University of Victoria
School of Earth and Ocean Science
Graduate Handbook
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Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>e-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair/Director</td>
<td>Dr. Stan Dosso</td>
<td>BWC A405</td>
<td>250-472-5133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Advisor</td>
<td>Dr. John Dower</td>
<td>BWC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Secretary</td>
<td>Kalisa Valenzuela</td>
<td>BWC A405</td>
<td>250-721-6120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-op Advisor</td>
<td>Diane Lusznia</td>
<td>CUN 105</td>
<td>250-721-8649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student representative</td>
<td>Sheryl Murdock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student representative</td>
<td>Rebecca Morris</td>
<td></td>
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POLICIES

Faculty and students are bound by policies set by the University, Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), and the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences (SEOS).

Faculty of Graduate Studies policies are given in the Graduate Calendar and in policy documents found on the Faculty of Graduate Studies website. In particular, students and faculty members should read the Graduate Supervision Policy, which outlines the rights and responsibilities in the supervisory relationship.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The spectrum of research in the School is broad and will be attractive to students from many areas of the basic and applied sciences; cross-disciplinary research can involve faculty and facilities in other departments. As an integral part of their program, students are expected to undertake teaching or research assistantships or equivalent duties within the School.

The supervisory committee, in consultation with the student, determines the content of the program and the exact division of units between coursework and thesis for each student. For example, the supervisory committee may decide that additional coursework is required depending on the student’s background. Coursework may include graduate courses in SEOS or other departments (see the calendar for more details).

- It is possible to include courses from other institutions provided the Supervisory Committee provides the written justification and FGS approves.
- All graduate students in SEOS are required to take EOS 525 (1.5 units; can be taken only once for credit), and to present their research at the Annual Graduate Student Workshop at least once during their degree program.

In the event that program information differs between this document and the University of Victoria Graduate Calendar, it is the latter that takes precedent.
Masters Students

The Master’s program consists of a minimum of 15 units with no fewer than 12 graduate-level credits (i.e. excluding 300- and 400-level undergraduate courses). Normally, students must complete a minimum of 4.5 units of graduate or upper-level undergraduate coursework, with a Master’s thesis (EOS 599) making up the remaining units.

EOS 599 Master’s Thesis

• The thesis requirement applies to all Masters students in the School. Students must enroll in 599 in their first term and remain enrolled until their thesis requirements have been completed.

Doctoral students

The PhD program consists of 45 units beyond the Bachelor’s level, or 30 units beyond the Master’s level. PhD students who enter the program with a Masters Degree are expected to complete a minimum of three graduate level units. Students who enter the PhD program with a Bachelor’s degree, including students who transfer from a Master’s to a PhD at UVic, are expected to complete a minimum of 7.5 units of coursework.

All PhD students must register in EOS 525 as part of their graduate course requirement, unless they have previously taken this course in the MSc program. In addition to the minimum three graduate or upper-level undergraduate course units, all PhD students must register in EOS 693 (PhD Candidacy Examination). The PhD dissertation (EOS 699) makes up the remaining program units. Students should consult the department for courses that will be offered in any given year. All PhD students are required to give a one hour seminar to the School on their research, normally within six months before the defence of their PhD dissertation.

EOS 693 Candidacy Examination

• The Candidacy Examination is a requirement of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and cannot be waived. SEOS requires that, within two years of first registration as a provisional doctoral student (or 18 months of transferring from an MSc program) and at least six months before the final oral examination, a PhD student must submit a written dissertation research proposal. This thesis proposal will be defended in an oral candidacy exam. Protocols for the process, proposal and examination are presented in a separate section below.
• Students enroll in EOS 693 (PhD Candidacy Examination) upon registering in the PhD program (or upon switching to the PhD program from the MSc program), and remain enrolled until all candidacy requirements have been completed.
• Corequisite: EOS 699

EOS 699 Doctoral Dissertation

• The dissertation requirement applies to PhD students in the School. Students must enroll in 699 in their first term and remain enrolled until their dissertation requirements have been completed.
• Co/pre-requisite: EOS 693
TRANSFER FROM THE MASTERS TO THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

Under certain circumstances, a student in a MSc program, typically with first class standing, may apply to transfer into a PhD program. Students must have completed at least two terms in an MSc program.

The student must formally request the transfer with a letter to his/her supervisor. This letter should outline the student's progress, and offer a detailed justification for the request. The supervisory committee will then meet to determine whether the student has the potential to satisfy the requirements of the program. If the committee is satisfied that the candidate has the capability to complete the program, the student must complete the re-registration form and provide it to the office. The transfer recommendation will be sent to FGS.

SUPERVISION

Supervisor

The supervisor(s) is your primary academic advisor and mentor, and will provide guidance on all matters pertaining to your graduate program. Every graduate student must have a regular faculty member from SEOS as a (co-)supervisor, but co-supervision by adjunct faculty or faculty in other departments is permissible. Students are advised to make themselves familiar with both their responsibilities and their supervisor's responsibilities by reading the information on the SEOS Current students site and on the FGS site.

Supervisory Committee

The supervisory committee plays an important role in guiding your studies and research in SEOS. The following rules outline the makeup of supervisory committees. Students must have a committee formed in the first eight months of arriving at UVic.

MSc program: at least three members of the UVic Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) including:
- a primary or co-supervisor from SEOS (not adjunct faculty).
- at least one other faculty member from SEOS (can include adjunct faculty)

PhD program: at least four members of the UVic FGS including:
- a primary or co-supervisor from SEOS (not adjunct faculty)
- at least one other faculty member from SEOS (can include adjunct faculty)
- at least one other UVic FGS faculty member but outside the SEOS faculty and SEOS adjunct faculty.

Committees may also have "additional members" who are not members of the UVic FGS (e.g. government or industry scientists, post doctoral fellows), but these members are additional to the members required above, and need permission of FGS to be added to the committee.

Faculty members who are jointly appointed between SEOS and other departments may only be the External Member on PhD committees by permission of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

The committee guides the research project and preparation of the thesis, thus ensuring the student is made aware of University expectations concerning the quality, volume, style and presentation of the thesis. If progress towards the degree is not satisfactory, the committee recommends to the FGS corrective steps or withdrawal. All changes in programs, or difficulties
encountered in completing programs, are to be reviewed first by the supervisory committee. The committee also participates in the student's PhD candidacy examination and final oral examination.

Please also see the Research and Supervisor site

Supervisor absences

If the supervisor is away from the University for six months or more an interim supervisor must be appointed and the Student, Faculty of Graduate Studies and the SEOS Graduate Advisor notified in writing. If a committee member (not the supervisor) is away for twelve months or more an interim member must be appointed and the student, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Advisor notified. Written notification of any change in the original structure of the supervisory committee must be given to the Graduate Advisor and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Nominating your supervisory committee

The supervisory committee is formed by consultation between the student and supervisor (a FGS requirement). Normally, it is nominated by the end of the first term, however, it must be formed within the first eight months of the program. The student is responsible for informing the Graduate Secretary of proposed committee composition.

Expected Meeting Frequency

With your Supervisor: While the FGS indicates that a minimum frequency of a meeting (in person, virtual or through detailed correspondence) should be twice a term, SEOS recommends a minimum of monthly contact to discuss the program progress. Delays due to field work, remote study, supervisor or student vacation, sick leave, etc. can be expected.

With your Supervisory Committee: Meetings of the entire committee and student must occur at least once per year throughout the period of study. It is the responsibility of the supervisor (or chair of the supervisory committee in the case of co-supervision) to ensure that these meetings happen in a timely manner. These meetings are, of course, in addition to regular student-supervisor meetings. SEOS recommends that a brief summary report be sent to the committee before the meeting.

Typically, the student will make a short presentation of their research progress at the start of the meeting, followed by general discussion of the course work and research progress. Recommendations for the student’s research or program (such as any additional course work required) are made. The committee must complete and sign a short report on each committee meeting using the Graduate Student Supervisory Committee Report Form (available from the Graduate Secretary); it is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure it is forwarded to the Graduate Secretary to put on the student's file.

Vacation for Graduate Students

Graduate students are entitled to a minimum of 10 working days of vacation per year (i.e. 10 days that do not include weekends, statutory holidays or the December university closure). Students may combine these days with weekends to take two consecutive weeks of vacation or, with permission of their supervisor, take vacation days in smaller increments or combine their vacation days with statutory holidays or the December university closure for an extended absence. 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. [From Graduate Calendar]

**EXPECTED TIMELINES FOR COMPLETION**

**Program length for MSc:** A student proceeding towards a master’s degree is required to complete all the requirements for the degree within five years (60 consecutive months) from the date of their first registration in the Master’s program. Recommended targets include:

- EOS 525 completed at first opportunity.
- Formation of the supervisory committee within 8 months;
- First meeting of supervisory committee in second or third term;
- Completion of coursework by fifth term;
- Second meeting of supervisory committee in fifth term;
- Defence plans set (or achieved) in seventh term.

**Program length for a PhD:** A student proceeding toward a doctoral degree is required to complete all the requirements within seven years (84 consecutive months) from the date of first registration in the program. If the student transfers to the doctoral program after an initial period in a Master’s program, completion is required within seven years of the date of the first registration in the Master’s program. A doctoral degree will not be awarded in less than twenty-four consecutive months from the time of first registration. Recommended targets include:

- EOS 525 completed at first opportunity.
- Formation of the supervisory committee within 8 months;
- First meeting of supervisory committee in second or third term;
- Completion of coursework by fifth term;
- Second meeting of supervisory committee before the end of the fifth term to set terms of the Candidacy exam.
- Candidacy exam complete before the end of sixth term.
- Defence plans discussed/set in 12th term.
- Don’t forget the departmental seminar to deliver in your final months – plan ahead as the schedule gets full.

For students transferring from an MSc program, the PhD candidacy should occur within 12 months of transfer.

**CANDIDACY EXAMINATION PROTOCOLS**

The purpose of the candidacy examination is to test the student's understanding of material considered essential to completion of a PhD and the student's competence to do research that will culminate in the PhD dissertation. If the deadline for the candidacy examination has passed, the student must request an extension from the Dean of Graduate Studies.

**Pre-examination committee meeting**

At least four months prior to the Candidacy the supervisory committee will meet with the student to decide on a date for the Candidacy exam and provide the student with verbal guidelines for what material will be covered in the Candidacy exam. The material to be examined will be that considered necessary background for the student to complete a PhD successfully in their subject.
area (and thus includes everything discussed in the thesis proposal). Guidance on the format of the thesis proposal will also be given to the student at this meeting. The chair of the supervisory committee is responsible for transcribing the verbal guidelines provided by the committee into a memo that should be provided to the student and supervisory committee within two working days following this meeting. This memo must include a copy of thesis guidelines to fulfill the requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The date of the Candidacy exam should be included in this memo and copied to the Graduate Secretary.

Between the time of the pre-examination supervisory committee meeting and the Candidacy exam the student must write their thesis proposal, and should study for their Candidacy exam. During this time students are encouraged to discuss any uncertainties they have about either the proposal or the material they need to know for the exam with any committee member.

**Thesis proposal**

The thesis proposal is a 10 to 20 page document (double spaced, excluding references and figures) that outlines a research plan for the thesis project. The plan should: (i) provide the scientific background and rationale for the proposed thesis research; and (ii) propose the methodology for undertaking the research that will constitute the thesis. This may include brief discussion of preliminary results if appropriate.

The thesis proposal must be provided to the entire committee and SEOS Graduate Advisor at least four weeks prior to the Candidacy exam. Within two weeks of receiving the thesis proposal the committee will decide (by vote if necessary) on whether the proposal is of sufficient quality for the Candidacy exam to go ahead. If it is not the student is asked to submit a revised proposal within one month.

The Candidacy examination is chaired by the SEOS Graduate Advisor or their designate, and is closed to all except the supervisory committee. The exam begins with a brief (15 minute) presentation by the student that provides the background for the project, updates the committee on research carried out to date, and introduces proposed future research. The exam proceeds with a round of oral questions from the supervisory committee, with the supervisor(s) being the last to question the student. There normally are two rounds of questions, although the total time allotted for questions after the candidate’s presentation does not usually exceed two hours.

Questions are aimed at determining the student's understanding of background knowledge required to undertake the proposed research, and on any other related subject areas that have been specified in advance by the supervisory committee. At the end of the examination, the student will leave the room, and the chair will then ask each committee member to review the performance of the student to assign a grade of pass, fail, or adjourn. Reasons to adjourn the exam include but are not limited to: thesis proposal is acceptable but the student has failed the oral portion of the exam.

**Possible outcomes:** There are three possible outcomes to the Candidacy exam.

- **Pass:** The student receives no more than one vote of either fail or adjourn. Candidates who pass the exam will have successfully advanced to PhD Candidacy and will continue in the program.

- **Fail:** Candidates receiving two or more votes of fail will be required to withdraw from the PhD program.
Adjourn: The student receives either (a) one vote of fail and one or more votes of adjourn, or (b) more than one vote of adjourn. In such cases the candidate will be offered the opportunity to take a second (and final) Candidacy exam within three months. In the event of a second exam, the candidate may be required to revise his/her thesis proposal and will be given a second opportunity to defend the proposal orally and demonstrate suitable background and competence for successful completion of a PhD. If the student does not pass the second exam (indicated by two or more votes of fail), he/she will be required to withdraw from the PhD program.

EXPECTED TURNAROUND TIME OF ANNOTATED THESIS, DISSERTATION OR PAPER

The maximum length of time for supervisors and members of the supervisory committee to return comments on a thesis, dissertation or paper to a student should not exceed 20 business days from time of receipt. Extenuating circumstances may apply.

REQUIRED THESIS AND DISSERTATION TIMELINES AND FORMATS

1) Details of how to prepare the thesis and timelines to ensure graduation on a given date are presented on the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Support for students preparing to graduate page. The supervisory committee must also be aware, well ahead of time, of your desired schedule and an external examiner arranged to accommodate this schedule.

2) The student’s thesis is to go to their supervisory committee about 2 weeks before the Request for Final Oral Examination Form form is due in FGS. During this review process, the student should be discussing possible dates, times and locations of their defense so that their full committee agree and an External Examiner can be nominated.

3) The Request for Final Oral Examination Form and Thesis/Dissertation Withholding Form must be submitted to FGS at least 20 working days for Masters and at least 30 working days for PhD before the examination date. When counting days, do not include statutory holidays, weekends or the actual date of the defence. The room location will likely be BWC A319, the graduate secretary can book the room as soon as she has the date and time of a defense. If that room is not available Kalisa will find another suitable room on campus.

Permitted thesis and dissertation format(s) can be found here.

PLACEMENT, CO-OP TERMS AND INTERNSHIPS

Participation in the Co-operative Education program enables students to acquire knowledge, practical skills for employment, and workplace experience. Master’s and PhD students may add work terms to their graduate education by enrolling with the Co-op program. Requirements include completion of two work terms for Master’s students and three work terms for PhD; a work term consists of four months of full-time, paid employment with an approved employer. Students require permission from their academic advisor and the Graduate Advisor, as well as the Co-op Coordinator, to participate in the Co-op program. Interested students should contact the SEOS Co-op Coordinator early in their first term. Students are also referred to “General Regulations: Graduate Co-op”. For more information on co-op opportunities for graduate students visit the Co-operative Education Program and Career Services page.
SEOS FUNDING POLICIES

Graduate students receive funding from many different sources, including: fellowships, scholarships, teaching assistantships, and research assistantships. UVic has policies and guidelines for each of these funding sources. Graduate students who have questions or concerns about their funding can seek advice and guidance from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Eligible years for guaranteed funding: All MSc students receive a minimum of $22,000/yr for two years, while PhD students receive this minimum for four years. Students should ensure they are aware of the policies governing their funding. Funding from the Faculty of Graduate Studies may form part of this stipend, and the remainder comes from the sources listed below and/or external scholarships. Funding may extend beyond these timelines.

Research Assistantships: Students may receive funding from their supervisor's research grants or contracts to maintain their income at or above the minimum level of support. The decision to provide a Research Assistantship is made by the supervisor as part of the evaluation process of the student's complete application package. Normally, expenses incurred as part of the student's research are paid by a research grant or contract held by the supervisor. There is no direct SEOS funding support for graduate student research; everything from photocopying to long distance telephone calls must be paid from research grants or personal resources.

Teaching Assistantships: Appointments are available for qualified students to work as teaching assistants in a laboratory setting or as markers for non-laboratory courses. Competitions for these positions are generally held in late June/early July for both the winter and spring sessions each year, and students will be advised when and how to apply.

Awards, Fellowships, Scholarships & Bursaries: Eligible SEOS graduate students (minimum GPA of 6.0 required) will normally receive UVic Graduate Awards as follows: MSc students receive for the first two years (6 terms), PhD students receive for the first four years (12 terms) and MSc-to-PhD students receive for the first four years (12 terms). UVic Graduate Award values may vary year to year. For more information about FGS funding, contact the Graduate Advisor.

FGS Awards for graduate study: Scholarships, medals and prizes are awarded to graduate students on the basis of academic merit or excellence and are administered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS). Detailed information on all awards and scholarships can be found here. A call for nominations is made in early August each year. Internal deadline for applications is early September so that the SEOS Graduate Committee has time to rank and put the department nominations forward to FGS. Available awards will be announced at application time.

Faculty of Science Awards: Graduate awards are also available through Faculty of Science. A current listing is available on the Science website.

Notification of Award Competitions: The Graduate Secretary will inform students of award availability in the summer with an internal deadline in September. The SEOS Graduate Committee assesses applications to present the School’s nominations to FGS. Awardees will be notified by the final selection committees. The call for NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship applications comes separately in the fall.