

MASTER OF ARTS IN GEOGRAPHY HANDBOOK



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OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The MA Program in Geography offers students an advanced education in geographical approaches to understanding social and human/environment relations, with emphasis on how contemporary processes affect spatial relations across a range of scales from the local to the global.

Students are trained to develop sophisticated and rigorous understandings of geographical processes through an examination of various current theoretical perspectives and research methodologies, as well as through exposure to diverse empirical material. Students are equipped to pursue doctoral studies or careers in areas where the ability to examine and analyze the spatiality of social and human/environment relations is an asset.

The program is broadly focused, drawing on the wide-ranging research and teaching strengths of participating faculty. Training (in both theory and research methods) explicitly links local, national and global processes, allowing graduates to develop broad yet sophisticated analyses of geographical phenomena at a variety of scales. Students are encouraged to develop a wide-ranging understanding of geographical concepts, issues and problems in their course work, through an examination of various theoretical perspectives as well as through the examination of diverse case studies (e.g., historical, comparative and contemporary). The thesis or major research paper provides students with the opportunity to develop specialist knowledge in a specific research field.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The MA in Geography will prepare students for a wide range of employment possibilities, covering the various substantive areas of human geography, aspects of applied geography, the different spatial techniques and methodologies, and the broader areas of critical thinking and policy development.

Enumerated below is a list of the transferable skills (beyond those of a specifically geographical nature) graduates will have the opportunity to learn during their studies:

Communication: the skillful expression, transmission and interpretation of knowledge and ideas (e.g., speaking effectively; writing concisely; listening attentively; expressing ideas; facilitating group discussion; providing appropriate feedback; negotiating; persuading; reporting information; describing feelings; interviewing; editing). These will be learned as part of coursework (leading seminars, seminar discussion, conducting research, providing peer evaluation, and writing papers), MRP and thesis preparation, thesis defense, and teaching assistant work.

Research and Planning: the search for specific knowledge and the ability to conceptualize future needs and solutions for meeting those needs (e.g., forecasting; predicting; creating ideas; identifying problems; imagining alternatives; identifying resources; gathering information; solving problems; setting goals; extracting important information; defining needs; analyzing; developing evaluation strategies). These skills will be learned as an integral part of completing coursework, theses and MRPs, as well as in teaching assistant work. Mentorship by faculty, especially supervisors and course instructors, will facilitate the transmission of these skills.

Human Relations: the use of interpersonal skills for resolving conflict, relating to and helping people (e.g., developing rapport; being sensitive; listening; conveying feelings; providing support for others; motivating; sharing credit; counseling; cooperating; delegating with respect; representing others;

perceiving feelings and situations). Teaching assistant work will be especially important in learning and practicing these skills. Students will be encouraged to participate in the university's TA workshop series to help them develop these skills. More generally, seminar-style coursework and primary data collection with human participants (and associated research ethics procedures) will facilitate the development of these skills.

Asserting, Organization, Management and Leadership: the ability to supervise, direct and guide individuals and groups in the completion of tasks and fulfillment of goals (initiating new ideas; handling details; coordinating tasks; managing groups; delegating responsibility; teaching; coaching; promoting change; selling ideas or products; decision making with others; managing conflict). Teaching assistant work will be especially important in learning and practicing these skills. There will also be opportunities to develop these skills in the context of group work in courses.

Work Survival: the day-to-day skills that assist in promoting effective production and work satisfaction (e.g., implementing decisions; cooperating; enforcing policies; being punctual; managing time; attending to detail; meeting goals; enlisting help; accepting responsibility; setting and meeting deadlines; organizing; making decisions). These are skills that students will hone as they manage the rigours of a demanding and time-constrained graduate program. Faculty members will be available to mentor students, and as examples, as they develop these skills.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

Graduate Program Director

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GRADUATE FACULTY

Learn more about our [Faculty](#) and their research interests.

- **Julia Baird** (Saskatchewan, Associate Professor; jbaird@brocku.ca, x3484)
- **Jeff Boggs** (UCLA, Associate Professor; jboggs@brocku.ca, x4975)
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The team in the Faculty of Graduate Studies works collaboratively with a number of units on campus to ensure graduate students receive the highest quality of service throughout their graduate education,

including recruitment, applications/admissions, student records, student awards and funding, student services support, and professional development services.

[Learn more about the Faculty of Graduate Studies.](#)

GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The Graduate Program Director (GPD) is responsible for overseeing the graduate program with the support of the graduate administrative coordinator, and in regular consultation with the graduate program committee. The usual term is three years. The GPD receives an administrative course relief of one half-course per year for a normal term of three years. Specific duties include:

1. Serving as the Chair of the Graduate Program Committee;
2. Consulting with the Chair of the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies as needed;
3. Consulting with the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Social Sciences, other Deans, GPDs, Chairs and Directors as needed, and serving actively as a member of the Graduate Council;
4. Overseeing the preparation, maintenance and distribution of program materials such as brochures, posters, the web page, the Graduate Studies Calendar entry and the Graduate Student and Faculty Handbook;
5. Ensuring the provision of information about the program to potential applicants;
6. Overseeing the admissions process (including ensuring that a faculty member is identified as a liaison person for each incoming graduate student);
7. Organizing an orientation and reception to welcome incoming students;
8. Annually revising the student and faculty handbook, and reviewing graduate policies and expectations with faculty and students;
9. Facilitating allocation of graduate student teaching assistantships for incoming full-time students;
10. Providing guidance to incoming students with respect to course selection;
11. Overseeing students' progress in conjunction with the graduate program committee. This includes ensuring the timely formation of supervisory committees, and ensuring that progress reports are submitted, reviewed, and that brief written feed-back is provided to students and supervisors;
12. Coordinating the MA Speakers Series (this role may be delegated);
13. Acting as "reader" of all theses and MRPs at the "first draft" and defense/grading stage, and participating as a member of the thesis examining committee (this role may be delegated when necessary);
14. Organizing the thesis oral defense in conjunction with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Dean of Social Science (see: [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#) and Faculty of Social Sciences Thesis Defense Procedure Policies)
15. Reviewing course outlines (including for Directed Studies courses) to ensure that workloads are comparable, and that all required components of course outlines are included (e.g., learning objectives, academic misconduct information, breakdown of assignments and grades);
16. Updating program procedures, ensuring that course and program evaluations are conducted, and that student representatives are selected by other students in a timely fashion; and
17. Ensuring that program issues (including student concerns) are brought to the attention of the graduate program committee.

GRADUATE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The committee is composed of six faculty members (including the GPD and Chair) normally appointed for staggered three-year terms, and two graduate student representatives (one from each year) selected by the graduate students. The committee is chaired by the GPD and meets at least three times a year to deal with the following: Graduate Calendar submission, teaching allocations, admissions, student concerns, and changes to the structure of the program. The program committee also receives progress reports from all students in January, May, and September, and reviews each student's progress. Feedback to each student and supervisor is given in the form of a brief email message prepared by the GPD or delegate. Student reviews occur at other times if there is concern regarding a student's performance (e.g., poor performance in a course; lack of progress on MRP or thesis). The Graduate Program Committee reports to the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies' Departmental Committee.

GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Each September, students in the first and second year of study elect a representative from their cohort (for a total of two representatives) who serves a 12-month term. Representatives are voting members of the Graduate Program Committee. Responsibilities include bringing graduate student concerns to the attention of the GPD, providing a graduate student perspective in discussions of program issues, serving as an information resource to other students and facilitating graduate student social interaction. Graduate student representatives are responsible for organizing at least one meeting of all interested graduate students in the Spring to collect student feedback on the program. Feedback is communicated to the GPD, Graduate Program Committee, and to the core faculty at the annual Spring half-day retreat. The program also encourages students to elect a representative to the Graduate Students Association (GSA).

University Level Governance of Graduate Studies

- [Graduate Calendar](#)
- [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#)
- [Graduate Students Association](#)
- [Canadian Union of Public Employees \(CUPE\) Local 4207](#)

RESPONSIBILITIES OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

RESPONSIBILITIES

By engaging in a graduate program, students make a commitment to devote the time and energy necessary to complete courses and conduct a thesis or MRP project. Course instructors, the supervisor, other committee members, and the GPD have the right to expect students to demonstrate ability, initiative, and receptiveness.

The research project (MRP or thesis) is independent work, so the primary responsibility for ensuring that it is completed rests with the student. The supervisory committee members provide guidance, but it is the student's responsibility to conduct research and develop an argument, to seek help when needed and to keep the supervisor and other committee members updated on the progress of the research. The student is responsible for ensuring their work is completed according to the timelines specified in this document, and to negotiate with the supervisor and GPD the conditions of any delays in meeting those deadlines.

Further responsibilities:

1. Conform to University and Faculty requirements and procedures with regard to registration, coursework, thesis/MRP style and standards, and graduation;
2. In co-operation with the supervisor, ensure that all work is completed according to the program's due dates and time-lines;
3. Meet regularly with the supervisor to review progress, and interact proactively with other members of the supervisory committee;
4. Seriously consider and respond to advice and criticism received from course instructors, the supervisor and supervisory committee members;
5. Recognize that the supervisor and supervisory committee members have other teaching, research and administrative obligations that may preclude an immediate response to queries or the immediate provision of feedback;
6. Activate and regularly check their Brock University email account. All university-related email will be sent only to a student's Brock email address. Students should refer to the [Information Technology Services'](#) web page for matters relating to their email account;
7. Conform to basic principles of academic integrity and professionalism with respect to the handling of data and in the development of a mature and professional relationship with the supervisor, supervisory committee, other scholars, and fellow students and staff at the University (see the [University's Academic Integrity Policy](#));
8. Familiarize themselves with University and Faculty requirements and standards for graduate studies as available in this document, in the [Graduate Studies Calendar](#), the University's policies on Intellectual Property and [Research with Human Subjects](#);
9. Conform to provisions regarding hours of employment at Brock University;
10. Consult with their supervisor and supervisory committee if major changes are required during the conduct of the research, and submit a revised research proposal if necessary;
11. Participate in the academic life of the program, including attendance at program-sponsored academic events.
12. Maintain open lines of communication between themselves and faculty; and
13. Notify their supervisor and GPD in advance of absences from the university, and seek permission for absences of longer than a week.

REVIEW THE FOLLOWING

- [Brock University Code of Student Conduct](#)
- [Respectful Work and Learning Environment Policy](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy](#)
- [Research Policies and Procedures in the Graduate Calendar](#)
- [Responsibilities of Faculty Supervisors and Student Researchers](#), and [Policies and Forms](#) (Students whose MRP or thesis involves working with human participants must submit the [appropriate documentation](#) to the Research Ethics Board (REB) and receive REB clearance prior to data collection.)
- Brock University's [Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#)

REGISTRATION

REGISTRATION

Students register for courses through [Brock Self-Service](#), the on-line registration system, which operates from several weeks prior to the beginning of classes until shortly after classes have begun. The Faculty of Graduate Studies sends students instructions about how to use the Brock Self-Service System, and students can refer to the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#) website.

After reading the program requirements and the list of available courses, students may wish to consult with their supervisor or the GPD regarding course selection before registering on-line. All student course selections must be approved by the GPD, who will review them and notify students of any concerns before the term begins.

Unless inactive status or a leave of absence has been granted, students must be continuously registered for the duration of their tenure in the program, which means they should register for GEOG 5F90 (thesis) or GEOG 5F91 (MRP) by the end of April of their first year; however, students should not register for either of these courses in the first or second terms.

For University policies regarding auditing, dropping, or repeating courses please see the Academic Regulations in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

INACTIVE STATUS AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE

If, for some acceptable reason, a student is unable to take courses in a specific term, inactive status may be approved by the GPD. Permission must be obtained before the start of the academic term for which the student is seeking inactive status, using the [Request for Inactive Term Form](#). For more information on policies and procedures relating to inactive status see Section II of Academic Regulations in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

A leave of absence from a graduate program will be granted only in exceptional circumstances which include parental and maternity leave, medical leave, work leave which requires the student to leave the geographic area, or compassionate grounds. Cases will be considered on an individual basis and must have the approval of the supervisor and the GPD before they are submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for approval. The Request for Leave of Absence Form is available from the [Graduate Studies](#) website. [More information on policies and procedures relating to leaves of absence.](#)

FULL-TIME STUDY OFF CAMPUS

It may be necessary for students who are conducting research to be absent from campus for an extended duration. In that case students should complete an [Application for Full-Time Study Off-Campus Form](#), and submit it to the GPD at least two weeks before departure. Full-time study off-campus requires the approval of the GPD and the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Students may also be asked to demonstrate that they have taken relevant precautions regarding their health and safety while in the field.

RESEARCH PROJECT COMPLETION FEE REDUCTION (“FINAL STAGE STATUS FEE”)

Full-time students receive a significant reduction in fees for one term if prior to registration for that term, both the supervisor and Graduate Program Director agree (a) that the write-up of an MRP or thesis is at a stage that could be considered a complete “final stage”, and (b) that the student may reasonably expect to complete all program requirements within the subsequent term. The program defines “final stage” as a document that (a) meets the length requirements for the MRP or thesis, (b) is a complete draft of their MRP or thesis, and (c) requires no further research or additional chapters/sections. Final Stage status may only be awarded once and for only one term. In these circumstances, a Final Stage Status Form indicating that a final stage draft has been completed, along with an electronic copy of the full draft of the MRP or thesis, must be sent to the Faculty of Graduate Studies by the date specified by the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#), and before the student registers for the subsequent term. Download the [Final Stage Status Form here](#).

REGISTERING FOR THE TERM IN WHICH A STUDENT COMPLETES THEIR MRP OR THESIS (“56-DAY RULE”)

If a student completes all of the requirements to graduate (i.e., the completed Graduate Student Record Form is sent to the Office of Graduate Studies) fewer than 56 days after the end of the final term for which they were registered, the student does not need to register or pay tuition for the following term (e.g., if you complete in early October you do not need to register for the fall term). In order to benefit from this rule, the student needs to seek approval from the supervisor and the Graduate Program Director to receive an IN (Incomplete) grade on their thesis or MRP for the last term for which they have paid tuition. Please note that students registered under the Final Stage Status fee are not eligible for the 56-day rule. Consult with the Administrative Coordinator or GPD for precise dates for a given term.

PART-TIME STUDIES

The program is intended primarily for full-time students. However, provision is made for qualified part-time students with the possibility of one or two being admitted each year. Part-time students must take Theoretical Approaches to the Critical Examination of Geographical Issues (GEOG 5P01) or one of the methodology courses (GEOG 5P02 or 5P03) in the first two terms, and successfully complete at least one half-credit course per year thereafter. The thesis or MRP must be completed within three years of completion of program course requirements. Part-time students should consult regularly with the GPD to specify a set of time-lines appropriate to their circumstances.

Graduate funding is not normally available to students enrolled on a part-time basis.

Full-time students should be aware that the Faculty of Graduate Studies does not usually allow a student to switch to part-time status in the term after their fellowship funding expires.

MAXIMUM TIME LIMITS

The MRP option is funded for four terms and the thesis option is funded for five terms; full-time students are expected to complete their degrees within those durations. The University’s maximum time limit for full-time MRP and thesis students is three years (nine terms) and for part-time students is five years (15 terms). [More information](#).

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM

Graduate students wishing to voluntarily withdraw from the program must consult with the Graduate Program Director and submit the [Notice of Voluntary Withdrawal Form](#) to the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The form is available from the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#) website.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

The program offers two streams: coursework with major research paper (MRP) (four terms) and coursework with thesis (five terms). The MRP stream provides students with graduate training in a wide range of geographical topics, but with the opportunity for some focus on a specific topic. The thesis stream provides students with opportunity for sustained, focused, independent research and analysis, while still requiring some breadth through the graduate level coursework. The two streams are equally rigorous, but designed to accommodate the backgrounds, aspirations and needs of different students. The usual path to the MA in Geography is the MRP option.

Students in the **MRP stream** take four terms (16 months) to complete seven half-credit courses (theory, methodology, and five electives), and write a major research paper of 50-70 pages that demonstrates capacity for sustained independent work. Students in the **thesis stream** take five terms (20 months) to complete five half-credit courses (theory, methodology, and three electives), and write a thesis of 80-120 pages that demonstrates capacity for sustained independent work and original research or thought. The thesis is defended publicly to the satisfaction of an examining committee that includes an external examiner.

Both the MRP and the thesis aim to be creative and innovative in their portrayal of insights about, or readings of, subject matter. They both develop a position or standpoint that represents the voice of the student. The two main differences between the MRP and the thesis are of scope and type of claim. An MRP claims to assess and evaluate other people's research. It has a wider scope than a thesis because it can be more speculative and agenda setting. Its role is more to raise significant questions and provide illustrative evidence than to provide definitive, fully documented answers. The end result of an MRP could be a well-grounded set of new research questions, an analysis of secondary data, or a well-developed critical literature review. A thesis claims to produce original evidence or argumentation based on the candidate's own novel research or theorizing. The overall scope is more focused, and the standard of argumentation and evidence are higher. The expectation is that, as an original contribution, the thesis will identify ways to push ideas forward by providing new analysis and argumentation, and some working answers to the research questions posed. For some thesis topics it may be appropriate to work with secondary data; more commonly, thesis students collect primary data.

As noted above, the usual path to the MA in Geography is the MRP option. Most research projects at the MA level will be designed so that they can be completed within the scope of an MRP, thereby allowing the student to broaden their geographical education through extensive coursework and also complete a more narrowly-focused research study.

Students who would prefer to write a thesis must apply by submitting a completed thesis proposal by the January 31 due date. The scope of the project and the student's previous research experience, as well as the student's first-term work, will determine whether the student is approved to undertake the thesis option. Students should discuss with the GPD and with their supervisory committee the possibility of enrolling in the thesis option as they draft their research proposal; approval is required from the supervisor, supervisory committee members, and the GPD.

Research proposals are due January 31 for students wishing to be considered for the thesis option. Research proposals for MRP projects are due March 15. The proposals submitted by these dates should be final drafts, already approved by all members of the supervisory committee ("[Proposal Approval](#)")

[Form](#)”). Deadlines for preliminary drafts of these documents will be established individually between the student and the supervisory committee. Failure to meet the January 31 thesis proposal deadline will automatically place students in the MRP stream. Failure to meet the March 15 MRP proposal deadline may jeopardize a student’s continuation in the program. Students whose research requires REB clearance, are expected to obtain it no later than by the end of the Winter Term (i.e., end of their 2nd term of study).

Full-time students first register for the thesis (GEOG 5P90) or MRP (GEOG 5P91) in their third term of study.

Students wishing to change from MRP to thesis stream, or thesis to MRP stream, must seek the approval of their supervisor and complete the [Request to Change Degree Pathway Form](#).

MA PROGRAM WITH MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER (MRP) OPTION

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Students following the MRP option are required to complete the following half-credit courses:

- a) GEOG 5P01: Theoretical Approaches to the Critical Examination of Geographical Issues;
- b) At least one of:
 - i) GEOG 5P02: Methods for the Critical Examination of Geographical Issues or
 - ii) GEOG 5P03: Quantitative Analysis in Geography; and
- c) Five half-credit elective courses.

The four-term MRP option allows students to complement their extensive program of coursework with a period of sustained in-depth attention to a particular line of geographic inquiry. Students write a research proposal and justify it at an oral presentation, conduct an independent research study, and write a major research paper of 50-70 pages. The latter is graded by a supervisor and second reader with input from the GPD. The MRP normally combines an overview of a given topic along with the critical and theoretical debates pertinent to it and develops a rigorous investigation and analysis of some empirical, methodological or theoretical aspect of the topic. The MRP differs from the thesis in that it does not require evidence of an original contribution to the production of geographic knowledge.

TIMING

In normal circumstances full-time students satisfy the theory and methods core requirements by the end of the second term, and elective course requirements by the end of the fourth term. Students prepare their MRP proposal in the second term and commence work on the MRP after the proposal has been approved, normally before the beginning of the third term. Students should aim to submit a complete first draft of their MRP to their supervisory committee by the end of the third term, so that a final draft can be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the due date for submission of grades for the fourth and final term.

MRP PROPOSAL

After establishing a committee comprised of a supervisor and second reader, students prepare a 10–15-page MRP proposal, which is circulated to the committee for their comments and eventual approval. Proposals should include an outline of the topic, a brief review of relevant scholarly literature, a description of the methodology being employed, if appropriate, and a list of cited references.

After a proposal has been circulated to the supervisory committee, the supervisor convenes a meeting at which the student provides an oral presentation of the proposal and supervisory committee members offer feedback and guidance. When the proposal is acceptable a [Proposal Approval Form](#) should be signed by the student, supervisor and second reader and then submitted to the GPD along with a copy of the proposal. An approved proposal is an agreement between a student and their supervisory committee; if a student wishes to change their topic or research design substantially after receiving approval for their proposal, they may be required to resubmit a revised proposal for approval.

The proposal must be approved for full-time students by March 15. Deadlines for preliminary drafts are established individually between the student and the supervisory committee. Failure to meet the March 15 deadline may jeopardize a student's continuation in the program.

PREPARATION, DEFENSE, AND EVALUATION OF MRP

The major research paper is normally 50-70 pages. It is graded by the supervisor and second reader with input from the GPD. The supervisor, in consultation with the second reader, provides the GDP with the grade and a single paragraph describing the reasons for which this grade has been assigned.

The GPD then enters this grade for GEOG 5P91 and completes the Graduate Record Form on DB Brock.

However, the Graduate Record Form cannot be completed until the student has applied to graduate.

This process takes four to six weeks. Students select either the Spring or Fall Convocation date.

Information on how to apply and deadlines are found [here](#). It is the student's responsibility to complete and submit this form in accordance with the University deadlines.

MRP students can, at their discretion, submit the final version of the MRP to the [Brock University Digital Repository](#). Follow the link to learn more about submission requirements.

MA PROGRAM WITH THESIS OPTION

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Students following the thesis option are required to complete the following half-credit courses:

- a) GEOG 5P01: Theoretical Approaches to the Critical Examination of Geographical Issues;
- b) At least one of:
 - a. GEOG 5P02: Methods for the Critical Examination of Geographical Issues or
 - b. GEOG 5P03: Quantitative Analysis in Geography; and
- c) Three half-credit elective courses.

The five-term thesis option requires from students a sustained, intense commitment to completing an original, independent research study. Students write a thesis proposal and justify it at an oral presentation/defense, conduct an original independent research study, write a thesis of 80-120 pages, and defend it publicly to the satisfaction of an examining committee that includes an external examiner. The thesis normally combines an overview of a given topic, along with the critical and theoretical debates pertinent to it, and develops a rigorous investigation and analysis of some empirical, methodological or theoretical aspect of the topic. These are longer than MRPs, and therefore require greater depth and breadth of discussion. Unlike MRPs, theses must also offer an original contribution to the production of geographical knowledge.

TIMING

In normal circumstances, full-time students satisfy the theory and methods core requirements by the end of the second term, and elective course requirements by the end of the fourth term. Students prepare their proposal during the first term and early in the second term, and commence work on the thesis after the proposal has been approved, normally mid-way through the second term. Students should aim to submit a complete draft of their thesis to their supervisory committee by the end of the fourth term, so that a final draft can be submitted by April 1. Thesis defenses should be held at least two weeks in advance of the due date for submission of grades for the fifth and final term in order to allow the student time for final revisions.

THESIS PROPOSAL

After establishing a committee comprised of a supervisor and two additional committee members, students prepare a 15–20-page thesis proposal, which is circulated to the committee for their comments and eventual approval. Proposals should include an outline of the topic, a brief review of relevant scholarly literature, a description of the methodology being employed if appropriate, and a list of cited references.

After a proposal has been circulated to the supervisory committee the supervisor convenes a meeting at which the student provides an oral presentation of the proposal and supervisory committee members offer feedback and guidance. When the proposal is acceptable a [Proposal Approval Form](#) should be signed by the student and all members of the supervisory committee, and then submitted to the GPD along with a copy of the proposal. An approved proposal is an agreement between a student and their supervisory committee; if a student wishes to change their topic or research design substantially after receiving approval for their proposal, they may be required to resubmit a revised proposal for approval.

The proposal must be approved for full-time students by January 31. Deadlines for preliminary drafts of the proposal are established individually between the student and the supervisory committee. Completing a thesis within the funded period of five terms requires strong motivation, excellent time management skills, and an early start. Students who do not meet the January 31 deadline for thesis proposals will be directed to the MRP option, which has a later proposal deadline of March 15.

PREPARATION, DEFENSE AND EVALUATION OF THESIS

Theses should fall within the range of 80-120 pages (including endnotes, references, appendices, etc.) and must be prepared according to style guidelines outlined in advance by the supervisor and in conformity with [Faculty of Graduate Studies requirements](#).

Students should provide their supervisory committee with a complete first draft of their thesis by the end of their fourth term. After receiving comments from supervisory committee members, students begin the difficult process of revising the thesis into a “defense draft”. Students may be required to complete several rounds of revisions before the supervisory committee decides the thesis is ready for defense. When the thesis has been completed to the satisfaction of the candidate and supervisory committee, an electronic copy of the thesis (in pdf) should be submitted to the GPD along with the information needed to fill the electronic “Thesis Defense – External Examiner Request” form, which identifies at least three individuals external to Brock who are qualified to assess the thesis.

The ‘defense draft’ of the thesis, meaning one that has been approved by *all* members of the supervisory committee that it is ready to move forward to a defense, should ideally be submitted by March 15 in order to allow for a thesis defense to be arranged at least two weeks in advance of the due date for submission of grades for the fifth and final term; this typically provides the student with adequate time to make final revisions after the thesis defense. The GPD keeps one copy of the thesis, delivers one to the Dean of Social Sciences, and sends one to the external examiner. At this time, the candidate must also provide an identical printed copy of the thesis to each member of the supervisory committee.

Policies and procedures related to appointing an external examiner, arranging and conducting the thesis defense, and evaluating the thesis are detailed in Policies and Procedures for MA Thesis Defences in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

In cases where the GPD is the student’s thesis supervisor or a committee member, another member of the graduate program committee will be designated to fulfill the responsibilities of the GPD, as appropriate.

DEPOSITING THE FINAL THESIS

When final revisions to the thesis have been approved, the student must submit to the GPD or graduate administrative coordinator:

- two properly-formatted print copies of the thesis;
- an identical electronic copy of the thesis in pdf format;
- a copy of the National Library of Canada (NLC) Non-Exclusive License to Reproduce Theses;
- a copy of the Brock University Library Partial Copyright Licence;
- a request to restrict the circulation of the thesis (if required in exceptional circumstances); and
- submit the thesis to the digital depository, [as described on this link](#).

The two print copies are bound and retained by the program and supervisor. Students who want personal bound copies at their own expense can arrange binding with the administrative coordinator. The electronic copy is reviewed by the GPD and administrative coordinator; after the electronic copy is approved the student submits one electronic copy of the thesis (PDF format only entitled i.e., Brock_Doe_Jane_2014) and any supplementary files via the Brock University Digital Repository for review by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Instructions for uploading the thesis are found at [Brock University Digital Repository](#). For additional assistance speak with the graduate administrative coordinator.

SUPERVISION AND SUPERVISORY COMMITTEES

OVERVIEW

Graduate research is recognized as a partnership involving students, supervisory committee members and the program as a whole. Proper supervision is a key element; it is vital that students are provided with responsible, professional supervision that is sensitive to student needs and free of personal conflict that might interfere with intellectual development.

ASSEMBLING A SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE

As part of the admissions process, the program committee appoints a faculty member to serve as an initial faculty liaison person for each incoming graduate student. The faculty liaison person aims to be reasonably available for email conversation during the summer, helps the student select their initial courses, and takes an active interest in the student's first-term progress. This faculty member also helps the student identify an appropriate and available supervisor from among the program's core faculty members. Students alone are responsible for initiating communication with prospective supervisors and for securing an agreement to supervise.

When a supervisory arrangement has been made, the supervisor takes over the mentoring role of the faculty liaison person and works with the student to assemble a supervisory committee. An MRP supervisory committee consists of a supervisor and a second reader. A thesis supervisory committee requires a supervisor and two additional committee members. With permission of the GPD, full-time tenured or tenure-track members outside the core faculty may serve as committee members; a written rationale must be provided. When a supervisory committee has been assembled students must submit a [Composition of Supervisory Committee Form](#) signed by all members of the committee, for the GPD's review and approval.

Full-time students should arrange a supervisor by November 1 and submit the Composition of Supervisory Committee Form no later than December 1. Part-time students should have a supervisory committee arranged by December of their second year.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORS

Supervisory committee members are expected to follow the guidelines established for the supervisor with the exception that, unlike the supervisor, they do not have primary responsibility for the student.

The extent of committee members' day-to-day involvement in the advisory process will vary among committees according to the preferences of those involved, but all committee members must participate in approving the MRP or thesis proposal, commenting on the first draft, and evaluating the final draft (i.e., recommending a grade for the MRP or serving as an examiner of the thesis).

The supervisor and supervisory committee must meet with the student to review the research proposal and formally approve the student's admission to the MRP or thesis option, and again before the MRP or thesis is evaluated. Formal research should not proceed until supervisory committee members and the GPD have reviewed the proposal and signed the [Proposal Approval Form](#). This form will be used to indicate to which stream (MRP or thesis) the student has been admitted.

Students are encouraged to call additional meetings with their supervisory committee or its individual members as needed.

CHANGING SUPERVISORS, SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS, OR RESEARCH TOPICS

As students' research interests develop there may be reason to consider replacing the original supervisor, second reader or committee member. This can be accomplished through discussion with the current and potential members of the committee and the GPD. On occasion, asking an additional individual with appropriate expertise to join the student's committee may be helpful. Changes to the composition of the supervisory committee that occur before the MRP/thesis proposal is approved may be dealt with easily. An approved MRP/thesis proposal indicates that the student is committed to a specific project, and that the supervisor and second reader are committed to advising the student as they undertake that project. Thus, a change to the composition of the committee after a proposal is approved requires that the new supervisory committee formally approve the proposal and communicate that approval in writing to the GPD. In cases where a student's research project changes substantially after the proposal has been approved (whether or not in association with a change in the composition of the committee), a new MRP/thesis proposal must be submitted and approved by the supervisory committee.

ROLE OF THE GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

The GPD reviews and approves research proposals and first drafts of MRPs and theses, approves the grade assigned to MRPs, and reads and participates in the oral examination of theses. The GPD has a supervisory committee member's prerogative to ask questions and recommend improvements. This is to ensure continuity of expectations and grading across the program.

In cases where the GPD is already acting as supervisor or supervisory committee member, he or she will designate another member of the graduate program committee to undertake the GPD's role.

COURSEWORK

OVERVIEW

Students should study the Degree Requirements and consult with the GPD as they plan which courses to take. Course selections are to be approved by the GPD for each term.

LISTING OF GRADUATE COURSES

See the [Graduate Calendar](#) for course descriptions.

Research Projects

- GEOG 5F90: Thesis
- GEOG 5F91: Major Research Paper

Core Courses (offered each year; students are required to take the theory course and one of the methodology courses)

- GEOG 5P01: Theoretical Approaches to the Critical Examination of Geographical Issues
- GEOG 5P02: Methodologies for the Critical Examination of Geographical Issues
- GEOG 5P03: Quantitative Analysis in Geography

Elective Courses (offered in rotation)

- GEOG 5P20: Economy, Space and Society
- GEOG 5P25: Advanced Topics in Geomatics
- GEOG 5P30: Sustainability and the Environment
- GEOG 5P35: Rural Geography, Planning and Development
- GEOG 5P40: Historical Geographies of Culture and Power
- GEOG 5P50: Critical Geographies of the City
- GEOG 5P55: Queer Geographies of Gender and Sexuality
- GEOG 5P60: Vulnerability, Human Communities and the Environment
- GEOG 5P65: Political Ecology and the Global South
- GEOG 5P70: Geographies of Inequality and Exclusion
- GEOG 5V10-5V19: Directed Studies
- GEOG 5V80-5V89: Selected Topics in Geography

The core theory (5P01) and methods (5P02, 5P03) courses are offered each year (two in the fall and one in the winter), whereas electives are offered in rotation (one in the fall and two in the winter). Refer to the [Academic Timetable](#) for scheduling information.

Full-time students should complete their coursework by the end of the fourth term. Elective courses are selected from among the following: (a) the second methodology course, (b) scheduled elective courses, (c) a graduate course in another program, or (d) a directed studies course, which may be a fourth-year undergraduate course that has been revised for graduate credit. Additional credits may be required of students with insufficient preparation. Students should consult with the GPD when selecting elective courses. The usual practice is to allow students to take only one elective that is not a scheduled MA Geography course.

Students following the **MRP option** normally take either (a) three half courses in the first term, three in the second and one in the fourth, (b) two in the first, three in the second and two in the fourth, or (c) three in the first, two in the second and two in the fourth, depending on which elective offerings suit their program of study.

Students following the **thesis option** normally take either (a) three half courses in the first term and two in the second, or (b) two in the first, two in the second and one in the fourth, depending on which elective offerings suit their program of study.

Term Three is a research term for both MRP and thesis students. It is without course responsibilities, so that students may focus exclusively on research and data analysis (which, in geographical research, may require periods of absence from the university).

DIRECTED STUDIES COURSES

Students who wish to take a directed studies course should first browse the [Undergraduate Calendar](#) to identify fourth-year undergraduate courses relevant to their interests, and then approach the instructor of the relevant fourth-year course to determine if the requirements could be modified to make it a graduate-level course. Graduate students may only take one half-credit course in which the majority of students are undergraduate students.

If no appropriate fourth-year course is being offered, students may approach a faculty member to offer a 'stand-alone' directed studies course (i.e., one that is not offered in conjunction with a fourth-year course). The instructor of a directed studies course should have sufficient expertise to provide guidance in the preparation of the topic. Students should be aware that there is no significant workload credit assigned to the instructor of directed studies courses; therefore, faculty are under no obligation to offer 'stand-alone' directed studies courses.

A faculty member who agrees to supervise a student in a directed studies course should develop with the student a written course outline with respect to readings, assignments, meetings, evaluation and due dates. This outline should be signed by the student and the professor and then submitted to the GPD for review and approval. The signed course outline constitutes an agreement between the student and professor and is kept in the student's file. After receiving the GPD's approval, the student should register on-line for the course (GEOG 5V10 if it is the student's first directed studies course, or GEOG 5V11 if it is their second).

Students planning to enroll in a directed studies course should initiate this process well before the start of the term in which they plan to take it. They must also submit the signed course outline to the GPD before the beginning of classes for that term.

ONTARIO VISITING GRADUATE STUDENT PLAN

Students may take a graduate course for elective credit at another Ontario university while remaining registered at Brock, through the Ontario Visiting Graduate Student Plan. The plan allows students to bypass the usual application for admission procedures. Enrolment in the course is not complete until prior approval has been received from both the host and home universities. A student who is classified as an Ontario Visiting Graduate Student will register and pay fees to the home university but will pay no fees to the host university. A description of the course must be attached to the form (course outline if available). Ontario Visiting Graduate Student forms and instructions are available from [Graduate Studies](#) website and in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

COURSEWORK EVALUATION

In evaluating students' coursework the program follows the regulations articulated in the section titled Evaluation of Student Performance in the Academic Regulations part of the [Graduate Calendar](#).

Graduate course instructors are required to provide students with a course outline at the beginning of a course. The course outline should specify, at a minimum, the course objectives and expectations, academic misconduct information, the grading scheme, and the nature, weighting, and due dates of assignments.

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

Students and instructors should provide each other with feedback throughout the course. In addition, students are invited to submit a more formal course evaluation once a course is completed. Where the small number of students in a group may make anonymity difficult to maintain, students have the option of preparing a group assessment, including minority opinions where applicable. Evaluations will be submitted to the graduate administrative coordinator for forwarding to the instructor.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

OVERVIEW

Incoming students should consult with the GPD and their faculty liaison person as they plan their program of study. After a supervisor has been arranged, students should communicate regularly with their supervisor and the GPD regarding updates on their academic performance and progress.

Students must achieve and sustain satisfactory academic performance to be eligible to continue in the graduate program. Students who are not progressing satisfactorily toward completion of their degree requirements may be placed on probation or withdrawn from the program. In terms of coursework, satisfactory performance means maintaining a minimum cumulative average of at least a B- (70 per cent) during each term of study and completing coursework within the specified timelines. In terms of MRP and thesis work, it means meeting deadlines and progressing according to timelines outlined in this handbook and/or negotiated with the supervisory committee.

Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations and policies regarding Minimum Academic Performance and Academic Probation are detailed in Section X of Academic Regulations in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

PROGRESS REPORTS

All students are required to submit progress reports for each term during which they are enrolled in the program. The [progress report form](#), which has separate sections to be completed by students and supervisors, is due to supervisors five days prior to the first day of classes of the following term and to the GPD by the first day of classes. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the report is submitted to the GPD by the due date.

The GPD reviews progress reports in consultation with the graduate program committee and provides a brief feedback letter to students accompanied by a copy of the submitted progress report. Students whose progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory will be placed on probation and asked to attend a meeting together with their supervisor and the GPD to plan a course of remedial action. Unsatisfactory progress for two consecutive terms may result in a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Studies that the student be withdrawn from the program.

SCHEDULE OF PROGRAM DEADLINES

Conforming to the deadlines specified below is an important indication of satisfactory student progress. Supervisors and students should set their own timelines to ensure students reach these deadlines on schedule.

Supervisor Finalised

- MRP – November 1st
- Thesis – November 1st

Supervisory Committee Assembled

- MRP – December 1st
- Thesis – December 1st
- Part-time – December of 2nd year

Approved Proposal Submitted to GPD

- MRP – March 15th
- Thesis – January 31st

Core Course Requirements Satisfied

- MRP – end of second term
- Thesis – end of second term

Final Stage Draft of Research Project Submitted

- MRP – end of third term
- Thesis – end of fourth term
- Part-Time – not later than end of fourteenth term

Elective Course Requirements Satisfied

- MRP – end of fourth term
- Thesis – end of fourth term

Final Draft of Research Project Submitted

- MRP – two weeks in advance of the due date for submission of grades (fourth term)
- Thesis – March 15th (fifth term)
- Part-Time – not later than the fifteenth term

Thesis Defended at Public Examination

- Thesis – two weeks in advance of the due date for submission of grades (fifth term)
- Part-Time – not later than the fifteenth term

Due dates are extended for students who arrange leaves of absence or inactive terms.

See the Schedule of Important Dates section of the [Graduate Calendar](#) for a list of Faculty of Graduate Studies deadlines relating to registration, graduation, fees, etc.

APPEALS AND STUDENT CONCERNS REGARDING EVALUATION

OVERVIEW

Opportunities for graduate students to communicate usefully and safely about their experiences and concerns include access to an ombuds officer for students (<https://brocku.ca/ombuds/>) and the Office for Human Rights and Equity Services (<https://brocku.ca/humanrights/>) – ext. 5657). Students also have the opportunity to submit anonymous course evaluations, articulate any concerns to the GPD, ask their graduate student representative to raise issues at program committee meetings, and contribute to a program review that graduate student representatives present to the core faculty at the annual Spring half-day graduate program retreat.

All graduate students have the right to appeal graduate decisions. An appeal is a request that an academic decision (e.g., a grade, or standing in a program) be changed, based on the evidence supplied by the student or that a regulation be waived on compassionate grounds or because of extenuating circumstances. The procedure of appeal varies according to the nature of the appeal. For more detailed information regarding appeals students should refer to Section XIX of Academic Regulations in the [Graduate Calendar](#).

STUDENT FUNDING

FELLOWSHIPS AND ASSISTANTSHIPS

Graduate fellowships are available for all full-time students admitted into the program. In normal circumstances full-time students also receive a teaching assistantship. Teaching assistants lead seminars and have marking responsibilities in undergraduate courses, usually in the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies. Teaching Assistantships are not typically available in the Spring Term (May-August). Some students may be offered a research assistantship or research fellowship instead of, or in addition to, a TA. Research assistants assist faculty members with their research projects. Students with research fellowships conduct their own thesis or MRP project in conjunction with the funded research of a faculty member. The availability of research assistantships and research fellowships depends on faculty research needs and resources in a given year.

Graduate students must limit their paid University employment to a maximum of 520 hours per year, with a maximum of 240 hours per academic term. This includes all paid employment on campus including Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Research Assistantships. Any requests to work additional on-campus hours must be made with the [appropriate form](#) and approved by the GPD and the Dean of Graduate Studies. For more information see the Collective Agreement between Brock University and the [Canadian Union of Public Employees \(CUPE\) Local 4207](#).

The above rule applies to teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and other on-campus employment for full-time students. It does not apply to full-time students on research fellowships and to part-time students. Part-time students may teach seminars to a maximum number as specified in the Collective Agreement, or work without restriction as research assistants. However, students should not take on responsibilities that interfere with their course work or the completion of their MRP or thesis.

It is individual course instructors' responsibility to meet with their TAs at the beginning of term for advance discussion of the work expected, methods to be used in evaluating the TA's work, and scheduling of duties throughout the term. Students should make sure that instructors of courses for which they are serving as teaching assistants complete an "Allocation of Hours" form; students should review the form with the course instructor and discuss anticipated workload problems prior to the start of the course. Graduate students are urged to familiarize themselves with the relevant articles from the University/CUPE Collective Agreement (especially [Articles 15.02 and 22, and Appendix C](#)).

Details of fellowships and assistantships for individual students are specified on the offer of admission that all admitted students receive from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Information about student funding packages, tuition fees and related expenses may be found in the Future Students and Current Students sections of the Faculty of Graduate Studies website:

- [Fees and tuition](#)
- [Funding information](#)
- [Scholarships and awards](#)

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RESEARCH FUNDING

In addition to the sources of funding outlined above, students may be eligible for a variety of external and internal fellowships, scholarships, and bursaries.

See the Fellowships, Scholarships, Bursaries, Awards, and Financial Assistance section of the [Graduate Calendar](#), as well as [Funding and Awards](#).

Please check these links frequently for updated information on funding opportunities. Students also receive regular email notifications about scholarship opportunities from the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

Students with entering averages in the A range should seriously consider applying for the OGS and/or one of the Tri-Council graduate scholarships (SSHRC, CIHR, NSERC), worth in the range of \$15,000-\$18,000. Due dates are early in the fall term, so students should begin preparing their applications by mid-September at the latest.

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES BURSARY

Students faced with unanticipated or non-typical financial needs may apply to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for an Graduate Studies Bursary by submitting the [Bursary Request Form](#). Details and application instructions are available through the [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#).

The Graduate Students' Association also offers emergency [financial aid](#).

STUDENT RESEARCH EXPENSES

Department: Funds may be available from the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies to support MRP- and thesis-related expenses such as book purchases, photocopying, and travel to conferences. Requests for such support should be made to the Graduate Administrative Coordinator, who will know what funds may be available from year to year. Please note that, according to University regulations, you must submit original receipts in order to be reimbursed for eligible expenses. Determine [what expenses are eligible](#) or speak with the Administrative Coordinator.

Faculty of Graduate Studies: Students may apply to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for travel to conferences expenses up to \$300. For information see [Travel Expense Reimbursement](#) information and form. Note that the Faculty of Graduate Studies will provide funds only to students who have first accessed funds available through the program.

Graduate Students' Association: The GSA also had [funds](#) to support student research and conference travel.

RESOURCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

GRADUATE STUDENT OFFICE

Students are provided with keys and an alarm code to access the MA Geography Graduate Student Office (Rooms C-406). The offices are equipped with desks, work tables, couches, computers, internet access and a scanner for MA Geography students' use.

The Faculty of [Graduate Studies](#) also provides many services and professional development opportunities.

RESOURCES

- Speak to the Graduate Administrative Coordinator if you wish to book meeting space in the Department of Geography and Tourism Studies (e.g., MC C405, C407, C419).
- The James A. Gibson Library offers a [variety of services](#) to graduate students, including workshops, tutorials, reserved study space and meeting/presentation space.
- The [Faculty of Graduate Studies](#) provides many services and professional development opportunities.
- A calendar of events for graduate students is available on [ExperienceBU](#).