

University of Victoria  
School of Earth and Ocean Sciences

# Graduate Handbook

Last updated July 2, 2021



**University  
of Victoria**

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## 1 Administration of the SEOS graduate program

Faculty and students are bound by policies set by the University of Victoria (UVic), the 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](#) webpages. In particular, students and faculty members should read the [Graduate Supervision Policy](#), which outlines the rights and responsibilities in the supervisory relationship.

At SEOS, the graduate program is overseen by the **Graduate Committee**, made up of three faculty members appointed by the SEOS Director. They are chaired by a faculty **Graduate Advisor** and assisted by the **Graduate Secretary**. Their meetings are also attended by two voluntary graduate **student representatives**, who bring student concerns and perspectives to the committee's attention.

The **Graduate Committee** are collectively responsible for discussing issues concerning the graduate program and making recommendations to SEOS faculty. They work with the Graduate Secretary to allocate UVic Graduate Awards and Fellowships ahead of each new academic year (see Section 8.3) and they make recommendations to FGS for UVic Graduate Entrance Awards, President's Research Scholarships, and BC Graduate Scholarships. Finally, they review SEOS graduate student applications for NSERC Postgraduate Scholarships (Section 8.5), UVic Graduate Donor Awards, and Faculty of Science Awards and Scholarships (Section 9), making recommendations to the university committees that oversee these awards.

The **Graduate Advisor** is responsible for chairing meetings of the Graduate Committee and acts as an advocate for the graduate students at the faculty level. They serve as an ombudsperson in the rare instance of any conflict arising between a graduate student and their supervisor. They arrange Chairs for SEOS candidacy exams (see Section 5). Lastly, they represent the SEOS graduate program externally, such as at meetings of the Faculty of Science and FGS.

The **Graduate Secretary** is the main point of contact for current and prospective graduate students with questions about the graduate program. They prepare paperwork for graduate student offer letters, funding schedules, committee meetings, candidacy and oral examinations, and program completions. In consultation with graduate students and their supervisory committees, they schedule candidacy and oral examinations. Together with the Graduate Advisor, they serve as the main point of contact between SEOS and FGS. The Co-op program is administered separately, by the **Co-op Advisor** (see Section 7).

### 1.1 Contact details

Role	Current holder	Office	Telephone	e-mail
<i>Director</i>	Dr. Jay Cullen	BWC A405	250-472-5133	<a href="mailto:seosdirector@uvic.ca">seosdirector@uvic.ca</a>
<i>Graduate Advisor</i>	Dr. Laurence Coogan	BWC A413	250-472-4018	<a href="mailto:seosgradadvisor@uvic.ca">seosgradadvisor@uvic.ca</a>
<i>Graduate Committee member</i>	Dr. Andy Fraass			<a href="mailto:andyfraass@uvic.ca">andyfraass@uvic.ca</a>
<i>Graduate Committee member</i>	Dr. Ed Nissen			<a href="mailto:enissen@uvic.ca">enissen@uvic.ca</a>
<i>Graduate Secretary</i>	Kalisa Valenzuela	BWC A405	250-721-6120	<a href="mailto:eosc@uvic.ca">eosc@uvic.ca</a>
<i>Co-op Advisor</i>	Diane Luszniak	CUN 105	250-721-8649	<a href="mailto:eosco@uvic.ca">eosco@uvic.ca</a>
<i>Student representative</i>	Chrissy Schellenberg			<a href="mailto:chrissy_es@hotmail.com">chrissy_es@hotmail.com</a>
<i>Student representative</i>	Moronke Harris			<a href="mailto:moronke@uvic.ca">moronke@uvic.ca</a>

## 2 Graduate student supervision

### 2.1 Supervisors and co-supervisors

The **primary academic supervisor** is your main source of guidance on all matters relating to your studies and research at SEOS. If appropriate, a graduate student may also have a maximum of one **co-supervisor**. Primary supervision by adjunct faculty or faculty in other departments is permissible, but in this case a regular faculty member from SEOS must serve as co-supervisor.

Students are advised to familiarize themselves with both their and their supervisor's responsibilities by reading the information on the [SEOS Current Students](#) webpages, on the [FGS Supervision and Advising](#) webpages, and in the [FGS Graduate Supervision Policy](#) document.

### 2.2 Supervisory committee

The supervisory committee plays an important role in guiding your studies and research in SEOS and notifies the student of University expectations concerning the quality, volume, style and presentation of the thesis. If progress towards the degree is not satisfactory, the committee can recommend 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 student's final oral examinations and Ph.D. candidacy examinations.

#### 2.2.1 Nomination and make-up of the supervisory committee

The supervisory committee is formed by consultation between the student and supervisor, and must be settled upon within the first two terms (eight months) of the program. The student is responsible for informing the Graduate Secretary of the proposed committee composition. Any subsequent changes to that composition must also be reported to the Graduate Secretary.

The following rules outline the make-up of supervisory committees. Most UVic faculty and adjunct faculty (of any department) are also members of UVic's Faculty of Graduate Studies.

*M.Sc. program:* at least three members of the UVic FGS, including:

- a primary or co-supervisor from SEOS faculty, excluding adjunct faculty.
- at least one other SEOS faculty or adjunct faculty member.

*Ph.D. program:* at least four members of the UVic FGS, including:

- a primary or co-supervisor from SEOS faculty, excluding adjunct faculty.
- at least one other SEOS faculty or adjunct faculty member.
- at least one **external member**, who should be a UVic FGS faculty member from outside the SEOS faculty and adjunct faculty.<sup>1</sup>

M.Sc. and Ph.D. 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 on top of those required above, and need permission of FGS to be added to the committee.

### 2.3 Expected meeting frequency

#### 2.3.1 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

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<sup>1</sup>Faculty members who are jointly appointed between SEOS and other departments may only be the external member by permission of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

the program progress. Delays due to field work, remote study, supervisor or student vacation, sick leave, etc. can be expected.

### 2.3.2 *With your supervisory committee*

In addition to regular meetings with your supervisor, you must meet with the entire committee at least once per year throughout the period of study. It is the responsibility of the primary supervisor to ensure that these meetings happen in a timely manner.

SEOS recommends that the student send a brief summary report to the committee before the meeting. At the meeting, the student typically makes a short presentation of their research progress. The committee then discusses research progress and course work with the student, and makes recommendations (such as identifying additional course work required). 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 or from [this weblink](#)). Students should print the form and bring it to each committee meeting; it is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure it is completed and forwarded to the Graduate Secretary to be placed on the student's file.

## 2.4 **Expected turnaround time for comments on a thesis, dissertation proposal, or dissertation**

When giving supervisory committee members work to read (e.g. a thesis, dissertation proposal, or dissertation), you should ensure they have enough time to read the work, ideally substantially before any deadlines in case revisions are asked for. The FGS suggests that it is the responsibility of committee members to provide feedback after 20 business days as a maximum, except in extenuating circumstances.

## 2.5 **Supervisor and committee member absences**

Under FGS guidelines, if the primary academic supervisor is away from the University for six months or more, an interim supervisor must be appointed. If another committee member (other than the primary supervisor) is away for twelve months or more, an interim member must be appointed. In either circumstance, the student, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Advisor must be notified in writing. Written notification of any change in the original structure of the supervisory committee must also be given to the Graduate Advisor and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

## 3 Program requirements<sup>2</sup>

Graduate students at SEOS receive credits toward their M.Sc. or Ph.D. degree programs by completing research and coursework. Minimum units of total credit and coursework credit are stated in Sections 3.1–3.2, but the supervisory committee, in consultation with the student, determines the exact content of the program and division of credits between research and coursework. For example, a supervisory committee might require that a student with a gap in their academic background take additional coursework, on top of the specified minimum.

Students should consult the department for courses that will be offered in any given year. Coursework may include Directed Studies (EOS 580), which requires the submission of a *Proposal for Graduate Pro Forma form*, available from the Graduate Secretary or from [this weblink](#). Coursework may also include graduate courses in other departments (see the [graduate calendar](#) for more details) or upper-level undergraduate courses, but these require submission of a *Graduate Registration form*, found at [this weblink](#). Lastly, it is also possible to include courses from other institutions, but the supervisory committee must provide written justification to FGS, who must approve the request.

### 3.1 M.Sc. program requirements

The M.Sc. 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, which must include *EOS 525 Research Frontiers in Earth and Ocean Sciences* (1.5 units). The M.Sc. thesis (EOS 599) makes up the remaining units.

All M.Sc. students are also required to present their research at the annual *Graduate Student Workshop* once during their degree program. Normally this is held during the Reading Break in Fall Term; students typically present during their second year in the program.

#### 3.1.1 EOS 599 MSc Thesis

The thesis requirement applies to all Masters students in the School. Students must enroll in EOS 599 in their first term and remain enrolled until their thesis requirements have been completed. The thesis must be defended in a final *oral examination* (see Section 6).

### 3.2 Ph.D. program requirements

The Ph.D. program consists of 45 units beyond the Bachelor's level, or 30 units beyond the Master's level. Ph.D. students who enter the program with a Masters Degree must complete a minimum of 3 graduate or upper-level undergraduate coursework units. Students who enter the Ph.D. program with only a Bachelor's degree, including students who transfer from a Master's to a Ph.D. at UVic, must complete a minimum of 7.5 units of coursework. All Ph.D. students must take *EOS 525 Research Frontiers in Earth and Ocean Sciences* (1.5 units), unless they took it previously as part of an M.Sc. degree (since this course can only be taken once for credit). The Ph.D. Candidacy Examination (EOS 693) and Ph.D. dissertation (EOS 699) make up the remaining program units.

Like M.Sc. students, Ph.D. students are required to present their research at the annual *Graduate Student Workshop* once during their degree program, normally in their second year. Ph.D. students are also required to give a one hour *SEOS seminar* on their research, normally within six months before the defence of their Ph.D. dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup>In the event that program information differs between this document and the UVic Graduate Calendar, the latter takes precedent.

### 3.2.1 EOS 693 PhD Candidacy Examination

The candidacy examination is a requirement of the FGS 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 M.Sc. program) and at least six months before the final oral examination, a Ph.D. student must submit a written *dissertation proposal* that will then be discussed with the supervisory committee in an oral *candidacy examination*. Protocols for the process, proposal and examination are described in Section 5.

Students enroll in EOS 693 upon registering in the Ph.D. program (or upon switching to the Ph.D. program from the M.Sc. program), and remain enrolled until all candidacy requirements have been completed. EOS 699 is a co-requisite (see below).

### 3.2.2 EOS 699 PhD Dissertation

The Ph.D. Dissertation is another requirement of the FGS and cannot be waived. Students must enroll in EOS 699 in their first term and remain enrolled until their dissertation requirements have been completed. EOS 693 is a co-requisite. The dissertation must be defended in a final *oral examination* (see Section 6).

## 3.3 Transfer from the M.Sc. to the Ph.D. program

A student and their advisor may decide it is desirable for the student to transfer from the M.Sc. program into the Ph.D. program. Students must have completed at least two terms in the M.Sc. program and will typically have first class standing.

The student must formally request the transfer with a letter to their 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 Ph.D. program. If the committee's verdict is positive, then the student must complete the re-registration form and provide it to the Graduate Secretary. The transfer recommendation will be sent to FGS for final approval.

## 4 Timelines for program completion

Full details of the required timelines for M.Sc. and Ph.D. program completion are provided in the [graduate calendar](#).

### 4.1 M.Sc. program timeline

Students proceeding towards a M.Sc. degree are required to complete all the degree requirements within five years (60 consecutive months) from the date of their first registration in the program. Normally, however, students can be *expected* to complete all M.Sc. requirements within or shortly after two years. Recommended targets include:

- Completing EOS 525 at the first opportunity;
- Forming the supervisory committee within 8 months;
- Meeting with the supervisory committee in the second or third term;
- Presenting at the *Graduate Student Workshop* in Fall of the second year (normally, the fourth term);
- Completing coursework by the fifth term;
- Meeting with the supervisory committee in the fifth term to discuss progress and plans for degree completion;
- Completing the thesis and defending it in a final oral examination in the sixth or seventh term.

Under exceptional or extenuating circumstances, M.Sc. program extensions beyond the normal five year limit can be requested by submitting a *Requet for Extension: Program form*, available from [this weblink](#). Approved extensions are normally granted on a term-by-term basis. Please also review the [graduate calendar](#) on regulations regarding the implications on your program time limit before requesting the extension. The graduate secretary is to be notified when a program extension is required.

### 4.2 Ph.D. program timeline

A student proceeding toward a Ph.D. degree is required to pass a candidacy examination within three years of the date of their first registration in the program, and to complete all the degree requirements within seven years (84 consecutive months) of first registration. In addition, a doctoral degree will not be awarded in less than two years (24 consecutive months) from the time of first registration, or in less than six months from the time of the candidacy examination. Normally, students can be *expected* to complete all Ph.D. requirements within or shortly after four years. Recommended targets include:

- Completing EOS 525 at the first opportunity;
- Forming the supervisory committee within 8 months;
- Meeting with the supervisory committee in the second or third term;
- Presenting at the *Graduate Student Workshop* in Fall of the second or third year (normally, the fourth or seventh term);
- Completing coursework by fifth term;
- Meeting with the supervisory committee in the fifth term to discuss progress and set terms of the candidacy exam (*note that this meeting must occur at least four months before the exam*);
- Writing a dissertation proposal and taking the candidacy oral examination before the end of the sixth term;



- Meeting with the supervisory committee in the third and/or fourth year to discuss progress and plans for degree completion;
- Delivering a SEOS seminar in your final months (*plan ahead as the schedule can fill up early*);
- Completing the dissertation and defending it in a final oral examination in the twelfth term.

Under exceptional or extenuating circumstances, Ph.D. candidacy examination extensions beyond the normal three year limit can be requested by submitting a *Request for Extension: Candidacy form*, available from [this weblink](#). Similarly, Ph.D. program extensions beyond the normal seven year limit can be requested by submitting a *Request for Extension: Program form*, available from [this weblink](#). Approved extensions are normally granted on a term-by-term basis. Please also review the [graduate calendar](#) on regulations regarding the implications on your program time limit before requesting the extension. The graduate secretary is to be notified when a program extension is required.

#### 4.3 M.Sc. to Ph.D. transfer timeline

A student who transfers to the Ph.D. program after an initial period in the M.Sc. program is required to complete all the Ph.D. requirements within seven years of the date of the first registration in the M.Sc. program. In addition, the Ph.D. candidacy examination should occur within 18 months of transfer.

#### 4.4 Leave of absence

Leaves of absence are available to graduate students for a variety of reasons or circumstances (e.g. medical, parental, compassionate). Students cannot undertake any academic or research work nor use any of the University's facilities for the duration of the leave, and all supervisory processes are suspended. Tuition fees are not charged during the leave.

Leaves of absence are normally granted in 4 month blocks, to coincide with the usual registration terms. Students must have completed one term in the graduate program to be eligible. Students in the M.Sc. program may take a maximum of three terms within the maximum 5 year period allowed, while those in the Ph.D. program may take a maximum of six terms within the maximum 7 year period allowed. To request a leave of absence, students should submit a *Graduate Academic Concession form*, available from [this weblink](#).

#### 4.5 Graduate student vacation

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.

## 5 Ph.D. candidacy protocols

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

### 5.1 Pre-examination supervisory committee meeting

At least four months prior to the candidacy examination, the supervisory committee will meet with the student to decide on a date for the oral exam and provide the student with verbal guidelines for what material will be covered in it. Material to be examined will be that considered necessary background for the student to complete a Ph.D. successfully in their subject area (and thus includes everything discussed in the dissertation proposal). Guidance on the format of the dissertation proposal will also be given to the student at this meeting.

The chair of the supervisory committee is responsible for transcribing these verbal guidelines into a memorandum that should be provided to the student (copied to the supervisory committee and Graduate Secretary) within *two working days* following this meeting. The memo must state the date of the candidacy exam, and it must also include a copy of [dissertation guidelines](#) that detail the requirements of the FGS.

Between the time of the pre-examination supervisory committee meeting and the candidacy exam, the student must write their dissertation proposal and study the material outlined by the supervisory committee. 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.

### 5.2 Dissertation proposal

The dissertation proposal is a 10–20 page document (double spaced, excluding references and figures) that outlines a research plan for the dissertation project. It should both provide the scientific background and rationale for the proposed dissertation research, and propose the methodology for undertaking the research. This may include brief discussion of preliminary results if appropriate.

The dissertation 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 dissertation 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.

### 5.3 Oral candidacy examination

The oral candidacy examination is chaired by a SEOS faculty member from outside of the supervisory committee, who is assigned by the SEOS Graduate Advisor. It is otherwise closed to all except the student and their 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 one or two rounds of oral questions from the supervisory committee, with the supervisor(s) being the last to question the student in each round. 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. The time taken for these questions and answers does not usually exceed two hours from the end of the candidate's presentation.

At the end of the examination, the student will leave the room, and the chair will then ask each committee member to review the student's performance and to assign a grade of pass, fail, or adjourn. Reasons to adjourn the exam include that the thesis proposal is acceptable but the student has failed the oral portion of the exam.

#### 5.4 Possible outcomes

Based on the supervisory committee members' assessments, there are three possible outcomes to the candidacy exam:

- **Pass:** the student receives no more than one vote of either fail or adjourn. Students who pass the exam will have successfully advanced to Ph.D. candidacy and will continue in the program.
- **Fail:** the student receives two or more votes of fail. Students who fail the exam will be required to withdraw from the Ph.D. 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 student 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 their 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 Ph.D. If the student does not pass the second exam (indicated by two or more votes of fail), they will be required to withdraw from the Ph.D. program.

The Graduate Secretary will need to be informed by the Chair of the examination or the student's supervisor of the final assessment. The graduate secretary is then responsible for drafting a Candidacy Memo that will be submitted to the FGS Graduate Admissions and Records.

## 6 M.Sc. and Ph.D. defence protocols

Assuming that all other requirements are fulfilled, SEOS graduate students complete their degrees by writing an M.Sc. *thesis* or Ph.D. *dissertation* and defending it in a *final oral examination*. Since there are strict timelines for each step in this process, students are advised to consult with their supervisory committees on their desired schedule for graduation and should inform the Graduate Secretary of this schedule well in advance.

### 6.1 Thesis and dissertation guidelines

The Faculty of Graduate Studies webpages outline permitted thesis and dissertation [format requirements](#) and provide additional [resources](#) and Microsoft Word and L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X templates.

The student's thesis or dissertation must be sent to their supervisory committee 2 weeks before the *Request for Final Oral Examination form* is submitted. During these two weeks, the student should consult with their supervisory committee to decide upon a date, time and location for their final oral examination (the location will likely be BWC A319, which can be booked by the graduate secretary). Separately, the supervisory committee must organize an external examiner for the examination.

M.Sc. students must submit their M.Sc. thesis together with the *Request for Final Oral Examination for Master's Program form* (available from [this weblink](#)) to the SEOS Graduate Secretary at least 20 working days before the examination date (not including statutory holidays, weekends or the actual date of the defence).

Ph.D. candidates must submit their dissertation and the *Request for Final Oral Examination for Doctoral Program form* (available from [this weblink](#)) to the SEOS Graduate Secretary at least 30 working days before the examination date (not including statutory holidays, weekends or the actual date of the defence).

Graduate students can also request a twelve month delay to publishing their thesis or dissertation on UVic's online repository — in the case that publishing it sooner would jeopardize patents or independent publications — by submitting to FGS a *Withholding form* at the same time. The form is available from [this weblink](#).

### 6.2 Final oral examination

The final oral examination is chaired by a member of the FGS external to SEOS, whom the FGS appoint. The examining committee otherwise comprises the student's supervisory committee and an external examiner. The exam begins with a brief (~20 minute) presentation by the student that summarizes their thesis or dissertation. The exam proceeds with one or two rounds of oral questions from the examining committee, starting each round with the external examiner, proceeding next to any supervisory committee member from outside SEOS, then to supervisory committee members from SEOS, and ending with the supervisor. If there is sufficient time, the Chair may also call for questions from the audience. When questioning is completed, the student and audience are asked to withdraw so that the examining committee can consider the thesis and oral exam in private.

### 6.3 Possible outcomes

Based on the examining committee members' assessments, there are five possible outcomes to the final oral exam:

- *The dissertation or thesis is acceptable subject to editorial changes as presented and the oral examination is acceptable.*

- *The dissertation or thesis is acceptable subject to minor revisions and the oral examination is acceptable.* Minor revisions are more than corrections of typographical or punctuation errors, and include clarification of textual material, the qualification of research findings or conclusions, or minor additions that improve the reading and understanding of the dissertation or thesis.
- *The dissertation or thesis is acceptable subject to major revisions and the oral examination is acceptable.* An example of when a dissertation or thesis is acceptable subject to major revisions and the oral examination is acceptable might be when a candidate has orally convinced the examining committee of the validity of the research results but has failed substantively to express this in the dissertation or thesis.
- *The examination is adjourned.* This result should not be confused with failure. Adjournment may be called for three different types of circumstances. (1) A sudden illness or emergency that does not allow for the examination to be completed; an external environmental situation arises that forces the exam to be prematurely terminated (such as fire alarm, power failure or natural disaster); or when the technology being used breaks down and cannot be repaired in time to continue the examination. (2) Where the external examiner casts the lone dissenting vote. (3) Where the thesis is acceptable but the student has failed the oral defence.
- *The examination is failed.* If two or more members of the examining committee are opposed to passing the student, the student will not be recommended for the degree.

## 7 The graduate Co-op program

Participation in the Co-operative Education ('Co-op') program enables students to acquire knowledge, practical skills for employment, and workplace experience. Master's and Ph.D. 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 Ph.D., where 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 webpage](#) or contact the SEOS Co-op Advisor (Section 1.1).

## 8 SEOS funding policies

SEOS supports its graduate students financially by paying stipends that seek to offset living costs and tuition expenses. There is no standardized stipend amount, and different SEOS supervisors support their students at different levels, depending on the grants they have available to support their research groups. However, SEOS does guarantee a minimum stipend of \$22,000/yr, paid to M.Sc. students for two years and to Ph.D. students for four years.<sup>3</sup> Supervisors often try to extend funding beyond the two- and four-year limits, but there is no guarantee of this.

Graduate student support derives from many different sources, including *research assistantships* (paid from supervisors' grants or contracts for work on research projects); *teaching assistantships* (paid by the University for work teaching undergraduates); *UVic graduate awards/fellowships* (paid by the FGS to graduate students with qualifying GPAs); *President's Research Scholarships* and *UVic graduate entrance awards* (given to select students on the basis of their academic record); and certain *external scholarships*. Students should be aware of the distinct UVic policies and guidelines for each of these funding sources, and can seek advice, guidance or answers to questions from the Graduate Secretary, Graduate Advisor, or Faculty of Graduate Studies.

### 8.1 Research assistantships

Part of the minimum level of support is usually paid out of supervisor's research grants or contracts in what is known as a *research assistantship*. The decision to provide a research assistantship is made by the supervisor. Research assistantship stipends are usually paid in monthly instalments.

Normally, expenses incurred as part of the student's research are also paid by a research grant or contract held by the supervisor. There is no direct SEOS funding support for graduate student research expenses; everything from photocopying to long distance telephone calls must be paid from research grants or personal resources.

### 8.2 Teaching assistantships

Appointments are available for qualified students to work as *teaching assistants* in laboratory classes or as *markers* for non-laboratory courses. A single competition for positions for the Fall, Spring and Summer terms is generally held in June/July each year; students will be advised when and how to apply by email. Applications are reviewed by SEOS teaching staff (not by the Graduate Committee) and outcomes are usually confirmed in August.

Unlike the other sources of financial support listed in this section, teaching assistantships are classified as salary (not stipend) and are therefore subject to taxation. Also note that while many supervisors include teaching salary as part of their students' minimum funding, others allow their students to earn teaching salary *on top of* their stipend. Your supervisor should have made their policy on this matter clear to you in their original offer letter or other correspondence.

### 8.3 UVic graduate awards & fellowships<sup>4</sup>

Eligible SEOS graduate students will normally receive UVic graduate awards or fellowships from the Faculty of Graduate Studies for the first two years (6 terms) of the M.Sc. program, or for the first four years (12 terms) of the Ph.D. program (including for students who transfer from M.Sc. to Ph.D.). In order to qualify, students must maintain a minimum GPA of 6.0.

<sup>3</sup>In May 2020, SEOS faculty voted to temporarily extend these periods by one term to  $2\frac{1}{3}$  years (M.Sc.) and  $4\frac{1}{3}$  years (Ph.D.). This ruling only applies to students still within their guaranteed funding term limits in May 2020.

<sup>4</sup>FGS classifies awards with values greater than \$10,000 as 'UVic graduate fellowships' and awards less than this amount as 'UVic graduate awards'. There is otherwise no practical distinction.

Students holding large NSERC postgraduate scholarships or BC Graduate Scholarships are also ineligible for these awards for the duration of the period they are funded externally. There is no way of deferring the UVic graduate awards or fellowships until after the external funding expires; the two year (M.Sc.) or four year (Ph.D.) eligibility limits still apply.

The value of the UVic graduate award or fellowship varies from year-to-year depending on the budget allocated to SEOS by FGS and the number of eligible SEOS graduate students.<sup>5</sup> SEOS distinguishes two sizes of award; a larger one for students with GPAs  $\geq 7.0$ ; and a smaller one (typically about half the amount of the full award) for students with GPAs of 6.0–6.9.<sup>6</sup> Incoming students with qualifying GPAs are eligible for awards so long as they have formally accepted their offers at the time that the allocation is made; faculty and adjunct faculty are given advance warning of this cut-off time.

In the past few years, full UVic graduate awards or fellowships have varied from \$6,900 to \$10,500 per student. The award is paid to the student in three equal instalments, in September, January and May.

#### 8.4 President's Research Scholarships and UVic graduate entrance awards

These annual awards are also administered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies, with a certain number allocated to SEOS each year. Like the UVic graduate awards & fellowships, they may make up part of a student's minimum funding.

The SEOS Graduate Committee selects the award winners. President's Research Scholarships may only be awarded to students who hold active NSERC postgraduate scholarships. UVic graduate entrance awards are given to incoming graduate students on the basis of their academic record. To be considered, students must have a GPA of at least 7.0. In the interests of equity, we do not assign UVic graduate entrance awards to NSERC postgraduate scholarship holders.

#### 8.5 External scholarships

Certain external scholarships may also form part of a student's minimum funding. These include *NSERC postgraduate scholarships*, which are open only to Canadian students and which require students to submit applications in the Fall (details [here](#)); *NSERC Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships*, which are open to students from any nationality and which must be nominated by UVic with the support of their supervisor (details [here](#)); *China Scholarship Council scholarships*, which are open to students from China and which require students to submit applications with the support of their supervisor; and *BC Graduate Scholarships*, which are open only to Canadian students and which must be nominated by the SEOS Graduate Committee.

#### 8.6 Notification of funding

The Graduate Secretary will inform eligible students of their individual UVic graduate award or fellowship in the late summer. Soon afterwards, the Graduate Secretary will work with your supervisor to draft a full payment schedule that incorporates all other sources of funding for the coming academic year (Fall–Spring–Summer). This is normally sent to students in early September.

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<sup>5</sup>FGS usually sets the budget in May, after which the SEOS Graduate Committee determines the allocation amongst qualifying SEOS students for the forthcoming year.

<sup>6</sup>We use GPAs that incorporate grades up to and including the recent Spring term.



## 9 Donor awards

Various scholarships, medals and prizes funded by private donors to UVic are awarded to graduate students on the basis of academic merit, disciplinary research focus, and/or financial need. Unlike the awards and scholarships described in Sections 8.3–8.5, donor awards do not count towards the minimum funding levels specified at the start of Section 8.

Donor awards are administered either by the Faculty of Graduate Studies (a list of awards and eligibility criteria can be seen by clicking on the fourth and fifth tabs [here](#)) or by the Faculty of Science (information is given [here](#)). Note that some of the donor awards require applications from students, while others require nominations from supervisors.

Calls for applications and nominations for a variety of awards appropriate for SEOS graduate students are made in early August each year. Internal deadlines for applications and nominations are usually set for late August or early September in order to give the SEOS Graduate Committee time to rank candidates and forward their selection to FGS and Faculty of Science, whose awards committees then decide upon the final award winners.