodate your needs in plenty of time to reassign duties as needed. Course instructors are not expected or required to accommodate absences due to conference travel, research field trips, vacations, etc. Similarly, course instructors are not expected or required to accommodate students who have chosen to live far away from campus. You are required to be available during the exam period at the end of the semester unless the course instructor has specifically indicated otherwise.

How do I Get Access to and Use Facilities and Equipment?

All full-time graduate students in the Department who are within their normal program duration and who work regularly on campus have office space and furniture .

Office space is assigned by the Administrative Secretary. Please do not change offices on your own. If you have a concern about your assigned office space, please see the Administrative Secretary.

You can decorate your workspace to make it more comfortable, but please remember that offices are a professional work environment. You cannot paint your office! Do not fix things to the wall using pins or tape, and do not attach things to the furniture that cannot be easily removed. If you want to mount a poster on the wall or your filing cabinet, use removable sticky tack.

Graduate student offices are shared work environments. Please keep noise levels down and respect the privacy of your colleagues. Many people are sensitive to scents; therefore, the Department requires that all members avoid using strong scents such as perfumes and aftershaves.

Keys are your responsibility. If you lose a key, contact the Administrative Secretary immediately for a replacement. Do not make duplicates of keys. A \$10 per key deposit is required.

Booking a room for a meeting

You can book a meeting room in the Hutt Building -- please email geogcals@uoguelph.ca with your request. Before you use a seminar room, make sure that it hasn't already been booked by someone else.

Booking audio-visual equipment

Rooms 234 and 348 in the Hutt Building are equipped with ceiling-mounted projectors that you can use to test slides for presentations and for meetings. Email geogcals@uoguelph.ca to book the rooms. The Department also has a portable projector and digital camera that can be signed out for teaching and other purposes; see the Cartographer.

Using the photocopier

The Department's photocopier is located in Room 129. It is available to graduate students for copying relating to GTA assignments. Please see the Department Secretary each time you need to do any copying for your GTA assignment. For personal copying (including for your courses and research), use the photocopiers available in the Library, the University Centre or elsewhere.

Making a long-distance phone call

Graduate student offices have telephones, but they are not set up to make long-distance phone calls. You'll need to use your Advisor's phone, a calling card or your own cell phone. If you need to make a phone call for research purposes, be sure to check with your Advisor. You cannot claim cell phone connection charges for research purposes, but with permission of your Advisor, you can claim long distance phone calls made for research using your own equipment; you'll have to bring in a phone bill where those calls are highlighted when you make your claim. See the Department Secretary if you have any questions about long-distance phone calls.

Collecting your mail

All graduate students have a mail slot in Room 125. Mailboxes are shared. Therefore, please collect your mail regularly. If you will be away for a lengthy period of time, arrange to have someone do it for you.

Your mailbox is not to be used to receive assignments or course material from students as part of your GTA assignments. Ask students to use the drop box.

Taking a break in the lunchroom

Room 125 is the Department's lunchroom. It has tables and chairs, a fridge (for daily use only), a microwave, and sink. All users of Room 125 must make an effort to keep it neat and clean.

Please be sure to remove things you put in the fridge at the end of each day.

How do I Access Computers and Computer Networks?

Using the University's computer networks

All members of the University of Guelph community have a central login ID. This is the account that you use to check your uoguelph.ca email address using Gryph Mail or your own client. It also gives you access to resources such as the library's restricted features (e.g., journal indexes) when you're working from off campus; WebAdvisor (for registering and paying fees); and the University's software download site. You will be assigned a central login ID when you apply to the University of Guelph.

Using the Department's local area network

The Department of Geography operates its own computer network (called GEOSRV), which requires a separate account and login ID; your central login ID and your Geography login ID may be different. All Geography graduate students have access to GEOSRV and its resources; these include shared and private file spaces and networked printers. You will be assigned a login ID for GEOSRV during your first week on campus.

GEOSRV can be accessed from any computer in the Hutt Building (including those in labs and your own personal computer). All graduate students also have access to the computers in the Advanced Spatial Analysis lab, Room 233. Note that Rooms 231 and 236 are undergraduate computing labs and are not for use by graduate students. Don't forget to review the [Acceptable Use Policy](#).

Connecting your personal computer (desktop or notebook) to the network

Every graduate student workspace has full access to the Department's local area network (GEOSRV). If your computer (notebook or desktop) has wired or wireless network capabilities, then you can connect to the network, as long as the operating system is Windows 7 or 8 Professional or higher. If it has the Home/Premium edition it CANNOT be connected to the department network (GEOSRV) but can access the University Wi-Fi to gain access to the internet only.

If you plan to use a wired connection, and you do not have a network card in your computer, then speak to the Geography Computing Coordinator. The Department's Computing Coordinator can set up the software side of your network connection if you need help.

If your computer has wireless capabilities, then you can connect to the University's wireless network from anywhere in the Hutt Building. The Computing & Communications Services web site has instructions for how to connect to the campus network using wireless.

Note that you can be connected to the Internet without being connected to the Department's local area network. Before you can connect to GEOSRV (with a network cable or wirelessly), you will need to be on the CFS (Central File system) Domain and need to have a valid CFS account. See the Computing Coordinator for instructions.

Getting, using and installing software

You may not install any software on the Department's computers, including those in labs and offices. See the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). If you need a particular software package installed on a Departmental computer, speak to the Computing Coordinator. If you use your own computer to connect to any of the University's networks (including GEOSRV), then you are still bound by the Acceptable Use Policy.

The University of Guelph has negotiated site licenses for numerous essential software packages that you can download and install on your computer. These include Adobe Acrobat, Microsoft Windows (XP, Vista), Microsoft Office, ArcGIS, Maple, MatLab, and SPSS. Some of these are provided at no cost to graduate students, while others are sold at reduced prices. The University's [software download site](#) provides license information and terms of use, prices, instructions, and links for available software packages (many of which can be downloaded).

Printing to a network printer

You can connect your own printer to your personal computer at your workstation. However, this isn't necessary because graduate students have access to several printers connected to the Department's local area network. Computers in Room 233 are already set up to print. You can access the printers in Room 233 from your own computer once you are logged into to the Department's local area network, but you will need to install the appropriate print driver. See the Computing Coordinator.

Each graduate student receives an annual \$50 print credit from funds provided by the Advisor. If this isn't enough, you'll have to add funds; see the Department Secretary.

Backing up your files

All Geography graduate students have private space on the Department's local area. All files stored on GEOSRV in this space will be backed up automatically by the University every night, but that's not enough protection. Other sensible backup strategies include regularly saving data on USB drives or external hard. Remember, ultimately you are personally responsible for backing up your files. If you lose the only copy of your doctoral thesis, then you may have wasted a couple of years of your life – let alone all the money your Advisor may have spent so that you can collect the data.

Miscellaneous

Finding and applying for scholarships, awards, and financial assistance

All full-time graduate students are expected, as part of the terms and conditions of their guaranteed minimum funding package, to apply for pertinent scholarships and awards. Information about the awards available to graduate students can be found in [Section X of the Graduate Calendar](#).

Arranging for a Graduate Research Assistantship (GRA)

Your Advisor may provide you with a GRA as part of your guaranteed minimum funding package. If you're not sure whether or not you will receive a GRA from your Advisor, then speak to him or her. If you do receive a GRA, be sure to discuss any terms and conditions. Your Advisor will make all financial arrangements with the Department's Admin Secretary.

Protecting your valuables

During the past few years there have been numerous incidents of theft in the Hutt building (wallets, computers, projectors, etc.). The University Police have noted that buildings such as ours are particularly vulnerable because they are open late in the evening, and because traffic can be low during certain times of the year.

Don't leave valuables unattended in your office. The desk and filing cabinet in your office are lockable.

Graduate student offices share a common key, and many people have this key. Get into the habit of closing and locking the door behind you if you're the last person in the room. If you have a notebook computer, you should buy a locking cable and attach it to something heavy in your office if you leave your notebook computer on your desk. Of course, you should not be leaving your notebook computer out in plain sight when you're away from your desk.