

Department of Geography 2025-2026 Graduate Handbook

v1.0

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Department of Geography Graduate Programs

Our programs

The Department of Geography has six graduate programs, each with distinct aims and curricular expectations. The procedures and norms outlined in this Handbook apply to all our graduate students, regardless of program.

- Master of Science in Atmospheric Sciences (ASP)
- Master of Arts in Geography
- Master of Geographic Information Science and Technology (MGIST)
- PhD in Atmospheric Sciences (ASP)
- PhD in Geography
- Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Science and Technology

The Master of Arts and Master of Science programs are research-oriented programs. Students gain the knowledge and skills necessary for identifying a research problem and marshalling the conceptual and methodological tools to adequately address it.

The MGIST is a professional program for those who wish to advance their careers by becoming an expert in cutting-edge geographic information science and technology.

The PhD programs are research-intensive programs that are designed to have you produce knowledge (empirical, conceptual, and/or methodological) in your area of specialization.

The GIST certificate is a stand-alone program for post-baccalaureate students seeking professional credentials in Geographic Information Science and Technology. Students may or may not be graduate students in other programs at Ohio State University.

Our commitments to our graduate programs

Our programs are designed to train students in the theories, applications, and empirical questions central to the disciplines of Geography, GIS, and Atmospheric Sciences. We seek to produce scholars and scientists of the highest quality. Graduate students are an integral part of our department's scholarly and scientific community; their contributions are central to our mission. This is reflected in our broad programmatic commitments (the emphasis among these commitments varies by program).

- To bring graduate students rapidly and fully into the collegial, scholarly, scientific, and teaching life of the department and University
- To provide a variety of courses to meet student research and training needs, and to support student efforts to find relevant courses outside the department

- To offer opportunities for students to become familiar with current research within geography, GIS, and atmospheric sciences
- To provide a common foundation for graduate research in geography, GIS, and atmospheric sciences
- To encourage students to engage with the academic culture of research presentation and critique
- To support as far as possible the financial needs of graduate students through a variety of teaching or research appointments and fellowships.

Our programs are designed to develop outstanding thinkers and to lay the foundation for rewarding careers in academia/education, government, the private sector, and non-profits. Many master's students go on to PhD programs, while others have found that their intellectual and technical training in our department leads to fulfilling careers in multiple fields. At the PhD level, we train students toward positions in research-intensive universities, liberal arts colleges, and other more teaching-intensive college settings (see the Graduate School's [Preparing Future Faculty](#) program). We also recognize that many PhD students may not find or want careers in academia, and find careers in government, industry, and non-profit sectors.

Students should discuss their career goals and aspirations with their advisors throughout their time in the program and structure their goals accordingly. We also encourage students to take advantage of the wealth of university resources aimed at helping students explore their career options.

Code of conduct: A harassment-free and collegial Department of Geography

We are a group of scholars, teachers, students, staff, coworkers, supervisors / subordinates, and colleagues. Our collective success depends on how well we work together, and abuse or mistreatment of any of us is corrosive to the whole.

All of us deserve a working and learning environment that is free from harassment and hostility, including but not limited to sex, gender, and racial discrimination.

- We are all entitled to bodily integrity at all times. Any inappropriate or unwanted comments, touch or sexual or romantic advances are not acceptable.
- It is never appropriate to vent frustrations by demeaning, threatening or verbally abusing another, in person or online (e.g., through social media). Yelling at or intimidating others are examples of actions that diminish our workplace and will not be tolerated.
- We expect that everyone will model appropriate behavior in all circumstances. Appropriate behavior means using good judgment and committing to acting in ways that preserve each individual's sense of dignity, safety and bodily integrity.
- Everyone, no matter who they are, will be held to these standards. Within academia, there is an implicit and explicit hierarchy (student-supervisor-professor-chair-dean,

etc.). These hierarchies make it harder for us to speak up and demand respect, particularly due to fear of retribution. Our university has strict anti-retribution policies in place, and as a department we commit to supporting and doing what we can to protect anyone who comes forward.

- If you have witnessed or been the target of any inappropriate behavior, please talk to your supervisor or departmental leadership (e.g., GSC Chair, Department Chair, Graduate Program Coordinator, Department Manager). We will work together to address any problems proactively.

“All members of our nation’s college campuses—students, trainees, faculty, staff, and administrators—as well as members of research and training sites should assume responsibility for promoting civil and respectful education, training, and work environments, and stepping up and confronting those whose behaviors and actions create sexually harassing environments.” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine 2018 Report Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine)

OSU Resources

- Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity: <https://policies.osu.edu/assets/policies/Policy-AAEEO.pdf>
- Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention: <https://titleix.osu.edu/>
- Employee and Labor Relations: <https://hr.osu.edu/services/elr/>
- Faculty Ombudsperson: <https://ombuds.osu.edu/faculty-ombuds>
- Graduate and Professional Student Ombudsperson: <https://ombuds.osu.edu/grad-ombuds>

Plagiarism and academic misconduct

The Ohio State University and the Department of Geography take any form of academic misconduct very seriously. The Department of Geography will enforce all University policies regarding academic misconduct. As a student and a teaching assistant, you are expected to be aware of these policies:

- The [Graduate Student Code of Research and Scholarly Conduct](#) describes the Graduate School’s general expectations for ethics and conduct in graduate research and scholarship.
- The [University Policy and Procedures Concerning Research Misconduct](#), available on the [Office of Research Compliance](#) website, meets the universities obligations as a recipient of federal funding to have an administrative process for reviewing, investigating, and reporting allegations of research misconduct.
- The university’s [Committee on Academic Misconduct](#) is responsible for reviewing charges of academic misconduct against students, including graduate students. The [Code of Student Conduct](#) defines the expectations of students in the area of academic honesty.

Department of Geography: Who We Are

Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

The Graduate Studies Committee is dedicated to advancing the aims of the Graduate Program for all graduate students. The committee comprises a chair, other faculty members to represent the department's specializations, the graduate program coordinator, and student representatives from the GGO.

The GSC's roles including publishing this Handbook, graduate admissions and recruitment, orientation of new students, supporting and evaluating all students, handing departmental awards and nominating students for university fellowships, overseeing and revising the curriculum, assisting the Department Chair in GTA assignments, coordinating with the university on graduate issues, and addressing petitions and other requests made by graduate students. The GSC also handles various ad-hoc issues related to graduate students within and beyond the department.

Director of Graduate Studies

The Director of Graduate Studies is your faculty point of contact for the GSC. The chair approves graduate programs and is the faculty member graduate students should address with problems.

Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC)

The Graduate Program Coordinator is the primary administrative liaison between graduate students and the department and between the department and the Graduate School. In this capacity the GPC is tasked with updating students regularly regarding administrative deadlines, alerting students to upcoming events, and making announcements on behalf of faculty regarding graduate student progress. A large part of the GPC's job is to handle the day-to-day flow of graduate applications and to compile and make that information available to the GSC and other faculty members.

Geography Graduate Organization (GGO)

The GGO is the university-recognized organization for graduate students in geography, GIS, and atmospheric sciences that serves the interests of the graduate student body; the organization strives to improve the experience of all graduate students. All departmental graduate students are by default members of the GGO. The organization serves several important roles within the department and wider university community.

Representatives from the GGO are elected each year to serve on all departmental committees to ensure that graduate student interests are taken into consideration in departmental decision making. The GGO also elects a representative(s) each year to serve on the Council of Graduate Students (CGS). The organization provides a forum for graduate students to voice concerns to the rest of the graduate student body and to discuss methods for addressing such concerns within the GGO leadership.

The GGO is also active in assisting with department functions, hosting events both for the department and wider university community and organizing social events. Participation and meeting attendance is encouraged for all students in the geography department, and many opportunities are made available for all graduate students to become involved with specific tasks and activities throughout the academic year.

Department Chair

The Chair of the Department of Geography plays a crucial role in the graduate program, particularly in terms of setting the priorities for the GSC. The Chair reviews GSC recommendations regarding all aspects of graduate program policy and is responsible for final decisions. The Department Chair is also the ultimate department-level arbiter of any disputes or problems between and among faculty and graduate students.

The Graduate School and University: Key Information

The OSU Graduate School

Our departmental programs are governed by the University's Graduate School. You can find a wealth of information about graduate education at OSU—program information, rules and regulations, information about funding, forms, etc.—at their [website](#).

The Graduate School Handbook

The [Graduate School Handbook](#) covers all aspects of the graduate experience, from admission to graduation. The information in the department handbook (which you are reading now) is meant to supplement the Graduate School's handbook.

Grad Forms

[Grad Forms](#) is the application you will use to file most types of forms with the graduate school. You, the student, will initiate the form and it will go through the appropriate workflow process to be approved. You are responsible for checking the status of a form you have submitted to ensure that it is approved by the appropriate deadline.

Registering for Classes

Deadlines

The deadline for registering for classes is seven days before the first day of classes in a semester or term. Enrollment in insufficient credit hours before the start of the term will result in a late fee, which the student will be responsible for paying. The Department of Geography will not pay late fees. Students should register for courses as soon as their enrollment window is available. Note that waitlisted courses do not count toward minimum credit hour enrollment.

Minimum credit hour enrollment

Minimum credit hour requirements for funded students , as set by the Graduate School. These are for <i>graduate</i> credit hours, i.e., 5000-level and above		
	Autumn/Spring Semesters	Summer term (only required if on appointment)
Master's and pre-candidacy PhD: funded as GTA, GRA, or GAA	8 credits	4 credits
Master's and pre-candidacy PhD: Fellowship/Trainee	12 credits	6 credits
Post-candidacy PhD	3 credits, continuous enrollment until graduation	3 credits
Veterans	6 credits	4 credits

Post-candidacy continuous enrollment policy

The Graduate School maintains a continuous enrollment policy for all post-candidacy PhD students (regardless of funding status), who must enroll for 3 credits every Autumn and Spring semester until graduation (you can apply for leave for personal reasons).

Continuous Enrollment. All students who successfully complete the doctoral candidacy examination are required to be enrolled in every autumn and spring semester (summer term is excluded) until graduation. These students must be enrolled, at Ohio State, for at least three graduate credits per autumn and spring semester. These registration requirements can include research hours. This policy is effective for all students. Post-candidacy doctoral students are not eligible for academic leaves. They may apply for a leave of absence due to medical or military reasons, or during periods in which the University has declared a University State of Emergency Section 7.7.

International Students

International students are required to register for a minimum of eight credit hours in autumn and spring semesters. Enrollment in the summer term is optional unless the international student is in the first or last term in their program, is participating in a Curricular Practical Training, or is on an appointment as a graduate associate.

Dual Degree Policy

In certain circumstances, graduate students may benefit by pursuing another degree outside the department during their graduate studies in the Department of Geography. For instance, in the past, Geography PhD students have successfully obtained Master's in Applied Statistics and Master's in Applied Economics.

Students seeking a degree in another department must formally apply to the Graduate Studies Committee as soon as possible once they enter the graduate program, and no later than one year prior to graduation. This application will consist of a one-page statement of justification/need, a detailed program of study outlining how they will satisfy all program requirements for both degrees, and a statement from the advisor. Students must acknowledge that their top priority remains the Geography degree. The addition of a dual degree in another program and the subsequent extension of time to degree does not in any way extend the commitment of funding from the Department of Geography. Interested students also need to consult the Graduate School's Dual Degree Plan Approval Form (on [Grad Forms](#)).

Emotional/Mental Health Challenges: Help for Stress and Anxiety

Graduate school can be emotionally difficult for a whole range of reasons: balancing multiple roles and responsibilities, time management, the uncertain future, and so on. Sometimes the process can be stressful and anxiety-inducing, and many students report that their transition to grad school is challenging and occasionally overwhelming.

Feeling overwhelmed or anxious is not unusual and is not a sign of failure; help is available. If you feel this way, please discuss it with your advisor, who may be able to offer you some concrete suggestions to ease your stress. Your committee members, the GSC Chair, and other faculty can also be helpful. Also be aware of the many resources on campus designed to help students with time management and with the management of stress and anxiety, including the [Student Advocacy Center](#) at the Office of Student Life, the [Younkin Success Center](#), which offers free and confidential [Counseling and Consultation Services](#), and the [Dennis Learning Center](#). [OUAB Grad/Prof](#) also provides support and special events for grad students and their families.

Grievance Procedures

When concerns arise or persist, the [graduate student ombudsperson](#) is an impartial resource that can help graduate students explore options in resolving their concerns.

Generally, graduate students should aim to address and resolve concerns within their department (see below for the procedure). If the concerns cannot be resolved internally within the department, the graduate student is encouraged to contact the associate dean for graduate studies within the College of Arts and Sciences. In situations where the student believes the issue has not been resolved within the College, they can request further review from the Graduate School.

The following are formal procedures for reporting and resolving grievances by graduate students internally in the Department of Geography.

1. Student must first bring the grievance to the attention of the Graduate Studies Committee Chair in writing. The written grievance should include:
 - Student name
 - Department
 - Position (if any; GRA, GTA)
 - Faculty Advisor
 - Statement of Grievance
 - Relief Requested
2. The Graduate Studies Committee Chair and the Department Manager review evidence to determine that a valid grievance exists. A representative from the GGO may be present at the request of the student.
3. Graduate Studies Committee Chair, GGO representative meet with the Department Chair to review if evidence of a grievance exists and, if so, how it may be resolved.
4. All of the above steps must be documented in writing and included in the student's academic file. The student will be provided a copy of the documentation as well.

See also the [Graduate School's grievance procedures](#).

II. MGIST AND GIST CERTIFICATE

Master of Geographic Information Science and Technology

The Master of Geographic Information Science and Technology (MGIST) program at Ohio State is specifically designed for professionals who wish to advance their careers. There are in-person and fully online options.

MGIST advising

The program director serves as each student's advisor. Each MGIST student will meet with the MGIST director at least once in each semester. During this meeting, the director and the student will discuss topics related to their progress in the program, including:

- The curriculum, including options related to a student's individual career needs
- The courses of the program and courses to be taken in the upcoming semesters
- Possible directions for the capstone project and potential presentation outlets
- The student's developing professional portfolio

Students should contact the MGIST director and graduate program coordinator when they need guidance about the MGIST program.

Time to degree

The MGIST program requires 33 credit hours. It is designed so that a full-time student can complete the program in two academic years.

Students in the MGIST program are making "good progress" when they make timely progress in completing the MGIST courses and by maintaining a graduate cumulative cGPA of 3.0 or better in all graduate credit courses.

Basic requirements

Required core courses provide a foundation. Most requirements are taken in a student's first year. The required courses are GEOG 5101, 5200, 5210, and 5225.

A capstone project (GEOG 6229) is designed for students to showcase the knowledge learned and skills developed in the proposed program. Students are required to take this course to complete the program.

Elective courses include both intermediate and advanced courses that meet specific needs. Generally, MGIST students will select courses from the curriculum (<https://geography.osu.edu/mgist>). However, there will be cases when an MGIST student needs to take courses outside the curriculum, due to courses taken prior to entering the program. The director will work with the student to find the most suitable course replacements and adjust when necessary.

The following table provides two scenarios for completing coursework in two years, depending on whether the student starts in Autumn or Spring semester. (Annotation: **required core course**, intermediate, advanced, and *required capstone*.)

Scenario 1 (Start in Autumn)			Scenario 2 (Start in Spring)		
Year 1	Autumn	5210 5200 5225	Year 1	Spring	5101 5200 5210
	Spring	5101 5201 6286		Autumn	5201 5212 5222
Year 2	Autumn	5212 5222 6226	Year 2	Spring	5225 5223 6286
	Spring	5223 6229		Autumn	6223 6229

Note: students may also consider taking GEOG 5210 and PUBAFRS 7555 in summer.

Professional development

Students should engage in professional development activities (e.g., workshops, conferences, service, outreach, publications, etc.) in the department and in the wider GIST community. In-person students should participate in departmental activities.

Student portfolio

The student portfolio will be one topic of each semester’s meeting with the MGIST program director. Each MGIST student will prepare an updated CV that includes:

- Educational achievement
- Professional positions
- Awards
- Participation in the GIST community, including but not limited to
 - Conferences
 - Service positions and experiences
 - Training
 - Professional events organization and participation
- Anything else relevant to the GIST profession

A significant portion of the CV should also be posted in the student's LinkedIn profile.

Application to Graduate

Students must fill out an **Application to Graduate – Master’s Degree** with the Graduate School via Grad Forms no later than the **third Friday of the semester** in which graduation is expected. Note that you must be registered for at least three credits in the term you plan to graduate.

You will have the option to choose an “end of semester” graduation, which means you complete the requirements after the deadline for attending graduation, up to the day

before the next term starts. You will be able to attend graduation the following semester or term.

Graduate Certificate of Geographic Information Science and Technology

This is a Type 3a (stand-alone) graduate academic certificate for students interested in GIS and geospatial data. A student is not required to be enrolled in a graduate degree program at Ohio State in order to complete this certificate. The program director serves as the advisor.

A student will complete the program with 4 courses, 12 credit hours.

GIST course requirements: 12 credit hours total	
Required	GEOG 5210
Elective: choose no more than two	GEOG 5103, 5200, 5225
Specialty: choose at least one	GEOG 5201, 5212, 5222, 5223, 5226

Students are welcome to participate in departmental activities, but this is not required.

You must fill out an **Application for Certificate Completion** via Grad Forms, no later than the third Friday of the semester in which completion from the certificate program is expected.

III. GEOGRAPHY AND ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES

Both the Geography and Atmospheric Sciences programs are research-oriented programs that offer Master's degrees (MA for Geography, MS for Atmospheric Sciences) and PhD degrees. The sections on "Advisors and Committees," "Professional Development," "Making Progress in Your Program," "Graduate Student Funding," and "Other Financial and Material Support" are for all students in these programs. The separate sections on the Master's program and PhD program provide specific guidance.

Advisors and Committees

All students in Geography and Atmospheric Sciences have an advisory committee that includes an advisor and several committee members.

Your advisor

The student-advisor relationship is at the heart of the graduate enterprise. Your advisor is your intellectual guide, advocate, and professional model. Success in the graduate program therefore rests in large part on achieving a productive mentoring relationship with your advisor.

You and your advisor are expected to meet at least once a semester, and preferably more often, to discuss your goals and progress toward those goals. It is recommended that you keep your advisor informed of various elements of your professional life so that they can be an effective advocate for you.

Check the Graduate School Handbook section on [Best Advising Practices](#) for more details.

Things to consider when selecting an advisor:

- While it is likely your advisor will be the person you named as your mentor in the application process, you are allowed to choose a different advisor
- The faculty member must agree to be your advisor
- Your advisor must be a regular faculty member of the department; for PhD students the person must have "Category P" status with the Graduate School
- Co-advising is an option, though before choosing this option you should consider the challenges as well as the benefits. In addition, only one advisor will chair the candidacy and final exams
- You must formally identify an advisor by the end of your first semester
- You are free to change advisors at any time except the semester in which you graduate or are taking candidacy. To change your advisor, consult with the GSC Chair.

Committee members

In addition to your advisor, other faculty members will form the committee(s) that helps to guide you through the program. The minimum number of committee members varies by program: see the handbook sections on the individual programs for information.

Your committee includes faculty of your choice who have a demonstrated interest and/or expertise in some aspect of your research program. Populate your committee with faculty who, based on your conversations with them, appear to be best able to help you with *your* project.

You are required to form your committee by the end of your first year. Many students (and advisors) want to wait to populate the committee until they have a clearer sense of the research project. It is better to form a partial, provisional committee and hold a committee meeting than to wait. Use your provisional committee to help you formulate your research, after which you may want to change the committee membership. You may change your committee at any point except the semester you graduate.

For PhD students, the composition of the candidacy committee may differ from that of the post-candidacy dissertation committee. This reflects the different pedagogic goals of each step and can affect the faculty expertise drawn on at each phase. Communicate all changes in committee membership to the GPC in writing as soon as they are made.

Notify the department of your committee membership as part of the annual spring review (see more below) or anytime by emailing the GPC.

Non-graduate faculty members (e.g. faculty at other universities) may be appointed to the committee by approval of the graduate studies committee in the student's home program and by petition to the Graduate School (in Grad Forms). The outside faculty member does not count toward the required number of committee members.

Committee requirements by program

Master's committees (the advisor counts as a member)	
Geography MA	3-4 members At least 50% must be Dept of Geography faculty
ASP MS	2-3 members At least 2 must be ASP faculty

PhD committees (the advisor counts as a member)		
	PhD candidacy	PhD dissertation (post-candidacy)
Geography	4-5 members At least 50% must be Dept of Geography faculty At least 4 must be Category P graduate faculty at OSU	3-5 members At least 50% must be Dept of Geography faculty At least 3 must be Category P graduate faculty at OSU
Atmospheric Sciences	4-5 members At least 3 must be ASP faculty At least 3 must be Category P graduate faculty at OSU	3-5 members At least 50% must be ASP faculty At least 3 must be Category P graduate faculty at OSU

Annual committee meetings

You are required to convene a committee meeting every year to review your progress over the previous year and to plan your research program and course schedule. These non-evaluative meetings should be considered separately from other committee business (e.g., exams). While it may not be possible or practical to convene all committee members, it is strongly recommended that every effort be made to do so. Notify the department you have completed your annual meeting as part of spring review.

Authorship and intellectual independence

The goal of the advising relationship is to foster intellectual curiosity and the free and open exchange of ideas. Especially when a student’s research endeavors are closely intertwined with those of their advisor, however, it can be difficult to trace ‘ownership’ of an idea back to one party or to disentangle the contributions of each to a joint research effort.

Issues of intellectual contribution and authorship should be discussed candidly with your advisor. Faculty hold different views on the relative roles of faculty and students in the authorship of work emanating from advised research. To avoid misunderstandings, it is strongly recommended that students ask their advisor to clearly lay out their authorship/attribution policies as early as possible in the mentoring relationship. If the policies appear unfair, students should consider working with a different advisor. Should this be impractical, students should bring their concerns to the GSC Chair and/or the Chair of the Department.

Similarly, you are encouraged to speak frankly with *any* research collaborators about attribution protocols early in the collaborative process. To help you think through these issues, be sure to read the [University’s Research Data Policy](#), which has a procedure on the handling of authorship disputes.

Master of Arts (Geography) and Master of Science (Atmospheric Sciences)

The MA and MS programs are research-oriented programs. Students in the MA program draw from a wide variety of geographical areas across physical, human, and nature-society geography. Students are encouraged to bridge multiple areas topically, theoretically, and/or methodologically. Students in the MS program will engage in research across the spectrum of weather and climate sciences and learn practical skills in weather and climate forecasting.

The Graduate School has a series of rules and requirements regarding the [Master's degree](#), as described in their Graduate Handbook. The requirements listed here are specific to our program and do not supersede those of the Graduate School.

Time to degree

The MA/MS is designed to be completed in two academic years (i.e., AU+SP semesters). Funded students should not expect additional funding beyond the two years.

You must graduate by the end of your fourth year, or you will be expelled from the program. If you cannot complete the degree by the end of your fourth academic year (i.e., SP of your fourth year) you can request an extension for Summer term. The advisor should make the request in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies no later than the seventh week of SP semester.

Basic requirements in summary

- Form a committee in your first year and have annual committee meetings (see the chapter on Advisors and Committees)
- Complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in your first semester and each spring until graduation (see the chapter on Making Good Progress in Your Program)
- Minimum of 30 credits of coursework
- Conduct research and complete a written thesis or paper
- Participate in relevant professional development (see the chapter on Professional Development)
- Pass the culminating Master's examination

Coursework

Required courses provide a shared foundation. Most requirements are taken in a student's first year.

Elective courses meet specific needs. Electives can include courses from within or outside the department.

Independent study (5193 for Master's students) counts as an elective course. You can take Independent Study for a variety of purposes including directed readings (with your advisor or another faculty member), proposal writing, fieldwork and other data collection, data analysis, thesis writing, and manuscript writing. Registering for independent study

requires approval of your advisor, using the following [Independent Study form](#). The GPC will register you after the form is completed.

GEOGRAPHY MA COURSE REQUIREMENTS	
Required Courses	Recommended Semester
8100 Geographic Thought	Year 1, Autumn
7101 Research Design	Year 1, Spring
7102 Fieldwork OR 8102 Advanced Spatial Data Analysis	Year 1, Autumn or Spring (as offered)
One seminar (6000-8000 level) per year	Years 1 and 2
Elective Courses	
Any graduate course (5000-8000 level) approved by your advisor; may include 5193 Individual Studies	Years 1 and 2

ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES MS COURSE REQUIREMENTS	
Required Courses	Recommended Semester
Completion of any missing prerequisites	Year 1
AS 5950 Atmospheric Thermodynamics	Year 1, Autumn
AS 5951 Dynamic Meteorology I	Year 1, Autumn
AS 5952 Dynamic Meteorology II	Year 1, Spring
8900-level seminar (8900, 8901, 8902, 8920, 8950)	Years 1 or 2
Elective Courses	
Select at least two: GEOG 5921, 5922, 5940, 5941, 5942, 8901, 8902, 8920, 8950, AS 5901, 8900	Years 1 or 2
5193 Individual Studies	Year 2

Research

All students in the MA/MS programs conduct research. At the master's level, a minimum requirement is that students demonstrate their capacity to conduct research, including the identification of a research problem, the design and execution of a research approach, and the analysis and write-up of that research. Some student's research will be independent, while others will do research that is linked to their advisor's research projects.

Most master’s students will write a research proposal. At the master’s level, a proposal is essential if you are interested in seeking non-departmental support for your research and is recommended for all students. Proposals demand a particular form of writing that requires practice. Our graduates report that proposal-writing is among the most important skills gained in graduate school, and it is a skill portable to multiple career paths.

Thesis or Non-thesis option?

The Graduate School provides two options for the Master’s degree: Thesis or non-Thesis.

- **All ASP MS students must take the Thesis option.** Students in this program will write a thesis based on their research; their Master’s examination will include both a written and oral component.
- **Geography MA students must choose between the Thesis and Non-thesis option.** Students should discuss with their advisor and committee which option is appropriate based on their goals.

Thesis Option: Students choosing this option will write an extensive thesis based on their research and will defend the thesis in an oral Master’s exam.

Non-Thesis Option: Students choosing this option will write a shorter research paper; their Master’s examination will include both a written and oral component.

Master’s examination

A culminating exam is a requirement. Note that you must be registered for at least three credits in the term you plan to take the exam. You formally register for the exam through your Application to Graduate (see below).

Structure of the Master’s exam based on program and option		
	Thesis Option	Non-thesis Option
Geography MA	Thesis Oral exam	Research Paper Written exam Oral exam
ASP MS	Thesis Written exam Oral Exam	NA

Geography MA Thesis Option: the exam has an **oral component only**, the so-called “thesis defense.” The exam is two hours, during which committee members take turns asking the student a series of questions related to the research in the context of the student’s academic program. The oral exam must be at least a week after acceptance of the thesis.

Geography MA Non-thesis option: the exam has a **written and oral component**. The written exam takes place after acceptance of the research paper. The written exam typically last one week, answering 1-2 questions per committee member. This is followed about a week later by a two-hour oral exam focusing on the student’s answers and on their research paper.

ASP MS: the exam has a **written and oral component**. The written exam is typically four-hours, answering four questions posed by the committee members. This is followed about a week later by a two-hour oral exam focusing on the student’s answers and on their thesis.

Variations from the typical exam format do occur, and ultimately are determined by discussions between the student, advisor, and committee members.

In all cases, at the conclusion of the exam, the committee decides whether the candidate passes the exam (the decision must be unanimous) and whether the thesis (for Thesis option) is satisfactory. The committee’s decision is recorded through Grad Forms.

Application to Graduate

Students must fill out an **Application to Graduate – Master’s Degree** with the Graduate School via Grad Forms no later than the **third Friday of the semester** in which graduation is expected. Note that you must be registered for at least three credits in the term you plan to graduate. This form also formally registers you for the Master’s Examination.

You will have the option to choose an “end of semester” graduation, which means you complete the requirements after the deadline for attending graduation, up to the day before the next term starts. You will be able to attend graduation the following semester or term.

Application to the PhD Program for Current Master’s Students

Master’s students interested in pursuing a PhD in the department must apply to the PhD program. **To be considered for funding, the deadline is the same as for all applicants (in 2024 this is November 15).**

You apply for an “Intra-University Transfer” through Graduate and Professional Admissions, though as a current student you do NOT need to pay a fee. Login using your current OSU name.# and password, select Graduate, then Degree Seeking, then Graduate Intra-University Transfer. There you will be able to start your application and upload the required documents:

- A statement of purpose describing your research interests and academic direction. Provide a detailed outline of your research trajectory and anticipated project.
- Three letters of recommendation
- A current CV
- Degree advising reports from OSU (in lieu of transcripts)

Internal PhD applications will be considered alongside all other applications received for the PhD program. Continued funding is not guaranteed and will be based on the availability of slots and the ranking in the entire cohort. We strive to make this process as rigorous as possible, and applicants should be aware that their file will be thoroughly and thoughtfully reviewed by multiple faculty members.

Admission is provisional, based on successful completion of your Master's degree.

Your acceptance will be revoked if you do not complete the Master's degree. It also can be revoked by recommendation of your advisory committee based on performance on the thesis/paper and Master's exam.

PhD in Geography or Atmospheric Sciences

The purpose of a PhD program is to train students to become broadly knowledgeable about the fields of Geography or Atmospheric Sciences and a specialist in particular subfields, while creating new knowledge that is rigorously grounded in a robust and appropriate empirical and theoretical context.

The Graduate School has a series of rules and requirements regarding the PhD degree, as described in their [Graduate Handbook](#). The requirements listed here are specific to our program and do not supersede those of the Graduate School.

Time to degree

The expected time to degree depends on whether you are entering the program with or without a Master's degree. Note that an academic year is AU+SP semesters.

With a Master's degree, you are expected to complete the degree in four academic years.

Without a Master's degree (Direct-to-PhD from Bachelor's), you are expected to complete the degree in five academic years.

Students do sometimes take more time than this to complete the degree. If you are a funded student, there is no guarantee of additional funding if you do not complete the degree within the expected time.

Basic requirements in summary

- Form a committee in your first year and have annual committee meetings (see the chapter on Advisors and Committees)
- Complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) in your first semester and each spring until graduation (see the chapter on Making Good Progress in Your Program)
- Coursework
- Research proposal
- Candidacy examination
- Colloquium presentation

- Participate in relevant professional development (see the chapter on Professional Development)
- Dissertation
- Doctoral Final Oral Exam (the “defense”)

Coursework

A minimum of 80 credits total, or at least 50 credit hours beyond the Masters; at least six must be completed after admission to candidacy.

Required courses provide a shared foundation. Most requirements are taken in a student’s first year.

Post-candidacy students are required to be enrolled in 3 credits every semester (not including summers) until graduation. This is the Graduate School’s continuous enrollment rule. Under most circumstances you will enroll in 8999 (Dissertation).

Elective courses meet specific needs. Electives can include courses from within or outside the department.

Independent study (7193 for PhD students) counts as an elective course. You can take Independent Study for a variety of purposes including directed readings (with your advisor or another faculty member), proposal writing, fieldwork and other data collection, data analysis, thesis writing, and manuscript writing. Registering for independent study requires approval of your advisor, using the following [Independent Study form](#). The GPC will register you after the form is completed.

GEOGRAPHY PHD COURSE REQUIREMENTS	
Required Courses	Recommended Semester
8100 Geographic Thought	Year 1, Autumn
7101 Research Design	Year 1, Spring
7102 Fieldwork OR 8102 Advanced Spatial Data Analysis	Year 1, Autumn or Spring (as offered)
One seminar (6000-8000 level) per year	Years 1 and 2
8999 (3 credits per semester)	Every semester post-candidacy
Elective Courses	
Any graduate course (5000-8000 level) approved by your advisor; may include 7193 Individual Studies	Years 1 and 2 (or until candidacy)

ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES PHD COURSE REQUIREMENTS	
Required Courses	Recommended Semester
Completion of any missing courses required for the Masters (see MS requirements)	Year 1
Two or more 8900-level seminars (8900, 8901, 8902, 8920, 8950)	Years 1-2
8999 Dissertation (3 credits/semester)	Every semester post-candidacy
Elective Courses	
Curriculum developed in consultation with your advisor; may include 7193 Individual Studies	Years 1-2

Research proposal

PhD students are required to write a research proposal, outlining the plan for research. At the doctoral level, the minimum requirement is that students harness their demonstrated capacity for research to a problem that results in the production of new knowledge. Some student's research will be entirely independent, while others will do research that is linked to their advisor's research projects. In either case, students will be participating in multiple stages of research from design to dissemination of results. At the PhD level, students should be *leading* their part of the research, even if it is linked to a larger project.

The proposal is to be completed within the first two years in the program, and prior to the candidacy exam.

The length and format of the proposal is to be decided by the student, advisor, and committee members.

Many PhD students submit a proposal written for external funding (e.g. the NSF DDRI) as their departmental dissertation proposal.

Proposals are due to the committee at least one week prior to the Candidacy Examination, and more time is better.

Candidacy

The candidacy exam is required of all PhD students. It is taken in the middle of your program, after you have completed all coursework and a research proposal. It marks the transition to a focus on dissertation research.

To register for candidacy with the Graduate School, you must *apply via Grad Forms at least two weeks before the oral exam date*. You also must be enrolled in at least 3 credit hours in the semester of the exam.

The aim of the exam is to assess your:

- competency in the subject matter of your area of specialization
- working knowledge of appropriate bodies of theory and methodology
- acquaintance with appropriate literature and journals
- ability to express facts and ideas clearly and effectively in writing and orally
- overall competence to pursue the independent research required for the dissertation.

Timing of the exam

Ideally the candidacy exam is taken at the end of your second academic year (usually this would be SP semester of year 2), but the deadline is the end of your third academic year.

If you do not pass the exam by the end of your third academic year:

- you forfeit funding for the fourth year
- continuing in the program requires a feasible plan for completing candidacy as soon as possible, put in writing and communicated to the Director of Graduate Studies

If you do not pass the exam by the end of your fourth academic year:

- you can request an extension for Summer term; the advisor should make the request in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies no later than the seventh week of SP semester
- if you do not pass candidacy by the end of the fourth calendar year, you will be expelled from the program

Written exam

Your committee has the responsibility to specify the precise format and timing of the written portion of the examination. There is considerable variation in the practice of candidacy exams, particularly with respect to the amount of time students are given to answer the committee's questions. Generally, the written exam is given over a period of 1 to 10 days. It is strongly recommended that students begin to discuss the specifics of the candidacy exam with their advisor and committee early in their second year, and that expectations be clearly established months in advance of the exam.

It is important that everyone has a clear idea of admissible areas of questioning. Procedures might include the preparation of reading lists by examiners, a meeting to lay out which committee members will ask questions on which body of literature, and so on. It is intended that, on the initiative of the student, continuous consultation with all committee members should take place to ensure that examiners and examinee share a common view of the scope and format of the exam.

Oral exam

The oral portion of the exam is for the student and members of their committee only, and no other individuals are to be present during the exam. This portion of the exam is two hours

long and each committee member must have sufficient time to question the student. The candidate is asked questions about their written responses by all committee members in turn. The exam may also include discussion of the candidate's proposal, but this must be done in addition to, not in place of, discussion of the exam questions.

Evaluation of the exam

Prior to the oral exam, committee members assess the written portion. If, based upon an evaluation of the written portion and discussion amongst themselves, the committee members see no possibility of a satisfactory overall performance in the Candidacy Examination such a decision will be conveyed to the student, who may then waive their right to take the oral component. The committee cannot, however, deny the student the opportunity to take the oral.

At the end of the oral exam, a final decision on both the written and oral portions is made. The decision of the examining committee must be unanimous. The advisor and committee submit their decision on the Report on Candidacy form via Grad Forms.

If for any reason a failure is recorded, or if the student waives their right to take the oral, the student is permitted to take a second examination if the committee recommends this course of action. The nature of the second Candidacy Examination shall be determined by the student's committee but must include an oral portion. The Candidacy Examination Committee must be the same as in the original examination unless substitution is approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate School also requires an external faculty member serve as a representative of the Graduate School in case of a second oral exam.

Options for a Master's degree concurrent with candidacy

If a direct-to-PhD student wishes to obtain a master's degree concurrently with candidacy, there are several additional requirements:

- Must have completed 30 total graduate credits (at least 80% must be taken at OSU); these must include the required and elective courses for the MA or MS
- Prior to candidacy write a research paper (similar to the paper for the non-Thesis option for the Geography MA) based on preliminary research. This is in addition to the research proposal.
- Submit an Application to Graduate on Grad Forms by the Graduate School's deadline for the semester

A student may also choose to exit the PhD program after the candidacy exam, taking a master's degree instead. In this case the dissertation proposal is not required. We encourage students to carefully consider this option and act as early as possible. The student should work closely with the advisor to identify a successful pathway toward candidacy.

Colloquium presentation

All post-candidacy PhD students will present their ongoing research in a departmental colloquium once before they graduate. Each semester, there will be at least one colloquium at which 2-3 students will present their work (each will have a separate talk and Q&A session). Students will be contacted to schedule their colloquium date and to provide promotional materials.

Dissertation

Writing and defending a doctoral dissertation represents the culmination of the PhD program. The dissertation is a substantial write-up of your research. It can be in the form of several stand-alone papers or in the form of a monograph in which the chapters are meant to be read together. In either case, it should make clear the purpose, methods, findings, and contributions of your research.

Your dissertation goes through three stages.

Working drafts on which you seek advisor (and often committee) feedback. Expect this draft to undergo multiple revisions until it is approved by your advisor and committee.

The approved draft: this is the draft that is defended. This draft must conform to Graduate School format requirements as described in their [document preparation guidelines](#). The Graduate School will check this document for compliance with these guidelines as part of the Application for Final Exam (see below). All members of your committee, including the appointed Graduate School Representative, must receive a copy of this draft at least one week before the Final Oral Examination.

The final draft. After the final exam, your committee may indicate additional revisions that are required before the final draft is submitted to the Graduate School. This is the official dissertation of record.

Students wishing to publish from their theses or dissertations may consider requesting that the Graduate School delay (by up to 5 years) the on-line dissemination of the document until the work is published in article or another format. The Graduate School has a petition to delay dissemination of Ohio State dissertations and theses, available on Grad Forms.

Final Oral Exam/Defense

Oral exam overview

The final oral exam, also known as the dissertation defense, is a two-hour oral exam to test “originality, independence of thought, the ability to synthesize and interpret, and the quality of research presented.” The examination is taken by doctoral candidates who have satisfied all other requirements for the degree. This examination is largely concerned with the dissertation, but it may range over the entire field of the candidate's specialty.

Once your dissertation draft is approved by your committee, you initiate the **Application for Final Exam** form via Grad Forms. This form must be **approved** by your advisor, the GPC, and the Graduate School **no less than two weeks prior to the date of the Final Oral**

Examination; to ensure completing the form on time, you should start the form prior to the deadline.

Oral exam guidelines

- Expected to occur at the end of your fourth or fifth academic year in the program, depending on your status entering the program (see “Time to degree,” above)
- Must occur within five years of the successful completion of the Candidacy Examination (a Graduate School rule)
- You must be registered for at least three credit hours during the semester in which the examination is taken
- The Final Oral Examination Committee consists of your committee plus a Graduate School Representative (assigned by the Graduate School after you complete the Application for Final Exam). The representative’s role is to ensure that the defense is carried out thoroughly and fairly.
- The defense is two hours long.
 - It may include a public presentation lasting no more than 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for questions from the audience. Send an abstract along with the time and date of the defense to the GPC for circulation to the department.
 - The bulk of the defense is a closed, private discussion, which is the primary evaluative portion. All visitors must withdraw, leaving only the student, the committee, and the Graduate Faculty Representative, who each ask the candidate questions about their research.
- Successful completion requires a unanimous “satisfactory” decision.

Application to Graduate

You must fill out an **Application to Graduate – Doctoral Degree** with the Graduate School via Grad Forms, no later than the **third Friday of the semester** in which graduation is expected. Note that you must be registered for at least three credits in the term you plan to graduate. This form is in addition to—and probably will be filled out earlier than—the one needed for the Final Oral Exam.

You will have the option to choose an “end of semester” graduation, which means you complete the requirements after the deadline for attending graduation, up to the day before the next term starts. You will be able to attend graduation the following semester or term.

Be sure to check the Graduate School Handbook to ensure you have met all graduate requirements and deadlines.

Professional Development

Students in all programs are expected to participate in activities beyond the basic requirements. There is greater choice about which activities to engage, based on individual desire and career goals. Listed here are some key forms of professional activity; this is not an exhaustive account.

Participating in the department

All students are expected to participate in the life of the department. Ways to do so include attending department colloquia, attending other GGO and departmental events (e.g., coffee hours, holiday parties, receptions), and being involved in the GGO. Students might also be involved in other programs allied with Geography, such as CURA or the Byrd Center.

Conducting work duties professionally

If you are funded as Graduate Assistant (Research, Teaching, or Administrative), you are expected to conduct all duties responsibly and professionally. This includes maintaining regular contact with your supervisor, conducting your work in a timely fashion, maintaining courteous and respectful relationships with all people with whom your work requires you to interact, and so forth. Students on standard appointments should not put more than 20 hours per week, on average, into their formal duties.

Seeking funding: grants and fellowships

No matter what type of research you intend to do, it is highly recommended that you pursue opportunities to have others help to pay for it. Various sources offer research grants. Some are offered through the University (so-called “internal” funding); others require applying to regional, national, or international organizations or governments (“external” funding).

At the PhD level, research funding opportunities grow in size and prestige. These include the DDRI (Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement) competition of the National Science Foundation and Fulbright’s doctoral fellowships.

The Graduate School maintains a [database of external funding sources](#).

Each source typically requires tailoring your research proposal to source requirements, and applications often include a CV, cover letter, and letters of recommendation.

Work with your advisor from the beginning of your first year to identify those sources of funding for which you are most likely to be competitive. Many grant application deadlines fall between October and February, and putting together a competitive application takes time. You should therefore begin this process as early as possible, and work closely with your advisor to revise drafts of your application.

Conferences

An essential component of professional life is regular attendance and presentation (posters and talks) at conferences, including local, regional, national, and international conferences. Attendance of the annual AAG, AMS, and/or AGU meetings are vital for PhD

students, both as an opportunity to present your work and as an important way to build your professional network. Talk with your advisor about the best ways for you to participate in conferences.

East Lakes Division of the American Association of Geographers (ELDAAG)

Ohio State is part of the East Lakes Division of the American Association of Geographers, which holds a regional conference every fall. Attendance at ELDAAG is required for all first-year Geography students and strongly recommended for first-year Atmospheric Science students. An oral presentation or poster is strongly encouraged. Subsequent years of attendance and presentation are encouraged but not required. The department will cover the costs for first-year students (registration, travel, hotel), and aims to cover the costs for all students who present. MGIST students are invited to participate in ELDAAG as well.

Publishing

Publishing your work is valuable to all students, regardless of your future career plans. All students should pursue publication; doctoral students are expected to do so. Initial publications are often co-authored with an advisor; PhD students, however, are expected to publish as first or single authors. Master's theses and research papers are common sources of publications, as are research papers written for courses.

It is important to develop a habit of writing for publication. In addition to research papers and theses, other aspects of your graduate experience can serve as writing fodder, including pedagogic innovations or your experience of graduate school itself.

There are multiple formats in which to be published. For example, many students 'break into' writing for academic journals with book reviews. They may then submit a research brief/report, a commentary, or a literature review before attempting a full-blown research piece.

The IRB

Like all universities, OSU has an "[Institutional Review Board](#)," or IRB, that is designed to ensure that researchers (be they undergrads, grads, or faculty) who work with human subjects in no way harm them or put them at undue risk. If you plan to work with human subjects, your proposed research must be approved by the IRB.

Getting this approval takes time. At a minimum, it requires that you: a) take an on-line course to learn about ethical research (this takes about 3 hours), and b) that you fill out a "Request for Exemption" or other form. Depending on the research, you may not qualify for exemption, and may need to fill out a full application. Based on the experience of other students, expect to spend at least a week (more in the case of international research) filling out these forms and following up with any more information that the IRB requires. Also, you'll need to begin this process at least six months before you intend to do the actual work, since the IRB meets infrequently, and it is likely you will have to revise your application. Talk to other students who have done IRBs to get their advice (and, ideally, ask to see copies of successful applications). Your advisor will also be able to help you navigate this process as efficiently as possible.

Making Progress in Your Program

“Good Standing” vs. “Good Progress”

According to the Graduate School, a student who maintains a GPA above a 3.0 and makes “reasonable progress” toward his/her program requirements is considered to be in “[good standing](#).”

The Department of Geography sets a higher standard called “good progress” to recognize excellent academic progress as well as active engagement in other aspects of the department’s mission, including professional development. Students in Geography and Atmospheric Sciences are making “good progress” when they:

- Make timely progress through the basic ‘milestones’ of their program, such as identifying an advisor, assembling a committee, writing a research proposal, completing candidacy, submitting drafts of written work, and defending the thesis
- Perform GTA/GRA/GAA responsibilities professionally
- Meet regularly with their advisor and committee
- Participate in appropriate professional development activities; for PhD students we emphasize participation in conferences, funding, and/or publication
- Participate fully in the life of the department, e.g. attending talks and social events
- Maintain good grades. Within our graduate programs, ‘good’ means the regular achievement of ‘A.’ In effect, grades only become an important indicator of student progress when they are consistently below the ‘A’ standard expected of all graduate students.

Departmental guidance and evaluation

To provide substantive support and guidance, student progress will be reviewed on an annual basis. The department provides support through an annual cycle of setting goals and reviewing progress toward those goals.

Individual Development Plan

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a *product* where you list your goals and your plans to achieve the goals. It is also a *process* that runs through steps to help you assess your career and professional needs, set plans for achieving your goals, and follow up with the plans.

In your first semester, we require you to conduct a self-assessment, write up an IDP and discuss the IDP with your advisor. You can find a blank IDP, with directions, in the Appendix.

Each Spring semester, you will meet with your advisor and ideally your committee to revisit the IDP, assess your progress toward your goals, and plan for the next year. Assessment of the IDP will become part of the annual spring review.

Spring review

Each Spring semester, you will be asked to submit information about your progress toward the degree as well as your other professional activities. The materials we will ask you to submit can include: your updated IDP, an up-to-date curriculum vita, and an online Spring Review form with your activities over the past year. Your advisor will also fill out a form regarding your progress and activities, as will your supervisor if you are a GRA or GTA.

The Spring Review includes an evaluation by the entire faculty of all students during an annual faculty meeting dedicated to that purpose. The annual spring review does not involve faculty voting on student progress. Rather, it gives all faculty who have had meaningful interactions with that student an opportunity to offer their comments on how the student is doing in the program, according to the criteria for “good progress” outlined above. This process helps to build a culture in which all faculty are familiar with all students in the program—personally and professionally—and thus more able to support their progress.

As an outcome of that meeting, you will receive a letter from the GSC Chair containing constructive feedback on your progress, including specific guidelines for areas of improvement, as necessary.

Students who are not considered to be making “good progress” will be informed in the letter from the GSC chair. A plan for performance improvement will be outlined, including a timeline to meet the goals for improvement. ***A student who fails to meet those goals may lose departmental funding support and/or may be denied further registration in the graduate program. See [section 5 the Graduate School Handbook](#) for more information on denial of registration.***

Graduate Student Funding

The Department recognizes the importance of contributing to graduate scholarship by reducing the financial burden of graduate education. For this reason, every effort is made to provide qualified candidates with financial assistance. *Note that the MGIST program is a professional master’s program and MGIST students are not considered for funding. Occasionally MGIST students are hired on a semester-by-semester basis for specific departmental needs.*

Graduate students typically receive funding in the form of a **Fellowship** or a **Graduate Associate (GA)** appointment. Graduate associates and fellows differ in terms of administration of their appointment as well as in enrollment criteria to maintain an active appointment.

Fellows

Students are usually appointed as *fellows* either because they were awarded University Fellowships or Presidential Fellowship from the Graduate School or because they have secured funding from outside of the Department. Fellows do not have work responsibilities and may not have other university employment during the period of their fellowship.

Graduate Associates

Most funded graduate students in Geography are appointed as *graduate associates* (GAs). There are three types of GA positions: Graduate Teaching Associate (GTA), Graduate Research Associate (GRA), and Graduate Administrative Associate (GAA).

The duties of for each of these positions vary greatly; students and supervisors should discuss responsibilities and expectations at the beginning of the appointment and regularly after that as needed.

Students on a standard (50%) appointment should be working no more than 20 hours per week on average.

Graduate Administrative Associates

GAA's help with administrative work of the department. The responsibilities and format for evaluation of GAAs are determined by the project manager on a semester basis.

Graduate Research Associates

Faculty frequently hire GRAs as research assistants to assist them with some aspect of their research, from literature reviews to transcription to data analysis. These are positions that should be approached with the same diligence and professionalism required of any position. It is best to lay out expectations in writing at the beginning of the appointment. Any breach or abuse of those expectations by either party should be brought to the attention of the GSC Chair or Department Chair immediately.

Graduate Teaching Associates

Most GTAs act as assistants to a classroom instructor; in some cases, this may include teaching lab sections independently. GTA responsibilities are established at the beginning of the semester in consultation with the course instructor.

GTA language requirements: All graduate teaching associates for whom English is not the first language must certify their proficiency in spoken English. The [Oral Proficiency Assessment \(OPA\)](#) test is administered by the ESL Spoken Language Program to determine a student's level of oral proficiency. Students may hold Graduate Teaching Associate appointments while enrolled in spoken English courses but are limited to the duties associated with their score. Because of these limitations, the department will require each GTA to take the OPA exam until certified. The cost of this exam will be covered by the department.

GTA training: All GTAs are required to go through the Graduate Teaching Orientation (GTO) organized by the Michael V. Drake Institute of Teaching and Learning. This orientation covers a wide range of topics such as challenges faced by international TAs, teaching online, and how to facilitate classroom discussion. It is designed to orient future teaching assistants and instructors to the multitude of resources on campus that are designed to assist them in their teaching mission.

The Drake Institute also provides continuing support for teaching. Materials and workshops are recommended for those seeking top-notch resources on how to design a syllabus, get ideas for classroom activities, and other forms of generic pedagogic advice.

Becoming Instructor of Record for a course: Students seeking employment in higher education or other career pathways that involve teaching or training of others often like to get the experience of running a class as the instructor of record, or what we often refer to as a “full-teach” assignment.

Full-teach assignments are generally limited to PhD students who are past-candidacy, though we occasionally make exceptions for Master’s or pre-candidacy PhD students. These assignments are available based on departmental need.

Stipends

“Stipend” refers to what students are paid as compensation for their work. Minimum stipends for GAs and university-sponsored Fellows are set by the Graduate School. There can be differences in total monthly ‘take-home’ pay because of variations in payroll deductions or taxes. If you have any questions about the accuracy or fairness of your pay, please raise the issue with the Department Manager.

To ensure that you receive your paychecks, reimbursements, or other funds in a timely manner, please make any changes in both your Buckeyelink Student Center page and [Workday](#) page through the HR office.

Students receive their stipends on the last working day of the month. The first paycheck will be received in the last day of the first month of the academic term.

Benefits

For a complete description of benefits available to graduate associates, see the [Office of Human Resources page on Student Employee Benefits](#).

Tuition and fees

Fellows and Graduate Associates with a 50% appointment (20 hrs/wk) or greater receive a waiver of university tuition and non-resident fees. Students with a 25% appointment receive a waiver of half of tuition and fees.

All other fees will not be paid by the department. These fees are deducted each month via payroll deduction.

If a student loses their funding for any reason, they also lose this tuition and fee benefit.

Summer fee authorization

Graduate School Policy (Copied from Section 11.1 of the Graduate School Handbook): Graduate students holding a 50 percent or greater GA appointment for autumn and spring semesters are entitled to a full fee authorization during the immediately following summer term without being on appointment. Students holding a 25 percent GA appointment for two consecutive semesters are entitled to a summer fee authorization at half the full fee authorization rate. Master’s students, pre-candidacy doctoral students, and post-

candidacy doctoral candidates using the summer fee authorization must be registered for at least .5 hours of credit. However, students completing graduate examinations or graduating during the summer term must register for at least three graduate hours of credit. A graduate student who elects not to enroll during the summer may not defer the use of the summer fee authorization. Students on a summer fee authorization may hold a 25 percent or less GA appointment. Fellows, Trainees, or non-GA appointments for one or both semesters are not eligible for the summer term fee authorization. Student Associate titles are not meant to be used as a substitute for GA appointments during the summer term.

Additional Departmental Policy: Courses taken with the summer session fee waiver must be programmatically relevant, such as fulfilling a degree requirement or meeting minimum credit conditions for fellowship eligibility. Discuss with your advisor or the GPC if you are considering utilizing a summer session fee waiver.

Reappointment and “contracts”

The department is committed to working with each student, given adequate academic progress, to secure financial support throughout the student's graduate career at Ohio State.

When a student is admitted to the graduate program, funded students receive a **letter of offer**. This letter outlines the department's **intent** with respect to the financial support of that student. By laying out the details of student funding over their anticipated fundable tenure in the program (two, four, or five years, typically, depending on program of admission), the department signals that it is keen and prepared to support the student as laid out in the letter. This letter, however, does not represent a contract between the department and the student, and it does **not guarantee** that the student receives the funds as described. This is because funding commitments are renewed every year based on evidence (garnered during the spring review process) of the student's good progress through their program. Should the student not make good progress their appointment may not be renewed.

During each semester of employment, a contract is issued from the department chair to the student outlining the terms of employment (credit hour requirements, amounts, and pay dates). Students are expected to sign this agreement in acknowledgement of their commitment and to confirm this matches their funding. Students are formally hired through ASC Human Resources.

Students with a funding package will be notified if there is some reason they will not be reappointed (including but not limited to unsatisfactory progress and/or budget limitations).

In some cases, students win research or fellowship support that supersedes their GA appointment. We encourage and celebrate such support. In such cases, the student should work closely with their advisor, the Department Chair, and the Department Manager to come to an agreement regarding how and for how long the student's GA-ship be suspended, when it will be renewed, and whether such support should constitute an “additional year” of departmental support.

Residency requirements/working outside Ohio

All Graduate Associates: Whether you are working in another state or internationally, you need to make a formal request that will go through standard Legal/HR/Payroll review. Approved remote work arrangements need to be documented through a formal university flexible work agreement. For more information, see the Human Resources site on [Working Outside Ohio](#).

Graduate Teaching Associates: Department policy is that all GTAs are expected to be present on campus during the semesters in which they are employed. Residency is required to ensure that a high-quality education is provided to OSU students and the continued experiential learning of the graduate student. This policy does not affect the eligibility for leaves of absence that are covered by university rules.

Students wishing to work remotely as GTAs will need to petition the department for permission to work away from campus. Students should provide a detailed statement of justification. The following criteria will be used by the department to consider petitions for remote work:

- Remote GTA assignments will be made on semester-by-semester basis.
- Remote GTA assignments will be provided for post-candidacy PhD students only after review and approval by department leadership.
- Students should initiate the petition two months before the end of the Spring or Autumn semesters and prior to the semester in which they wish to work remotely.
- The department may request additional materials from petitioning student and/or graduate advisor.
- Decisions will be made no later than two weeks prior to the semester being considered.

Unfunded students: requesting funding

Students who have been admitted and matriculated without departmental funding, or whose funding has run out, can request consideration for funding for the next academic year by emailing a written statement to the Graduate Studies Chair by the deadline for new student applications (currently November 15). All requests for funding will be ranked alongside the incoming cohort. Funding is not guaranteed.

Students without funding can also be picked up on a semester-by-semester as-needed basis, when the department has funds available for an additional GA position.

Funding limits

Our programs are designed so that master's students graduate within two years and doctoral students within four years (five years for a direct-to-PhD). The Department will not fund a third year for a master's student, and it cannot guarantee funding to PhD students beyond this expected timeframe. Requests for additional funding for PhD students will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The annual review will ensure that the Department

Chair, Department Manager, and GSC are familiar with such cases so they can evaluate these student requests for merit and competitiveness.

Students wishing to graduate in the summer can apply a Summer Term Tuition and Fee Waiver, as outlined separately in this Handbook.

It is also understood that personal and professional issues may arise that extend the time a student may require in their program. If you expect your progress to vary significantly from the norm, the onus is on you (in close consultation with your advisor) to plan ahead and/or account for any variations or delays. For example, you may be eligible for family/medical [leave of absence](#), including [leave from the continuous enrollment policy for post-candidacy PhD students](#).

Other Financial and Material Support

Computers

The department is not able to provide individual computers to graduate students. Advisors may choose to provide computers to their advisees if they have the funds to do so.

There is a computer lab, with desktops and printers, available for graduate student use.

Conference support

Attending and presenting at conferences is an important part of students' professional development. National meetings of the AAG, AGU, and AMS are important disciplinary conferences of national and international standing and there are also numerous specialty conferences that are also valuable venues.

The department currently commits the following for students to present their research at conferences (we will provide more if additional funds become available).

- PhD students can receive up to \$1,000 (\$1250 for direct-to-PhD students) to spend on national/regional conference attendance during their time in the department.
- Master's and PhD students in Geography and Atmospheric Sciences attending the East Lakes Division of American Association of Geographers meeting (ELDAAG) will be funded separately. Preference will be given to students in the first year of their graduate studies and students who present their research. (See ELDAAG in the Professional Development section, above.)

Expenditures must follow University policies and procedures. Please contact the Graduate Program Coordinator with any questions regarding travel policies.

To receive payment, before you travel or pay to register for a conference you are required to fill out the necessary travel paperwork. Due to the changing environment of departmental and college budgets, the procedure of these funds will vary from year to year.

On occasion, individual faculty members provide travel or research support for their mentees. This support is given at the discretion of individual faculty members. Students also must fill out necessary travel paperwork **before** the conference.

Departmental awards for outstanding graduate students

Once per year we will ask students to apply for these awards. Awards may not be given if there are not enough funds or if there are no qualified students.

Rayner Scholarship for Fieldwork

This scholarship is intended to support fieldwork endeavors by graduate students. 'Fieldwork' is understood as any form of data generation that is conducted in order to address a research question. Fieldwork costs might therefore include expenses related to travel to a field site, supply or equipment costs, access fees (to libraries, archives) or other research-related expenses. This competition is open to PhD students.

Fenburr Travel Scholarship for Outstanding Graduate Students

This scholarship is intended to offset costs of travel or items associated with professional development. 'Professional development' typically refers to activities related to the conduct or dissemination of research, such as training workshops, conferences, or fieldwork. This competition is open to PhD and Master's students.

Lakshmanan Chatterjee Fellowship for Outstanding PhD Students

This endowment was established June 5, 2009 with gifts from Dr. Tiruvarur R. Lakshmanan and Dr. Lata Chatterjee to be used to recognize a distinguished graduate student in the Department of Geography who is in the PhD program. This award is intended to benefit a PhD student carrying out research on the Global South (Asia, Africa, or Latin America). The award should support a student professionally focused on issues of benefit to humanity, and with demonstrated professional promise. This will provide funds for research.

The E. Willard and Ruby S. Miller Award

The award is given in recognition of potential to make a major contribution to geography or its subfield(s), particularly through scholarship and scholarly writing. Awardees must have at least one single-authored or first-authored paper submitted, forthcoming, or published in a major professional journal in Geography or Atmospheric Sciences. The quality of the manuscript will be a central criterion in judging nominees. All papers to be considered must be largely (if not entirely) carried out during tenure at Ohio State.

The Robert Max Thomas Fellowship

This one semester fellowship recognizes outstanding accomplishments in the graduate program, including significant service to the department and discipline.

University awards for outstanding graduate students

There are also travel/research funding opportunities from the university. The [Graduate School](#), [Council of Graduate Students](#), and [Office of International Affairs](#), have graduate

funding, and each also maintain lists of other grants and fellowships students might consider.

Various offices and programs on campus offer research funding for graduate students as well; for example, recently funding has been available through the Mershon Center, Sustainability Institute, FREE Center, and The Women's Place. Students should investigate numerous sources specific to their research focus.

Tuition and Fee Waivers for students with external grants and fellowships

Students who are applying for external funding may be eligible for a [Graduate School Matching Tuition and Fee Award](#). These are only available to students with external research funding who do not have Graduate Associate or Fellowship positions that already provide tuition and fee authorizations. For example, a post-candidacy student may not be able to hold a GTA position while in the field for dissertation research yet is still required to enroll in the university; such students *may* be eligible for this program.

Eligible students are applying for a prestigious, nationally competitive fellowship that includes a stipend (e.g. Fulbright). Students must work with the Graduate Studies Committee to apply for this award *PRIOR* to their application for the specific fellowship. (Faculty may also apply to this program to support graduate students on their grants.)

Note that this award does *NOT* cover all fees, which can still be substantial. Read the award description at the above link for more information.

The Presidential Fellowship

The [Presidential Fellowship](#) is the most prestigious award given by the Graduate School to recognize the outstanding scholarly accomplishments and potential of graduate students entering the final phase of their dissertation research. The Presidential Fellowship provides financial support so that each Presidential fellow may devote one year of full-time study to the completion of his or her dissertation or degree project unimpeded by other duties. Competitions are held once a year in autumn semesters.

This award is for PhD students who will be post-candidacy by the nomination deadline. [Guidelines and full eligibility requirements](#) are provided by the Graduate School. While not a formal eligibility requirement, in our experience this fellowship is awarded to students with a record of publication.

The Presidential Fellowship competition is held once annually during the Autumn semester. PhD students do not apply directly for a Presidential Fellowship, but instead are nominated by their departments.

The Department of Geography procedure for nomination for the Presidential:

- Any eligible PhD student who wishes to be nominated by the department will submit to the Graduate Program Coordinator (by email) a pre-application. This is due the second Friday of Autumn semester.
- The departmental pre-application consists of two of the elements of the full nomination package:

- An up-to-date CV
 - A statement of no more than 5 pages about the research
- The GSC will choose which students to nominate.
- The GSC will work with the student and advisor to complete the full package of application materials. Note that this package requires at least one letter of reference from a faculty member *not* at OSU.
- The full nomination package, including the letters of recommendation, is due to the Graduate School by the third Friday of October during autumn semester.

Appendix: Individual Development Plan (IDP) Information and Blank Form

An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is a product where you can list your goals and your plans to achieve the goals. It is also a process that runs through a few steps to help you assess your career and professional needs, set plans for the goals, and follow up with the plans. Your IDP will be part of the graduate portfolio you submit in each Spring. Review of the IDP, at the end of each academic year, will provide constructive feedback to help you reach your goals and revisit the IDP for the next round.

Step 1. Self-assessment

The first step helps you prepare the goals. It is useful to think about the skills you are going to need for different purposes. For example, skills you may need to develop during grad school may include:

- Research methods, study design
- Critical thinking, analysis
- Written & oral communication
- Teaching
- Programming
- Data and literature search and management
- Self-motivation
- Self-directed learning

And skills your potential employers specifically want may include:

- Teamwork
- Project management
- Public speech
- Teaching new courses
- Organization
- Grant writing
- Coaching/mentoring others
- Communicating effectively with lay audiences

Another way to self-assessment is to think about the following six areas. Some example competencies or skills are provided for each area, but your list should not be limited to these:

- Discipline-specific conceptual knowledge
 - Understand history of my discipline
 - Appraise major paradigm shifts in the discipline
- Research skill development
 - Programming
 - Survey design
 - Data collection and processing
- Communication skills
 - Write for experts in my discipline
 - Present to a lay audience

- Professionalism
 - Understand the job market and prepare for applications (e.g., writing a cover letter, resume, and/or CV)
- Leadership and management skills
 - Mentoring others
- Responsible conduct of research
 - Demonstrate equitable and inclusive leadership skills
 - Understand human subjects in research
 - Conduct myself ethically and professionally

To identify specific goals, it will be helpful to ask yourself questions related to your professional and research aspirations, as well as the skills needed. For example,

- What type of work would you like to do before and after you graduate?
- What is important to you in your future career?
- What competencies/skills are required for your chosen career?
- How well do your current skills match the competencies/skills required for your chosen career?
- How will you develop contacts--a network--related to your career exploration goals?
- Are there particular technical skills or discipline-specific knowledge that you need to develop?
- Are there scholarly activities you would like to accomplish or work toward during the next year? Two years? (Examples: join a professional organization, present at a conference, co-author a paper...)
- What are the requirements of your specific graduate program? (Examples: courses, credit hours, milestones)
- What are your teaching goals? Do you prefer to be a full TA?

It is a good practice to keep your IDP convenient. For example, a **spreadsheet** saved on a cloud drive may allow you to access and update more easily than on a physical paper. But physical paper may just work for some people.

SAMPLE:

Goals and needs	How do you plan to get there?	Timeframe
Teaching full courses	Obtain graduate certificate in college and university teaching (https://ehe.osu.edu/educational-studies/gis-gim/college-university-teaching/courses/). I will finish this program in 2 years for 14 credit hours.	Fall Year 3 (in your IDP you will include a real date!)
Proposal writing	This is a big topic, but I will focus on learning general ideas about research design and proposal writing. I will start with GEOG 7101 (Research Design). This course	Spring Year 1

	should help me work on my own research proposal in the next year.	
Improve public speech	I plan to (1) attend at least one conference such as the AAG annual meeting or a regional AAG meeting, and (2) actively seek advice from my advisor and peers during multiple internal presentations and warmup presentations for the conference. This is a long-term goal and I will follow up with a renewed plan in the next year.	Spring Year 1

Step 2. Discuss with your advisor

You need constructive and professional advice from your advisor when finding the gaps in your current skillset and identifying effective approaches to setting up your plan for the goals, especially in an early stage in the program. It is important to make sure your goals and plans are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (the so-called SMART criteria, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria for more details). The following is a mockup IDP for a hypothetical PhD student. This is not a complete IDP, but it illustrates a range of goals, from ones that are relatively big and its plan must be broken down into multiple steps, to those that are relative straightforward. Your IDP will likely look different from this. You can be creative in using a format that fits you. But remember to make your goals/plans SMART.

Step 3. Planning and implementation

Ideally, you should create a month-by-month time line for the next 12 months. You should be committed to the plan, but also remember that you will need to be flexible and modify your plan as your goals or circumstances may change.

Step 4: Reviewing, updating, and revising

The IDP will be updated each year (or more frequently!), which will serve as a monitoring tool for you and your mentor/advisor to discuss your plan for the future.

Resources and Further Reading

<https://career.ucsf.edu/IDP>

<https://u.osu.edu/osupac/for-faculty/fellowship-and-grant-resources/postdoc-mentoring-plans-and-the-idp/>

Fuhrmann, C.N., Hobin, J.A., Clifford, P.S. and Lindstaedt, B., 2013. Goal-setting strategies for scientific and career success. <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2013/12/goal-setting-strategies-scientific-and-career-success>

Individual Development Plan, Department of Geography

Graduate Student:

Advisor:

Date:

Use the following table to fill out your IDP for this year. Use the first column to list your near-term (within one year) and long-term (2 years or longer) goals in research progress, graduate program completion, and professional/career development, as well as your needs for funding and other support. The second column is used to outline your plan to achieve the goals, and the timeframe column is for the plan's completion time. In Spring, you will reflect on your progress and discuss with your advisor, who will write comments or mark the completion time of each goal in the last column.

Goals and needs	How do you plan to get there?	Timeframe	Student reflection on progress toward goals	Advisor feedback on progress toward goals
