



# **Graduate Student Handbook**

## **M.A., M.Sc., and Ph.D.**

### **in Geography**

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The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance to graduate students, faculty, and staff relating to policies and procedures for graduate programs in geography. Every effort has been made to ensure that departmental policies and procedures meet minimum standards established by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (CGPS). In some cases, Departmental policies exceed those of the College. In the event that there is conflict between procedures described here and the policies and procedures of the CGPS, those of the CGPS supersede those listed in this handbook.

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## Section 1: Introduction and General Information

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### 1.1 Introduction

The website of the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Saskatchewan is [www.artsandscience.usask.ca/geography](http://www.artsandscience.usask.ca/geography).

Potential applicants should refer to the website of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, ([www.cgps.usask.ca](http://www.cgps.usask.ca)) for regulations governing graduate programs, for details of graduate student fees and expenses, and for general information on studying at the [University of Saskatchewan](#) in [Saskatoon](#). This handbook aims to provide additional information on those aspects of graduate studies that are specific to the Department of Geography and Planning graduate programs.

### 1.2 The Geographical Setting

*- Saskatchewan: Land of the Living Skies -*

As a new student at the U of S, and possibly also to Canada, you may have questions about life in Saskatoon, and about this country more generally. The following information will help you to learn more about local attractions, the geography and the climate, as well as to familiarize you with other aspects of graduate student life, such as how to acquire accommodation and healthcare. For international applicants, please contact the International Student Office (see the number provided below) if you have further questions relating to travel, immigration, English language support, student visas, or special events at the U of S. Other useful contacts are also provided at the end of this section.

Saskatoon is a city of approximately 257,000 people (as of 2017), situated on the South Saskatchewan River, 348 kilometres North of the boundary between the United States and Canada, 225 kilometres from the Western boundary and 346 kilometres from the Eastern boundary of the province. Saskatoon is located on the Yellowhead Highway #16 which is part of the TransCanada Highway system between Edmonton, Alberta and Winnipeg, Manitoba. The route is scenic with varying landscapes passing from bald prairie to the rolling countryside dotted with aspen bluffs that fringe the pre-Cambrian Shield. Eight bridges cross the river within the city limits, six of which are for vehicular and pedestrian traffic, while the other two serve the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways and one in the process of being decommissioned. The river is also flanked by over 300 acres of parkland with pedestrian and cycling pathways, and in the winter, well-maintained cross-country ski trails.

Agricultural production in the region surrounding Saskatoon is predominantly livestock, dairy products, and grains, forming a significant portion of the local economy. Large deposits of oil, natural gas, and potash are also becoming an important source of income for the Province.

**Climate:** Saskatoon has four distinct seasons, with the temperature rising or falling dramatically between summer and winter. Summers are warm and dry, with temperatures ranging from 20 to 35 degrees Celsius. Winter temperatures vary from 5 to -40 degrees Celsius. Temperatures range from +30°C to -40°C. Saskatoon is known as the sunniest city in Saskatchewan, with most

years in excess of 2000 hours. The average annual precipitation is approximately 38 cm, one quarter of which is snow. The weather in Saskatoon can be very unpredictable—with dramatic fluctuations possible in the temperature during the same day. It is advisable that you check the weather forecast every day before going outside to ensure you are wearing appropriate clothing.

**Accommodation:** There are essentially two main types of housing available to students at USask: the first is on-campus residence (administered through the University or privately), the second - and most common - is off-campus housing, consisting of suites, houses or apartments. If you plan to live in a University Residence while studying at USask, plan to apply well in advance of your arrival in Saskatoon. There may be a waiting list for student residence, and thus, accommodation in on-campus residences is not guaranteed.

For those students seeking assistance in securing off-campus accommodation, visit the Students' Union Housing Registry online. A map of neighbourhoods in Saskatoon may help you in your search. When deciding where to live, consider the cost, as well as the distance from campus. Keep in mind the reality of a long winter with some extremely cold periods when considering travel to and from campus. Use the following estimated travel times as a guide while looking for accommodation: it takes approximately 25 minutes to walk to campus from Broadway and 11th St., or 7 minutes to travel the same distance by bicycle; it takes approximately 20 minutes to walk from downtown to campus. You may also wish to find a rental unit close to a main bus route (see Saskatoon Transit at the number provided below). City bus route maps can also be obtained at the information kiosk in upper Place Riel Student Centre. Check bus schedules to see whether the bus operates into the late evening to allow for late night study at the University.

**Attractions:** Attractions ranging from museums and galleries, to theatres, restaurants, and parks are available year round. Saskatoon has rich historical and cultural sites, including [Wanuskewin Heritage Park](#) and the [Western Development Museum](#). Many special events and festivals are also celebrated annually in Saskatoon, such as [Folkfest](#), the [Saskatchewan Jazz Festival](#), the [Saskatoon Exhibition](#) and the [Fireworks Festival](#). For a complete listing of attractions, events, and festivals, visit Tourism Saskatoon (see the website address below).

## 1.3 USEFUL LINKS FOR NEW STUDENTS

For more information on policies, forms, and student life at USask, and in Saskatoon, visit the helpful links provided below:

College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
[www.cgps.usask.ca](http://www.cgps.usask.ca)

Access and Equity Services - is guided by Saskatchewan's Human Rights legislation and the duty to accommodate individuals requiring accommodations based on disability, religion, family status and gender identity.  
<https://students.usask.ca/health/centres/access-equity-services.php>

International Student Office website:  
<http://students.usask.ca/international>

USask Student Services website, Information for New Students:  
<http://students.usask.ca/new>

University Residence Information and Applications:  
<http://livewithus.usask.ca>

Student housing Information:  
<https://ussu.ca/main-page/services/housing-registry/>

Tourism Saskatoon Website:  
<http://www.tourismsaskatoon.com/>

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/new-saskatoon/life-saskatoon>

### ***Travelling around Saskatoon:***

Saskatoon transit website:  
<https://transit.saskatoon.ca/>

**Bicycle Guide and Rules of the Road**  
[https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/transportation-utilities/transportation/cycling/cofs\\_cyclingguide2021\\_web1.pdf](https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/transportation-utilities/transportation/cycling/cofs_cyclingguide2021_web1.pdf)

Or find the information on the City website

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/moving-around/cycling/cycling-safety/cycling-guide-tips-and-where-ride>

<https://www.saskatoon.ca/moving-around/cycling/information-cyclists>

## 1.4 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### How do I get more information?

This handbook is intended to answer most of the basic questions that you may have, however it is recommended that you contact a faculty member directly before applying, whose work is most similar to your own interests. Please include a brief summary of your interests and academic history.

Graduate Secretary contact information:

Ms. Phyllis Baynes, Graduate Secretary, Department of Geography and Planning  
University of Saskatchewan, Room 125, 117 Science Place  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5C8 Canada  
Telephone: (306) 966-5654  
Fax: (306) 966-5680  
Email: [geography.planning@usask.ca](mailto:geography.planning@usask.ca)

### When do I have to apply?

The application deadline for September admission is **February 1<sup>st</sup>** each year, but it is a good idea to apply as early as possible, to ensure that your letters of recommendation and official transcripts arrive on time. Many prospective students contact a potential supervisor(s) in advance to discuss their interests.

Online applications open in the middle to end of September for the following year.

### Minimum Degree Requirements For A Masters Application

You must have completed either

- A four-year undergraduate degree, or equivalent, from a recognized college or university in an academic discipline relevant to the proposed field of study,
- OR
- A three-year first cycle undergraduate degree, in an academic discipline relevant to the proposed field of study, from an institution that meets the criteria set forth in the [Bologna Declaration](#), will be acceptable as the equivalent of an undergraduate honours degree.

### How do I apply?

- Apply Online:** Apply and submit all documents online for your application to graduate studies at the University of Saskatchewan. You can find the link on the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website: <https://grad.usask.ca/admissions/how-to-apply.php#Beforeyouapply>
- Application Fee:** You must pay a non-refundable application fee of \$120.00 CDN. See the CGPS website for [how to pay](#).
- Transcripts:** Transcripts are part of the online application. You must upload transcripts from all your previous university(ies). If your academic records are in a language other than English, you must submit official literal English translations of all records.



*iv) Letters of Recommendation:* Letters of recommendation should be from three referees who can report on your academic ability and qualification to pursue the program for which you are applying. These letters are usually provided from faculty who have taught or supervised you in the past. When you submit your application and enter the email addresses of your referees, they will receive an automatic email. This email will include a link for them to follow to submit their letter electronically.

*v) Statement of research interest (also known as a Statement/Letter of Intent):* With your application you are required to submit a statement of your research interests - it should be one to two pages in length. The statement of your research interests may include your preference of supervisor and potential members of an advisory committee. This document you upload during the submission of your application online.

*vi) Language Proficiency:* Applicants from universities where English is not the primary language of instruction must provide proof that they have sufficient knowledge of oral and written English to successfully pursue graduate-level study at the University of Saskatchewan. This form you upload online.

These are the minimum English language proficiency requirements for admission, which are determined by the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for the most common test types.

Please check their website: [English Language Proficiency Requirements](#)

## Section 2: Administrative Guidelines

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### 2.1 M.A. AND M.Sc. DEGREE PROGRAMS

#### 2.1.1 *Program of Studies*

The M.A. and M.Sc. programs involve both coursework and the preparation of a thesis. The courses are intended to provide the student with a general background in the research methods of geography, and to develop an area of specialization. The thesis presents an opportunity for the student to undertake independent research. For your interest, a list of previous theses completed by graduate students can be found online at

[www.artsandscience.usask.ca/geography/graduates/recently-defended-thesis.php](http://www.artsandscience.usask.ca/geography/graduates/recently-defended-thesis.php)

and a listing of current students and their projects underway is available online at

[www.artsandscience.usask.ca/geography/graduates/current-grad-students.php](http://www.artsandscience.usask.ca/geography/graduates/current-grad-students.php)

The thesis research and the selection of courses are done under the direction of an advisory committee. An appropriate supervisor must be available before a student will be recommended by the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) for admission to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (see section 2.4 for more information on the GAC). Faculty serving as graduate student supervisors must be members of the Department of Geography and Planning and of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Adjunct and Associate faculty of the Department of Geography and Planning are normally restricted to serving as co-supervisors with a regular faculty member.

The supervisor, in consultation with the student, invites others to serve on the advisory committee. The advisory committee has the primary responsibility for directing and evaluating the student's graduate study. The advisory committee recommends a Program of Studies for the graduate student, and may recommend revisions to that program. A majority of the members of the advisory committee must approve all recommendations with regard to the student's program.

The supervisor is responsible for calling meetings of the advisory committee. Keeping of minutes of the meetings, and distributing those minutes to the student and advisory committee members is undertaken by the advisory committee chair with the support of the graduate secretary. Advisory committee meetings are held at least once per year and as required to evaluate and assist the student in their program of study.

#### 2.1.2 *The Graduate Advisory Committee: Function and Structure*

The graduate student advisory committee is to assist the student in completing the program requirements. Members are brought together for their substantive expertise in the research area.

The Master's Advisory Committee consists of at least three members as follows:

1. Advisory Chair – A member of the faculty of the CGPS (adjunct professors included), a requirement of the Department
2. Supervisor - A member of the faculty of the CGPS (adjunct professors included) but cannot be a Professional Affiliate.
3. Co-Supervisor (if applicable) – persons who are not members of the faculty of CGPS may be granted permission to be a co-supervisor by the Dean, CGPS. Co-supervisors share a vote in decision-making at the oral defence, and thus count as one member.

4. Additional Members - [need a minimum of 1 for a Master's]. Must be members of the faculty of CGPS, adjunct professors, Professional Affiliates or be granted permission by the Dean, CGPS.

### ***2.1.3 The Role of the Chair of Advisory Committees***

*Purpose:* The role of the Chair of graduate student Advisory Committees is to maintain the fairness and integrity of the process for both students and faculty.

*Duties:* The Chair is required to attend all meetings and to work with the supervisor to complete minutes of each meeting, record votes, and file the records with the graduate secretary. During all meetings (including examinations or defenses such as when the student completes a proposal defense), the Chair can ask questions of clarification or interpretation. The Chair can also interpret departmental policy and help to ensure fairness and equity in the treatment of graduate students during the program. The Chair may be asked to vote, so it is important that s/he read components of the student's work including the written comprehensive exam, the research proposal, and the final thesis.

### ***2.1.4 Departmental Obligations for Chairing Committees***

It is a collective responsibility of all faculty members to participate in Chairing committees regardless of whether or not they have graduate students. Note that the Chair of the Advisory committee cannot pass judgment on matters that are not normally addressed by the committee (e.g., academic dishonesty). Matters that cannot be addressed by the committee must be referred to the Head of Department and Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for resolution. The Chair should provide all the relevant information in such a situation.

### ***2.1.5 Annual Progress Reports***

Each year a student is expected to demonstrate progress towards completing course requirements. A student is expected to meet annually with their supervisor and committee to discuss progress, any issues, etc. At this meeting a Progress Report form is completed and the original is submitted to the Graduate Secretary who submits it online and keeps in the student's file. Effective May 2024 students will be able to view their Progress Reports in PAWS.

Failure to make progress may result in a recommendation that the student withdraw.

Additionally, students supported by funding must maintain specific grade point averages in order to retain funding. Students on scholarship must maintain an 80% GPA and students on Teaching Assistantship must maintain a 70% GPA. Students failing to make these requirements will have funding withdrawn and may face an assessment of unsatisfactory progress.

### ***2.1.6 Student-Supervisor Agreement (required starting September 2020)***

The student-supervisor agreement is a tool that provides a basis for shared understanding surrounding expectations, roles and responsibilities, and milestones and establishes guidelines to govern the student-supervisor relationship. The purpose of the agreement is to facilitate conversations on the various stages and aspects of the student's academic lifecycle and inform one another on any challenges that may arise.

Graduate students enrolled in thesis-based programs will complete a student-supervisor agreement in collaboration with their supervisor(s). **The initial agreement must be completed within the first twelve months of the student's program** and is a non-course requirement. (see [CGPS Policies and Procedures Manual 3.4](#))

### **2.1.6 Course Requirements**

A fully-qualified Master's student is required to take **a minimum of 12 credit units** of graduate coursework (each graduate course is typically 3 credit units). This must include **GEOG 803.3 - Research Methods in Geography**. It is expected that a Master's student will normally complete these requirements in the first year of study. Failure to do so may result in the student's progress being rated as unsatisfactory. Renewal of funding for graduate students requires satisfactory progress in the program of study.

Graduate students are also required to take a short online course relating to the University of Saskatchewan's guidelines and policies on ethics and integrity. The course is **GPS 960** entitled **"Introduction to Ethics and Integrity"** and if the student is doing research working with people they are also required to take **GPS 961 "Ethics and Integrity in Human Research"**. Both courses have no credit unit value but are a requirement of their graduate course work.

The remaining course work will be in the student's area of specialization and are selected in consultation with the advisory committee. A student may take **one** 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year undergraduate course to fulfill the 12 credit requirement with the approval of the advisory committee. Credit may be granted for graduate-level courses taken previously at this or another university, provided they have not already been credited toward a bachelor's or professional degree. The GAC may require a student to sit an examination to demonstrate proficiency before credit is granted for courses taken at another university.

At the Master's level, to retain standing, students must achieve a grade of at least 60% in all courses required for the degree and maintain an overall weighted average of at least 70% in those courses. Students with scholarships must maintain an 80% average to retain funding. If the student fails to meet this standard, the advisory committee will assess the student's performance and determine an appropriate course of action. The student may be permitted to re-take a course or undertake other remedial work if, in the opinion of the advisory committee, the overall performance of the student was otherwise satisfactory. If this is not the assessment of the advisory committee, they will recommend that the student discontinue.

Master's students are also required to register in these two courses:

1. **GEOG 994 – Research - every** term until successful defense of their thesis.
2. **GEOG 990 - Departmental Seminar - in every** Fall and Winter terms until the successful dense of their thesis.

#### **Policy for Course Credit in GEOG 990**

To obtain credit for GEOG 990 students must complete two requirements:

- (1) Attend one conference, which could be but is not limited to the University of Saskatchewan's Graduate Students' Association Conference. Presentation by the student at the conference is optional. You must provide proof of your attendance at

the conference (i.e., a copy of your registration is required) to the Graduate Secretary.

**AND**

(2) Present their thesis results at their defense

**Presentation:** Each student will be required to give one 30-minute departmental colloquium presentation on the day of his/her thesis defence. The expectation is that the presentation will be 20 minutes followed by a 10-minute question open period. All members of the student's advisory committee are expected to attend the colloquium presentation by the student for the purpose of meeting the requirements of GEOG 990. The supervisory committee chair will communicate to the Graduate Chair that this presentation has been satisfactorily completed.

The presentation should include:

- i. A statement of the purpose and objectives of the research, framed within a gap(s) in the literature.
- ii. A summary of the research methodology identifying the study location or population, and the data gathering and analysis techniques employed.
- iii. A presentation of the major results of the analysis.
- iv. A discussion of the meaning and significance of the results in the context of earlier research.
- v. A clear statement of the principal conclusions drawn from the research.

This requirement cannot be met by presenting at a conference.

### ***2.1.7 Thesis Proposal***

During the first year of residence, the student will select a thesis research topic and prepare a thesis proposal. The student will be guided in this effort by their supervisor and advisory committee. The GEOG 803.3 course provides additional guidance to the Master's student in the preparation of this proposal. The proposal should clearly establish the objectives of the research, outline the theoretical context of the research, and identify the methods to be used to meet the research objectives. **The deadline for completing the proposal is 8 months from first registering in the program.**

The thesis proposal is submitted to the student's supervisor for review and recommendations for revision. Once the proposal is judged satisfactory by the supervisor, copies of the proposal are provided to the other members of the advisory committee. The advisory committee will meet and determine by consensus, if the proposal provides a satisfactory basis for thesis research. All students are required to have a thesis proposal approved by their advisory committee by the end of their first eight months' residence. Written confirmation of approval must be filed with the graduate secretary by the committee chair. The supervisor will ensure that a copy of the approved thesis proposal is placed in the student's departmental file.

### ***2.1.8 Ethical Approval to Conduct Research***

**All research** that involves living human or animal subjects, living or not, requires review and approval by the University of Saskatchewan Research Excellence and Innovation (formerly known as Research Services and Ethics Office) (<https://vpresearch.usask.ca/ethics/human-ethics.php> OR <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/ethics/animal-care-and-research-support1.php>). Physical geographers may require research permits before field work can commence. Obtaining these permits is the

responsibility of the graduate student. Students who work with animal research with potential environmental impacts, and/or in parks or protected areas are also responsible for obtaining the necessary permits or permissions before undertaking their research. Your supervisor will guide you with this process.

### ***2.1.9 Permission to Write the Thesis***

Once the student has completed the data collection and analysis components of the thesis research, a meeting of the advisory committee will be held to evaluate the quality of that work and to assess whether it is adequate to permit writing of the thesis. The supervisor will determine when permission to write the thesis should be requested from the advisory committee. Permission to write must be indicated in writing and placed in the student's file by the committee chair.

### ***2.1.10 Requesting Extension of Time Limit (taken from CGPS Policy & Procedure Manual)***

Students who have almost reached the time limit of the program without completing program requirements should meet with their Advisory Committee. If the Advisory Committee supports an extension, students may apply in writing to the CGPS, with a written indication of support from the Supervisor and the Advisory Committee, indicating reasons for the slow progress and providing a detailed plan, with indications on time, for completing remaining requirements.

It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for extension. **Please do so within 6 weeks of the deadline.**

#### ***CGPS Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.1:***

Time in program extensions may be granted to students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to finish their program within the time limits.

Well before a student reaches the time limit of the program without completing program requirements, the student will meet with their advisory committee and/or graduate chair to discuss whether an extension to time in program would be a suitable alternative to program withdrawal.

If the reasons that the student has not yet completed the program requirements include supervisory issues, the graduate chair will consult with the head of the academic unit.

The academic unit has the authority to approve one extension to time in program of up to 12 months/three academic terms for master's, PGD, graduate certificate (if applicable), or doctoral students.

If the student's program requirements are still incomplete after an extension given by the academic unit, a request may be submitted to the Dean of CGPS for one (master's, PGD) or two (doctoral) additional extensions of up to 12-months/three academic terms each.

Thesis-, dissertation-, and project-based students who will reach the time limit of the program without completing program requirements should meet with their supervisor to discuss a plan and timeline for completion. Once a plan has been drafted, it should be distributed to the advisory committee, and an advisory

committee meeting should be scheduled to discuss, finalize, and approve the plan. The plan must also be approved by the program's Graduate Chair on behalf of the academic unit.

For unusual circumstances when completion takes longer than one-year, clear and satisfactory progress by the end of each extension period will be necessary to support the application for additional extensions, if applicable.

**Topics which should be discussed and documented in the plan and timeline include:**

1. Program requirements completed to date (e.g., coursework, exams, fieldwork)
2. Program requirements that remain outstanding (e.g., analysis, writing, defence)
3. Reasons for the delay in completing requirements, actions taken to address them
4. A detailed plan and timeline to completion
  - a. Indicate plan and time required for each remaining program requirement
  - b. If time required exceeds one-year timeframe of an extension, include plan for what clear indicators of satisfactory progress will be achieved during the present extension, and what will be achieved during additional extensions, if applicable.
5. Expectations for working together while on extension, such as:
  - a. How often the supervisor and student will meet
  - b. How often the advisory committee and student will meet
  - c. Responsibilities of all parties (i.e., student, advisory committee members) surrounding communication, revisions, and feedback.

Approved plans and timelines **must be submitted to the CGPS by a staff or faculty member from the student's academic unit** via the Request for Extension to Time in Graduate Program eForm in the CGPS Service Desk.

If it is a second or third extension request requiring approval by the Dean of the CGPS, the Dean may, at their discretion, request a meeting with parties (e.g., student, supervisor, graduate chair) as part of the review process.

Once the extension has been processed by CGPS (in the case of first extensions approved by the academic unit) or approved by the Dean of the CGPS and processed (in the case of second or third extensions requiring Dean's approval) the appropriate contacts in the academic unit will be notified via e-mail by the CGPS.

### **2.1.11 Thesis**

The thesis must be based on original research and demonstrate judgment and scholarship on the part of the candidate. The quality of the thesis is evaluated by an examining committee consisting of the advisory committee and an external examiner who usually is a faculty member in another department at the University and who is familiar with the thesis subject.

**At least one month prior to the thesis defense**, the supervisor must work with the Graduate Secretary to finalize the date, time, and proposed name of the arms length examiner. The GAC Chair will review the thesis and the proposed arms length examiner and will approve both within 2-3 working days. In the interim, neither student nor any member of the advisory committee can provide the arms length examiner with a copy of the thesis. Once approved, there must be at least 2 weeks provided for reading of the thesis and preparation for the defense. *These timelines are strictly enforced.*

Keep in mind that from the time the draft of the thesis is first submitted to the supervisor, to the time the final copy is submitted to the graduate advisory committee for review, there may be a 3 – 4 month waiting period before the student is able to defend. Students must allow for this time in their program scheduling.

#### ***2.1.12 Thesis Format***

Students may prepare a thesis by manuscript format (typically 2 manuscripts) or a thesis by traditional format.

A detailed description of the thesis format requirements is provided on the CGPS website at: <https://cgps.usask.ca/onboarding/grad-toolkit/roadmaps/thesis-roadmap/drafting.php#ManuscriptStyleThesesandDissertations>

After the defence it is the responsibility of the student to submit their thesis electronically to the ETD website <https://students.usask.ca/graduate/thesis-etd.php>.

#### ***2.1.13 Appointment of the Thesis Examining Committee***

The thesis examining committee for a Master's student consists of the advisory committee and an Arm's Length Examiner approved by the Chair of the Graduate Affairs Committee. The Arm's Length Examiner may be from within or outside the academic unit but should not have been directly involved in the student's thesis research.

#### ***2.1.14 Examination of the Thesis***

The examination of the thesis is a public, oral examination conducted by the thesis examining committee. It is usually about two hours in length, and limited to work done by the candidate for the thesis and to knowledge of directly related material. At the conclusion of the examination the thesis examining committee meets to determine if the thesis, and its defence by the student, meets the requirements for the degree. The student is advised immediately of the thesis examining committee's decision. Below is a list of the possible recommendations:



**University of Saskatchewan - Policies and Procedures for Masters and Ph.D. Defences**

**THESIS ORAL EXAMINATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

<p><b>THESIS ACCEPTABLE</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis acceptable, with or without minor revisions</li> <li>• Oral defence acceptable</li> </ul> <p>All members of the examining committee sign the certification pages EXCEPT THE SUPERVISOR, who will sign only after ensuring the necessary revisions have been made.</p> <p><i>As a general guide, if the committee does not feel that thesis revisions can be completed within a two-week time frame by a student working full-time on the thesis, it should consider Recommendation 2.</i></p>	
<p><b>THESIS REQUIRES RE-SUBMISSION</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying research adjudged to be sound, but thesis in need of recasting, addition of illustrative material or limited additional data</li> <li>• Oral defence acceptable</li> </ul> <p>Recommendation 2 is often used in a situation where different members of the committee take on specific responsibilities for ensuring that a particular part of the thesis is revised as required. In these circumstances, the normal practice is for those with such responsibilities not to sign the approval page until the revisions have been made, while other members not so involved may sign immediately after the examination. Otherwise, none of the committee members sign approval pages until the revised document has been returned for the committee's final approval (no additional oral defence).</p> <p><i>As a general guide, if the committee does not feel that the thesis revisions can be completed within a six-week time frame by a student working largely full-time on the thesis, it should consider Recommendation 4.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL DEFENCE ACCEPTABLE</b></p>
<p><b>THESIS ACCEPTABLE</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis acceptable</li> <li>• Oral defence unacceptable</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only available to students taking the oral exam for the first time</li> </ul> <p><i>Second attempt at oral defence should be completed within three months of the date of the initial examination.</i></p>	<p><b>ORAL DEFENCE UNACCEPTABLE</b></p>
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	<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis does not meet minimum standards and committee considers that no reasonable amount of additional research or revision is likely to bring it to an acceptable standard or oral defence of thesis is completely unacceptable and Committee agrees that the Candidate does not have potential to be able to successfully defend the work.</li> </ul> <p><i>Committee recommends Candidate be Required to Discontinue from the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.</i></p>	<p><b>CLEAR FAIL</b></p>
<p><b>EXTERNAL EXAMINER DOES NOT VOTE WITH MAJORITY</b></p>	<p><b>External Examiner Does Not Vote with Majority</b></p> <p>If the Committee cannot reach a consensus on the acceptability of the thesis and/or the defence, a vote must be taken. The Dean's Designate may not vote but the Chair of the Examining Committee and the Supervisor are entitled to vote. Abstentions shall be interpreted as negative votes. Where the External Examiner does not share the majority view, (whether it is a yes or a no vote) the examination shall be adjourned, the External Examiner shall write a report to the Dean indicating why he or she could not support the majority opinion of the Examining Committee, and the Dean will review the situation and establish appropriate procedures to resolve the matter. In addition, the chairperson must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the department head.</p>	<p><b>DEAN'S ACTION</b></p>

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## 2.2 Ph.D. DEGREE PROGRAM

### 2.2.1 *Program of Studies*

The Ph.D. program involves course work, qualifying exam (in some cases), [Candidacy Assessment](#) (formerly known as the comprehensive exam), and the preparation of a thesis. The purpose of the courses is to complete the student's general training in Geography and to develop an area of specialization sufficient to permit the student to undertake research which will make a contribution to the discipline. The selection of course work and thesis research is directed by the advisory committee.

An appropriate supervisor must be available before a student will be recommended by the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) for admission to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (see section 2.4 for more information on the GAC). Faculty serving as graduate student supervisors must be members of the Department of Geography and Planning and of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Adjunct and Associate faculty of the Department of Geography and Planning are restricted to serving as co-supervisors with a regular faculty member.

The supervisor, in consultation with the student, invites others to serve on the advisory committee. The advisory committee has the primary responsibility for directing and evaluating the student's graduate study. The advisory committee recommends a program of studies for the graduate student, and may recommend revisions to that program. A majority of the members of the advisory committee must approve all recommendations with regard to the student's program.

The supervisor is responsible for calling meetings of the advisory committee. Keeping of minutes of the meetings, and distributing those minutes to the student and advisory committee members is undertaken by the advisory committee chair with the support of the graduate secretary. **Advisory committee meetings are held at least once per year and as required to evaluate and assist the student in their program of study.**

### 2.2.2 *The Graduate Advisory Committee: Function & Structure*

The graduate student advisory committee is to assist the student in completing the program requirements. Members are brought together for their substantive expertise in the research area.

The Ph.D. Advisory Committee consists of at least five members, as follows:

1. Advisory Chair – A member of the faculty of the CGPS (adjunct professors included), a requirement of the Department.
2. Supervisor - A member of the faculty of the CGPS (adjunct professors included) but cannot be a Professional Affiliate.
3. Co-Supervisor (if applicable) – persons who are not members of the faculty of CGPS may be granted permission to be a co-supervisor by the Dean, CGPS. Co-supervisors share a vote in decision-making at the oral defence, and thus count as one member.
4. Additional Members - [need a minimum 1 for a Ph.D.]. Must be members of the faculty of CGPS, adjunct professors, Professional Affiliates or be granted permission by the Dean, CGPS.

5. Cognate Member - Must be a member of the faculty of the CGPS (adjunct professors included, but cannot be a professional affiliate) from a different principal academic unit (department/college/school) than the student and supervisor.
6. The Dean of the CGPS is an ex officio member of the Advisory Committee.

### *2.2.3 The Role of the Chair of Advisory Committees*

*Purpose:* The role of the Chair of graduate student Advisory Committees is to maintain the fairness and integrity of the process for both students and faculty.

*Duties:* The Chair is required to attend all meetings and to work with the advisor to complete minutes of each meeting, record votes, and file the records with the graduate secretary. During all meetings (including examinations or defenses such as when the student completes a proposal defense), the Chair can ask questions of clarification or interpretation. The Chair can also interpret departmental policy and help to ensure fairness and equity in the treatment of graduate students during the program. The Chair may be asked to vote, so it is important that s/he read components of the student's work including the written comprehensive exam, the research proposal, and the final thesis.

### *2.2.4 Departmental Obligations for Chairing Committees*

It is a collective responsibility of all faculty members to participate in Chairing committees regardless of whether or not they have graduate students. Note that the Chair of the Advisory committee cannot pass judgment on matters that are not normally addressed by the committee (e.g., academic dishonesty). Matters that cannot be addressed by the committee must be referred to the Head of Department and Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for resolution. The Chair should provide all the relevant information in such a situation.

### *2.2.5 Annual Progress Reports*

Each year a student is expected to demonstrate progress towards completing course requirements. **A student is expected to meet annually with their supervisor and committee** to discuss progress, any issues, etc. At this meeting a Progress Report form is completed and the original is submitted to the Graduate Secretary who submits it online and keeps in the student's file. Effective May 2024 students will be able to view their Progress Reports in PAWS.

Failure to make progress may result in a recommendation that the student withdraw.

Additionally, students supported by funding must maintain specific grade point averages in order to retain funding. Students on scholarship must maintain an 80% GPA and students on Teaching Assistantship must maintain a 70% GPA. Students failing to make these requirements will have funding withdrawn and may face an assessment of unsatisfactory progress.

### *2.2.6 Student-Supervisor Agreement (required starting September 2020)*

The student-supervisor agreement is a tool that provides a basis for shared understanding surrounding expectations, roles and responsibilities, and milestones and establishes guidelines to govern the student-supervisor relationship. The purpose of the agreement is to facilitate

conversations on the various stages and aspects of the student's academic lifecycle and inform one another on any challenges that may arise.

Graduate students enrolled in thesis-based programs will complete a student-supervisor agreement in collaboration with their supervisor(s). **The initial agreement must be completed within the first twelve months of the student's program** and is a non-course requirement. (see [CGPS Policies and Procedures Manual 3.4](#))

### **2.2.7 Course Requirements**

A fully-qualified Ph.D. student is required to take a **minimum of 6 credit units** of graduate course work. This must include **GEOG 803.3 Research Methods in Geography**. If a student has completed GEOG 803.3 or an equivalent course then another course must be substituted. Additional courses may be required if the advisory committee feels that the student's background is deficient in some area. All required courses must be noted on the Program of Studies, including courses that have no credit unit value (i.e. GPS 960).

Graduate students in the doctoral program are not allowed to count undergraduate courses towards their required credit units, however they can audit undergraduate courses as part of their Program of Studies.

Graduate students are also required to take a short online course relating to the University of Saskatchewan's guidelines and policies on ethics and integrity. The course is **GPS 960 entitled "Introduction to Ethics and Integrity"** and if the student is doing research involving working with people they are also required to take **GPS 961 "Ethics and Integrity in Human Research."** Both courses have no credit unit value but are a requirement of their graduate course work. If these courses were taken at the University of Saskatchewan during a Masters degree then they do not need to be re-taken.

At the Doctoral level, students must achieve a grade of at least 70% in all courses required for the degree. Students with scholarship must maintain an 80% average to retain funding. If the student fails to meet this standard, the advisory committee will assess the student's performance and determine an appropriate course of action. The student may be permitted to re-take a course or undertake other remedial work if, in the opinion of the advisory committee, the overall performance of the student was otherwise satisfactory. If this is not the assessment of the advisory committee, they will recommend that the student discontinue.

Doctoral students are also required to register in these two courses:

- 1. GEOG 996 – Research - every term** until successful defense of their thesis.
- 2. GEOG 990 - Departmental Seminar - in every** Fall and Winter terms until the successful defense of their thesis.

#### **Policy for Course Credit in GEOG 990**

To obtain credit for GEOG 990 students must complete two requirements:

- (1) Attend one conference, which could be but is not limited to the University of Saskatchewan's Graduate Students' Association Conference. Presentation by the student at the conference is optional. You must provide proof of your attendance at the conference (i.e., a copy of your registration is required) to the Graduate Secretary.

**AND**

(2) Present their thesis results at their defense

**Presentation:** Each student will be required to give one 30-minute departmental colloquium presentation on the day of his/her thesis defence. The expectation is that the presentation will be 20 minutes followed by a 10-minute question open period. All members of the student's advisory committee are expected to attend the colloquium presentation by the student for the purpose of meeting the requirements of GEOG 990. The supervisory committee chair will communicate to the Graduate Chair that this presentation has been satisfactorily completed.

The presentation should include:

- a. A statement of the purpose and objectives of the research, framed within a gap(s) in the literature.
- b. A summary of the research methodology identifying the study location or population, and the data gathering and analysis techniques employed.
- c. A presentation of the major results of the analysis.
- d. A discussion of the meaning and significance of the results in the context of earlier research.
- e. A clear statement of the principal conclusions drawn from the research.

This requirement cannot be met by presenting at a conference.

### **2.2.8 Qualifying Exam**

A Ph.D. student is required to undertake a qualifying examination if the advisory committee determines it is necessary. The purpose of this requirement is to determine any weaknesses in the student's background which should be remedied in the courses included on the approved program of study.

i) Timing

A needs assessment must be **completed within the first two terms** of a student's program in consultation with the advisory committee. The results must be placed in the student's file by the advisory committee chair.

### **2.2.9 Doctoral Candidacy Assessment (formerly known as Comprehensive Exam)** [\(CGPS Policies and Procedures Manual 6.2\)](#)

1. **Students are required to complete both the comprehensive examination and their thesis proposal within 16 months of entering the Ph.D. program** (Effective May 1, 2024). Failure to undertake the examination within 24 months will be considered in the annual review of progress.
2. Prior to taking the examination, the student will have completed the course work required by the Program of Studies.
3. Three months before the start of the comprehensive exam, the Advisory Committee in consultation with the student, will:

- A) define (1) a major area of specialization within geography for the purposes of the comprehensive examination and (2) a research area that is cognate to the student's proposed research.
- B) provide a reading list that will form the basis of the comprehensive examination. Please note that each area above has its own reading list. Combined, the two reading lists should total about 8-10 pages. Faculty may not add materials to the list within 3 months of the examination. However, students may address questions on their exam from readings that are not on the list. The department must receive a copy of the reading list to be placed in the student's file and in a central file.

#### 4. Examinations:

- A) Written: There are two written examinations within one comprehensive exam.
  - i) One written examination will assess the student's knowledge of the major area of specialization and its place within the discipline of Geography.
  - ii) The other written examination will focus on topics cognate to the student's area of thesis research as outlined in the thesis proposal approved by the Advisory Committee.
  - iii) The written examinations will be compiled by the supervisor in consultation with the Advisory Committee.
  - iv) For each written exam, the student will be required to answer two questions with some choice available.
  - v) The answer to each question should be approximately 2500 words in length (excluding references). (Note: It is assumed that the materials referred to in the exam are in the required reading list unless otherwise stated by the student.)
  - vi) Each individual exam will be completed on a "take-home" basis within a 24-hour period.
  - vii) The written examinations will be written independently of one another and both must be completed within a 7-day period.
- B) Oral:
  - i) The oral examination will cover not only topics in the major area of specialization and the thesis research area, but may also address broader issues in the discipline of Geography as a whole.
  - ii) The oral examination will be conducted by the members of the Advisory Committee.
  - iii) The oral examination is to be completed within seven days following the completion of the written examinations.

#### 5. Results of Examination:

The Advisory Committee members will determine by consensus or majority vote whether the written and oral components of the comprehensive exam is:

- A) passed without condition

- B) passed with condition (e.g. conditions may include requirement to re-write one of the exam papers, to take another course)
  - C) failed
- In the event of failure, the Advisory Committee will recommend:

- i) that the student be granted a second opportunity to attempt the comprehensive exam.
  - If a second opportunity is granted, the student must pass the examination on her/his second attempt or be required to withdraw.
  - A second examination will normally take place within 2-3 months of the first examination.
- ii) that the student be required to withdraw from the program. This recommendation is made to the Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and he/she will make the final decision. Please note that the chairperson does NOT normally ask questions at the oral examination. However, the chair should have read the examination papers and be prepared to cast a ballot in the case of a tie. The chairperson of the committee need not vote except to break a tie.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to provide a copy of the written examinations and the examination reading list to the student's file. It is the responsibility of the chair of the advisory committee to inform the graduate secretary (by completing a Progress Report form GPS 210) and the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies of the outcome of the comprehensive examination. The decision of the committee must be communicated to the student immediately and to the GAC Chair within 24 hours of the examination.

### ***2.2.10 Thesis Proposal***

During the first year of residence, the student will select a thesis research topic and prepare a thesis proposal. The student will be guided in this effort by their supervisor and advisory committee. The GEOG 803.3 course provides additional guidance to the Master's student in the preparation of this proposal. The proposal should clearly establish the objectives of the research, outline the theoretical context of the research, and identify the methods to be used to meet the research objectives. The deadline for completing the proposal is 8 months from 1<sup>st</sup> registration in the program.

The thesis proposal is submitted to the student's supervisor for review and recommendations for revision. Once the proposal is judged satisfactory by the supervisor, copies of the proposal are provided to the other members of the advisory committee. The advisory committee will meet and determine by consensus if the proposal provides a satisfactory basis for thesis research. All students are required to have a thesis proposal approved by their advisory committee by the end of their first eight months' residence. Written confirmation of approval must be filed with the graduate secretary by the committee chair. The supervisor will ensure that a copy of the approved thesis proposal is placed in the student's departmental file.

### ***2.2.11 Ethical Approval to Conduct Research***

**All research** that involves living human or animal subjects, living or not, requires review and approval by the University of Saskatchewan Research Excellence and Innovation (formerly

knows as Research Services and Ethics Office) (<https://vpresearch.usask.ca/ethics/human-ethics.php> OR <https://vpresearch.usask.ca/ethics/animal-care-and-research-support1.php>). Physical geographers may require research permits before field work can commence. Obtaining these permits is the responsibility of the graduate student. Students who work with animal research with potential environmental impacts, and/or in parks or protected areas are also responsible for obtaining the necessary permits or permissions before undertaking their research. Your supervisor will guide you with this process.

### *2.2.12 Permission to Write the Thesis*

Once the student has completed the data collection and analysis components of the thesis research, a meeting of the advisory committee will be held to evaluate the quality of that work and to assess whether it is adequate to permit writing of the thesis. The supervisor will determine when permission to write the thesis should be requested from the advisory committee. Permission to write must be indicated in writing and placed in the student's file by the committee chair.

### *2.2.13 Requesting Extension of Time Limit (taken from CGPS Policy & Procedure Manual)*

Students who have almost reached the time limit of the program without completing program requirements should meet with their Advisory Committee. If the Advisory Committee supports an extension, students may apply in writing to the CGPS, with a written indication of support from the Supervisor and the Advisory Committee, indicating reasons for the slow progress and providing a detailed plan, with indications on time, for completing remaining requirements.

It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for extension. **Please do so within 6 weeks of the deadline.**

#### *CGPS Policy and Procedures Manual 4.3.1:*

Time in program extensions may be granted to students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to finish their program within the time limits.

Well before a student reaches the time limit of the program without completing program requirements, the student will meet with their advisory committee and/or graduate chair to discuss whether an extension to time in program would be a suitable alternative to program withdrawal.

If the reasons that the student has not yet completed the program requirements include supervisory issues, the graduate chair will consult with the head of the academic unit.

The academic unit has the authority to approve one extension to time in program of up to 12 months/three academic terms for master's, PGD, graduate certificate (if applicable), or doctoral students.

If the student's program requirements are still incomplete after an extension given by the academic unit, a request may be submitted to the Dean of CGPS for one (master's, PGD) or two (doctoral) additional extensions of up to 12-months/three academic terms each.



Thesis-, dissertation-, and project-based students who will reach the time limit of the program without completing program requirements should meet with their supervisor to discuss a plan and timeline for completion. Once a plan has been drafted, it should be distributed to the advisory committee, and an advisory committee meeting should be scheduled to discuss, finalize, and approve the plan. The plan must also be approved by the program's Graduate Chair on behalf of the academic unit.

For unusual circumstances when completion takes longer than one-year, clear and satisfactory progress by the end of each extension period will be necessary to support the application for additional extensions, if applicable.

**Topics which should be discussed and documented in the plan and timeline include:**

1. Program requirements completed to date (e.g., coursework, exams, fieldwork)
2. Program requirements that remain outstanding (e.g., analysis, writing, defence)
3. Reasons for the delay in completing requirements, actions taken to address them
4. A detailed plan and timeline to completion
  - a. Indicate plan and time required for each remaining program requirement
  - b. If time required exceeds one-year timeframe of an extension, include plan for what clear indicators of satisfactory progress will be achieved during the present extension, and what will be achieved during additional extensions, if applicable.
5. Expectations for working together while on extension, such as:
  - a. How often the supervisor and student will meet
  - b. How often the advisory committee and student will meet
  - c. Responsibilities of all parties (i.e., student, advisory committee members) surrounding communication, revisions, and feedback.

Approved plans and timelines **must be submitted to the CGPS by a staff or faculty member from the student's academic unit** via the Request for Extension to Time in Graduate Program eForm in the CGPS Service Desk.

If it is a second or third extension request requiring approval by the Dean of the CGPS, the Dean may, at their discretion, request a meeting with parties (e.g., student, supervisor, graduate chair) as part of the review process.

Once the extension has been processed by CGPS (in the case of first extensions approved by the academic unit) or approved by the Dean of the CGPS and processed (in the case of second or third extensions requiring Dean's approval) the appropriate contacts in the academic unit will be notified via e-mail by the CGPS.

#### **2.2.14 Thesis Format**

Students may prepare a thesis by manuscript format (typically 2 manuscripts) or a thesis by traditional format.

A detailed description of the thesis format requirements is provided on the CGPS website at: <https://cgps.usask.ca/onboarding/grad-toolkit/roadmaps/thesis-roadmap/drafting.php#ManuscriptStyleThesesandDissertations>

After the defence it is the responsibility of the student to submit their thesis electronically to the ETD website <https://students.usask.ca/graduate/thesis-etd.php>.

#### **2.2.15 Thesis**

The thesis must be based on original research and demonstrate judgment and scholarship on the part of the candidate. It must represent a worthwhile contribution to Geography which would warrant publication, in whole or in part, in a recognized scholarly form. The quality of the dissertation is evaluated by an examining committee, consisting of the advisory committee and an external examiner from another university who is knowledgeable in the subject matter.

At least 7 to 8 weeks prior to the defense, the supervisor must work with the graduate secretary to submit necessary forms to the CGPS, indicating date, time, final version of thesis and proposed name and CV of first choice external examiner for approval by the CGPS. Faculty must allow 3-5 working days for the forms to clear the Departmental office. This is reviewed at CGPS and approved within 5-7 working days. In the interim, neither student nor any member of the advisory committee can provide the external examiner with a copy of the thesis. Once approved, there must be at least 4 weeks (for a PhD) provided for reading of the thesis by the external examiner and student preparation for the defence. *These time lines are strictly enforced.*

Keep in mind that from the time the draft of the thesis is first submitted to the supervisor, to the time the final copy is submitted to the graduate advisory committee for review, there may be a 3 to 4 month waiting period before the student is able to defend. Students must allow for this time in their program scheduling.

#### **2.2.16 Appointment of the Thesis Examining Committee**

The thesis examining committee for a Ph.D. student consists of the advisory committee and an external examiner appointed by the Dean of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The external examiner is usually a member of faculty at another University who is an expert in the thesis subject.

Effective May 2024 there is also a University Examiner that must be recommended by the Supervisor to the Graduate Chair.

The GAC chair will consult with the supervisor and advisory committee and then advise the Dean of the name and CV of first choice external examiner and the University Examiner. This information is submitted to CGPS via an online e-form that the Graduate Secretary submits. (See [CGPS Policies and Procedures Manual 8.2](#))

The student cannot have previously discussed their research with the external examiner or had any personal relationship.

#### **2.2.17 Examination of the Thesis**

The examination of the thesis is a public, oral examination conducted by the thesis examining committee. It is usually about two hours in length, and limited to work done by the candidate for the thesis and to knowledge of directly related material. At the conclusion of the examination the thesis examining committee meets to determine if the thesis, and its defence by the student, meets the requirements for the degree. The student is advised immediately of the thesis examining committee's decision. Below is a list of the possible recommendations:

University of Saskatchewan - Policies and Procedures for Masters and Ph.D. Defences

THESIS ORAL EXAMINATION RECOMMENDATIONS

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<p><b>EXTERNAL EXAMINER DOES NOT VOTE WITH MAJORITY</b></p>	<p><b>External Examiner Does Not Vote with Majority</b></p> <p>If the Committee cannot reach a consensus on the acceptability of the thesis and/or the defence, a vote must be taken. The Dean's Designate may not vote but the Chair of the Examining Committee and the Supervisor are entitled to vote. Abstentions shall be interpreted as negative votes. Where the External Examiner does not share the majority view, (whether it is a yes or a no vote) the examination shall be adjourned, the External Examiner shall write a report to the Dean indicating why he or she could not support the majority opinion of the Examining Committee, and the Dean will review the situation and establish appropriate procedures to resolve the matter. In addition, the chairperson must submit a written assessment of the examination. All reports must be copied to the department head.</p>	<p><b>DEAN'S ACTION</b></p>

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## 2.3 THE GRADUATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

It is the responsibility of all departments to monitor the progress of graduate students registered in programs of study under their direction. In the Department of Geography and Planning, this responsibility is delegated to the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC). The GAC is charged with overseeing all aspects of the operation of the graduate program in Geography and with administering the program according to the regulations of the Department and of the College of

Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The chair and members of the GAC are appointed by the Head of the Department.

Within its general mandate, the GAC is charged with the following specific duties:

- i) To make recommendations to the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies on behalf of the Department of Geography and Planning on all applications for admission to graduate studies, graduate student programs of study, and applications for University of Saskatchewan Graduate Scholarships.
- ii) To make recommendations to the Head of the Department of Geography and Planning on the award of scholarships and appointment of Graduate Teaching Fellows.
- iii) To review annually the regulations of the Department of Geography and Planning affecting graduate studies and to recommend revisions of those regulations to the Department.

The GAC chair is charged with the following specific duties:

- i) To call regular meetings of the GAC and to deal with policy, program, or university student issues.
- ii) To facilitate progress of students in their programs
- iii) To report the activities of the GAC to faculty meetings of the Department.
- IV) To ensure representation of the Department of Geography and Planning at all faculty meetings of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

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## Section 3: Graduate Courses in Geography

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The graduate courses offered by the Department of Geography and Planning are found in the online University course and program catalogue: <http://www.usask.ca/calendar/coursecat/>

## Section 4: Graduate Student Life on Campus

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### 4.1 THE GRADUATE STUDENT COMMUNITY IN GEOGRAPHY

Graduate student life forms an important part of the graduate experience in geography at the University of Saskatchewan. Social and academic events have been developed to provide graduate students with the intellectual and social support necessary to create a positive and stimulating learning environment. At the beginning of each school year, the geography department hosts a welcome barbecue, providing new graduate students with the opportunity to meet faculty and fellow students. In addition, this past year the students' council organized a successful winter holiday fundraising dinner, New Years and end-of-term potluck celebrations, as well as curling and skating events for faculty and students. Student presentations at colloquia, as well as professional development seminars held by the department further contribute to the intellectual vigour of the graduate program.

The graduate student council is not only active in organizing social events, but also in working with faculty to accommodate students' academic needs, as well as providing feedback to the department on issues and policies that concern graduate students. We look forward to seeing you as a graduate student in geography at upcoming student council meetings and social activities!

To help students in their studies, graduate students have access to the computer lab, in office computers, printer, photocopier, fax facilities, and extra GB storage.

**Postal address for graduate students:**

Department of Geography and Planning  
University of Saskatchewan  
117 Science Place  
Saskatoon SK S7N 5C8  
Canada

**E-mail (all grad students):** [geog\\_grad@usask.ca](mailto:geog_grad@usask.ca)

### 4.2 THE GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION AT USASK

The official website for the USask Graduate Students' Association (GSA) is [www.gsa.usask.ca](http://www.gsa.usask.ca). The GSA represents graduate students on most university committees, to advocate for unique needs and concerns of graduate students. Graduate students from all departments may contact the GSA for information or assistance with problems related to university affairs:

Graduate Student Association Office:

Emmanuel & St. Chad  
1337 College Drive  
Saskatoon SK S7N 0W6  
Telephone: (306) 966-8471  
Fax: (306) 966-8598

## 4.3 STUDENT WELLBEING

There are many services on campus that are available for all students. This page <https://students.usask.ca/> provides a list of services and links to information pages for each one, such as – Student Wellness Centre, Student Affairs and Outreach, Access and Equity Services, International Student and Study Abroad Centre, Aboriginal Students’ Centre, ICT Service Desk, Help Centre, etc.

## 4.4 BEING AWAY FROM CAMPUS

### 4.4.1 RECORD OF ABSENCE

If you will be absent from the Department for MORE THAN ONE WEEK or are leaving the Province/Country, please provide the completed Record of Absence form to the graduate secretary at [geography.planning@usask.ca](mailto:geography.planning@usask.ca) or to Room 125 Kirk Hall. The form is found at the end of the handbook.

### 4.4.2 LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Leaves of absence are available to students for compassionate, medical, parenting, educational, and ‘Co-op Program’/Industry reasons. Reasonable accommodation is expected to be made.

The Dean of the CGPS, or designate, will consider any petitions from students whose request for leave or extension of leave has been initially denied by the academic unit. If the leave request remains denied, the student may formally appeal under the procedures for appeals of standing in program.

The leave period is not included in the time period for completion of the degree, and tuition is not assessed during the leave. Nominal student fees are assessed during the leave period. While a student is on leave, all supervisory processes are suspended. Unless otherwise permitted by the source of funding, financial support offered to a full-time, fully-qualified student is not available to a student on leave. Students are advised to refer to the terms of the funding agreement. Students are advised to discuss with their academic unit the implications of financial support when a leave is necessary.

Information is found online in the CGPS Policy and Procedures Manual <https://cgps.usask.ca/policy-and-procedure/leaves-accommodations/Accommodations-and-Supports.php#131LEAVESOFABSENCE>

### 4.4.3 WITHDRAWAL – [Information from CGPS website](#)

Students who wish to withdraw from their graduate program must submit a Notice of Withdrawal from Graduate Program form to CGPS.

As soon as a student decides to withdraw from their graduate program, they must also withdraw from any courses they are currently registered in through the registration channel in PAWS.

Withdrawal from a program is effective as of the submission date and depending on when they withdraw, a student may receive a tuition refund. Students should view the registration and withdrawal deadlines, which pertain to tuition/fee assessment and grades, in the Academic Calendar. Failure to submit an appropriate withdrawal form when leaving a program can result in a faculty action of Required to Discontinue (RTD) that will remain on an official academic record. Failure to withdraw

from courses can result in failing grades on an official academic record. As such, it is important to complete these tasks when choosing not to continue in a graduate program.

A student may be withdrawn from their program by CGPS due to lack of registration, per graduate policy 7.2.4.

#### **4.5 GRADUATION PHOTOS**

After the successful completion of the defense, students can have their formal graduation pictures taken at McMasters Photography. The photos will be added to the departmental composite board for each year.

Contact McMasters Photography directly to set up an appointment. Their contact information is:

135 Robin Crescent, suite 207, Saskatoon, SK S7L 6M3

Phone: 306-665-6802

[website](#)

email: [info@mcmastersphotography.com](mailto:info@mcmastersphotography.com)



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## Section 5: Graduate Student Funding

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All successful applicants for graduate studies in the Department are considered for support or scholarship on the basis of merit. Several types of financial support are available through the Department of Geography and Planning and the University of Saskatchewan. Eligible students may also hold other scholarships and awards such as those provided by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Canadian Institutes for Health Research, among others. The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies maintains an up-to-date awards database (<https://students.usask.ca/money/awards/graduate-awards.php>).

Many scholarships require some service in the form of teaching or research assistantships. The duties of a teaching assistant usually include instructing and marking laboratories and tutorials for introductory classes. The duties of a research assistant will vary depending on the supervisor and type of research project they are assisting with.

### *Department of Geography and Planning Policy on Graduate Teaching Assistants*

Students may be hired as graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) to serve courses taught by professors in the department. TAs must be paid the minimum rates for graduate students that are set out by the University. In all cases, full-time students working as TAs should not be required to work for more than a maximum of 204 hours per term (“normally” 12 hours per week). Students and faculty must complete and sign a *Statement of Duties* that specifies the expectations of work, expected number of hours per week, and the total hours of work before duties begin. The Statement of Duties form will be provided to the student when the letter for the TA offer is sent out.

### *Department of Geography and Planning Policy on Graduate Research Assistants*

Students may be hired as graduate research assistants (RAs) by professors in the department. RAs must be paid the minimum rates for graduate students that are set out by the University. In all cases, full-time students working as RAs should not be required to work for more than a maximum of 204 hours per term (“normally” 12 hours per week). Students and faculty must complete and sign a *Statement of Duties* that specifies the expectations of work, expected number of hours per week, and the total hours of work before duties begin. The Statement of Duties form will be provided to the student when the letter for the TA offer is sent out.

### *Procedures for Appeals of Work*

Students who believe that the work is being unfairly or inappropriately allocated should first see the instructor to discuss the assignment. If the student is not satisfied with the explanation or expectations of the work assignment, the student may approach the Chair of the Graduate Affairs Committee, or the Head of the Department to assist in sorting out the terms and conditions of the assignment. In some cases, a representative of the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies may be necessary to help resolve the issue. Every effort will be made to resolve the matter fairly to both student and faculty member involved in the assignment.

Instructors who believe that the work is not being completed by students should first meet with the student to discuss the assignment. If the instructor is not able to resolve the issue with the student, the Head of the Department should be approached to discuss the situation. If it is determined that the student did not undertake the assigned work without due cause, the student may be required to refund income received and/or may forfeit future funding from research or teaching assistantships.

***Graduate Student Union – Public Service Alliance of Canada, Local 40004 (PSAC)***

Effective, April 2015 there is a graduate students union on campus. The agreement is found online at <https://working.usask.ca/agreements/psac/agreements/graduate-students/index.php> and covers the following:

- Article 1 - Purpose
- Article 2 - Scope and Purpose
- Article 3 - Definitions
- Article 4 - Union Membership
- Article 5 - Management Rights
- Article 6 – Correspondence and Information
- Article 7 - Union Representatives and Activities
- Article 8 - Union Rights and Privileges
- Article 9 - Picket Lines, No Strikes and No Lockouts
- Article 10 - No Discrimination and No Harassment
- Article 11 - Union-Management Committee
- Article 12 – Working Conditions and Access to Facilities
- Article 13 – Appointments
- Article 14 – Job Postings
- Article 15 – Hours of Work
- Article 16 – Job Classification
- Article 17 – Evaluation
- Article 18 – Training
- Article 19 – Discipline
- Article 20 – Official Employee File
- Article 21 – Grievance Procedure
- Article 22 – Arbitration
- Article 23 – Academic Freedom
- Article 24 - Occupational Health and Safety
- Article 25 - Technological Change
- Article 26 – University Holidays
- Article 27 – Sick Leave
- Article 28 – Other Leaves of Absence
- Article 29 – Wages and Pay Administration
- Article 30 – Duration
- Appendix B
- Archive
- Memorandum of Agreement
- Memorandum of Understanding: Release of Duties for Union Business
- Schedule A: Rates of Pay



# UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Department of Geography and Planning  
117 Science Place, Saskatoon SK S7N 5C8

## Record of Absence of a Graduate Student for More Than One Week from the Department OR if you are leaving the Province/Country

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**NAME OF STUDENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME OF SUPERVISOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*PROJECTED DATES OF ABSENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(during absence, if appropriate)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**REASON(S) FOR ABSENCE:**       **Vacation**                       **Other**

**If Other, please provide description of the reason for absence and the research project work to be conducted during the absence:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Student

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\*NOTE: It is the responsibility of the student to inform the supervisor by a memorandum if the actual return date is different from the return date projected above.