



University of Victoria Department of Geography Graduate Student Handbook

Last revised: July 2019

We acknowledge with respect the Lkungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



*This booklet contains guidelines to assist graduate students and supervisors in the successful administration of the Department of Geography's graduate programs. These guidelines are **additional** and **complementary** to the policies and regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, which are described in the [Calendar](#) and the [Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Supervision Policy](#). If there is a conflict between information in Faculty of Graduate Studies policies and this handbook, Faculty of Graduate Studies policies take precedence.*

Faculty and students are bound by policies set by the University, Faculty of Graduate Studies, and this Department. We strongly encourage all graduate students and supervisors to read and become familiar with graduate policies and regulations.

If, at any point during your program, you have questions or would like advice, please contact our graduate program assistant at geog2@uvic.ca or 250-721-7350, or contact our graduate advisor.

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1. GETTING STARTED

1.1. Program Objectives and Vision

Our department is proud to be a space for high quality and conscientious research and teaching. We are a highly interdisciplinary unit, and much of our work is possible thanks to close partnerships with community members and groups, both locally and around the world.

The Department of Geography offers graduate programs leading to a Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc), or PhD. Geography's graduate programs focus on thesis-based research supplemented by coursework. The overarching goal of the graduate programs in the Department of Geography is to educate and train the next generation of professional geographers.

The main objectives of Geography's graduate programs are to:

- develop a graduate-level understanding of fundamental concepts and skills in one or more of the major domains of geography: physical geography, human geography, human-environment interactions, and geographic information science;
- design, execute, produce, and disseminate original research relevant to the discipline of geography through teaching and research;
- produce graduates with strong writing, graphic, and verbal communication skills.

Our vision is to produce outstanding geography graduate students who have contributed new knowledge to the discipline of geography.

1.2. Principal Contacts

If you are in doubt about who to contact, please ask the graduate program assistant (geog2@uvic.ca).

Role	Basic Responsibilities	Contact Information
Graduate Program Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Answers questions about graduate programs▪ Supports graduate students and supervisors in administrative processes▪ Keeps administrative records	geog2@uvic.ca 250-721-7350
Graduate Advisor and Chair of Graduate Affairs Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Supports and provides guidance to students▪ Liaison between students, the Department, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies▪ Chair of the Graduate Affairs Committee	Dr. David Atkinson datkinso@uvic.ca
Chair of the Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advice and appeals	geogchair@uvic.ca

Administrative Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supports students, faculty, and staff with employment-related administration ▪ Organizes employment as a specialist (lab) instructor for eligible graduate students 	geogao@uvic.ca
Co-op Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All enquiries related to co-op employment 	sscoop@uvic.ca
Communications and Office Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manages front desk of office ▪ Administers office keys, mail, and photocopying ▪ Assists with purchasing 	geoginfo@uvic.ca
Departmental Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizes departmental events ▪ Supports Department with accounting forms and purchasing 	dbraith@uvic.ca
Graduate Student Committee Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Represents graduate students in departmental meetings and on departmental committees including the Graduate Affairs, Awards, Lecture Series, and Equity and Diversity committees 	Contact dbraith@uvic.ca for current representatives

1.3. Other Roles in Graduate Programs

- *Supervisor*
Supervisors play a pivotal role in your graduate program. They advise and support students with the formulation of a thesis/dissertation project, its execution, and the process of writing and defending the thesis/dissertation. More information on the roles and responsibilities of a supervisor is detailed in the Faculty of Graduate Studies [Graduate Supervision Policy](#).
- *Co-Supervisor*
One co-supervisor must be a regular, full-time faculty member; the other can be an adjunct faculty member. Adjuncts serving as co-supervisors on PhD committees must have a PhD.
- *Supervisory Committee*
All members of the supervisory committee must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies prior to being formally approved as a member of a student's committee. Please contact geog2@uvic.ca if you would like to check a member's status or add someone to your supervisory committee. For further details and requirements for committees, see section 6.5 for Master's programs and section 7.5 for PhD programs.
- *Departmental Graduate Affairs Committee*
The Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) includes the graduate advisor (chair), a minimum of three additional regular faculty members (voting members), the graduate program assistant (non-voting member), and a minimum of one graduate student (non-voting member). The committee reviews applications for graduate admission, makes recommendations for awards and scholarships, and proposes policy recommendations regarding the graduate programs.

- *Graduate Admissions and Records Office*
The Graduate Admissions and Records Office works with departments and the Faculty of Graduate Studies in the administration of admissions, registration, and records.
- *Faculty of Graduate Studies*
The [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#) is responsible for university-wide graduate policy, administration of scholarships, final approval of candidacy or program extensions and leave requests, and final oral exams. Issues or concerns that cannot be resolved within the Department are generally referred to the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

1.4. Master's Programs: Important Dates

If you have questions about any of the deadlines or activities below, please email geog2@uvic.ca or call 250-721-7350.

Master's: Before starting - For new students		
Date	Category	Activity
Early July	<i>Employment</i>	Apply for Specialist Instructor (TA) employment
Late August	<i>Registration</i>	Register for classes

Master's: Fall term		
Date	Category	Activity
Early September	<i>Funding</i>	Apply for Department of Geography Donor Awards
Early September	<i>Program Requirement</i>	Department of Geography Graduate Student Orientation (all new graduate students must attend)
Early September	<i>Employment</i>	TA Conference 1 (new Specialist Instructors are encouraged to attend)
Early September	<i>Employment</i>	Consider co-operative education program employment
September 15	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for September CPFA fee reduction, last day for final oral examination
Mid-September	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register in courses for the Fall term
Mid-September	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register for personal leave
September 20	<i>Employment</i>	Deadline 1 to apply for co-operative education program employment
Late September	<i>Funding</i>	Start preparation for Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's application, if eligible
September 30	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	Last day for paying Fall term fees without penalty
September 30	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for September CPFA fee reduction, last day to submit final thesis and graduation documents
October 31	<i>Registration</i>	Last day to withdraw from courses in the Fall term
Early November	<i>Funding</i>	Recipients of Department of Geography Donor Awards are notified
November	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Register for the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition

Mid-November	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Fall term, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
November 15	<i>Graduation</i>	Deadline to apply to graduate for students completing in the Fall term
December 1	<i>Funding</i>	Last day to submit Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's application, if eligible
Early December	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible to defend between January 1-15 and get a CPFA fee reduction, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
Mid-December	<i>Graduation</i>	Last days to do final oral examination in Fall term
Mid-December	<i>Funding</i>	Start Mackenzie-King Memorial Scholarship application, if eligible
First working day in January	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Fall term, deadline to submit final thesis and graduation documents

Master's: Spring term

Date	Category	Activity
Early January	<i>Employment</i>	Consider co-operative education program employment
Early January	<i>Employment</i>	TA Conference 2
January 15	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for January CPFA fee reduction, last day for final oral examination
Mid-January	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register in courses for the Spring term
Mid-January	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register for personal leave
January 20	<i>Employment</i>	Deadline 2 to apply for co-operative education program employment
January 30	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for January CPFA fee reduction, last day to submit final thesis and graduation documents
January 31	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	Last day for paying Spring term fees without penalty
Early February	<i>Funding</i>	Mackenzie-King Memorial Scholarship application due, if eligible
Early February	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Register for Western Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers (WDCAG) Annual Meeting
February	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	3MT Competition Preliminary Heats
February 15	<i>Graduation</i>	Deadline to apply to graduate for students completing in the Spring term
February 28	<i>Registration</i>	Last day to withdraw from courses in the Spring term
Early March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	3MT Competition Finals
Early March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	WDCAG Annual Meeting
Early March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Register for UVic Geography Bridging the Gap conference

Mid-March	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Spring term, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Bridging the Gap conference
Early April	<i>Funding</i>	Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's results available
Mid-April	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible to defend between May 1-15 and get a CPFA fee reduction, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
Mid-April	<i>Graduation</i>	Last days to do final oral examination in Spring term
April 30	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Spring term, deadline to submit final thesis and graduation documents

Master's: Summer term		
Date	Category	Activity
Early May	<i>Employment</i>	Experienced TAs – consider applying for TA Consultant position
May 15	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for May CPFA fee reduction, last day for final oral examination
May 30	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for September CPFA fee reduction, last day to submit final thesis and graduation documents
May 31	<i>Employment</i>	Application deadline for TA Consultant position
May 31	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	Last day for paying Summer term fees without penalty
June 28	<i>Registration</i>	Last day to withdraw from courses in the Summer term
Early July	<i>Employment</i>	Apply for Specialist Instructor (TA) employment
Mid-July	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Summer term, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
July 15	<i>Graduation</i>	Deadline to apply to graduate for students completing in the Summer term
Mid-August	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible to defend between September 1-15 and get a CPFA fee reduction, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
Mid-August	<i>Graduation</i>	Last days to do final oral examination in Summer term
Late August	<i>Registration</i>	Register for classes
August 31	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Summer term, deadline to submit final thesis and graduation documents

1.5. PhD Programs: Important Dates

If you have questions about any of the deadlines or activities below, please email geog2@uvic.ca or call 250-721-7350.

PhD: Before starting - For new students		
Date	Category	Activity
Early July	<i>Employment</i>	Apply for Specialist Instructor (TA) employment
Mid-August	<i>Funding</i>	Explore Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship and contact department about nomination if interested
Late August	<i>Funding</i>	Start preparing application for SSHRC/NSERC Doctoral Award, if eligible
Late August	<i>Registration</i>	Register for classes

PhD: Fall term		
Date	Category	Activity
Early September	<i>Funding</i>	Apply for Department of Geography Donor Awards
Early September	<i>Program Requirement</i>	Department of Geography Graduate Student Orientation (all new graduate students must attend)
Early September	<i>Employment</i>	TA Conference 1 (new Specialist Instructors are encouraged to attend)
Early September	<i>Employment</i>	Consider co-operative education program employment
September 15	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for September CPFA fee reduction, last day for final oral examination
Mid-September	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register in courses for the Fall term
Mid-September	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register for personal leave
September 20	<i>Employment</i>	Deadline 1 to apply for co-operative education program employment
September	<i>Funding</i>	Vanier nominees complete application process
September	<i>Funding</i>	Start preparing application for Trudeau Scholarship
September 30	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	Last day for paying Fall term fees without penalty
September 30	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for September CPFA fee reduction, last day to submit final thesis and graduation documents
Early October	<i>Funding</i>	SSHRC/NSERC Doctoral Award applications due, if eligible
Early October	<i>Funding</i>	Vanier applications due
Late October	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Fall term, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
October 31	<i>Registration</i>	Last day to withdraw from courses in the Fall term
Early November	<i>Funding</i>	Recipients of Department of Geography Donor Awards are notified
Early November	<i>Funding</i>	Trudeau Scholarship application due
November	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Register for the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition
November 15	<i>Graduation</i>	Deadline to apply to graduate for students completing in the Fall term

Mid-November	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible to defend between January 1-15 and get a CPFA fee reduction, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
Mid-December	<i>Graduation</i>	Last days to do final oral examination in Fall term
Mid-December	<i>Funding</i>	Start Mackenzie-King Memorial Scholarship application, if eligible
First working day in January	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Fall term, deadline to submit final thesis and graduation documents

PhD: Spring term		
Date	Category	Activity
Early January	<i>Employment</i>	Consider co-operative education program employment
Early January	<i>Employment</i>	TA Conference 2
January 15	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for January CPFA fee reduction, last day for final oral examination
Mid-January	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register in courses for the Spring term
Mid-January	<i>Registration</i>	Deadline to register for personal leave
January 20	<i>Employment</i>	Deadline 2 to apply for co-operative education program employment
January 30	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for January CPFA fee reduction, last day to submit final thesis and graduation documents
January 31	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	Last day for paying Spring term fees without penalty
Early February	<i>Funding</i>	Mackenzie-King Memorial Scholarship application due, if eligible
Early February	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Register for Western Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers (WDCAG) Annual Meeting
February	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	3MT Competition Preliminary Heats
February 15	<i>Graduation</i>	Deadline to apply to graduate for students completing in the Spring term
Late February	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Spring term, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
February 28	<i>Registration</i>	Last day to withdraw from courses in the Spring term
Early March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	3MT Competition Finals
Early March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	WDCAG Annual Meeting
Early March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Register for UVic Geography Bridging the Gap conference
March	<i>Presentation Opportunity</i>	Bridging the Gap conference
Late March	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible to defend between May 1-15 and get a CPFA fee reduction, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend

April	<i>Funding</i>	NSERC Doctoral Award results available
Mid-April	<i>Graduation</i>	Last days to do final oral examination in Spring term
April 30	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Spring term, deadline to submit final thesis and graduation documents

PhD: Summer term		
Date	Category	Activity
Late April/early May	<i>Funding</i>	Vanier recipients announced
Late April/early May	<i>Funding</i>	SSHRC Doctoral Award results available
Early May	<i>Employment</i>	Experienced TAs – consider applying for TA Consultant position
May 15	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for May CPFA fee reduction, last day for final oral examination
May 30	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible for September CPFA fee reduction, last day to submit final thesis and graduation documents
May 31	<i>Employment</i>	Application deadline for TA Consultant position
May 31	<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	Last day for paying Summer term fees without penalty
Late June	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Summer term, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
June 28	<i>Registration</i>	Last day to withdraw from courses in the Summer term
Early July	<i>Employment</i>	Apply for Specialist Instructor (TA) employment
July 15	<i>Graduation</i>	Deadline to apply to graduate for students completing in the Summer term
Late July	<i>Graduation</i>	To be eligible to defend between September 1-15 and get a CPFA fee reduction, deadline to submit your Request for Oral Examination form and the version of your dissertation that you will defend
Mid-August	<i>Graduation</i>	Last days to do final oral examination in Summer term
Mid-August	<i>Funding</i>	Explore Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship and contact department about nomination if interested
Late August	<i>Funding</i>	Start preparing application for SSHRC/NSERC Doctoral Award
Late August	<i>Registration</i>	Register for classes
August 31	<i>Graduation</i>	If completing in Summer term, deadline to submit final thesis and graduation documents

2. GENERAL GRADUATE PROGRAM INFORMATION

2.1. Communication

Information about funding opportunities, employment opportunities, professional development opportunities, administrative details, and so on will be communicated to students by email. Students should ensure that the graduate program assistant has their preferred email address.

2.2. Funding Your Studies: Income during Your Program

Different levels and types of income opportunities are available to many graduate students. These include UVic and departmental awards, faculty research grants, and external funding. Students and supervisors are expected to work together to find additional funding as needed.

2.2.1 General Departmental and Faculty Funding Eligibility Guidelines

Graduate students who have received \$30 000 or more in any one year (September 1 to August 31) of UVic-administered funding (SSHRC/NSERC/CIHR funding and UVic fellowships, awards, research grants, and so on) will not be considered for further department-administered funding if there are other eligible candidates. This policy is in place to encourage a more even distribution of funding.

Graduate students must recognize that the amount of graduate funding allocated to each department by the Faculty of Graduate Studies varies from year to year. All departmental and UVic funding nominations must receive final approval by the Faculty of Graduate Studies before being officially offered to students. More information is available on the Faculty of Graduate Studies [Awards and Fellowships page](#).

Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirements

The UVic Faculty of Graduate Studies requires students to hold a minimum GPA to be eligible for Graduate Awards, Graduate Entrance Awards, Graduate Fellowships and President's Research Scholarships. Students must always meet minimum GPA requirements for UVic Graduate Entrance Awards and President's Research Scholarships. Exceptions to GPA requirements for other awards will be considered only under one or more of the following circumstances:

- Student has made previous outstanding contributions to their field (peer-reviewed paper, patent, etc.)
- Student or a close family member has experienced a significant health or personal crisis which negatively affected the student's grades for the related period of time.

The decision whether an exception should be granted is made by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

2.2.2 Guaranteed Minimum Income

All students who start their graduate programs after August 2019 are eligible for guaranteed minimum income (GMI) consideration. Master's students receive GMI for the first 2 years of their program, and PhD students receive GMI for the first 3 years of their program.

Master's Yearly Guaranteed Minimum Income		
Income source	Income type	Amount
Graduate Awards, Graduate Entrance Awards, and/or Graduate Fellowships	Departmental award (Scholarship)	\$5000 to \$9500 ^a

Specialist Instructor (Teaching Assistant) employment	<i>Departmental employment</i>	\$4900^b
Supervisor Commitment	<i>Grant-funded scholarship or research assistant employment</i>	\$2500^c
Approximate Minimum Yearly Total:		\$12 500 to \$16 500^a

PhD Yearly Guaranteed Minimum Income		
Income source	Income type	Amount
Graduate Awards, Graduate Entrance Awards, and/or Graduate Fellowships	<i>Departmental award (Scholarship)</i>	\$5000 to \$10 500^a
Specialist Instructor (Teaching Assistant) employment	<i>Departmental employment</i>	\$4900^b
Supervisor Commitment	<i>Grant-funded scholarship or research assistant employment</i>	\$2500^c
Approximate Minimum Yearly Total:		\$13 500 to \$17 500^a

- a. Depending on entrance GPA
- b. Approximate amount before taxes
- c. Minimum amount

Guaranteed Minimum Income Policies

1. International students receive slightly higher total guaranteed minimum income to offset higher tuition costs.
2. Maintaining the same levels of departmental award support is contingent on maintaining the minimum GPA necessary for the award amount as stated in the letter of offer. This is a Faculty of Graduate Studies regulation.
3. Yearly income from departmental awards is established based on a student's entrance GPA, as described in the letter of offer. The amount of departmental awards offered to a student will not increase even if a student's GPA increases. Departmental award amounts will only decrease in the event of a student receiving a GPA lower than the minimum required for their initially established award amount.
4. If students are successful in securing a major source of funding that brings their total UVic-administered income over \$30 000, the department may reduce its award support up to the point where the student will receive a minimum of \$30 000 in UVic-administered income. The same rule will apply if supervisor commitment is over \$30 000 in a given year.
5. If students choose not to apply for and/or take the offered employment (Specialist Instructorships or Research Assistantships), the department and/or the supervisor is under no obligation to replace the income – the student is choosing to take a reduction in income.
6. If students are financially independent, meaning that they are able to support themselves and any dependents comfortably during the first 2 years (Master's) or 3 years (PhD) of their graduate program, they should make the department aware so that they are removed from guaranteed minimum income consideration.

2.2.3 Graduate Awards for Students Who Entered Prior to August 2019

Graduate awards of a minimum of \$1000 per year are awarded to eligible students who

1. started prior to August 2019,
2. have a minimum GPA of 6.0,
3. are in the first two years of their Master's program or in the first three years of their PhD program,
4. are eligible according to the general departmental eligibility guidelines.

The total funds available vary from year to year as determined by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. These awards are distributed in the Fall term of each academic year.

2.2.4 Other UVic or Departmental Awards

Department of Geography Donor Awards: A number of donor-funded scholarships, some only open to geography students, are awarded annually. These scholarships are awarded based on high academic standing (usually a minimum GPA of 7.0) and qualifications specific to each award. Students are notified of the competition in late August or early September. Nominations are considered by the GAC, which then forwards their recommendations to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for final decisions.

President's Research Scholarships (\$4000 or \$8000 per year in 2019-20; \$5000 per year thereafter; must hold SSHRC, NSERC, or CIHR funding): Available only to students who simultaneously hold federal research council (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR) funding at the master's or doctoral level.

Grant-funded Scholarships: Supervisors may choose to offer income in the form of grant-funded scholarships. Income in this form is to support students in their graduate program as they work on their courses or own research, and as such, no duties or conditions can be attached to this income. Grant-funded scholarships are offered in accordance with grant terms, and continuing support is dependent on satisfactory progress as determined by your supervisor.

2.2.5 External Funding

Academically outstanding eligible students are also encouraged to apply to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Michael Smith Foundation, and other external sources of funding. Many of these opportunities are only open to Canadian citizens and permanent residents; however, international PhD students can explore the Vanier Graduate Scholarship and the Trudeau Foundation scholarships, both of which are open to international applicants.

External funding can usually be applied for in the year preceding the start of the graduate program or in the first year. Students can apply for some funding opportunities after their first year of studies. Information on these grant opportunities is circulated to all graduate students well in advance of deadlines.

2.3. Employment Opportunities

2.3.1 Teaching Assistant/Specialist Instructor Employment

Specialist Instructor (also called teaching assistant) employment is available for qualified graduate students in the Fall, Spring, and sometimes Summer terms. Normally, in-residence students may be eligible to teach **up to two labs per term**. All new, incoming students are notified in their letter of offer if they are guaranteed Specialist Instructor (SI) employment. The Department's Administrative Officer and other relevant teaching staff make final decisions on appointments. The list of SI opportunities is announced several weeks before the beginning of each term. **All new specialist instructors are strongly encouraged to attend professional development workshops through UVic Learning and Teaching Support and Innovation in order to gain and improve instructional knowledge and skills.**

2.3.2 Research Assistant Employment

Students may also receive funding in the form of research assistant employment from their supervisor's research grants or through contracts. Grant-funded research assistant employment is offered in accordance with grant terms and Canadian employment laws. As such, income is subject to taxes. Consult your supervisor as to availability of these opportunities. If a graduate student receives any offers of contracts or research support from a faculty member other than their supervisor, their supervisor should be consulted to ensure that the student's research program is not adversely affected.

2.3.3 Co-op Employment Placement

The Department participates in the University's Graduate Co-operative Education Program, which offers opportunities for graduate students to work in government or industry as part of their degree studies. Students who wish to participate must receive permission from their supervisor (see **Appendix A** for more details).

2.3.4 Sessional Instructor Employment (PhD students only)

At times, the Department of Geography may require additional course instructors. UVic gives preference to instructors who already hold a PhD; however, qualified PhD students may apply.

2.4. Registration in Geog 590 Directed Studies

To take a directed studies course (Geog 590), [Pro Forma paperwork](#) must be completed in consultation with the faculty member offering the course and signed by the student's supervisor. A course title and course description must be provided. This form will be submitted to the graduate program assistant for approval by the graduate advisor prior to submission to Graduate Records, who will register the student and assign a section number. Students cannot register online for a directed studies course.

2.5. Formal Review of Student Progress

Every student will undergo an annual formal review of progress with their supervisory committee. The intention of this review process is to reflect on the past year and plan for the upcoming year, with a particular focus on achievements and areas to improve. It is a conversation, not an exam.

2.5.1 Terms of Reference for Review

Supervisory committees will review the following indicators of student progress as applicable:

- a. Courses taken and grades achieved
- b. Progress towards writing targets
- c. Degree milestones completed (PhD candidacy exams, proposal defense/review)
- d. Other indicators as required by the student's individual program, such as fieldwork completed or data gathered

2.5.2 Procedure for Review

1. The student and their supervisory committee will meet to review and discuss the student's progress in the past year and to set goals and expectations for the upcoming year.
2. Without the student present, the supervisory committee will discuss the student's progress and any recommendations for addressing identified deficiencies in progress. The supervisory committee will decide whether the student's progress is satisfactory or unsatisfactory.
3. The supervisory committee will meet with the student to discuss their decision and any recommendations.
4. The supervisory committee and student will complete the Formal Review of Student Progress form (accessible on the departmental website under [Graduate – Current Students](#)). The completed form will be given to the graduate program assistant.
5. The graduate program assistant will send a copy of the completed form to the student, their supervisory committee, and the graduate advisor. The hard copy form will remain in the student's file.

2.5.3 Possible Outcomes

Satisfactory

The student will continue with the program of study and fulfill any recommendations made by the committee.

Unsatisfactory

The supervisory committee will recommend mechanisms for addressing identified deficiencies in skills, knowledge, or expertise, such as additional courses, readings, and so on.

If a student receives two or more determinations of unsatisfactory progress, the graduate advisor will have the option to make an application to the Faculty of Graduate Studies to withdraw the student from the program for failure to meet academic standards.

3. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

The [Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Supervision Policy](#) outlines the responsibilities and roles of graduate students. This document also includes the official roles and responsibilities of supervisors and departmental staff during graduate programs at UVic, including policies about academic integrity, professionalism, accessibility, and cultural awareness, among other matters.

3.1. Program Orientation

A weekend field orientation may be held in August or September, and all incoming graduate students are required to attend. If a field orientation does not occur, an on-campus orientation will be held. All incoming graduate students must attend.

3.2. Lecture Series Attendance

All graduate students are strongly encouraged to attend the department's lecture series presentations on a regular basis. Students are encouraged to attend so that they are informed about the breadth and diversity of current geography research, knowledge of which will likely assist in a student's own research.

3.3. Academic Achievement Requirements

The Faculty of Graduate Studies requires that students obtain a B grade or higher in all courses. Should a student fail to maintain this standard, the supervisory committee will examine the circumstances and provide recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies. For more information, see the [Academic Performance section](#) of the UVic Graduate Calendar.

3.4. Academic Integrity

Graduate students are expected to uphold the standards of academic integrity. It is expected that students, faculty members, and staff at the University of Victoria, as members of an intellectual community, will adhere to these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research, and service. Graduate students should consult the University's [Policy on Academic Integrity](#) in the University Calendar.

3.5. Research Ethics and Regulatory Approval

You will require prior regulatory approval if your research involves human participants, animals, or if you will be using research materials that require biosafety, radiation safety or hazardous materials, or diving registration. Students should be aware that it can take several months to gain the necessary approvals. For more information, see UVic's [Regulatory Approval page](#).

3.6. Academic and Research Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the student (further to those outlined in Sections 1 and 9 of the Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Supervision Policy) include:

- a. Recognizing that responsibility for timeliness and quality of the course and research work lies with the student.
- b. Choosing a topic of research in conjunction with, and acceptable to, the supervisor.
- c. Bringing research progress and problems to the attention of the supervisor in a timely manner.
- d. Meeting with the supervisory committee for formal requirements such as thesis proposal review, candidacy oral exam, and thesis/dissertation defense, as well as any other meetings deemed to be necessary.
- e. Producing a thesis/dissertation which is the student's own work and conforms to the required standards.
- f. Actively seeking out available funding sources for research and living expenses if required in consultation with the supervisor.

4. SUPERVISOR, SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE, AND DEPARTMENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Faculty of Graduate Studies [Graduate Supervision Policy](#) outlines the basic responsibilities and roles of supervisors, the supervisory committee, the department, and staff. Responsibilities and requirements outlined in this handbook are complementary to the policies of the Graduate Supervision Policy.

4.1. Supervisors

In most cases, you will contact and identify a provisional supervisor prior to the application process. The supervisor is responsible for guiding and supporting the student's academic progress. The supervisor will be a full-time, regular faculty member of the Department of Geography.

In the rare event that a serious disagreement or incompatibility exists between student and supervisor, either party has the right to ask for a change in supervision. The student and/or the supervisor should notify the chair of the GAC. Every effort will be made to resolve the difficulty without major detriment to the student.

4.1.1 Responsibilities

See Sections 1, 4, and 7 of the Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Supervision Policy for basic supervisor expectations and responsibilities.

Further responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- a. Meeting with the student in person, virtually, or by email a minimum of once every 40 business days.
- b. Recommending courses for the program of study, recommending appropriate supervisory committee members, and discussing potential research topics and preliminary reading material.
- c. Returning comments on thesis or dissertation drafts within 20 business days maximum.
- d. Working with the student to identify and apply for necessary operating funds and other resources for the research project, such as data, equipment, and access to facilities.
- e. Directing, encouraging, and assisting students to apply for funding/income sources to cover living expenses including external grants, scholarships, and work terms as well as departmental and university funding such as fellowships and awards.
- f. In the event of conflict with the student, after discussions with the student and the supervisory committee, requesting the GAC to reassign the student to another supervisor if this is deemed in the best interest of the student or supervisor.
- g. Informing the student, co-supervisors, and GAC of dates and duration, as soon as possible, if the supervisor is taking a study or other type of leave.
- h. If the supervisor is to be away from the University for more than 1 month, and if this absence is likely to be detrimental to the student's program, assisting in choosing an interim supervisor according to Section 7.10 of the FGS Supervision Policy.

4.2. Supervisory Committees

Supervisory committees must be formed within 6 months of starting the program for MA/MSc students and 1 year for PhD students. All members must be familiar with the area or method of study and be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. See section 6.6 on Master's Supervisory Committees and section 7.6 on PhD Supervisory Committees for more information.

4.2.1 Responsibilities

See Sections 1, 4, and 8 of the Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Supervision Policy for basic supervisory committee expectations and responsibilities.

Further responsibilities of the supervisory committee include:

- a. Meeting at least once a year with the student.
- b. Returning comments on thesis or dissertation drafts within 20 business days maximum.
- c. If a member of the supervisory committee who is not the supervisor is away for more than 3 months, an interim member may be appointed subject to approval of the Department and the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

4.3. Department

The Department of Geography is responsible for the administration of a student's program. Departmental staff members involved in graduate program administration include the graduate program assistant, the graduate advisor, and the department chair.

4.3.1 Responsibilities

See Sections 1, 4, 5, and 6 of the Faculty of Graduate Studies Graduate Supervision Policy for basic Departmental expectations and responsibilities.

5. PROBLEMS, CONFLICTS, AND GRIEVANCES

5.1. Who to Talk to if You Have a Problem or Grievance

If you have a concern or other issue with coursework, thesis research, or your supervisory committee, please first consult with your supervisor. If you feel that the issue requires further discussion, then contact the graduate advisor. In rare cases, consulting the chair of the department is the next step. If your concern is not satisfactorily reconciled within the department, the Dean of Graduate Studies can be consulted. In the case of an appeal, [Appeal Procedures](#) are available from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

5.2. Neutral Support for Students with Problems or Grievances

The [Office of the Ombudsperson](#) is an independent, impartial, and confidential resource for undergraduate and graduate students and other members of the University of Victoria community. They help resolve student problems or disputes fairly. The ombudsperson can:

- help you understand your options, rights, and responsibilities
- coach you in constructive ways of raising an issue or complaint
- facilitate communication or problem-solving
- assist in the use of appeal procedures
- investigate and make recommendations

Contact: ombuddy@uvic.ca

6. THE MASTER'S PROGRAM

6.1. General Information

A Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Science (MSc) student can expect to take 2 years to complete the program. Students generally spend a minimum two to three terms physically at UVic in order to complete coursework and to develop a research proposal. The remaining terms of the program involve a focus on thesis research.

The thesis may be a monograph style (typically 80-100 pages) or a paper-based thesis typically consisting of one or two papers formatted as articles for submission to peer-reviewed journals, along with an introductory and concluding chapter. The thesis must be formally defended in a final oral examination at the end of the program.

6.2. Program Requirements

The Master's program requires a total of 19 units as follows:

1. A minimum of 7.5 units of coursework including:
 - a. GEOG 500A (1.5 units) and GEOG 500B (1.5 units)
 - b. One of GEOG 518, 523, 524 (1.5 units) or another methods-based course on recommendation of the Supervisory Committee as approved by the Graduate Advisor.
 - c. One of GEOG 536, 537, 538, 539 (1.5 units)
 - d. One of GEOG 591, 590 (1.5 units) or another special topics course on recommendation of the Supervisory Committee as approved by the Graduate Advisor.

Additional courses may be recommended on advice of the Supervisory Committee.

2. GEOG 599 (11.5) Thesis

See the [UVic Calendar](#) for current offerings.

6.2.1 Course Substitutions

Students are permitted to request to substitute a course from another department to fulfill their coursework requirements if the proposed course is judged most beneficial to their program by their supervisor. Master's students are permitted to take up to 1.5 credits of 300-level or 400-level undergraduate courses to fulfill coursework requirements. Please contact the graduate program assistant (geog2@uvic.ca) to request a course substitution.

6.3. Program Duration

For a Master's degree, the normal duration of the program is two years.

6.4. Timeline and Time Limits

The timelines shown below provide a guideline to complete a thesis within two years.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies has set a time limit of 5 years from the date of first registration in the program for completion of a Master's program. Extensions may be granted under extenuating circumstances. The Supervisor must submit an [Extension Request form](#) to the Graduate Advisor, who will then forward a decision to the Dean of Graduate Studies through the graduate program assistant.

Suggested Thesis Timelines (for September entry)

Year 1

- Complete primary coursework.
- Defend thesis proposal late in spring term and begin data collection in summer.

Year 2

- Finish data collection and begin analysis in fall term.
- Write thesis during fall and spring terms and defend thesis in late spring or summer.

6.5. Supervisory Committee

For the MA and MSc degrees, the supervisory committee must consist of at least two members.

1. The first member is your supervisor, who must be a regular, full-time faculty member in the Department of Geography.
2. The second member can be a co-supervisor or a committee member. Co-supervisors must be a faculty member or an adjunct faculty member from the Department of Geography. Committee members are generally from within the Department (faculty or adjunct faculty); however, members from other UVic departments or outside of the university will also be considered if it will benefit the student's program the most.

As long as the aforementioned minimum conditions are met, additional committee members can be added. Supervisory committee members are selected jointly by the student and the supervisor.

All members of the supervisory committee must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies prior to being formally approved as a member of a student's committee. Please contact geog2@uvic.ca if you would like to check a member's status or add someone to your supervisory committee.

Prior to the final oral examination (final defense), an external examiner will be nominated. At the Master's level, the external examiner cannot have worked closely with the student and must be from outside of the Department of Geography.

6.6. Thesis Proposal

A written thesis proposal must be submitted to the supervisory committee prior to undertaking any major research. The proposal should define the research topic, the goals of the research, and the methodology to be used. The proposal is evaluated by the supervisory committee. For MA and MSc students, the proposal is to be presented to, and approved by, the supervisory committee usually within 9 months of joining the program.

6.6.1 Thesis Proposal Outline

The following is a useful guide to the proposal:

Introduction

This section should contain a clear statement of the scope and objectives of the research. The questions posed by the researcher should be related to the theoretical context from which they arose. A statement on the scientific, social, and practical significance of the research should also be included.

Literature Review

The literature review must clearly explain the theoretical or conceptual context of the problem under investigation. Relevant literature should be cited in the process of presenting the underlying theoretical and methodological rationale for the research. This means citing key studies and emphasizing major findings.

Methodology

This section should clearly state how the objectives will be achieved. The first task is to indicate what type of method and analysis you are proposing: experiment, survey, field research, available data analysis, or humanistic approaches. The type of study will influence the design and procedural issues that must be addressed. For example:

- In the case of experiments, the key issues include the type of experimental design and procedures of implementation.
- In surveys, the type of survey instrument, its length, and the sampling design.
- In field research, the nature of the setting.
- In research using available data, the sources of data and their completeness.

Timetable

An outline of the research agenda. It is to your benefit to be as realistic as possible.

Preliminary Table of Contents

A provisional table of contents that lists the anticipated outline of chapters that will be included in the thesis.

References

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. As your research progresses, you will no doubt acquire other references.

6.6.2 Oral Proposal Review

Students will orally present their proposal to their supervisory committee within 9 months of starting their degree program.

6.7. Transfer to a PhD Program

In rare and highly exceptional circumstances, students in a Master's program can request to transfer to a PhD program. Students must have completed at least two terms in a Master's program, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies will not normally consider such transfers after the student has completed more than 16 consecutive months of an MA or MSc program. The minimum

requirement for the PhD degree is 30 units of work beyond the Master's level or 45 units beyond the bachelor's level and satisfactory completion of the prescribed program.

A transfer can be requested by the student's supervisor after consulting with the student and the supervisory committee. The request for a transfer should include the following:

1. An outline of the student's progress to date prepared by the supervisor;
2. A justification for the request prepared by the student in consultation with their supervisor detailing:
 - a. how the student has demonstrated Master's-level competencies and
 - b. how the proposed research constitutes PhD-level work;
3. A mini PhD proposal prepared by the student;
4. A schedule for the completion of the candidacy examination and PhD research proposal defense prepared by the student;
5. A statement by the student acknowledging the risk involved in a transfer to the PhD program;
6. A copy of the student's unofficial undergraduate transcripts and graduate transcripts to date; and
7. The student's up-to-date CV.

The initial request will be reviewed by the department's GAC. This process will involve a meeting with the student's supervisor if the GAC would like further information or clarification about the request. The GAC will evaluate the request based on the following criteria:

- Academic excellence;
- Research achievements and potential; and
- Whether the proposed research program constitutes a PhD program according to the [Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada](#).

If the GAC approves the transfer request, it will make a recommendation for transfer to a PhD program to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. If the GAC declines the request, then the student will continue in a MA or MSc program.

6.8. Thesis Preparation

For details on the preparation of theses, see the Faculty of Graduate Studies' [Thesis and Dissertation information page](#).

The UVic Library has a [Word thesis template](#) and a [LaTeX thesis template](#) available online.

The form of the final document can follow the traditional thesis format or be structured as a series of peer-reviewed manuscripts linked through a common theme and bounded by introductory and concluding chapters. For a paper-based Master's thesis, at least two academic papers formatted to be submitted to peer-reviewed journals are required. See **Appendix B** for more details about paper-based theses.

6.9. Final Oral Examination (Final Defense)

6.9.1 Final Oral Examination Preparation

Keep in mind that deadlines for graduation and end of term deadlines are popular times to defend a thesis or dissertation. Students must plan well ahead of these deadlines to allow sufficient time for their supervisory committee to review and comment on the thesis and for students to make any necessary revisions. The final draft of the thesis must be approved by all members of the supervisory committee. For more information, see the Faculty of Graduate Studies [Oral Examinations webpage](#).

In order to schedule a final oral examination, students will need to complete a few steps. Most of the items below must be completed a minimum of **20 business days** before the examination date.

1. Students complete as much of the [Request for Oral Examination for Master's Program form](#) as they can and send it to the graduate program assistant and their (co-)supervisor(s) so that they can fill out the rest.
2. Students confirm with the graduate program assistant who is on their committee and indicate whether each member will be attending the defense in person or by video conference.
3. Students upload the version of their thesis that they will defend on CourseSpaces GS 599/699 at least 20 business days before their examination date. Students should contact the graduate program assistant if they have any issues.
4. If a student's external examiner is from outside UVic, their CV must be sent to the graduate program assistant.
5. Students email the version of their thesis that they will defend to the graduate program assistant.
6. Students apply to graduate using UVic MyPage.
7. Students make sure that they are registered for the term in which they will defend their thesis.
8. If students have a Human Research Ethics Approval or Waiver Form, they must send or bring it to the graduate program assistant.
9. If students want to withhold their thesis from being published on UVicSpace for 1 year, they must complete the [Thesis/Dissertation Withholding Form](#) and send or bring it to the graduate program assistant.

If students have any questions during this process, they should contact the graduate program assistant at geog2@uvic.ca.

6.9.2 Defending in the First 15 Days of a Semester

If students defend within 15 days of the start of a semester (before September 15th, before January 15th, or before May 15th), they are eligible for a tuition fee reduction. They will need to pay a \$250 fee and ancillary fees as outlined in the calendar instead of full tuition fees. Students will need to submit their final thesis (with all revisions completed) and documents by the 30th day of the month to be eligible for this fee reduction. For more information, see the section on Completion Postponement Fee Adjustment in [Regulations Concerning Tuition Fees for Graduate Programs](#).

6.9.3 Final Oral Examination Procedure

The final oral examination (defense) is chaired by the Dean's nominee and is open to the public. The candidate will normally give a brief presentation (approximately 15-20 minutes) summarizing the most important features of the research. The external examiner leads the questioning, after which each member of the committee is asked to question the student. A second round of questioning may be called for. Questions usually focus on the thesis and areas directly related to it. Following questioning by the examining committee, members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies who are in the audience may be given the opportunity to question the candidate. Time permitting, the Chair may then open the question period to the audience. At the completion of questioning, the student and audience are excused, and the examining committee reviews the performance of the student and the thesis. Outcome options range from unqualified pass to fail.

6.9.4 After a Final Oral Examination

When final revisions are completed, a digital submission to UVicSpace is required. Students will receive an email from a Graduate Admissions and Records clerk that outlines the process for submitting the final thesis to UVicSpace. If students have any issues submitting to UVicSpace, they should contact the clerk who sent the email or the graduate program assistant. After the final submission, students must confirm with the graduate program assistant that they have submitted so that the graduate program assistant can send the student's final documents to Graduate Records. These final documents are a Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form and a Letter of Recommendation, which are prepared by the graduate program assistant, signed by the supervisor and the department chair, and sent to Graduate Records after the final thesis submission.

7. THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

7.1. General Information

A PhD candidate generally takes 3 to 5 years to complete the program. The PhD program requires the planning and completion of independent and original research leading to an advancement of knowledge in the declared field of study. Within 18 months of entry to the PhD program, a comprehensive knowledge of the field must be demonstrated by satisfactorily completing a PhD candidacy examination with both written and oral components. Following completion of these exams, students are required to present a research proposal.

Written results of independent research are presented as either a monograph dissertation, or as a paper-based dissertation consisting of a minimum of three chapters that are formatted as articles for submission to peer-reviewed journals, along with an introductory and concluding chapter. The work is also presented to the committee and the public in a final dissertation defense.

7.2. Program Requirements

The Doctoral program requires a total of 31.5 units as follows:

1. A minimum of 7.5 units of coursework including:
 - a. GEOG 500A (1.5 units) and GEOG 500B (1.5 units)
 - b. One of GEOG 536, 537, 538, 539 (1.5 units) or another advanced course on recommendation of the Supervisory Committee and as approved by the Graduate Advisor.
 - c. GEOG 693 (3.0 units) (Candidacy Examination) during terms in which students are preparing for and writing their PhD Candidacy Examinations. PhD students in Geography must sit their Candidacy Exams by 18 months after entry into the program and no sooner than 6 months prior to the final oral examination
Additional courses may be recommended on advice of the Supervisory Committee
2. GEOG 699 (24.0 units) Dissertation

See the [UVic Calendar](#) for current offerings.

7.2.1 Course Substitutions

Students are permitted to request to substitute a course from another department to fulfill their coursework requirements if the proposed course is judged most beneficial to their program by their supervisor. Please contact the graduate program assistant (geog2@uvic.ca) to request a course substitution.

If a student has completed a Master's program in our department, then GEOG 500A and GEOG 500B are not required. Students must replace these courses with other relevant courses, subject to their supervisor's and the graduate advisor's approval.

7.3. Program Duration

The normal program duration for a PhD degree is 3 to 4 years. The first 12 months (three terms) of the PhD program are generally completed full-time, on-campus, in Victoria.

7.4. Timeline and Time Limits

The timelines shown below provide a guideline to complete a dissertation within three years. It is common for students to take four years to complete the program.

The Faculty of Graduate Studies has set a 7-year time limit for the completion of a PhD degree. Extensions may be granted under extenuating circumstances. The student and supervisor must submit a [Request for Program Extension form](#) to the graduate advisor, who will then forward the department's decision to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Suggested Dissertation Timelines (for September entry)

Year 1

- Complete primary coursework and write scoping document.
- Prepare for candidacy exam in spring and summer.

Year 2

- Write and defend candidacy exam in fall term.
- Write and defend dissertation proposal in spring term.
- Begin data collection in spring term or in summer.

Year 3

- Finish collecting and analyzing data in fall term and begin writing dissertation.
- Defend dissertation in late spring or summer.

7.5. Supervisory Committee

For the PhD program, the supervisory committee must consist of at least three members.

1. The first member is your supervisor, who must be a regular, full-time faculty member in the Department of Geography.
2. The second member must be a co-supervisor or a committee member who is a faculty member or an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Geography.
3. The third member must be a committee member from outside of the Department of Geography – this person can be from another UVic department or from outside of the university.

As long as the aforementioned minimum conditions are met, additional committee members can be added. Supervisory committee members are selected jointly by the student and the supervisor.

All members of the supervisory committee must be members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies prior to being formally approved as a member of a student's committee. Please contact geog2@uvic.ca if you would like to check a member's status or add someone to your supervisory committee.

Prior to the final oral examination (final defense), an external examiner will be nominated. At the PhD level, the external examiner cannot have worked closely with the student or the supervisor and must be from outside of the University of Victoria.

7.6. Candidacy Examination

Students in the PhD program are termed *provisional candidates* until they successfully complete their candidacy examinations. Candidacy examinations are also known as 'qualifying' or 'comprehensive' (comps) exams.

7.6.1 General Information

PhD students must complete their candidacy exams within the first 5 terms (18 months) of their program. Students must be registered in Geog 693 for the semester(s) during which they will complete these exams. The objective of the candidacy examination is to ensure that students have a broad and comprehensive knowledge of their fields of specialization. If students fail the candidacy exam, they may be asked to withdraw from the program.

Candidacy exams consist of two parts:

- two essays (maximum 30 pages each) written within 30 business days
- an oral exam (maximum 2 hours)

A major objective of the comprehensive exam is for students to develop and/or demonstrate competency with the literature insofar as it relates to their dissertation and the broader area of scholarship within which their research is embedded. Different approaches for developing or demonstrating competency exist, and students can choose their own approach, which they will formally defend.

Communication between students and their supervisory committee must be quite limited during the candidacy exam period. It is permissible to seek clarification on the exam questions, but students cannot solicit advice – for example, it is not permitted to seek advice on a possible approach that a student is contemplating in answering a question or a certain school of thought, body of knowledge, etc. that a student might be considering.

7.6.2 Essays

Objectives

The objective of these written essays is to allow the candidate to demonstrate competent and critical understanding of *both* broader geographic scholarship (as it relates to their research areas) and focused research literature pertinent to their eventual research pursuits.

Format

Each essay must not exceed 30 pages (exclusive of references) with double line spacing, 1" margins, and 12 pt. font.

Topics and scope

Each essay will be structured around a question(s) developed by the examining committee, the scope of which will be discussed in the pre-examination committee meeting as documented in the pre-examination scoping document (see form in Appendix C or in the [Current Students webpage](#)). Details of final questions will not be revealed to the student until they commence the 30-day examination period. Final questions will be distributed to the student by the graduate program assistant on the start date.

Essay 1: This paper will focus on aspects that pertain to the development of thought in the candidate's area of Geography (e.g., physical, human, geomatics, environment & sustainability) with an emphasis on linkages to the broader discipline. Supervisory committees will define the scope of thematic focus (e.g., geomorphology, health geography, remote sensing, etc.) within these areas, but the general goal of this paper is to allow the candidate to demonstrate how and why their research focus is situated in the broader realm of Geography.

Essay 2: This paper will focus on specific aspects of the candidate's research area as structured by a question(s) that critically explore major advances, key theories and paradigms, essential models, and/or fundamental methods and broader methodologies used. The goal of this paper is to allow the student to express advanced, critical knowledge in their research area sufficient to demonstrate developing expertise.

Submission

Both questions will be released to the student at the start of the examination period. The candidate will have **30 business days to complete and submit their written essays** to their committee and the graduate program assistant as **two separate .doc or .pdf documents**. The oral exam (described below) will be set for a date within 2 weeks of final submission of the two papers.

7.6.3 Oral Exam

A 2 hour (maximum) oral examination will occur within 2 weeks of submitting the written essays. The examination will involve a question period during which the examining committee asks the student to elaborate, expand, and defend points made in their written submissions as well as any other related areas not addressed in their written work. The goal of the examination is for the student to defend their written work, demonstrate proficiency in an oral examination setting, and satisfy the committee that the thoughts and arguments put forth in the written material reflect the original work and abilities of the student.

The oral exam is not a public event. Attendance is limited to the student, their supervisor and committee, and the chairperson. In circumstances where the student or any committee member have concerns about the neutrality or fairness of the process, a neutral Faculty of Graduate Studies or Department representative may attend.

The oral examination date and time will be scheduled by the academic supervisor in consultation with the supervisory committee and the candidate, **allowing at least 2 weeks** for the graduate program assistant to book a room and identify a chairperson for the examination.

7.6.4 Decision Process and Outcomes

Following the oral examination, the committee will assess the candidate's performance toward successful completion of the candidacy examinations as one of the four possible outcomes:

- a. The student passes the examinations with **no revisions** to the written essays and may proceed on to full candidacy.
- b. The student passes the examinations with **minor revisions** to the written essays and may proceed on to full candidacy. Please give further detail on the back of this form.
- c. **Major revisions** are required to the written essays **or the oral exam must be repeated**. Passing the examinations is dependent on successful completion of the components described on the back of this form.
- d. The student **fails the examinations** and a transfer to a Master's program will be requested or the program will be terminated.

Note: The student may pass the examinations with one dissenting vote as long as it is not the supervisor.

A final post-examination report form documenting the outcome of the examinations, including any recommended remedial requirements, timelines, and deliverables, is then completed by the academic supervisor and signed by examining committee members, the student, and the chair of the GAC. The report is submitted to the graduate program assistant and kept for record in the student's file.

7.6.5 Summary of Candidacy Exams Steps

1. The student and the supervisory committee meet and prepare a **research scoping document** (see form in **Appendix C**) to define the topics, scope, and relevant readings for the candidacy exams. This document will be signed by the student and members of the committee. Once complete, the scoping document must be sent to the graduate program assistant to be kept on record.
2. The supervisory committee will prepare two essay questions for the student and send the questions to the graduate program assistant.
3. On the agreed upon start date, the graduate program assistant will send the essay questions to the student. The student will have 30 business days to write the two essays (one essay in response to each of the two questions). Once the essays are complete, the student must submit them to the graduate program assistant.
4. The student and supervisory committee will agree on a date and time for the oral examination within 2 weeks of submitting the written essays. The student or supervisor will inform the graduate program assistant of the oral exam date and time at least 2 weeks in advance so that a room can be booked and an exam chairperson can be found.
5. After the oral exam, the post-examination report form with signatures will be submitted to the graduate program assistant.

7.7. Dissertation Proposal

For doctoral students, there are two parts in the dissertation proposal process: a written proposal and an oral proposal presentation. The proposal should define the research topic, the goals of the research, and the methodology to be used.

The proposal must be submitted to the supervisory committee prior to undertaking any major research. The proposal will only be submitted after the completion of the candidacy examination, and ordinarily this must occur within 6 months of completing the candidacy exams and within 2 years of initial registration.

7.7.1 Written Dissertation Proposal

A written dissertation proposal must be submitted to the supervisory committee for evaluation before the oral defense. The proposal normally has a maximum length of 25 double-spaced pages.

The following is a useful guide to the proposal:

Introduction

This section should contain a clear statement of the scope and objectives of the research. The questions posed by the researcher should be related to the theoretical context from which they arose. A statement on the scientific, social, and practical significance of the research should also be included.

Literature Review

The literature review must clearly explain the theoretical context of the problem under investigation and how it has been studied by others. Relevant literature should be cited in the process of presenting the underlying theoretical and methodological rationale for the research. This means citing key studies and emphasizing major findings rather than trying to report every study available on the problem.

Methodology

This section should clearly state how the objectives will be achieved. The first task is to indicate what type of method and analysis you are proposing: experiment, survey, field research, available data analysis, or humanistic approaches. The type of study will influence the design and procedural issues that must be addressed. For example:

- In the case of experiments, the key issues include the type of experimental design and procedures of implementation.
- In surveys, the type of survey instrument, its length, and the sampling design.
- In field research, the nature of the setting.
- In research using available data, the sources of data and their completeness.

Timetable

An outline of the research agenda. It is to your benefit to be as realistic as possible.

Preliminary Table of Contents

A provisional table of contents that lists the anticipated outline of chapters that will be included in the thesis/dissertation.

References

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. As your research progresses, you will no doubt acquire other references.

7.7.2 Oral Proposal Presentation

Attendance at the oral proposal presentation is open to all members of the department. The student will present a short overview of their proposal (15 minutes maximum) and then answer questions from the supervisory committee. A second round of questioning may be conducted. After the supervisory committee has completed its questioning, others in attendance will be invited to ask questions.

A .pdf or .doc version of the written proposal must be sent to the graduate program assistant prior to the oral presentation for the student's records.

The supervisory committee will consider the written proposal and the oral presentation when evaluating the student. A memo will be completed by the supervisor and supervisory committee indicating the outcome.

Possible Outcomes

- a. Acceptable as is — proceed with study
- b. Revisions needed — revise the document, resubmit to the supervisory committee, but the oral is not repeated
- c. Unacceptable — a student may be asked to repeat the entire process.

7.8. Dissertation Preparation

For details on the preparation of theses, see the Faculty of Graduate Studies' [Thesis and Dissertation information page](#).

The UVic Library has a [Word thesis template](#) and a [LaTeX thesis template](#) available online.

The form of the final document can follow the traditional thesis format or be structured as a series of peer-reviewed manuscripts linked through a common theme and bounded by introductory and concluding chapters. For a paper-based PhD dissertation, at least three papers formatted to be submitted to peer-reviewed journals are required. See **Appendix B** for more details about paper-based dissertations.

7.9. Final Oral Examination

7.9.1 Final Oral Examination Preparation

Keep in mind that deadlines for graduation and end of term deadlines are popular times to defend a thesis or dissertation. Students must plan well ahead of these deadlines to allow sufficient time for their supervisory committee to review and comment on the thesis and for students to make any necessary revisions. The final draft of the thesis must be approved by all members of the supervisory committee. For more information, see the Faculty of Graduate Studies [Oral Examinations webpage](#).

In order to schedule a final oral examination, students will need to complete a few steps. Most of the items below must be completed a minimum of **30 business days** before the examination date.

1. The student's supervisor must complete the [Arm's Length Status form](#) for the student's external examiner as soon as possible. Please send the completed form and the external examiner's CV to the graduate program assistant. The graduate program assistant will submit both of the documents to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The Faculty of Graduate Studies has very specific requirements and does not always approve the examiner, so this process should be done as soon as possible.
2. Students complete as much of the [Request for Oral Examination for Doctoral Program form](#) as they can and send it to the graduate program assistant and their (co-)supervisor(s) so that they can fill out the rest.
3. Students confirm with the graduate program assistant who is on their committee and indicate whether each member will be attending the defense in person or by video conferencing.
4. Students upload the version of their dissertation that they will defend on CourseSpaces GS 599/699 at least 30 business days before their examination date. Students should contact the graduate program assistant if they have any issues.
5. Students email the version of their dissertation that they will defend to the graduate program assistant.

6. Students apply to graduate using UVic MyPage.
7. Students make sure that they are registered for the term in which they will defend their thesis.
8. If students have a Human Research Ethics Approval or Waiver Form, please send or bring it to the graduate program assistant.
9. If students want to withhold their dissertation from being published on UVicSpace for 1 year, please complete the [Thesis/Dissertation Withholding Form](#) and send or bring it to the graduate program assistant.

If students have any questions during this process, they should contact the graduate program assistant at geog2@uvic.ca.

7.9.2 Defending in the First 15 Days of a Semester

If students defend within 15 days of the start of a semester (before September 15th, before January 15th, or before May 15th), they are eligible for a tuition fee reduction. They will need to pay a \$250 fee and ancillary fees as outlined in the calendar instead of full tuition fees. Students will need to submit their final dissertation (with all revisions completed) and documents by the 30th day of the month to be eligible for this fee reduction. For more information, see the section on Completion Postponement Fee Adjustment in [Regulations Concerning Tuition Fees for Graduate Programs](#).

7.9.3 Final Oral Examination Procedure

The final oral examination (defense) is chaired by the Dean's nominee and is open to the public. The candidate will normally give a brief presentation (approximately 15-20 minutes) summarizing the most important features of the research. The external examiner leads the questioning, after which each member of the committee is asked to question the student. A second round of questioning may be called for. Questions usually focus on the thesis and areas directly related to it. Following questioning by the examining committee, members of the Faculty of Graduate Studies who are in the audience may be given the opportunity to question the candidate. Time permitting, the Chair may then open the question period to the audience. At the completion of questioning, the student and audience are excused, and the examining committee reviews the performance of the student and the thesis. Outcome options range from unqualified pass to fail.

7.9.4 After a Final Oral Examination

When final revisions are completed, a digital submission to UVicSpace is required. Students will receive an email from a Graduate Admissions and Records clerk that outlines the process for submitting the final dissertation to UVicSpace. If students have any issues submitting to UVicSpace, they should contact the clerk who sent the email or the graduate program assistant. After the final submission, students must confirm with the graduate program assistant that they have submitted so that the graduate program assistant can send the student's final documents to Graduate Records. These final documents are a Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form and a Letter of Recommendation, which are prepared by the graduate program assistant, signed by the supervisor and the department chair, and sent to Graduate Records after the final dissertation submission.

8. DEPARTMENTAL RESOURCES

8.1. Desk Space and Keys

Desk space will be issued to all graduate students in their supervisor's research lab or in a graduate room until the term of residency has expired. Those graduate students who are also SIs (Specialist Instructors) will be given a shared desk space in a SI office to consult with students during office hours.

Students with permanent desks or authorized seating arrangements will be issued key(s) for grad rooms and entrance to the building by the graduate program assistant or office and communications assistant after paying a refundable deposit (\$20). Other keys will be issued on an individual basis. Students are not permitted to have departmental keys privately cut at their expense. No keys are to be passed to others without authorization.

Upon completion of the residency period, keys must be returned to the graduate program assistant unless authorized by the student's supervisor. Key deposits will be refunded only after *all* department keys have been returned.

8.2. Printing, Photocopying, and Scanning

Students can use general UVic printing and copying facilities for printing and copying related to their own graduate research. Specialist Instructors (TAs) will have access to departmental printing and copying equipment if necessary for their employment duties. Graduate students can use the departmental scanning equipment for small jobs – please direct any questions to the front desk.

8.3. Technical Services

Teaching and Audio-visual Equipment

All teaching and audio-visual equipment (e.g., LCD projectors) is available in the Geography general office (David Turpin Building B203). Equipment is to be signed out with the department office and communications assistant.

Laptops

Laptop computers are available and can be signed out from Rick Sykes in David Turpin Building A250.

Field Equipment

Field equipment such as GPS units, quadrats, survey instruments, etc., can be signed out from David Turpin Building B302 or the main office (DTB B203). Equipment needed by faculty members or students for scheduled classes will be given priority.

Computer Help

Questions regarding computers, e-mail accounts, and access to the computer/research labs should be directed to Rick Sykes, David Turpin Building A250. If Rick is not available, please contact the

8.4. Mail

Students will be assigned a mailbox in the Geography mail room (David Turpin Building B205). The university mail service for both incoming and outgoing mail is for professional use only. No personal mail is allowed.

9. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

9.1. Health and Mental Health Services

- [UVic Health Services](#)
 - Booked or walk-in doctor appointments
 - Referred and booked psychiatrist appointments (free)
- [Student Mental Health](#)
 - A collection of information and resources to assist graduate students
- [Counselling Services](#)
 - Scheduled appointments (3-4 sessions)
 - Group counselling in:
 - Career exploration
 - Connection & support
 - Cognitive behavioural therapy
 - Grief
 - Anxiety
 - Mindfulness
 - Thesis completion
- [Clinical Psychology Clinic \(Department of Psychology\)](#)
- [GSS Extended Health Plan](#)

9.2. English Language and Academic Communication Assistance

The [Centre for Academic Communication](#) assists students with reading, writing, speaking, and academic expectations. They offer one-on-one appointments, workshops, and more.

Contact: thecac@uvic.ca

9.3. Research Help

The [UVic Library](#) provides many resources to help with research, including [citation help](#), [workshops](#), [subject guides](#), and a subject librarian who can provide in-depth research assistance, such as how to search for articles and information sources.

Geography and GIS Subject Librarian: Daniel Brendle-Moczuk

Contact: danielbm@uvic.ca

9.4. Centre for Accessible Learning

The [Centre for Accessible Learning](#) works with faculty and students to promote educational equity and accessibility for students with disabilities. Students with a learning disability, ADHD, mental health issue, chronic health issues, or long-term physical or sensory disabilities can register with the CAL to address barriers to your education through academic accommodations or other adjustments.

Contact: infocal@uvic.ca or 250-472-4947

9.5. Services for Indigenous Students

There are many [sources of support on campus](#) for Indigenous UVic students, such as Indigenous counselling services and the Elders in Residence.

Contact: jaceiss@uvic.ca

9.6. International Student Services

[International Student Services](#) provides supports to international students such as opportunities for connecting with other international and Canadian students, as well as advising about immigration, health, housing, finances, and employment in Canada.

Contact: issinfo@uvic.ca

9.7. Safety and Security

[Campus Security](#) provides security services, emergency planning, and parking and transportation services. If at any point you are at UVic and you feel unsafe, if there is an emergency, or if you see a crime, contact Campus Security immediately.

Contact:

Non-emergency phone: 250-721-6683

24 hour emergency phone: 250-721-7599

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Graduate Co-op Guidelines and Procedures

Goals of the Graduate Co-op Program in Geography

- to foster cooperative research with industry and government;
- to attract high quality graduate students;
- to provide an income opportunity to graduate students while conducting graduate research;
- to support students in developing and understanding their workplace competencies, thus helping students transition from their academic program to employment.

Guidelines

Graduate co-op should be mutually beneficial to the graduate student, their research program, the Supervisor, the department, and the [co-op program](#).

Graduate co-op is available to all graduate students in Geography (MA, MSc, PhD, and Interdisciplinary) irrespective of grade point average, as long as consent has been given by the supervisor or supervisory committee.

Co-op terms can be planned once graduate students have satisfactorily completed their research proposal. Graduate students close to completion of their research should be encouraged to complete their thesis instead of accepting graduate co-op jobs. Once they have defended their thesis or dissertation, students may complete their remaining co-op terms to earn the co-op designation on their degree, but may not begin doing co-op terms at that point.

Graduate co-op employment opportunities must be arranged in consultation with the co-op coordinator. Graduate students may be allowed to take a double or triple work term as long as consent has been given by the supervisor in consultation with the supervisory committee. In order to earn the co-op designation on their degree, graduate students must take a minimum of two 4-month work terms at the Master's and three 4-month work terms at the PhD level to qualify for co-op recognition on their transcript. Graduate students are discouraged from doing more than four graduate work terms. Graduate co-op experience will not count towards graduate course credits. While registered for a co-op term, graduate students have full-time student status. Students who enroll in the co-op work terms will have additional months added to the normal completion time of their degree equal to the time registered in co-op work terms, to a maximum of 12 months.

Procedures

Faculty should be encouraged to discuss possible co-op and related income opportunities for their existing and incoming graduate students with the co-op coordinator.

Graduate students must normally consult with, and obtain written approval from, their academic supervisor prior to enrolling in graduate co-op, and should meet with the co-op coordinator to identify and discuss possible employers and job recruiting.

To qualify as a co-op work term, job descriptions, job offers, work term conditions, and contractual details must be managed through the co-op office.

As part of each co-op term, graduate students are required to submit a work term report which will be marked by a faculty member. Where necessary, the report must be revised until acceptable as satisfactory.

Grievances will be handled initially between the student, the supervisor, and the co-op coordinator. Where necessary, the next step will be to involve the graduate advisor, chair of the department,

and supervisory committee. Beyond this, the usual grievance procedure for graduate students will take place.

Appendix B. Paper-based Thesis/Dissertation Preparation

Overview

At the outset, it is important to note that the highest quality standards will be maintained for both Master's and PhD students in the development of their theses, whether paper-based or more traditionally formatted. Students' intent on following either path will be subjected to the same standards of rigor in examining the quality of their final work.

Policy

In the history of the Department of Geography, paper-based theses generally follow a format in which the cornerstones are an introduction at the beginning and a discussion/conclusion chapter at the end, with the paper-based chapters forming the main body of the thesis. The introduction and conclusion chapters are extremely important, and careful attention should be given to how they support and extend the manuscript/paper chapters — the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. It is recognized that there may be a degree of overlap in the paper-based thesis regarding comments made in the introduction, literature review, and methodology sections of each paper-based chapter (some degree of duplication being necessary for clarity and integrity within any given paper), and this also draws attention to the scope and breadth required in the introduction and conclusion chapters.

As a guideline, Master's students should aim for at least one paper-based chapter, and PhD students should aim for at least two papers in the body of their works. Ultimately, however, it is expected that the number of papers a thesis warrants will be a joint decision by the student, the supervisor, and the supervisory committee in recognition of the breadth, diversity, and specificity of the topic under study.

Students should also consider the importance of appendices in their paper-based thesis, which may include additional maps, survey instruments, and other relevant documentation supporting the development of their theses/dissertations.

Other Considerations

There is no expectation that paper-based theses should have chapters that are published at the time of the student's defense. It is recognized that this may or may not be the case, given that academic journals have a wide range of publication deadlines.

Appendix C. PhD Candidacy Exam Scoping Document Form

Student:

Committee:

Topics:

Primary topics:

Supporting topics:

Scope:

Question 1:

Question 2:

Suggested readings:

Agreement:

The student and Committee have agreed to the general topics and scope of the comprehensive exam.

Date

Student's name and signature

(Co-)Supervisor's name and signature

Co-supervisor or committee member's name and signature

Committee member's name and signature

Committee member's name and signature

Committee member's name and signature