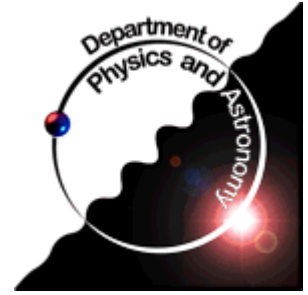


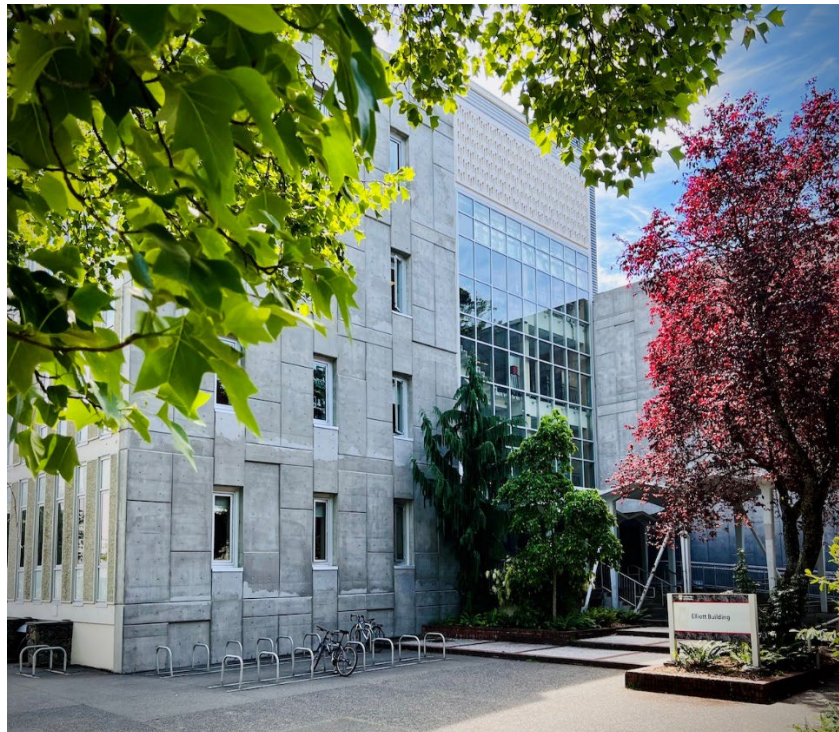


University  
of Victoria

# Department of Physics & Astronomy



## Graduate Student Information 2025-2026



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# Welcome to Graduate Studies in the Department of Physics & Astronomy

This handbook is intended to provide new graduate students with an introduction to the people, facilities, and resources available to you during your degree at UVic. It also outlines the steps you will need to go through to complete your program. If you can't find someone or something you need in here, please ask the Graduate Program Assistant (Cindy Kutyn).

It is best to read this handbook online, as there are several links to webpages—particularly the Department webpage: <https://www.uvic.ca/science/physics/> that provide further information.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

**Cindy Kutyn**

Graduate Program Assistant

*Primary contact – registration, funding, planning for defense, candidacy exams, travel claims*

Email: [physgrad@uvic.ca](mailto:physgrad@uvic.ca)

Office: ELL 101; Phone: 7700

**Dr. Pavel Kovtun**

Graduate Advisor

*Program policies, regulations*

Email: [pkovtun@uvic.ca](mailto:pkovtun@uvic.ca)

Office: ELL 110

Assistant to the Chair

*Administrative matters, backup for grad matters support*

Email: [phast@uvic.ca](mailto:phast@uvic.ca)

Office: ELL 102; Phone: 7698

**Anna Harama**

Department Assistant

*Copying, phone, fax, mail, room bookings*

Email: [physgen@uvic.ca](mailto:physgen@uvic.ca)

Office: ELL 101; Phone: 7700

**Monica Lee-Bonar**

Administrative Officer

*Office space allocation, keys, TA applications, building safety*

Email: [phastao@uvic.ca](mailto:phastao@uvic.ca)

Office: ELL 104; Phone: 7699

**Byoung-Chul Choi**

Department Chair

Email: [phastchair@uvic.ca](mailto:phastchair@uvic.ca)

Office: ELL 103; Phone: 7698

**Tammy McLash, Admin., VISPA**

*Administrative support for HEP and Theory students, travel claims*

Email: [vispa@uvic.ca](mailto:vispa@uvic.ca)

Administrator, CAMTEC

*Administrative support for CAMTEC students*

Email: [camtec@uvic.ca](mailto:camtec@uvic.ca)

**Jade Fisher**

Chair - PAGSA Physics and Astronomy Graduate Students Association

Email: [pagsa@uvic.ca](mailto:pagsa@uvic.ca)

**Brian Tucker - Co-op Coordinator**

Email: [scicoop@uvic.ca](mailto:scicoop@uvic.ca)

# PROGRAM GUIDE

	MSc program	PhD program
<b>Supervisory Committee Meetings</b>	Min. every 8 months	Min. every 12 months
<b>Candidacy Exam</b>	n/a	First 18-24 months of PhD program entry
<b>Post-Candidacy Progress Review</b>	n/a	Min. every 12 months, alternate with cmte mtg.
<b>Thesis/Dissertation Completion Goal</b>	2 years	3 years

Table 1: Program elements for MSc and PhD programs

## MSc Program

The [MSc program](#) is a research degree that, nominally, lasts for 24 months. The degree program comprises a series of courses, depending on your concentration, most of which are normally completed in the first year. Work on your thesis project may commence as soon as you arrive, but most of your time in the first 8 months will likely be spent on coursework and preparation for research. The following list outlines some of the program elements:

- Formation of supervisory committee: within 8 months of entry.
- According to FGS policy, students and supervisors are required to meet regularly, either in person, remotely, or through detailed correspondence to discuss the student's research in intervals of no more than 40 working days.
- [Meeting of supervisory committee](#): A minimum of once every eight (8) months and should include all members of the supervisory committee. A written memo is required.
- Completion of course work: The requirements depend on your chosen research field. An up-to-date [list of required courses](#) for each specialization appears in the Graduate Calendar. Your course program should be planned in consultation with your supervisor.
- Thesis submission and [defense](#): Writing your thesis should commence, at the latest, early in the last term of your second year. The supervisor is allowed a minimum of two weeks for preliminary review of the thesis. The remainder of the Supervisory Committee are allowed a minimum of two weeks to review the thesis once the supervisor has approved it. Expected maximum length of time for supervisors and committee members to return comments is 20 working days except under extenuating circumstances. Note that at least **25 working days** are required between the date of submission of the Request for Oral Examination (ROE) to the Graduate Program Assistant and the proposed date of the defense. The Graduate Program Assistant can calculate this date for you. **Working days** are any day, Monday to Friday, that does not include any statutory holidays or University closures. Guidelines for [Preparing Thesis/Dissertation](#).

## Funding

All students who are admitted to a graduate program in the Department of Physics and Astronomy have access to a funding package that draws from various sources of funding and that complies with our [financial support rules](#).

## PhD Program

The [PhD program](#) is a research degree that, nominally, lasts for 36 months. Depending on concentration, the program normally requires a small number of courses beyond those of the MSc, but most of your time will be spent conducting research. The following list outlines some of the program elements:

- Formation of supervisory committee: within 12 months of entry.
- Completion of course work: The requirements depend on your chosen research field. An up-to-date [list of required courses](#) for each specialization appears in the Graduate Calendar. Your course program should be planned in consultation with your supervisor.
- According to FGS policy, [students and supervisors](#) are required to meet regularly, either in person, remotely, or through detailed correspondence to discuss the student's research in intervals of no more than 40 working days.
- [Meeting of supervisory committee](#): A minimum of once every 12 months and should include all members of the supervisory committee. A written memo is required.
- [Candidacy examination](#): This is required of all PhD students and marks the transition point to completion of the degree and writing of the dissertation. It involves writing a short report and passing an oral exam. It must be completed within 24 months of entry into the PhD program. Students are allowed two attempts at their candidacy exam.
- [Post-Candidacy progress](#): Meetings with your supervisor a minimum of once every 6 months to review your progress along the proposed timeline. A written memo is required.
- The dissertation should be thoroughly reviewed and should include written constructive comments for improvement and a schedule for completion negotiated with the student. If the dissertation is not ready, the supervisor's written comments/rationale should identify key areas the student needs to complete/revise and a timeline for those revisions. The supervisor is allowed a minimum of two weeks for preliminary review of the thesis. Expected maximum length of time for supervisors and committee members to return comments is 20 business days except under extenuating circumstances. Once the supervisor has approved the thesis, the remainder of the Supervisory Committee are allowed a minimum of two weeks to review.
- Dissertation submission and [defense](#): Note that at least **35 working days** are required between the date of submission of the Request for Oral Examination form (ROE) to the Graduate Program Assistant and the proposed date of the defense. The Graduate Program Assistant can calculate this for you. Working days are any day, Monday to Friday, that does not include any statutory holidays or University closures.

## Funding

All students who are admitted to a graduate program in the Department of Physics and Astronomy have access to a funding package that draws from various sources of funding and that complies with our [financial support rules](#).

## MSc to PhD Transfer

Students in the MSc program may request to [transfer to the PhD program](#), following discussions with their supervisor and supervisory committee. Normal eligibility requires completion of all but 3.0 units of the MSc course program with a graduate GPA of at least 7.0. The process requires submission of a Transfer Report and passing a Transfer Exam. Students who successfully complete the transfer process enter the PhD program and follow the timelines above.

Transfers should be completed within 16 months of entry into the MSc program. Note that even if you are eligible, transferring may not be preferable to first completing the MSc degree and then commencing a PhD.

## COURSES AND REGISTRATION

The [list of courses](#) to be offered in a given year appears on the Department webpage. Course offerings vary from year to year. You should discuss your course program with your supervisor.

The registration deadline is usually about 2 weeks after classes have started, except in the summer term. Consult with your supervisor about which courses you should register in. Register for your courses using the “Student services” tab available through the [Online Tools](#) button on UVic’s homepage. If you have any trouble registering or have any questions, please consult with the Graduate Program Assistant. If you are on campus you should register in the A01 section and if you are off campus (like in Vancouver), you should register in the A02 section.

### IMPORTANT NOTES:

**All NEW students** are strongly encouraged to register in **PHYS 561** (Research Skills and Professional Development) in the fall term of their first year. This course is a series of presentations and has no formal assessment. If you do not register in this course, you will be registered by the Graduate Program Assistant.

**ALL students** must register in: **PHYS 560** (Colloquium). You are required to register in this course for BOTH the **fall** and **spring** terms.

**ALL students** must register every term (**fall, spring, AND summer**) for **PHYS 599 (MSc Thesis) OR PHYS 699 (PhD Dissertation)**. This is an ongoing course and the unit value will not be assigned until you defend your thesis or dissertation.

**All PhD students** must register each term (**fall, spring, AND summer**) for **PHYS 693 (Candidacy Exam)** until the Candidacy Exam has been completed.

**PhD Physics students (non-Astronomy)** must register for **PHYS 662** (Research Seminar) each term after completion of their Candidacy Exam and until the Research Seminar has been completed.

**PhD Astronomy students** must register for **ASTR 661 (PhD)** in **fall and spring** terms. **PhD** students do not need to register in **ASTR 661** after completion of **PHYS 693**.

**MSc Astronomy students** must register for **ASTR 561 (MSc)** in BOTH the **fall** and **spring** terms.

**MSc Medical Physics students** must register in **one elective course** in addition to the following program requirements: PHYS 534 and 540 (fall term); PHYS 535, 539, and 544 (spring term); PHYS 545 and 546 (summer term). For the one elective course, students typically choose PHYS 515 (Data Analysis) which is offered in the fall term.



## Standards

Graduate students must maintain a **cumulative GPA of at least 5.0** (B), with no individual grade a B- or below, for all required courses (namely those specified by the student's supervisory committee as part of the program). Grades of B- or below trigger a review by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and a hold on future registration. Such grades must be reviewed by the supervisory committee.

## FINANCES

The Department of Physics and Astronomy's [financial support rules](#) are explained in detail on the department website. Graduate students are funded through a combination of fellowships, faculty research grants, and teaching assistantships, some of which are outlined below.

All payments will be paid by direct deposit. You will need to complete the [Direct Deposit authorization](#) online. To receive your payments by direct deposit, make sure to click "+ add new" under both "Payroll Direct Deposit Account" and "Reimbursement/Scholarship Direct Deposit Account".

### **NSERC Scholarships**

For those Canadian students receiving a postgraduate award from NSERC, these funds arrive directly from Graduate Studies once a month on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.

Note that students who are in the first year of their degree may have the opportunity to re-apply for NSERC Scholarships and are encouraged to do so. The deadline is early in the fall semester.

### **Graduate Entrance Awards (GEAs)**

These are competitive awards given to a small number of incoming students, normally for one year. Students receiving an entrance award receive income directly from Graduate Studies either once per term or once a month on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, depending on the overall award value.

### **Donor Awards**

There are various Departmental and University donor awards. It is not necessary to apply for these directly. The Departmental Graduate Awards Committee reviews all eligible students for nomination each year.

### **Teaching Assistantships (TAs)**

Students must apply for a TA position every year that they wish to have a TA position. The deadline to apply is usually 31<sup>st</sup> July for positions in the following academic year and April 1<sup>st</sup> for Summer TA positions. These positions are assigned, with the goals of providing financial support and teaching experience to graduate students, while also contributing to the Department's teaching mission. As a TA, you will be a member of CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees) Local 4163. The allocation of TA positions, and the salary, is determined by agreement between UVic and the Union. TA income is paid twice per month, on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> of the month.

One TA is guaranteed as part of the basic funding package; however, students can apply for a second TA (which are usually available) after discussion with their supervisor(s). As such, hours spent on guaranteed TA duties should be considered part of a student's regular work week hours, not in addition to a full week of research work.

## Research Assistantships (RAs)

These funds are provided from grants held by your supervisor and are paid to you in one monthly lump sum on, or around, the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month.

## Fellowship

This is another form of Departmental support that is paid to eligible graduate students who are within the guaranteed minimum funding limits and meet the eligibility requirements. Eligible international students will receive an additional \$1,707 per year on top of the normal Fellowship payment to offset higher tuition costs. Fellowships are usually paid out in the first month of each term.

If you have questions about your funding, or how you will be receiving it, please ask the Graduate Program Assistant.

## **University Fees**

The university fees comprise: tuition and GSS fees, UMO bus pass, extended health and dental fees, and athletic services. Fee assessments can be viewed via [Online Tools](#), and payment is due at the end of the first month of each new semester. Note that credit cards are not accepted for tuition fees. Fees are assessed as follows:

- **MSc:** 6 installments\* (over 6 terms), and then a reduced re-registration fee for subsequent terms. \*Master's programs require a minimum of 5.0 fee installments over the course of the program.
- **PhD:** 9 installments\*\* (over 10 terms), and then a reduced re-registration fee for subsequent terms. The table below explains the schedule of tuition fee installments for PhD students. Please note that if a PhD student remains registered beyond Year 4, re-registration fees will continue for subsequent terms. \*\*PhD programs require a minimum of 7.5 fee installments over the course of the program.

	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Term 1</b>	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	0.5 = half tuition fee installment
<b>Term 2</b>	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	0.5 = half tuition fee installment	Re-registration fee
<b>Term 3</b>	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	1.0 = full tuition fee installment	Re-registration fee

## Graduate Student Tuition Income Offset Plan

Graduate students have the option of participating in a [Graduate Student Tuition - Income Offset Plan](#). This plan allows graduate students to pay tuition fees in 4 equal instalments over each four-month term, with payments taken directly from a student's bank account via automatic withdrawal. This is intended to better align the payment of tuition to the receipt of fellowship and employment income received by many graduate students. You can download the [form](#), or for more information, visit the [Financial Services](#) website.

The deadlines to apply are as follows:

Fall term: September 20<sup>th</sup>

Spring term: January 20<sup>th</sup>

Summer term: May 20<sup>th</sup>

## DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

### Computers

For information on the computer system, please see Rolf Seuster in ELL 022b.

Astronomy grad students should speak with Stephenson Yang in BWC A117 about accounts on the Astronomy computers.

Particle Physics and Condensed Matter grad students should talk to their supervisor about setting up computer accounts.

You can set up these accounts after you arrive.

### Keys

Please see the Administrative Officer **Monica Lee-Bonar** (ELL 104) for your building and office keys. You will need to pay a \$10 cash refundable deposit to obtain your keys.

### Mail

Mailboxes are located in the General Office, ELL 101. **Your mail will be in the black grad student mail folders.** Please check your mailbox on a regular basis. Please use a Canada Post mailbox for personal mail. There are several mailboxes located around campus.

### Office Space

Desks and/or office space are assigned based on many factors including but not limited to desk availability, cohort groups, number of new students, etc. Below is a list of desk/office user expectations that you should keep in mind.

- Assigned desk/office space is intended for graduate students to use as a study and work space only.
- Sleeping or staying overnight in the desk/office space is strictly prohibited.
- Keep a minimum number of personal belongings on your desk and keep your desk tidy.
- Only use the desk/office you are assigned to. Assigning yourself to another desk is strictly prohibited. If you want to be reassigned to a different desk or office, a request with rationale **must** be submitted by email to the department Administrative Officer [phastao@uvic.ca](mailto:phastao@uvic.ca) for review. Please note that submitting a request does not guarantee your request will be granted.
- Desk/office space is only assigned to students who will be working/studying on campus full-time (at least four days a week).
- No changes, addition of, or removal of furniture or appliances without prior approval. (e.g. mini fridge, couches, microwave, etc.)
- Please inform the Administrative Officer when a desk is no longer required so that it can be re-assigned.
- Keep the desk area clean and remove all personal belonging when vacating the desk space.
- Be mindful of others who are sharing the desk/office space. It is expected that you lower your voices to minimize disruption to others.

## Library

The McPherson Library is located next to our building (it has the fountain in front) and is the main library for the university. Your student card also serves as your library card for checking out materials.

## Stationery Supplies

Stationery supplies are available at Science Stores, Petch Building Room 168. Stationery supplies will normally be charged to your supervisor. Please discuss these charges with your supervisor.

## Meeting Rooms

The department has three meeting rooms which are available for booking through the General Office. Both Elliott 105 (the 'Reading Room') and Elliott 038 are equipped with teleconference and videoconference systems and a video data projector. Elliot 503 (the 'chart room') does not have any system set up. All three rooms seat 10-12 people. Please contact anyone in the general office if you need to reserve a meeting room.

## Departmental Administration

Department meetings attended by Faculty members, Adjunct Faculty and regular department staff are held monthly during the fall and spring. A graduate student representative – the [graduate liaison](#) – attends these meetings and can provide input into decisions, particularly those affecting the graduate program, and report information to the graduate students in the Department. There are currently several graduate liaisons, elected internally and representing individual research groups, who attend the monthly Department meetings in rotation.

The Department also has several committees that deal with different aspects of the graduate program. These committees are always happy to receive feedback, and indeed may request input from graduate students directly. The chair of the main Graduate Committee is the Graduate Advisor.

There is also a representative of the [Graduate Students Society](#) (GSS), who can provide information about grants and other activities.

## Physics and Astronomy Graduate Student Association (PAGSA)

This student-run association was established to enhance the experience of graduate students in the department, by creating opportunities for interaction via social gatherings or academic events. Representatives are chosen for each departmental concentration (Physics, Medical Physics, and Astronomy). PAGSA provides representation within the department and university, with the Graduate Student Society, and with the TA union CUPE 4163. All graduate students in the department are members of PAGSA and there is no membership fee.

PAGSA website:  
[www.astro.uvic.ca/~pagsa/](http://www.astro.uvic.ca/~pagsa/)

PAGSA contact:  
[pagsa@uvic.ca](mailto:pagsa@uvic.ca)

## Requests for Verification Forms

New students can use their offer letter to apply for a study permit.

Students applying to extend their study permit can submit a [Request for study permit](#) through the Office of the Registrar. Please apply for your permit extension a minimum of 4-6 months prior to its expiry date.

[Verification of enrolment](#) letters can be requested through the Office of the Registrar. [Degree Completion letters](#) can be requested through the Office of the Registrar.

If you require a letter outlining your current financial support you can request a Funding letter from [physgrad@uvic.ca](mailto:physgrad@uvic.ca).

## Thesis/Dissertation Binding

As of 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2023, the Phys&Astr department will no longer be responsible for binding of thesis/dissertations.

## UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

### Email Address and Contact Information

New UVic students should set up an UVic email address using a “Netlink ID.” You can do this by going to: <http://netlink.uvic.ca>. If you have problems setting up your email, please go to the Computer Helpdesk in the Clearihue Building A037, or phone them at 250-721-7687.

Please inform the Graduate Program Assistant of your UVic email, Victoria phone number, and address as soon as you have finalized that information.

### Graduate Admissions and Records

The [Graduate Admissions and Records Office](#) (GARO) is located on the second floor of the Jamie Cassels Centre. This office handles all regular matters relating to admissions, course registration, records, and applications to graduate.

### Graduate Students Society

The [GSS](#) represents the interests of graduate students at UVic and serves as an advocacy and lobby group for its members within the University of Victoria, as well as speaking on behalf of its membership to issues of concern at the university and the larger community. If you have questions regarding medical and dental benefits, please contact the GSS. The GSS is located in the Halpern Centre across Finnerty Road from the bookstore, and houses meeting rooms, offices, one food kiosks and a pub/restaurant.

### Faculty of Graduate Studies

[Graduate Studies](#) is located on the second floor of the Jamie Cassels Centre and handles all awards, fellowships and grants, PhD and MSc Oral Exams, requests for leaves of absence, as well as waivers and exceptions.

### Transportation to and from Campus

UVic is switching from bus passes being on your OneCard to a separate UMO reloadable card available at the UVSS/GSS office or a UMO app downloaded to your phone. You will need to choose one or the other, you cannot use both the app and a reloadable card. You will need to activate your bus pass every term. OneCards will no longer work for bus transportation as of September 1, 2023. All registered on-campus students pay for the UMO bus pass in their student fees. More information can be found here: [UPASS Package – UVic Graduate Students' Society](#)

Victoria is a great city for cycling. The [Campus Bike Centre \(CBC\)](#) is the hub for all things cycling on campus. There are plenty of bicycle parking spots around the Elliott building. There are also secure bicycle lockers available for rent.



Annual [parking permits](#) are available from the Campus Security Building. You can also park in the General lots located around campus and pay the hourly or daily rate. Hourly and daily rates are more expensive in parking lots inside of Ring Road.

## Graduate Student Vacation

Graduate students are entitled to a minimum of 10 working days of vacation per year. Working days do not include weekends, statutory holidays or University closures. Students may combine these days with weekends to take two consecutive weeks of vacation or, with permission from their supervisor, take vacation in smaller increments or combine their vacation with statutory holidays or University closures. Students planning to take vacations must consult with their supervisor in writing in advance of the planned absences, and make appropriate arrangements for care of ongoing research projects if necessary. The time taken for vacation leave will be counted toward the maximum time allotted to degree completion. All program requirements, academic unit expectations and deadlines will remain the same.

## Health & Dental

All students must have basic health coverage through [MSP services](#). For international students, there is a 3-month waiting period, so apply for this as soon as you are present in BC. If you are not a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, there is a monthly fee for MSP which is currently \$75/month.

Because of the waiting period for MSP, international students will be covered by **MTMI** (Mandatory Temporary Medical Insurance), that is paid for with your tuition fees in September. This one-time cost covers your basic health insurance from August 18<sup>th</sup>-December 31<sup>st</sup>. International students can refer to the [International Student Services](#) website for more details about health insurance.

The Graduate Student Society (GSS) offers extended health and dental plans. For information on the GSS Extended Health and Dental Insurance Plan, please visit the [GSS website](#).

If you require health and dental coverage for your family members, contact the GSS about family plan coverage.

## Immigration

International students require a study permit (and some will need a visa) to study in Canada. On arrival, you will also need to obtain a [Social Insurance Number](#) (SIN). Please talk to the Graduate Program Assistant if you have any questions. Note that visas and permits may require renewal during your stay. Be sure to apply early (2-3 months is recommended).

UVic's [International Centre for Students](#) office is a wealth of information for International students with immigration related questions.

## Support Services

The Department promotes a safe and supportive working environment, and does not tolerate any form of harassment. Any student who perceives that they are the victim of harassment is encouraged to seek confidential advice from the Graduate Advisor or Department Chair. Students

may also approach the [Equity and Human Rights Office](#) which oversees and provides support with regard to UVic's practices of equity, fairness and inclusion.

UVic also offers significant [counseling resources](#) to all students.

## Career Educators

UVic offers appointments with [Career Educators](#). They can help you with your resume, cover letters, and interviews. You can engage in career exploration, research and planning. They can help you search for employment opportunities and help you complete Graduate and professional school research applications.

