

McGill University

Department of Geography

GRADUATE INFORMATION HANDBOOK

Note: This handbook only covers key issues specific to our geography programs. Consult the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies [\(GPS\) office website](#) for general information on McGill

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Graduate students elect representatives to the departmental meeting and to the Graduate Affairs Committee, and are always invited to delegate a member for a search committee for faculty positions. It is vital that these representatives are diligent in reporting and discussing the results of committee meetings with their colleagues.

3. CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS

3.1. REGULAR STUDENT (FULLTIME)

Regular students are those enrolled in a Master's or PhD program, and who are attending classes or receiving guidance or consultation relevant to their programs from members of the Geography, regular students must be registered on a fulltime basis; there are no parttime or half-time students

3.2. RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

All students in the Master's Program are required to complete three terms (18 months) of residency to complete their program, and must pay full fees during this period. See the [Student Accounts website](#) for detailed information on fees beyond this period.

Students who enter at the PhD 1 level must complete four years of residency. Those who have completed a Master's degree(e)-6(r)4 Me

3.5. VISITING STUDENTS

Visiting graduate students are those who are registered in a degree program at another university, and who have obtained written permission from both universities to ~~take~~ or more course(s) at McGill for credit at the other university. Graduate students wishing to come to McGill to do only research may do so after acceptance by a supervisor in the Department, GAC and ~~CPG~~ Graduate Research Trainees. The department recommending admission must submit the same documentation as for Visiting Students but specify "Visiting Research Trainee". These students are charged additional session fee rates and any course taken will be charged extra at the rate per credit. See [Visiting, Exchange and Special Students](#)

3.6. SPECIAL STUDENTS

Special students meet the minimum entrance requirements of the Faculty, but are ~~enrolled~~ in a graduate degree program. They usually take one (at most two) graduate courses (500 or 600 level) per term. Special students may subsequently apply for entry to the graduate program, again with no obligation on the part of the department for their acceptance. Courses completed as a special student may subsequently be credited towards a graduate degree, with the approval of the GAC and the Graduate Faculty. See: [Visiting, Exchange and Special Students](#)

4. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance for graduate students' cost of living, tuition and fees, and research expenses is available from a variety of sources. Students must be proactive in seeking it as the Department does not have the resources to fully support all these expenses. Typically, the Department and University provide some support in the first year of a graduate program, but not in subsequent years. A student's support usually consists of some combination of the following:

- x University and/or Department recruitment awards and fellowships (first year only)
- x External and major fellowships (see below)
- x Teaching assistantships
- x

See Section 11 for more on TA regulations.

Some degree of student support is often provided by her or his supervisor in the form of a graduate fellowship or research assistantship. See

For reference, the list of guidelines below provides an overview of the submission process

- $\frac{3}{4}$ Submit entire dissertation to the committee. Allow 6 weeks for review.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ Anticipate that you will need at least 2 weeks to incorporate t8c 0(lo)-4on

The supervisor (in consultation with the student) is responsible for choosing and securing the “external examiner”. The “external examiner” is recorded on the Nomination of Examiners. It is the student’s responsibility to prepare this form. This must be signed by the supervisor and then submitted for approval by the GAC at least one week before the thesis is submitted to the GPS office.

The “external examiner” gives the thesis a Pass/Fail Grade (which satisfies GE ~~609~~) and this is accompanied by qualitative evaluations according to various criteria, and usually a comment letter. These comments are returned to the supervisor. If they include final changes that must be made to the thesis or suggestions for improvements, these are made by the student in consultation with their supervisor. It is the supervisor who agrees that the thesis is ready for the final submission.

Final submission to GPS is electronic. For details and step-by-step instructions on how to file, see [final thesis submission](#). Note that again at this stage certain forms are required. Note also that signed certificates (if applicable) are not to be included in the final PDF thesis submission. Copies of any certificates of compliance must be retained by the supervisor and student in accordance with McGill’s policies on research ethics. Supervisors indicate on the Nomination of Examiners and Thesis Submission Form that the research carried out has complied with all ethical standards.

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6.11. TABLE OF MASTERS DEGREE COMMITTEES

Supervisory Committee	Examination Committee
Supervisor/Chair (Geography faculty member)	Examiner (Geography faculty member or outside the
Committee member (Geography faculty member)	Department, usually within McGill)
Optional: Third member (any department or university)	

7. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PhD DEGREE

The doctoral degree is the highest official degree recognition of academic achievement within the university. It identifies the holder as one who has a broad intellectual background as well as highly specialized training and is ready to embark upon a scholarly career. The period of study towards a PhD should provide an opportunity to push one's intellectual ability to its limits, and to become fully confident of one's ability to address issues and solve problems within one's chosen field. By the time the degree is awarded, it should be recognized that an original contribution to knowledge has been made.

The PhD, therefore, is more than the completion of a thesis. The thesis is a major component, of course, and its completion represents the major commitment of time and effort towards achieving the degree. The degree is awarded, however, not to the thesis but to the candidate, who must be deemed to have sufficient scholarly merit, sufficient general background as well as creative and critical insight, to warrant receipt of a doctorate. The doctoral program should be structured, therefore, to include the thesis as well as courses and seminars, participation in scholarly activities such as conferences and symposia, publication, consultation with advisors and whatever other activities are recommended by the committee as being necessary for the candidate to achieve her or his fullest potential as a scholar. PhD candidates should also recognize that it is these general qualities that will be considered by prospective academic employers.

7.1. SUPERVISION, SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE AND DIRECTION OF PhD STUDIES

GPS regulations prohibit persons who are themselves registered for a doctoral degree from supervising doctoral candidates. The Supervisory Committee is responsible for the direction of a student's study program and guidance for the thesis research. In general, it is advisable to keep formal membership of the Committee small.

The Ph.D. supervisory committee should not exceed five members; if it does reach this size, then three

Graduate Faculty regulations define a 'passing grade' for a graduate student as 65% (C+). In case of failure, the student may be permitted to ~~take~~ a supplemental examination only on the recommendation from the Department and approval from the GPS office. Any student who has failed in a course required for the degree and does not receive permission to attempt a supplemental will be required to withdraw from the program.

Those who enter as PhD 1 students, however, are required

words or less (excluding reference list). Upon completion, the student must submit one hardcopy of each essay to the Graduate Coordinator (7th floor). A PDF copy of each essay should also be emailed to the Graduate Coordinator (grad.geog@mcgill.ca)

For each question set, the student has two weeks/14 days to complete an essay, from the moment of reception of questions to submission of the relevant essay. Two weeks/28 days in total for the two essays.

A detailed thesis proposal (7500 words or less, excluding reference list and appendixes) is also submitted by the student to the Graduate Coordinator at the same time as the second essay is submitted (with a PDF copy of the proposal also emailed to grad.geog@mcgill.ca)

Note that the comps clock starts when the student picks the questions (usually at 10:00 am) and is the student's responsibility to submit one copy each (both printed and electronic) of the essays and proposal to the Graduate Coordinator by the deadlines specified on the instruction sheet supplied with the comps questions (students should read the instruction sheet carefully).

an academic journal for publication. This approach is more demanding than it appears, but is encouraged by some faculty members provided the integrity of the thesis is maintained. Students are encouraged to discuss the suitability and details of this option with their supervisor. Modification of the published paper is almost always required, to make the thesis read smoothly. [GPS guidelines](#) should be consulted for information on manuscripts and authorship. The thesis must contain an explicit statement on the contribution of the student and supervisor or, if applicable, other joint authors.

7.6. SUBMISSION AND REVIEW OF PHD THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT

Also called: internal thesis submission/'lying in state'. Before submission to McGill GPS for external evaluation, one copy of the thesis is deposited with the Graduate Coordinator for a two week 'lying in state' period.

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to the supervisor and to members of the oral defence committee. The student does NOT see these reports until after the oral defence

7.9. ORAL DEFENCE

The oral defence will be tentatively scheduled after the thesis has been submitted. It is the supervisor's responsibility to organize this committee in consultation with the student's supervisory committee, the student, and GAC; although selection and attendance of the Pro-Dean is organized by GPS.

The oral defence committee consists of not fewer than five and not more than seven members (not counting the Pro-Dean). Its composition varies depending on how many committee members are present, and a range of other factors. For precise details see the [oral defence](#) section on the GPS website.

As a general guide, this committee usually comprises:

- x the Chair of the Department or designated representative
- x the supervisor
- x a department member of the supervisory committee
- x at least one other member from inside the Department (not involved in thesis research)
- x and a member selected from outside the Department (often called the 'internal' as that person is from McGill or a university close by who has not had direct involvement in the thesis research)

If the committee consists of seven members, at least two should be external to the Department. This does not include the Pro-Dean. The external examiner, if not remote, may be invited to attend the defence. However it is not essential that the external be present, and his or her questions on the thesis are read by the supervisor for the student to answer.

The oral defence committee may accept or reject the thesis, regardless of the recommendations of the examiners. In the rare event that a passing recommendation of the examiners is overturned, clear and precise regulations govern the submission and appeal process.

The oral defence begins with a private, closed meeting of the defence committee (held in a room separate from the defence). Everyone then moves to an open session. First, the student gives a 20 minute presentation of his or her findings (often with the use of PowerPoint - it is the student's responsibility to make sure that this technology is booked and works). This is followed by one to two hours of questions by members of the defence committee. The role of the research supervisor at the oral defence is to present all questions and observations submitted by the external examiner, as well as asking his or her own questions.

8. THESE THINGS TAKE TIME THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU SUBMIT YOUR MASTER'S OR PhD THESIS

Each student prepares a timetable delineating the steps to be followed in her/his program including completion of required coursework, the time to be devoted to data acquisition and analysis and the schedule of writing of the thesis. It is expected that the average Master's program will be completed within two years and that of Ph.D.'s within four years. This requires diligence and organization, as seen below.

Students must be aware, however, that delays in one or several of their program steps may delay submission of the thesis beyond the anticipated and/or regulation time. Students, therefore, should be realistic in the scheduling of their program stages, and not least in calculating the time necessary to draft a polished, submittable manuscript.

The time it will take a student to analyze her or his data, draw proper conclusions in light of relevant theory and write first drafts of all thesis chapters is mostly in the student's hands and is not to be underestimated.

Neither however should the time to graduation be underestimated, once first drafts are completed and shown to the supervisor.

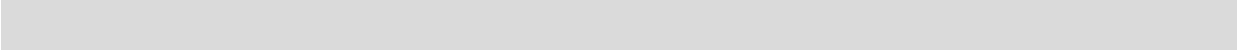
Students need to be aware that there can be a significant time lapse when they complete their 'full first draft' of their thesis to the granting of the graduate degree (not necessarily convocation).

For Master's students, this can take approximately 9 months.

For PhD students, this can take approximately 18 months.

committee.

6) Formal convocation is separate.



about the scheduling and deadlines for applications, process and notification of assignment, level of eligibility, and salary level for teaching assistants in the Department follow those set out in the Collective Agreement between McGill University and AGSEM. The Department of Geology supports the procedures in the collective agreement.

Expectations:

1. Teaching Assistants are expected to be present on campus one week prior to the start of classes and to be available through the entire final examination period (16 weeks);
2. Teaching Assistants are typically assigned 90 hours per term (a "half" TA position)
3. Teaching Assistants will help with the preparation of teaching and laboratory materials, photocopying of class materials, preparing reading lists and checking on class library holdings, equipment operation during classes/labs, the general administration of tests and other assignments, receiving class assignments, and contact with students as necessary concerning assignments;
4. To help gather material for the preparation of tests, labs and examinations;
5. To assist in the marking of sections of tests, examinations and labs that are objective (i.e. multiple choice, true/false, machine scored) in nature and essay style questions for which there is a marking guide
6. To hold scheduled office hours for consultation by students;
7. To perform as discussion or seminar leaders of small groups in so far as these activities may form part of the assigned course's academic activities;
8. Teaching Assistants are not expected or required to: a) set questions for class tests, assignments or labs; b) mark any test, assignment or lab materials that does not conform to No. 5 above (i.e., long essays or research papers for which there are no guidelines); c) give lectures or talks requiring original preparation; d) invigilate final examinations set outside the exam or lecture period. However, these activities can be undertaken, in prior agreement with the course instructor, if appropriate and the TA wants the experience and skills;
9. Teaching Assistants should keep a log of their workload hours, to be submitted to the Graduate Chair and course instructor at the end of the term assignment. McGill University Teaching Assistant Workload Forms" are available from the Graduate Affairs Coordinator.

For information on the Teaching Assistants' Union (AGSEM) Collective Agreement, please refer to your Union Representative.

12. INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Non-Canadian (international) students at McGill should consult the International Student Service (ISS) Office [website](#). The International Student Service's Office is located at 3600 McTavish Street 514-398-4349 international.students@mcgill.ca

reduced accordingly. For information on McGill's parental leave policy, consult the [University Regulations](#).

14. SAFETY, LIABILITY AND INSURANCE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Graduate students are urged to take advantage of the University's insurance policy, in order to provide themselves with coverage for injury or accident in the course of field work or laboratory work. You must be enrolled and your premium paid before an accident occurs.

If you are a Teaching Assistant, you should familiarize yourself with the risks or hazards of any laboratory or fieldwork or special field trips off campus. You cannot make any assumptions about the levels of experience or common sense of undergraduate students. Teaching safe practices is part of teaching science. Every graduate student who uses a Department laboratory should be thoroughly familiar with: (1) the line of responsibility for keys, security, and supervisory regulations; (2) the emergency equipment (shower, ventilation); (3) how to call for help; and (4) standard safety practices in laboratories, as described in the handbook *Safety in Laboratories*, ed. Hartree and Booth, 1977.

If your own research involves fieldwork, you should consult your supervisor and others with experience about the risks involved and the precautions to take. The TJ 0.0vo1 withcoat]T6(e)-3(n)2.2